

The Artist, His Muse. And Her Pig

written by

John Stone

A stage play

(C)

Continued / Aside - Off stage *

LIGHTS UP:

ACT 1

Setting.

THE STUDIO

Voluptuous actress DORIS is a brunette with long wavy hair and thin facial features. She has a sharp nose and she is thirty something. She speaks with a London accent. She lies back upon a chaise and her red peignoir hangs loose around her shapely frame to reveal her shapely breasts.

Parisian artist MAURICE. He is tall, dark and handsome and in his mid-thirties. He stands at the easel with brush in hand, while a dim fluorescent light hangs precariously above.

There is a door that leads off along the back wall.

He steps down centre.

MAURICE

(poetically)

Have thou a body? Oh beautiful
Goddess!

DORIS cackles.

DORIS

Oh, Maurice, you're insane.

MAURICE

I know. And it is all down to
you, Mon Cherie.

He returns to the easel and begins to paint.

Long silence.

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

MAURICE /

Oh this is hopeless! I am sorry,
Doris, but I cannot continue
under this annoying light. I
think I am beginning to see
double.

She shifts uncomfortably.

DORIS

Oh. Would you like me to go,
then? Ill be happy to come back
later if you like?

MAURICE

No, no, non. Just give me a few
minutes to sort myself out.

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

DORIS

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

MAURICE

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

She climbs off the chaise and buttons her peignoir.

DORIS

Well you knew I was coming. You
should've changed the bulb.
You've had all week to do it,
haven't you?

He turns to face her with a glass of water in hand.

MAURICE

I know. I know, Doris. But I
really have enough to think
about... what with the
exhibition. I really do not know
if I am coming or going.

DORIS

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

MAURICE

It is practically finished.

DORIS

Oh that's good. Can I see it now?

MAURICE

Oui.

DORIS

Awesome!

He joins her at the easel.

MAURICE

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

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

DORIS

I see.

MAURICE

You know, I almost lost my vision completely.

DORIS

Really?

MAURICE

Hm.

DORIS

(dismayed)

Right.

MAURICE

You have the most amazing definition for your age, Doris.

DORIS

(bashfully)

D' you think so?

MAURICE

Of course. You are my muse.

DORIS

Oh, am I really, Maurice?

MAURICE

Oui, Mon Cherie!

(pauses)

You know I am overjoyed to have you as my muse.

DORIS

Oh, you don't really mean that. You're just being nice.

MAURICE

I do... most sincerely.

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

DORIS

She looks nothing like me, does she?

MAURICE

(aback)

She is every inch of you, Doris.

DORIS

Well she's not what I expected.

MAURICE

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

DORIS

Oh. Ok then.

MAURICE

Here. Let me help you.

He gently moves her back a couple of steps.

MAURICE /

Better?

She sighs her disappointment.

DORIS

(irritatedly)

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

He chuckles.

MAURICE

No, of course not, Doris. What do you think? It is not a portrait. It is an illusion.

DORIS

Is that why my noses are so pointed?

MAURICE

Illusion is the first of all pleasures, Doris.

DORIS

(dispassionately)

Is it?

Short silence.

MAURICE

It is most definitely you. Look at her left ear.

She takes a closer look.

MAURICE /

It is the same form of art that Picasso used during one of his periods.

DORIS

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

MAURICE

Of course not, Doris.

(chuckles)

Maybe you should look at it from a different angle.

She shifts to her left.

MAURICE /

What do you see now?

DORIS

A mirror image.

MAURICE

At last!

DORIS

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

MAURICE

Oh Doris, you are so unearthed.
You really need to get out more.

She looks at him dolefully.

MAURICE /

Visit art galleries. It will
widen your knowledge of the arts.

DORIS

So is this how you really see me,
then?

MAURICE

No, of course it is not. I see
you in many, many different
lights. This is just one of those
fascinating lights that I am
exploring.

DORIS

Oh.

MAURICE

I will paint an exact image of
you if that makes you feel
happier. But you will have to pay
me for it. And I do not come
cheap.

Short pause.

DORIS

She looks like she's had cosmetic
surgery.

MAURICE

(sighs)

Now you are being ridiculous.

DORIS

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

MAURICE

Not true.

DORIS

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

MAURICE

Now you are just being silly, Doris.

DORIS

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

MAURICE

(irately)

Well, I couldn't paint a nineteenth century witch.

DORIS

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

MAURICE

(imploringly)

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

DORIS

(sardonically)

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

He follows her towards the clothes rail.

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

MAURICE

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

She looks into his big blue eyes from close proximity.

DORIS

Do you?

MAURICE

Oui Madam. And what if I had
chosen another way? It would have
surely incited a temptation
between us, non? And what would
your Horace say... That I am the
unscrupulous artist who went to
far with his adorable wife? An
artist not worthy of his own
time?

She cackles.

DORIS

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

She snorts to mimic the sound of a pig.

DORIS /

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

MAURICE

Clearly I do.

DORIS

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

MAURICE

It is absolutely fine, Doris.

DORIS

So when is this exhibition of
yours, then?

MAURICE

Next month, actually.

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

DORIS

Are all these paintings going to be exhibited?

MAURICE

Absolutely.

DORIS

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

MAURICE

And he is absolutely right, of course.

(pauses)

Anyway, what do you think, that I would not invite my muse and her pig to my exhibition?

She cackles.

DORIS

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

MAURICE

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

DORIS

OK then, I will.

MAURICE

Will you be able to pop back in the morning? I just need to put the finishing touches to it.

DORIS

Only if you fix that poxy light bulb.

MAURICE

I will do it immediately.

DORIS

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

MAURICE

Hardly.

DORIS

OK.

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

MAURICE

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

She cackles.

DORIS

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

She cackles.

MAURICE

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

She cackles.

DORIS

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

She mimics the girl's pathetic voice.

DORIS /

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

MAURICE

I can see where you get your
acting skills.

DORIS

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

She cackles.

MAURICE

Can you not change your agent, or
something?

DORIS

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

MAURICE

What about Horace? Can he not
help?

DORIS

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

She cackles.

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

MAURICE

Would you like quick one?

DORIS

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

She gets to her feet. He fills a glass and hands it to her.

MAURICE

Enjoy, Mon Cherie.

She takes a sip.

DORIS

Hmm. Nice. Where's it from?

MAURICE

Tesco.

She cackles.

DORIS

Which region, silly?

MAURICE

The Loire Valley.

Short silence.

DORIS

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

She cackles.

MAURICE

Let us raise a toast.

DORIS

What to?

MAURICE

My forthcoming exhibition.

DORIS

Oh that. All right.

They toast.

MAURICE

Here. Take this.

He hands her an envelope from his back pocket.

DORIS

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

(irked pause)

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

She cackles.

MAURICE

You are incomparable, Doris.

DORIS

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

MAURICE

I only have one muse, Doris.

DORIS

D' you really mean that?

MAURICE

Oui.

She steps forward and puts her hand lightly upon his chest.

Their lips meet, before he pulls away, thus leaving her perplexed.

DORIS

I'm sorry. It's the wine. It's gone straight to me flipping head.

MAURICE

It is fine, Doris.

DORIS

I'm really sorry.

MAURICE

Don't be.

She hands him her empty glass.

DORIS
I better get going.

MAURICE
Thank you, Doris. I really appreciate it.

DORIS
Did you really mean what you said earlier?

MAURICE
Oui.

DORIS
Then kiss me again.

MAURICE
But you are a married woman, non?

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

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

She cackles.

MAURICE
Ohmondieu!

DORIS
Bye, Maurice.

She blows him a kiss and exits stage left. He sighs in relief.

LIGHTS DOWN:

LIGHTS UP.

Setting.

THE APARTMENT

A split stage. A winding staircase leads to a bedroom.

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

Overweight and bespectacled HORACE (50's) lies on the bed. He sports a red cravat and paisley dressing gown and clutches a brandy glass.

HORACE

(on phone)

Ha,ha,ha,ha,ha. Now that would be just my luck- I should reach Paris Nord around nine thirtyish- So will you pick me up, or shall I jump in a cab like last time-? I'll do that then.

Down: DORIS enters and shakes her head to the sound of his bellowing voice.

HORACE /

(Knowingly)

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

He hangs up the phone and picks up his laptop, before he climbs off the bed and checks himself in the mirrored wardrobe.

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

Doris pours herself a glass of Chardonnay in the kitchenette.

DORIS

(knowingly)

You're in, then.

HORACE

(casually)

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

DORIS

Who was that you were speaking to on the phone?

HORACE

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

She turns away in disgust.

DORIS

Liar.

HORACE

Who?

DORIS

You, who else?

HORACE

Gordon?

He stomps towards the drinks table and pours himself another brandy, before he slumps down in the armchair.

HORACE /

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

She gives him the finger.

DORIS

Swivel.

He roars with laughter.

DORIS /

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

HORACE -

Debatable.

(pause)

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

DORIS

Probably not for all I know.

HORACE

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

He opens his laptop and switches it on.

DORIS

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

HORACE

Fine.

(pauses)

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

She becomes excited and sits down on the sofa as he begins to tap away on his computer.

DORIS

Well, what did you say to them?

He looks at her knowingly.

HORACE

I turned it down, naturally.

DORIS

You did what?!

HORACE

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

DORIS

(outraged)

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

HORACE

That's right.

DORIS

But why?

HORACE

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

DORIS

You twerp!

HORACE

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

DORIS

Twat!

HORACE

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

DORIS

(defeatedly)

I need a flipping drink.

She gets to her feet and exits.

She returns and stands over his shoulder as she looks at him with utter contempt.

HORACE

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

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

DORIS

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

HORACE

They already have someone for Napoleon.

She turns away in disgust.

DORIS

Oh fuck off, then, you twerp!

He roars with laughter as she sits down again.

HORACE

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

DORIS

(fractured)

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

HORACE

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

DORIS

But I can't. I've been with him
flipping years. Are you sure
they're not auditioning for other
parts? I bet you haven't even
thought to ask, have you?

HORACE

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

DORIS

Oh, don't be ridiculous!

HORACE

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

DORIS

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

HORACE

Well he would do, wouldn't he?!
He just wants to get inside your
knickers.

DORIS

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

She gets up and storms off.

HORACE -

I rest my case.

Flushing toilet.

DORIS *

I'm classically trained, you know!

HORACE -

Hysterically trained, more like.

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

DORIS

Shove it up your arse!

HORACE

I'll have a go if you like.

DORIS

Get lost.

HORACE

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

DORIS

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

HORACE

I work, Doris.

She begins to channel surf the TV.

DORIS

And so do I.

HORACE

Lying on your back is not work,
Doris.

DORIS

Is that what you think I do all
day?

HORACE

It's one of them.

DORIS

You think I'm cheap.

HORACE

I don't think anything, Doris.

DORIS

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

HORACE

Give me a break, will you?

DORIS

You started it.

HORACE

Then let me finish it.

A long silence as he continues to work.

HORACE /

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

DORIS

I don't want anything from you.

HORACE

You know your trouble?

DORIS

Enlighten me.

HORACE

You're ungrateful.

DORIS

Ha! I'm ungrateful?

HORACE

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

DORIS

I'm not bitter. I'm angry.

HORACE

Get better. Not bitter, Doris.

DORIS

Bollocks.

HORACE

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

DORIS

Is there a part for me?

HORACE

There might well be, Doris.

DORIS

I will, then.

HORACE

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

DORIS

You pig!

She gets up and exits in a fury.

DORIS / *
Are you ashamed of me?

She returns to the sofa.

HORACE
Only slightly... nothing to worry
about.

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

DORIS
Bastard!

He spills his brandy over his laptop and jumps to his feet.

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

He quickly exits.

DORIS
Stop winding me up, then.

HORACE *
WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR BLOODY
SENSE OF HUMOUR?

DORIS
I still have mine.

She turns up the volume of the television.

He reenters and pours himself another brandy.

HORACE
AND TURN THAT BLOODY THING DOWN.

DORIS
Oh, get to bed.

HORACE
I SAID TURN IT DOWN!

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

DORIS
Give that back!

HORACE

There's something you should know first.

DORIS

What's that?

HORACE

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

She consumes his statement of fact with a huge sigh.

DORIS

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

HORACE

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

DORIS

Can I come this time?

HORACE

No. You'll just get in the way.

DORIS

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

HORACE

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

DORIS

But I'd rather come to Paris with you.

HORACE

(angrily)

Take no for a bloody answer, will you?

She turns away disappointedly.

HORACE /

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

DORIS

I'll believe that when I see it.

(reflects)

I hardly see you these days. We might as well be flipping divorced for all you care.

HORACE

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

DORIS

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

HORACE

Is that what they call it these days?

DORIS

At least he's not a pig like you.

HORACE

Why do you have to boost his bloody ego all the time?

DORIS

He doesn't have one, unlike you.

HORACE

If you say so, Doris.

DORIS

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

HORACE

What figure?

DORIS

Oh fuck off, you wanker!

She exits as the land line telephone rings.

He picks up the receiver and listens.

HORACE

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

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

DORIS

Who was that?

HORACE

Who'd you think?

DORIS

How dare you speak to my friends
like that!

HORACE

Then tell him not to ring here!

DORIS

But he's a friend.

HORACE

Then tell him to get lost!

DORIS

You horrible man!

HORACE

Just tell him to leave us alone,
Doris!

DORIS

Take me with you then.

A long silence as he knocks back his drink and ruminates.

She stares at him scornfully.

HORACE

D' you know what I discovered
today?

DORIS

What?

HORACE

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

DORIS

Whoopy do.

HORACE

That's official.

DORIS

So who are the other four, then?

HORACE

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

(gloating pause)

It's all the way up from here on.

(pause)

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

(pause)

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

(expectant pause)

Well, aren't you going to congratulate me?

DORIS

Why should I?

HORACE

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

DORIS

I'll believe that when I see it.

(scathes)

Actually, Maurice has written a play.

HORACE

Tell him if he sticks a ten pound note behind every page I'll critique it for him.

DORIS

Don't be ridiculous.

HORACE

Well he does fuck my wife.

DORIS

He does not, you imbecile!

HORACE

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

DORIS

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

HORACE -

Fantasiist.

(angry pause)

And I want you to stay away from him.

DORIS

Take me to Paris and I will then.

HORACE

That's not going to happen, Doris.

DORIS

In that case, as you were, then.

HORACE

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

DORIS

Oh get to bed.

HORACE

Still I'd rather have my brain power thank you very much.

DORIS

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

He throws his brandy glass at the wall in torment.

HORACE

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

DORIS

BASTARD!

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

HORACE

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

LIGHTS DOWN:

LIGHTS UP.

THE STUDIO

MAURICE twiddles with a guitar beneath a brighter fluorescent light.

DORIS appears stage left.

Her fake fur fully unbuttoned to reveal a naked bosom, black French knickers, black stockings and suspenders.

MAURICE

(aback)

Ohmondieu! Doris, what is going on? Why are you dressed like this?

He puts down his guitar and checks his watch.

MAURICE /

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

DORIS

(provocatively)

Oh do I, Maurice? Do I really?

MAURICE

(bemused)

Do you what, Doris?

DORIS

Just say I do, Maurice.

MAURICE

OK. You do, Doris.

She falls into his arms and cackles wildly, before he bends over her like Cupid & Psyche.

DORIS

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

MAURICE

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

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

DORIS

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

MAURICE

Everything, Doris.

(dismayed pause)

Park yourself down on the chaise.

She lets her fur coat fall to the floor beneath her feet, then lies back on the chaise in a sensual pose.

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

DORIS

(perplexed)

Oh what are you doing, Maurice?

MAURICE

(smitten)

Does it bite?

DORIS

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

MAURICE

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

DORIS

Yes, but be careful, it's moulting.

MAURICE

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

DORIS

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

MAURICE

You mean losing hair, Doris?

She cackles.

DORIS

(bashfully)

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

MAURICE

Are you sure, Doris?

She cackles.

DORIS

Yes! Oh what are you like, Maurice?

MAURICE

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

She cackles.

DORIS

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

MAURICE

Oh.

He climbs to his feet and ruminates briefly.

MAURICE / -

What am I doing?

He collects his brushes from the sink unit then goes to the
easel and paints.

DORIS

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

MAURICE

Oui Madam.

She exaggerates her pose.

DORIS

Is this okay?

MAURICE

Exactly like that, Doris.

He paints.

DORIS

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

MAURICE

Forget it.

DORIS

He's gone to Paris. He can go and
fuck himself for all I care. I'm
done with him.

MAURICE

What is he doing in Paris?

DORIS

Checking out new talent,
apparently.

MAURICE

How do you mean?

DORIS

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

MAURICE

Oh.

DORIS

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

MAURICE

Why not?

DORIS

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

MAURICE

He said that?

DORIS

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

MAURICE

Oh dear, Mon Cherie.

DORIS

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

MAURICE

So what will you do while he is in Paris?

DORIS

Maybe I should let my hair down. I'm not just going to sit around waiting for him like some flipping puppy dog waiting for its owner to come home from work.

MAURICE

Well I am not doing anything.

DORIS

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

MAURICE

Why not? I will wear my outrageous suit.

DORIS

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

MAURICE

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

DORIS

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

MAURICE

But what would he say if he knew?

DORIS

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

(angry pause)

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

Short silence.

MAURICE

So when the cat's away...

DORIS

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

She cackles.

DORIS /

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

Short silence.

DORIS /

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

He shows a look of concern.

DORIS /

Yeah, I found a piece of paper
inside his jacket pocket this
morning. It had a telephone
number written on it in red
lipstick.

(pauses)

Then I listened to a phone call
he made to Gordon... He's a work
colleague. They were laughing
about this tart he was going to
meet up with when he gets there.

(fractured pause)

I mean, what can I say to him...
who's that flipping tart you're
shagging in Paris?

(sighs)

But what if I'm wrong? What if
she is just a work colleague, and
he was just playing with Gordon's
head?

MAURICE

Ask him.

DORIS

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

She cackles.

DORIS /

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

MAURICE

Confront him.

DORIS

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

She cackles.

MAURICE

Ohmôndieu! This is far too extreme, Doris.

DORIS

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

MAURICE

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

DORIS

I know, Maurice, I know.

Long silence.

DORIS /

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

MAURICE

Oui.

DORIS

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

MAURICE

It takes me forever to do anything, believe it.

DORIS

Aw... my neck is bleeding killing me. Are we almost done?

MAURICE

Finally.

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

DORIS

Oh that's much better. You're so talented.

MAURICE

I am just happy it is finally finished.

DORIS

I love it now.

MAURICE

Thank you, Doris.

DORIS

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

MAURICE

You can have it if it fails to find a buyer.

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

DORIS

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

MAURICE

Relax. It is only a quarter past.

DORIS

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

MAURICE

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

DORIS

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

MAURICE

Well, hurry or you will be late.

DORIS

Will I see you later, then?

MAURICE

Oui.

DORIS

Fantastic! Call me.

MAURICE

I will.

She bursts into non-operatic melody upon her exit. He goes to the sink basin and washes his brushes.

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

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

MAURICE

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

HORACE

Where is she?

MAURICE

She has gone home. You have just missed her actually. She left just one minute ago.

HORACE

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

MAURICE

Pardon?

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

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

He bangs his fist frantically upon the door, rear of stage.

HORACE /
Doris! Doris! Come on out!

MAURICE
(chuckles)
You will not find her in there.

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

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

MAURICE guffaws as he rolls a cigarette.

MAURICE
I told you.

HORACE stands demented and flustered.

HORACE
Just what are you sniggering at?

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

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

MAURICE
Hashish?

HORACE

What's that wretched smell then?

MAURICE shows him the burning cigarette in hand.

MAURICE

I smoke these.

HORACE

Smells like hashish to me.

MAURICE

Would you like me to roll one for you?

HORACE

No. I don't smoke.

MAURICE

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

HORACE

Are you trying to be funny, matey?

MAURICE sniffs the air and shows his distaste.

MAURICE

Phew! Fly killer! Disgusting!

HORACE

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

MAURICE

Actually, she did mention it.

HORACE

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

MAURICE

I apologies for my country.

HORACE

I'm just saying.

MAURICE

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

Short silence as they make knowing eye contact with one another.

HORACE

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

MAURICE

Non.

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

HORACE

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

MAURICE punches the air triumphantly.

MAURICE

Vive la France!

HORACE

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

MAURICE

Sorbonne. Why?

HORACE

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

MAURICE

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

HORACE

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

MAURICE

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

HORACE

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

MAURICE

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

HORACE

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

MAURICE

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

(pauses)

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

He leads him towards the easel.

HORACE

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

MAURICE

Oh c'mon, Horace.

HORACE

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

MAURICE

So what do you think?

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

MAURICE looks at him in bemusement.

HORACE

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

MAURICE

How do you mean?

HORACE

I bet she loves it. And does she?

MAURICE

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

HORACE

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

MAURICE

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

HORACE

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

MAURICE

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

HORACE

In your solipsism I think you mean.

MAURICE

Pardon?

HORACE

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

(snarls)

Same as her nipple.

MAURICE

Is that all you see?

HORACE

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

MAURICE

Because I like the flesh of a real woman.

HORACE

Do you only paint naked women, then?

MAURICE

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

(pauses)

It is the versatility within the reflection of her character that is paramount to the perception of the premise, and thus how you are going to connect with her upon first sight.

HORACE

What is that premise?

MAURICE

Undiscriminating beauty.

HORACE

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

MAURICE

Hot blooded, eh? Maybe you are her teacher.

HORACE

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

MAURICE

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

HORACE

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

MAURICE

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

HORACE

So why are you all hot and bothered, then?

MAURICE

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

He shows the extent of his perspiration.

MAURICE /

The mark of a real man.

HORACE

Primitive man, more like.

(pauses)

Just stay away from my wife.

MAURICE

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

HORACE

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

MAURICE

And I am a rat?

HORACE

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

MAURICE

I find you so insulting.

HORACE

Then stay away from her.

MAURICE

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

HORACE

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

MAURICE

Are you going to support her?

HORACE

What do you mean?

MAURICE

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

HORACE

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

MAURICE

Could be.

HORACE

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

MAURICE

Oh.

HORACE

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

MAURICE

Fine.

HORACE

Right then.

HORACE collects his trolley case and exits.

MAURICE -

(knowingly)

We will see.

LIGHTS DOWN:

LIGHTS UP.

ACT 2

THE DINNER PARTY

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

DORIS prepares food in the kitchenette. She wears hot pants, and a red blouse, and carries a glass of Chardonnay at all times.

DORIS

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

HORACE

(intolerantly)

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

DORIS

...you cocked it up, again.

HORACE

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

DORIS

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

HORACE

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

DORIS

Oh.

HORACE

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

DORIS

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

HORACE

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

She chokes on a mouthful of wine.

DORIS

(splutters)

Sorry, it went down the wrong hole.

HORACE -

That makes a change.

DORIS

Oh get to bed.

HORACE

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

She passes him a wry look, then fetches a salad bowl to the dining table. He stands back to oversee her.

HORACE /

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

(checks watch)

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

He stomps towards the kitchenette then fetches a basket of bread to the table.

DORIS

Gordon should be doing all this, not us.

HORACE

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

DORIS

He farts and you sneeze.

HORACE

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

DORIS

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

HORACE

I've told you there's nothing going on between us. She's an actor. Gordon wants her in this play because she's French, and that's all it is.

(pause)

She caught me at a low ebb. I let my guard down, slightly.

DORIS

I don't want to hear excuses.

HORACE

Leave it at that will you?

(pauses)

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

DORIS

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

She cackles. He pours himself a brandy.

HORACE

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

DORIS

I know. I'm not stupid.

HORACE

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

DORIS

Fine.

Doorbell.

HORACE

(kerfuffled)

Right. He's here.

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

Doris returns to kitchenette.

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

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

HORACE /

(aback)

Monica! What are you doing here?

MONIQUE

(distressed)

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

HORACE

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

MONIQUE

What happened to you?

HORACE

(tuts and sighs)

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

He checks over his shoulder for Doris.

MONIQUE

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

HORACE

Appreciated... but you have to
go.

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

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

DORIS

Horace, who's that at the door?

HORACE

(to Doris)

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

MONIQUE

But when will I see you again?

HORACE

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

DORIS

(suspicious)

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

HORACE

(to Monique)

I'll call you tomorrow.

MONIQUE

No! Let me in, or I will scream.

DORIS peers over his shoulder and spots her.

DORIS
(furiously)
Who the fuck is this?

HORACE
(squirms)
It's okay, Doris. I've got it covered.

DORIS
Let her in!

HORACE -
Oh shit.

He steps aside. MONIQUE enters.

MONIQUE
(to Doris)
Merci beaucoup.

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

MONIQUE
What do you think?

HORACE
(interjects)
I think I can explai...

DORIS
(to Monique)
...Just tell me what the fuck is going on?

MONIQUE
(to Horace)
Tell her.

DORIS
Tell me what?

MONIQUE
Tell her, or I will.

HORACE
Look, I can explain every...

DORIS

...OH SHUT UP, YOU TWERP.

(To Monique)

Did he invite you here?

MONIQUE

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

DORIS

(aback)

Did you?

HORACE

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

DORIS

(to Horace)

So you are together, then?

MONIQUE

(interjects)

He said his marriage was over.

HORACE turns away and squirms.

DORIS

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

HORACE

No, of course not.

(pauses)

It just seemed that way at the
time.

DORIS

And now?

MONIQUE

He said you were having an affair
with your artist.

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

DORIS

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

HORACE

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

MONIQUE

(angrily)

...Menteur!

HORACE

Look, can we just all calm down?

MONIQUE slumps down at the table opposite him.

An awkward silence.

HORACE

Would you like a drink, Monica?

MONIQUE

Est-il Francais?

HORACE

Italian.

MONIQUE

Merci.

He pours Monique a glass of Italian red.

DORIS grabs the bottle of Chardonnay and pours her own.

HORACE

Olive, Monica?

MONIQUE

Sont-il bourres?

HORACE

Yes they are.

MONIQUE

Merci beaucoup.

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

DORIS

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

HORACE

OK, Doris, calm down.

(pauses)

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

MONIQUE

(angrily)

Why?

HORACE

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

MONIQUE

You used me.

HORACE

Not true, Monica. I did not.

MONIQUE

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

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

DORIS

YOU DIRTY BITCH! GET OUT! GET OUT RIGHT NOW!

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

HORACE

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

DORIS

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

HORACE

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

Telephone rings.

HORACE /

Shit!

They all stare at the phone.

DORIS

(to Monique)

Please, just leave now.

HORACE

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

A continuous ring.

DORIS -

For fuck sake!

DORIS picks up the phone receiver and listens as they stare at her with interest.

DORIS /

(to Horace)

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

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

HORACE

(irked)

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

He slams down the receiver.

DORIS continues to stare threateningly at Monique

DORIS

(to Horace)

What's wrong?

HORACE

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

DORIS

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

HORACE

Will you just shut up and let me think, Doris!

(pauses)

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

DORIS

No fucking way!

HORACE

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

DORIS

If she stays, I go.

HORACE

Think about it, Doris. It makes utter sense.

DORIS

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

MONIQUE

(dejectedly)

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

HORACE

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

Protracted silence as DORIS contemplates the idea.

DORIS

(to Monique)

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

HORACE

Right, sorted.

(contented pause)

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

DORIS

It's fine. Go.

He exits

Awkward silence as they sit back at the table.

DORIS

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

MONIQUE

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

DORIS

Well you can't stay here, luv!

MONIQUE

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

DORIS

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

The toilet flushes.

He reenters and takes his seat at the table.

Doorbell.

HORACE

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

MONIQUE -

(snarls)

Ridiculous.

HORACE

Doris, just please, be nice.

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

MAURICE

(jazz hands)

Ah ha!

HORACE snarls.

HORACE

What'd you want?

MAURICE

Er. Well. Actually I...

HORACE

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

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

MAURICE

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

HORACE

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

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

DORIS

Maurice, is that you?

MAURICE

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

DORIS

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

He grabs his own crotch and squirms.

MAURICE

I need the toilet, please...

HORACE

No! Just fuck off before I lose
my temper.

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

DORIS

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

HORACE

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

DORIS

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

He enters as HORACE contorts with anger.

MAURICE

I'll try to be quick.

HORACE

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

MAURICE'S attention quickly turns to MONIQUE as she stands in
awe.

MAURICE

(elatedly)

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

They throw their arms around each other and peck.

MONIQUE

(lovingly)

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

DORIS

(agape)

Holy shit.

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

MAURICE
I cannot believe my eyes,
Monique. Ohmondieu!

HORACE intervenes.

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

MAURICE turns to him and guffaws.

MAURICE
Monique was my fiancée.

MONIQUE
We were going to be...

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

MAURICE gently releases himself from MONIQUE'S grasp.

MONIQUE
(to Horace)
Maurice is the artist I was
telling you about, remember?

DORIS brings a pot of food to the table.

DORIS
(to Monique)
In the bed, doggy, was it?

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

HORACE
(to Monique)
He screws my wife behind my back.

DORIS slaps his face.

DORIS

How dare you!

MAURICE sniggers behind his back.

HORACE

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

(grimaces)

He gatecrashes our apartment then
to top that he and Monica are
past lovers. You really couldn't
make it up.

(bitterly)

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

DORIS

(to Horace)

Oh get to bed, you twerp.

She marches back towards the kitchenette. MONIQUE follows.

MAURICE

You are being ridiculous, Horace.

HORACE

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

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

DORIS

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

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

MAURICE

Hmm. Magnifique! Where shall I
sit?

HORACE

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

MAURICE

Oh please...

HORACE

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

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

DORIS

If Maurice goes, I go.

MONIQUE

Me too.

HORACE

(dispiritedly)

I see. Like that is it?

(to Maurice)

Well, you are popular, aren't you?

MAURICE shrugs his shoulders.

HORACE /

(to Maurice)

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

DORIS

(interjects)

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

HORACE snarls and reluctantly pulls a chair out. He sits down at the table next to DORIS. MAURICE takes a seat opposite HORACE and next to MONIQUE.

HORACE

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

MAURICE

It just happened, non?

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

MONIQUE

(to Maurice)

Il se comporte comme un cochon.

DORIS

No speaking French at the table!

MONIQUE

Oops. Sorry, I forgot.

HORACE

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

MAURICE

(to Horace)

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

HORACE jumps out of his seat and raises his fist at him.

HORACE

THAT'S IT! OUT!

MAURICE

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

HORACE

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

MAURICE

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

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

HORACE

Out! Before I have you removed.

MAURICE

Ohmôndieu! Doris, tell him it was only banter.

DORIS

(eats)

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

HORACE

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

DORIS

(interjects)

Well, I'm qualified to do that.

MAURICE

I think you should just calm down Horace.

HORACE

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

DORIS

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

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

MAURICE

Red please.

HORACE refuses to pour him wine.

HORACE

I'm not your servant.

MAURICE

Fine. I'll do it myself, then.

MAURICE pours his own glass of wine. They tuck in.

MONIQUE

This is really nice, Doris.

DORIS

Thanks.

MONIQUE

The aubergine is perfectly baked.

DORIS

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

MAURICE

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

HORACE

(proudly)
I made them myself.
(pauses)
There's nothing to it really.

MAURICE

My compliments.

DORIS

You can buy them from the
supermarket.

HORACE

True. But not as good as mine.

DORIS -

Debatable.

HORACE gives her a warning look as MAURICE sniggers.

DORIS /

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

MONIQUE

Thank you, Doris.

DORIS

Not here! Maurice has got his own
studio.

HORACE throws down his utensils in torment.

HORACE

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

MAURICE

(to Monique)
No, no, non! Vous pouvez dormir
avec moi!

HORACE

(to Maurice)

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

MONIQUE

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

(giggles knowingly)

Beaucoup de fois.

They burst into laughter. HORACE looks on lividly.

HORACE

(to Monique)

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

DORIS

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

HORACE

Just stay out of this, Doris.

MAURICE

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

HORACE throws down his napkin in anger and gets to his feet.

HORACE

That's it!

MONIQUE

(imploringly)

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

MAURICE

Super...

MONIQUE

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

DORIS

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

He sits down again with a threatening stare at MAURICE.

MAURICE

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

HORACE

No.

(pauses)

I can't go anywhere. I'm still
waiting for Yusimi Yusimi to show
up.

(checks watch)

Where the hell is he gotten to?

DORIS

Maybe he heard all the shouting
and changed his mind.

HORACE

What the hell would you know?

MAURICE wipes his hands on a napkin and takes a deep breath
before he gets to his feet and looks down at HORACE who
throws an olive in to his mouth.

MAURICE

(grins knowingly)

Well, ladies and gentlemen he is
here.

HORACE looks up as he masticates the olive. His eyes wide and
curious his expression anticipates the outcome.

HORACE

What did you just say?

MAURICE

I said, he is here.

HORACE

What are you talking about? Sit
down.

MAURICE

Yusimi Yusimi.

(smirks)

Do you see me, Horace?

Awkward silence as the olive gets stuck in HORACE'S throat.

MAURICE /

(gasps)

Shit!

MAURICE moves quickly to give him the Heimlich Manoeuvre as the women jump out of their seats aghast.

MONIQUE

Oh mon Dieu! What is happening?

DORIS

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

MAURICE

Fetch some water! Quickly!

The olive is extracted from his mouth and flies across the table.

DORIS fetches a jug of water. She fills a glass and gives it to HORACE.

MONIQUE

He's pourpré.

MAURICE

He'll be fine in just a moment.

HORACE drinks the water.

DORIS

Horace, are you okay?

He clears his throat.

They sit down at the table and await his response.

MAURICE

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

HORACE

(resentfully)

I should have seen that coming.

(sips water)

Very clever. Very clever indeed.

MAURICE

Yusimi Yusimi is my pseudonym.

HORACE

I can see that. I'm not stupid.

(ruminates)

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

MAURICE

(shakes head)

Non.

HORACE

Is that the play you gave to Doris?

MAURICE

Oui.

HORACE

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

MAURICE

I know. But I wanted to surprise you.

HORACE

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

MAURICE

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

HORACE

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

MAURICE

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

HORACE

Fair point.

(pauses)

So do you want my assessment now that you're here?

MAURICE

Oui.

HORACE

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

DORIS

(angrily interjects)

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

MAURICE throws his arms up and sighs.

MAURICE

Oh c'mon, man.

HORACE takes a sip of water and clears his throat.

HORACE

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

He takes a sip of water and stares coldly at MAURICE.

MAURICE

Is that it?

HORACE

I haven't finished.

MAURICE

Apologies.

HORACE

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

MAURICE leans across the table with added enthusiasm.

MAURICE

Oh, I love it.

HORACE

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

MAURICE

(aback)

Pardon? But I cannot wait to get started.

HORACE

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

MAURICE

But I won the competition fair and square.

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

HORACE

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

MAURICE

Pardon?

HORACE

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

DORIS

(interjects)

Horace!

HORACE

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

MAURICE

I just want...

HORACE

...Over my dead body, matey!

MONIQUE lends MAURICE her sympathy as she puts a comforting
arm around him.

HORACE /

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

MAURICE

Oh c'mon, Horace.

MONIQUE

Horace, I think you are just being ridiculous.

HORACE

Am I, Monica? Am I really?

DORIS

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

HORACE

(defeatedly)

Three against one. I see.

MAURICE

Oh, be reasonable.

HORACE

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

MAURICE

Gordon said that you were expecting me.

HORACE

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

Short silence.

MAURICE

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

Short silence.

HORACE

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

MONIQUE

Oh this is so crazy.

HORACE

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

DORIS

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

MONIQUE

(to Horace)

What has he done to you?

HORACE ignores her question and stares blankly at the wall.

DORIS

(clicks fingers)

Horace!

MONIQUE

Why is he acting like this?

DORIS

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

MAURICE climbs out of his seat despondently.

MAURICE

I think I should go?

DORIS

No. Wait a moment, Maurice.

Silence.

DORIS /

Horace, come on.

Silence.

DORIS /

Horace, please stop this bullshit silence!

Silence.

MAURICE

Maybe he needs more water.

DORIS

He can have this then!

Without hesitation she picks up the jug of water and throws it at him.

Without hesitation he gets up and climbs the stairs.

DORIS

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

DORIS fills their glasses with more wine.

LIGHTS DOWN:

LIGHTS UP.

BEDROOM

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

LIGHTS DOWN:

LIGHTS UP.

LOUNGE

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

MONIQUE smiles and gets to her feet.

MONIQUE

(poetically)

Oh I just want to dance.

MAURICE

(To Doris)

So what will happen now?

DORIS

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

MAURICE

But you heard what he said.

DORIS

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

MONIQUE

Let's dance.

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

DORIS

Come in number five! Where the fuck are you?!

DORIS cackles.

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

MONIQUE

I want to dance like crazy. Whoa!
Whoa!

DORIS

He won't spoil our fun, will we?
Miserable old fuck-pig.

DORIS cackles.

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

MONIQUE

I love the music.

DORIS

Yeah, me too. It's brilliant!

DORIS stares at MONIQUE with concern.

DORIS /

It is over, isn't it?

MONIQUE

Completely. Finished. Caput. Au
revoir Horace Nugents!

DORIS cackles.

DORIS

Ha! Brilliant! I love it!

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

MAURICE

I have something for you, Doris.

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

They stop dancing as he hands her the painting.

MONIQUE

What is this, Maurice?

DORIS

(excitedly)

Is that for me?

MAURICE

You can have it now.

DORIS

Oh, Maurice, thank you so much!

She kisses his cheek.

DORIS /

(to Monique)

He knew how much I wanted this.

DORIS rips off the paper to reveals the painting. She positions it upright on the mantle.

MONIQUE

It is beautiful, Maurice.

MAURICE

Thank you, Monique.

DORIS

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

DORIS cackles.

MONIQUE

You are so amazing, Maurice.

DORIS kisses his cheek again.

MONIQUE /

Oh I just want to dance.

They all begin to dance once more.

LIGHTS DOWN:

LIGHTS UP.

BEDROOM

HORACE slowly removes his spectacles, then opens the wardrobe door. He takes out a carved wooden box,

He opens the box to reveal an antique pistol. He loads a single bullet into the chamber then points the pistol at his reflection.

HORACE -

He is the enemy of theatre. He is hostile to your world.

(American accent)

Are you talkin' to me?

(points pistol)

I said are you talkin' to me, punk?

He discards the pistol and turns away in disgust.

LIGHTS DOWN:

LIGHTS UP.

A party mood as they continue to dance to the music of Saint Germain.

MONIQUE

What are we waiting for? Let's go.

DORIS

All right.

MAURICE

Hey Doris, do you like my suit?

DORIS

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

MONIQUE laughs and throws her arms around him. He responds
and pulls her closer.

MONIQUE

(provocatively)

Tu aimes ma robe, Maurice?

MAURICE

Oui. Très sexy, tu es aussi
belle.

She kisses him on the lips.

DORIS cackles.

DORIS

Wait here. I'll just put on a
frock.

MAURICE

Super...

DORIS takes the stairs.

LIGHTS DOWN:

LIGHTS UP.

BEDROOM

HORACE sits despondently on the bed.

DORIS enters in high spirits. She ignores him and goes to the
wardrobe and pulls out a black dress before she turns to face
him.

DORIS

(imploringly)

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

Silence.

DORIS /

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

Silence.

DORIS /
Oh cheer up for god sake!

She holds up the dress for him to see.

DORIS /
D' you remember this dress?
Vivian Westwood.

Silence.

DORIS /
I'll wear it for you if you want?

Silence.

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

She sighs compromisingly and sits down next to him. She puts a consoling arm around his shoulders.

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

Silence.

DORIS /
Oh come on, Horace.

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

DORIS
Oh don't be so silly.

Silence.

DORIS /
Oh you've changed. You're
becoming a stranger to me these
days. I don't even know my own
flipping husband anymore.

HORACE

That reptile down there has
destroyed me.

DORIS

(furiously)

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

HORACE

That toe rag has belittled me.

DORIS

Oh don't be so bloody ridiculous!

(reflective pause)

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

(pause)

Forgive your enemies... nothing
annoys them most.

HORACE

(intolerantly)

It wasn't one of mine.

DORIS

Whatever!

(pauses)

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

HORACE

So what.

(pauses)

I wouldn't mind putting a bullet
through his skull.

Doris moves away from him and climbs off the bed. She stares
in the mirror at her reflection before she turns around with
a contemptuous look on her face.

He watches her pitifully before she flies in to him with a
volley load of verbal abuse.

DORIS

Now you listen to me, Horace Nugents. You said his play was one of the best you've read in a decade. Just because he wrote it you sit here like a flipping defeatist... sulking like a juvenile delinquent.

(pauses)

You sit here with egg all over your face all because you've been exposed as a pompous, self absorbed, miserable old fuck pig. And I have just about had enough of your selfish me, me, me attitude all the soddin' time! All you do is sit there going on about how flipping great you are. Character assassinating people who don't live up to your expectations. And d' you know something else? In all these years of our marriage you've not once offered me a helping hand. How could you be so flipping high and mighty about your own successes while at the same time not giving a flying fuck about mine? My life! You're an egotistical fuck pig, Horace Nugents and right now I fucking hate you!

HORACE

(grits teeth)

He's my Nemesis.

DORIS

No! You just want to control him.

(pauses)

Everyone feels the tension around you.

HORACE

Just leave me alone, then. I want to be alone.

(pauses)

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

DORIS

Stop this bullshit!

She pins him down and slaps him about, until she lies down beside him and bursts in to tears.

DORIS /

(sobs)

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

HORACE

I will confront him, the Horace Nugents way.

He climbs off the bed and straightens his clothes.

DORIS

Please stay calm, Horace.

HORACE

We'll see.

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

DORIS gets up and undresses.

LIGHTS DOWN:

LIGHTS UP.

LOUNGE

MAURICE and MONIQUE quietly canoodle on the sofa.

Unaware HORACE approaches with pistol in hand.

MAURICE

(to Monique)

So what happened after you left Paris?

MONIQUE

I went to Canada.

With a look of horror on her face she spots HORACE approaching.

MONIQUE /

Horace, what are you doing?

MAURICE jumps off the sofa and retreats.

MAURICE
(knowingly)
Horace, what is going on?

HORACE
I am going to kill you,
Maurice... that's what's going
on.

He aims the pistol at him.

MAURICE
(afraid)
Oh please stop this nonsense,
Horace.

HORACE
You know this pistol once
belonged to the Duke of
Wellington. He gave it to my
great uncle Charles. He was a
hero at the battle of Waterloo.

MAURICE
That is good, non?

HORACE
He killed many of your lot with
this mechanical device.

MAURICE
So are you going to shoot me with
it?

MONIQUE steps between them.

MONIQUE
Please, Horace, don't shoot him.
I beg you not to shoot him. I
still love him.

HORACE
He's turned my world upside down.

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

MONIQUE panics and exits through door right.

MAURICE

Oh c'mon, man. You cannot
frighten me with that toy gun. I
bet it does not even work.

HORACE

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

MAURICE

We will go, then. Monique!

HORACE

Who's laying eggs now, punk?

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

Off stage MONIQUE screams as MAURICE dives for cover.

MAURICE

OHMONDIEU! DORIS COME! PLEASE
HELP US! HORACE HAS LOST HIS
MIND!

HORACE

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

MAURICE

HORACE PLEASE STOP THIS! DORIS
HELP US!

HORACE

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

MONIQUE *

HORACE PLEASE DON'T HURT HIM!

MAURICE

HORACE I BEG YOU TO STOP THIS
NONSENSE RIGHT NOW!

HORACE

Give me one good reason why I
should?

MONIQUE *

PLEASE HORACE STOP THIS!

DORIS quickly descends the stairs in her outrageous black and gold dress. She spots the ruined painting and gasps.

DORIS

(lividly)

What have you done, you twat!

She whacks him across the head, then grabs the pistol from his hand.

HORACE

I was aiming at a reptile. I
missed.

MAURICE appears from behind the sofa.

MAURICE

We cannot stay here a moment
longer. This man has gone
loopies.

MONIQUE reenters and stands agape at the destruction of the painting.

MONIQUE

Oh mon Dieu! Crazy guy, Horace.

MAURICE

C'mon Monique. Let's get out of
this hot house.

DORIS stands deflatedly with her head inside the portrait.

DORIS

(to Horace)

Look what you've done to my face.
It's ruined.

HORACE

It was an accident, Doris.

She discards the painting and collects her coat.

DORIS

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

MAURICE

(to Horace)

You should seek help, man.

DORIS

(to Horace)

And get to bed, you twerp!

MONIQUE

So crazy...

They exit.

He stares at the pistol for a moment, then picks it up and
slides the barrel inside his mouth. He wraps his finger
around the trigger and squeezes.

CLICK.

LIGHTS DOWN:

THE ARTIST, HIS MUSE. AND HER PIG