MY THREE ANGELS

The Musical

Book by Sam and Bella Spewack

Music and lyrics by David Warrack

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MY THREE ANGELS

Adapted from the play “My Three Angels” by Sam and Bella Spewack. Based on “La Cuisine Des Anges” by Albert Husson.

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My Three Angels, the musical, was first produced in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, at the Bluma Appel Theatre in the St. Lawrence Centre, for Christmas 1985, directed by Heinar Pilar.

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CHARACTER LIST

1. Emilie
2. Felix
3. Mme Parole
4. Marie-Louise
5. Joseph
6. Jules
7. Alfred
8. Henri
9. Paul

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MUSICAL SCORE

1.	It Doesn’t Seem A Lot Like Christmas	Felix, Emilie, Mme Parole
2.	Was I Blind?	Marie-Louise
3.	We Got Caught	Jules, Alfred, Joseph
4.	It’s So Clear, Clear to Me	Alfred, Marie-Louise
5.	Christmas Eve	Emilie, Felix
6.	Introductions	Jules, Joseph, Felix, Henri, Alfred
7.	The Old Book Cooker	Joseph
8.	Honest Man	Felix
9.	Be Young, Young Man	Jules, Joseph, Alfred, Paul, Marie-Louise
10.	You’ve Been Bitten	Alfred, Joseph, Jules
11.	He’s Dead, Oh Dear!	Mme Parole, Joseph, Alfred, Jules, Paul
12.	Someone Like You	Jules, Emilie
13.	Christmas is Over	Jules, Joseph, Alfred
14.	You’ve Been Bitten (Reprise)	Alfred, Jules, Joseph, Paul
15.	Kyrie Eleison	Company

MY THREE ANGELS

ACT I

Place: French Guiana

Felix Ducotel is sitting at a table in his living room working at his ledgers. It is Christmas Eve, 1910. He is in his mid-fifties, and dressed for Paris rather than Cayenne, with a frock coat, boiled shirt, et cetera. We hear the shop bell, but he does not. On the second ring, his wife enters.

Song #1: It Doesn't Seem A Lot Like Christmas

EMILIE

I'M SURE I HEARD THE BELL.

FELIX

THE CHURCH BELLS OF CHERBOURG?

EMILIE

THE SHOP DOOR BELL.

FELIX

SLEIGH BELLS JINGLIN'
GOOD KING WENCESLAS LOOKED OUT
ON THE FEAST OF STEPHEN,
THE SNOW WAS DEEP AND CRISP AND EVEN.

EMILIE

YOU'RE DELIRIOUS, MY DEAR.
JUST HOW FAR CAN YOUR IMAGINATION GO?
IN THIS DREADFUL HEAT,
AT LEAST TAKE OFF YOUR COAT!

FELIX

YOU SPEAK TO A FRENCHMAN!
LET THE NATIVES STARE.
MY POSITION DEMANDS THAT I WEAR
THE CLOTHES THAT I AM WEARING.

EMILIE

PLEASE DON'T THINK ME CALLOUS
BUT THIS ISN'T THE ROYAL PALACE
WE'RE UN A COLONY OF THIEVES
DESPERATE CRIMINALS WANDERING FREE.

Hammering is heard.

DON'T PRETEND YOU'RE IN FRANCE.
THIS IS DEVIL'S ISLAND IN CAYENNE.
WE ARE FAR FROM THE SNOW
OF THE CHRISTMAS BACK WHERE WE BEGAN
THE ANGELS THAT WE HEAR ON HIGH
REPAIRING OUR ROOF ARE CROOKS.

FELIX

GOD REST YOU MERRY GENTLEMEN
I HAVE TO FINISH MY BOOKS.

BOTH

IT DOESN'T SEEM A LOT LIKE CHRISTMAS
WITH NO SNOW, OR SLEIGHS, OR FROSTY DAYS
FRENCH GUIANA ISN'T FRANCE
SO WHERE IS THE ROMANCE OF CHRISTMAS?

Hammering Is heard.

EMILIE

My Christmas will be much merrier once those thieves are gone from our rooftop.

FELIX

You worry too much, my dear. They're perfectly honest.

EMILIE

Honest?

FELIX

They're not thieves. They are murderers.

EMILIE

I CANNOT BEAR THIS HEAT
ALL WE NEED IS HENRI NOW
WON'T YOU REST FOR A WHILE?
HE'S FOUR THOUSAND MILES FROM HERE.

FELIX

BUT THE THOUGHT OF HIS FURY!
PLAYING JUDGE AND JURY
AS MY BOOKS GO UP ON TRIAL
FOR REFUSING TO RECONCILE.

EMILIE

ARE THEY REALLY IN BAD SHAPE?

FELIX

A PASSING CONDITION
BUT I KNOW WHAT THEY WILL SHOW.
THAT OUR OVERHEAD'S TOO HIGH.

EMILIE

IT'S NOT THE OVERHEAD THAT'S KILLING
NO ONE PAYS.

FELIX

AH, BUT THEY ARE WILLING
JUST POOR -- THEY MUST BE FED.
WHAT CAN I DO?
I MARK IT "OVERHEAD".

Hammering Is heard.

EMILIE

Overhead! Those murderers are driving me mad -- overhead.

DON'T PRETEND YOU'RE IN FRANCE
THIS IS DEVIL'S ISLAND IN CAYENNE.
WE ARE FAR FROM THE SNOW
OF THE CHRISTMAS BACK WHERE WE BEGAN.

BOTH

THE ANGELS THAT WE HEAR ABOVE
REPAIRING OUR ROOF DON'T FLY.

FELIX

GOD REST YE MERRY GENTLEMEN
YOU'RE NEARER TO GOD THAN I.

BOTH

IT DOESN'T SEEM A LOT LIKE CHRISTMAS
WITH NO SNOW, OR SLEIGHS, OR FROSTY DAYS
FRENCH GUIANA ISN'T FRANCE
SO WHERE IS THE ROMANCE OF CHRISTMAS?

Mme Parole breezes in.

MME PAROLE

Merry Christmas! Merry Christmas!

EMILIE

And, to you, Mme Parole.

MME PAROLE

A BOTTLE OF CHARTREUSE TO GIVE MY ERNEST
HIS YEARLY SURPRISE.
HE GIVES ME BISCUITS IN RETURN, MY DARLING ERNEST,
WHICH HE PROCEEDS TO GLUTTONIZE.

BUT AH, I DRINK THE CHARTREUSE THAT I GAVE HIM.
I'M ONLY DOING IT TO SAVE HIM.
YOU SEE, HIS HEART IS VERY WEAK.
AND, IF I MAY FRANKLY SPEAK,
IT'S LIKE AN ANTIQUE.

FELIX

I don't understand. I had a case of Chartreuse here, right here. I do have some cognac.

MME PAROLE

Oh dear. Well, cognac will have to do.

Hammering is heard.

DON'T CONVICTS OFFER WONDERFUL ASSISTANCE
SO CHEAP AND WILLING AND NEAT?
LOUIS IS THE JOY OF OUR EXISTENCE
A LITTLE LIGHT ON HIS FEET.
BUT AS THE HOUSE IS OPEN FOR INSPECTION
JUST LIKE MYSELF, GROOMED TO PERFECTION.
YOU KNOW THAT, HOW TO SAY IT "LOOK"
BUT I DON'T MIND … THEY ALL CAN COOK.
AND HE LOVES ERNEST.
LIKE A GOOD BOOK
THE KIND YOU'D LIKE TO TAKE TO BED.
I DON'T BELIEVE WHAT I JUST SAID.

MME PAROLE

EMILIE

FELIX

WELL, IT'S NICE TO HAVE
THIS CHANCE TO CHAT
SO SELDOM DOES THE TIME
PERMIT
BUT I REALLY MUST BE
GOING
ERNEST NEEDS ME, AND
WHILE I THINK OF IT…

DON'T PRETEND
YOU'RE IN FRANCE…

DECK THE HALLS…

MME PAROLE, EMILIE, FELIX

THE ANGELS THAT WE HEAR ON HIGH
REPAIRING OUR ROOF SERVE TIME

FELIX

GOD REST YE MERRY GENTLEMEN

EMILIE, MME PAROLE

I HOPE WE'RE NOT YOUR NEXT CRIME.

MME PAROLE, EMILIE, FELIX

IT DOESN'T SEEM A LOT LIKE CHRISTMAS
WITH NO SNOW, OR SLEIGHS, OR FROSTY DAYS.
FRENCH GUIANA ISN'T FRANCE
SO WHERE IS THE ROMANCE OF CHRISTMAS?

EMILIE

Felix was just going over the accounts, weren't you Felix?

FELIX

Was I? Ah, yes.

EMILIE

And, he thought if you could possibly … it's quite a large bill.

MME PAROLE

But, of course. How much do I owe you?

FELIX

I believe it's…

MME PAROLE

Where's my purse? Oh, dear! I forgot! Ah, well -- charge it.

EMILIE

How soon do you think you'll…

MME PAROLE

By the way, how's the shop going? Better? Ernest says you're too trusting, too careless. People take advantage. People are such beasts. Well, I must take a look at my bill one of these days. Goodbye.

She exits.

FELIX

What a scatterbrain.

EMILIE

Scatter brained as a fox.

EMILIE, FELIX

IT DOESN'T SEEM A LOT LIKE CHRISTMAS
WITH NO SNOW, OR SLEIGHS, OR FROSTY DAYS.
FRENCH GUIANA ISN'T FRANCE
BUT WE'LL STILL FIND ROMANCE AT CHRISTMAS.

Marie-Louise bursts in, very excited.

MARIE-LOUISE

Mama, Paul's here! He is on the Mirabelle. I knew he'd come for me. I knew it! I didn't dare breathe it, not even to you. But, I knew he wouldn't wait a whole year. I knew it!

Song #2: Was I Blind?

DIDN'T I PROMISE THAT THIS WOULD HAPPEN?
GET OUT THE ROSES FROM OUT OF THE GARDEN AND
NOW YOU'LL BELIEVE ME. NOW YOU WILL UNDERSTAND
WHY THE TRUST IN MY HEART FELT SO RIGHT.
WAS I BLIND? NOT QUITE.

EMILIE

When you've simmered down, will you please tell me --- Paul's here? Alone?

MARIE-LOUISE

No, with Uncle Henri!

DIDN'T I TELL YOU MIRACLES HAPPEN?
THOUGHT I AM SURE YOU'LL BE BEGGING MY PARDON, WELL
NOW THAT MY HEART'S NOT TORN ASUNDER
I CAN FORGIVE AND FORGET IF I TRY.
WAS I BLIND? NOT I.

FELIX

Where are they?

MARIE-LOUISE

In quarantine. Papa, you've got to get them right out.

EMILIE

You've seen them?

MARIE-LOUISE

How could I? In quarantine? Uncle Henri sent word through Monsieur Parole for you to get him right off the ship. Here's his note.

ISN'T THIS LIFE A GLORIOUS THING?
WHEN YOU LEAST EXPECT IT, YOU ARE REDIRECTED.

WE ARE ALL PUPPETS ON A STRING.
AND WHOEVER THE PUPPETEER IS,
I AM A GOOD FRIEND OF HIS.

I'll give Paul my room, and I suppose we'll have to give his uncle yours. I'll do Paul's room myself. I know just how he likes it. He's not fussy, just particular.

EMILIE

Felix, did Henri write you he was coming?

FELIX

Well, not exactly.

EMILIE

And, Paul hasn't written Marie-Louise in months. Has he, dear?

MARIE-LOUISE

He wanted to surprise me. Paul always said letters are so banal.

LOOK AT THE SUN SHINE. LISTEN TO THE BIRDS SING.
SUDDENLY I FEEL A PART OF THE JOY.
FOR WHEN ALL'S SAID AND DONE, FINE SHEETS AND FINE WORDS BRING
NOTHING UNLESS THEY ARE SLEPT IN AND SAID WITHOUT LIES.
AM I BLIND? NO. WISE.

I'm going to get flowers from the garden. Paul loves flowers!

PAUL'S COMING AND ALL'S GOING TO BE WELL.

EMILIE

Fresh sheets would be more to the point.

MARIE-LOUISE

PAUL'S COMING AND ALL'S GOING TO BE WELL.

Isn't it miraculous? Flowers in the garden for Christmas! Merry Christmas, Papa! Merry Christmas, Mama! Merry Christmas!

PAUL'S COMING AND ALL'S GOING TO BE WELL.

She exits.

EMILIE

My two children -- one I gave birth to, one I married.

FELIX

Reading

This is a terrible shock. You don't know.

EMILIE

What don't I know? After all, Henri has so many interests in many places. This shop's a bagatelle to him. He hasn't come down here to -- or has he? Felix, what don't I know?

FELIX

In some of his letters he threatened … unless I reorganized drastically … but, how could I? With local conditions -- he can afford to lose a little money the first year. Give a man a chance to get acclimated.

EMILIE

Felix…

FELIX

You'd think a man who swindled me out o a first-class department store -- legally, I admit -- a cousin, by marriage, I admit -- but still a cousin. We grew up together as boys.

He reads the note.

"I have two days to give you. I want to make a complete inventory and check your books. I shall then make the logical decision. Be good enough to get me off this damn ship at once."

EMILIE

Logical decision? Felix, is he going to close the shop?

FELIX

I don't know.

EMILIE

Or, get someone else?

FELIX

I don't know.

EMILIE

After a pause.

We can always go home.

FELIX

With what? And, to what? At my age? God help us!

Loud hammering.

What's that?

He remembers the convicts.

Oh!

EMILIE

That's not God coming to the rescue. Just some of His wayward children who will solve all our problems by murdering us in our beds tonight.

She embraces him.

FELIX

What am I going to do?

EMILIE

You go down and see the Health people and get him off the ship.

FELIX

I guess so.

Marie-Louise enters from the garden with flowers.

MARIE-LOUISE

Papa, haven't you gone yet? Papa, they're waiting!

FELIX

I'm going, I'm going. Thank God, come what may, I still have you, Emilie.

EMILIE

You still have me, Felix.

He exits. Emilie goes to the table and looks through a bundle of letters.

Marie-Louise, there's a letter here for you from Suzanne.

MARIE-LOUISE

Taking the letter.

It's always the same silly letter. In school she was always first with the bad news. Guess who's down with the mumps. Guess who's going to be expelled. Guess who's pregnant.

EMILIE

Marie-Louise!

She exits to the kitchen.

MARIE-LOUISE

I wonder if she's written me about Paul?

She sits down to read. Three figures descend the ladder and stop. They wear pajama-like uniforms with appropriate numbers, straw hats and sandals. They watch her as she reads. She smiles. They smile. She chuckles. They chuckle silently. She rises, startled. They react. Then suddenly a gasp escapes her. She keels over. The three convicts move to her. Joseph puts on his glasses and picks up the letter. Alfred is carrying a small cage made of a coconut shell and twigs. It has a leather handle. As he moves toward the girl, he leaves the cage on the table. Under all of the above, the three angles theme is playing.

JOSEPH

I wonder if this letter was poisoned?

JULES

Poisoned?

JOSEPH

I read somewhere that poisoned letters were common in the days of the Borgias. The victim picked it up, and -- poof!

JULES

Well, nothing's happened to you … yet.

JOSEPH

No.

JULES

Damn funny. There she was, reading away, smiling, chuckling, and then -- out like a light.

JOSEPH

Having a glance quickly through the letter.

Ah! Here's the poison.

He reads.

"Darling, Paul and I are engaged." Three exclamation points. Engaged, in capital letters. "Papa and M. Trochard arranged it just before Paul sailed with his darling uncle. Darling Marie-Louise, I know how happy you'll be for us." Happy capitalized, two exclamation points. "After all, Darling, a school girl crush is not love, as we all know. And, let's be frank, that's all there was between you and Paul. And, honestly, I don't mind. Not a bit." Two exclamation points. "But, I do want to save Paul embarrassment when he sees you. You know how kind" - capitalized - "how very kind he is." Want to hear more?

JULES

No.

Drinking in all the details of the room. Alfred kneels to get a closer look at the girl.

JOSEPH

Examining the envelope.

Suzanne Audibert. Incidentally, she writes that the day of her engagement, her complexion cleared up completely.

Felling the letter.

I should say, judging from the quality of the stationary…

He sniffs it.

… and general tone of the letter, I should say that Suzanne Audibert is quite rich.

ALFRED

She's a bitch.

JOSEPH

Of course.

ALFRED

That Paul must be mad!

He stares at Marie-Louise.

To turn this down. She's beautiful!

JOSEPH

Enough of that! In your position, one does not admire a beautiful woman. Neither party stands to benefit.

ALFRED

I can look, can't I?

JOSEPH

Get me some water instead.

ALFRED

Right.

Emilie enters as Alfred moves to the kitchen. She backs away, frightened.

EMILIE

Oh!

JULES

Don't be afraid, Madame.

EMILIE

Seeing Marie-Louise.

Marie-Louise!

Goes to her.

JOSEPH

Crosses to right of Joseph.

We were on the ladder when it happened.

EMILIE

Marie-Louise, speak to me. When what happened?

JULES

She fainted.

JOSEPH

Nerves.

JULES

Shock.

JOSEPH

No wonder -- read this letter.

He gives her the letter.

Here's the viperish paragraph.

Alfred returns with a glass of water.

Believe me, Madame, we sympathize with you.

Sprinkles water on Marie-Louise.

Uncle Henri's unexpected and unwelcome arrival. The fickle Paul!

Emilie returns the letter to Joseph. He hands the glass to Alfred.

And, she had such high hopes.

EMILIE

Staring at him.

Did you hear everything up there?

Indicates roof.

JOSEPH

Everything.

EMILIE

Oh!

Marie-Louise moans. Joseph, Jules, and Alfred move out of her line of vision.

Poor darling.

MARIE-LOUISE

Sitting up.

Where am … What happ...

She sees the men.

Oh!

EMILIE

Don't be afraid.

MARIE-LOUISE

Getting up slowly.

I'm not afraid. Nothing can frighten me now.

EMILIE

Marie-Louse, my poor darling…

MARIE-LOUISE

Please leave me alone. I don't want to talk about it. I don't want to talk to anybody. I don't want to see anybody. I just want to die.

She runs into her room right of the centre arch.

I just want to die.

EMILIE

Marie-Louise!

She starts to follow her.

JULES

Stopping her.

I'd leave her alone. Youth always dallies with suicide. We who live on know better. Alfred…

Alfred follows Marie-Louise into her room.

EMILIE

But…

JOSEPH

No danger. Alfred's with her. He's quick as a cat.

EMILIE

She's so upset, so shocked. God knows what she might do.

JOSEPH

Alfred's problem.

Alfred re-enters.

ALFRED

She's in her room. Nothing to worry about. I checked. No poison. No weapons.

Goes to the table, puts down the scissors and the file.

I removed these. Scissors, nail file, no sedatives, no gas stove, of course. And, if she jumps, her window is only three feet from the ground.

JOSEPH

Extending his hand.

Well done.

ALFRED

Shaking hands.

A pleasure. A real pleasure.

Goes to door of Marie-Louise's room.

JULES

We disapprove of death. Especially for young and charming girls. She'll be all right. Time heals all wounds. We're authorities on the subject of time.

Shop bell rings.

EMILIE

Good heavens. A customer. At a time like this. I suppose I better see…

She starts towards the shop.

JOSEPH

Stopping her.

A customer is always welcome. May I? It'll be a treat for me.

He exits into the shop, leaving his hat on the bureau.

EMILIE

He's not going to…

JULES

Wait on the customer? Of course. There's nothing he likes better. He can sell anything to anyone. And has.

Emilie looks with uncertainty from the shop entrance to Alfred, then to Jules. There is an awkward pause.

We make you nervous, Madame?

EMILIE

Crosses to the table.

No. It's just that…

JULES

You've never had convicts working for you before?

EMILIE

Never.

JOSEPH

Our loss, Madame. Our loss.

Place a chair beside the table for her. Alfred disappears quietly into Marie-Louise's room, unnoticed by Emilie.

EMILIE

Crosses to the chair and sits.

You don't talk like a convict, somehow.

JULES

Well, I wasn't born in a cell. And, on the other hand, I wasn't sent here for biting my nails.

EMILIE

Somehow you haven't the face of a … a …

JULES

A murderer? I agree. That's exactly what I said when I caught a glimpse of myself in the mirror after I'd …

EMILIE

Fascinated, despite herself.

After you'd…?

JULES

After I'd strangled my wife, Madame.

EMILIE

Oh!

JULES

I didn't feel any differently afterwards. There is very little that separates us … inside, shall we say. And those … outside.

Song #3: We Got Caught

YOU THINK DIRE THOUGHTS, OR MAKE A THREAT,
AND WHAT HAVE YOU DONE? NOTHING YET.
IT'S THE KIND OF THING THAT MAKES US FRET 'CUZ
WE GOT CAUGHT.

YOU SAY, "I COULD KILL HIM. I WISH HE WERE DEAD."
THINK BACK NOW, THOSE ARE WORDS YOU'VE SAID.
THE SIMPLE FACT IS, WE WENT AHEAD AND THEN
WE GOT CAUGHT.

YOU'D THINK THAT WE WOULD GET REWARDED
FOR GETTING THE JOB DONE.
BUT NOW NOT ONLY OUR COMMENTS ARE GUARDED
WE ARE AS WELL, AND IT AIN'T NO FUN.

YOU CHEAT ON YOUR INCOME TAX, BREAK A FEW LAWS,
LIE A BIT, STEAL A BIT -- MINOR FLAWS.
THE ONLY DIFFERENCE THAT GIVES US PAUSE IS
WE GOT CAUGHT.

JULES

Poor thing. There she was, stretched out on the carpet, her think little neck all purple, her eyes staring -- in astonishment, I'm sure.

EMILIE

My god!

JULES

Exactly what I said, Madame. I called out to Him, but He was busy elsewhere.

EMILIE

Was she a bad woman? Did she make life miserable for you?

JULES

Never! Never in six years of happy marriage. No, it was my fault.

EMILIE

Oh?

JULES

I came home from a trip one day, unexpectedly.

EMILIE

Unexpectedly?

JULES

She didn't expect me. He didn't expect me.

EMILIE

Well, you did have provocation at least.

JULES

Crime of passion. That's what the newspapers called it. My attorney was eloquent on the subject. But it was stupidly, Madame. Black stupidity. I should have sent a telegram.

Alfred enters from Marie-Louise's room.

ALFRED

She's weeping.

EMILIE

Oh, that Paul. I could wring his…

ALFRED

Indeed.

YOU THINK YOU COULD, IT'S WELL DESERVED
BUT WHETHER OR NOT HIS NECK'S PRESERVED
THE DIFFERENCE THAT WE'VE ALL OBSERVED IS THAT
WE GOT CAUGHT.

WE LOOK SO SWEET, SO WARM AND KIND
WHO'D EVER SUSPECT AN EVIL MIND?
YOU'RE THE ORANGE AND WE'RE THE RIND
'CUZ WE GOT CAUGHT.

ALFRED, JULES

NOW, WHAT'S THE SENSE IN YOUR PRETENDING
YOU'VE ALWAYS TOED THE LINE.

ALFRED

A SIP OR TWO IS ALLOWED FOR EACH MORTAL.

JULES

IF NO ONE'S THE WISER.

ALFRED, JULES

THEN AIN'T THAT FINE.

JULES

YOU CHEAT ON YOUR HUSBAND.

EMILIE

Really!

ALFRED

YOUR BOYFRIEND AS WELL.

EMILIE

What are you… ?

ALFRED, JULES

WHAT IS THE HARM IF YOU DON'T KISS AND TELL?
IT'S A SUBJECT ON WHICH WE AER BOUND TO DWELL
'CUZ WE GOT CAUGHT.

JULES

LIKE NERO'S FLAMES DID

ALFRED, JULES

WE GOT CAUGHT.

ALFRED

LIKE HENRY'S DAMES DID

ALFRED, JULES

WE GOT CAUGHT.
LIKE JESS JAMES DID
WE GOT CAUGHT.

Joseph enters from shop.

JOSEPH

Madame, can you change this, please? Take out twenty-five francs.

EMILIE

What did you sell?

She goes to the bureau, takes a small cash box from the drawer.

JOSEPH

The painting, Madonna with Child, artist unknown.

EMILIE

The painting? It's been here as long as we have. Who bought it?

JOSEPH

The mailman.

EMILIE

He couldn't have. He's an atheist.

JOSEPH

He wanted a bedspread.

EMILIE

And, you sold him the Madonna and Child? Why, that's a miracle.

JOSEPH

No, Madame. I appeared to his cupidity. I asked one simple question. How do you know this isn't a Rembrandt? Besides, I couldn't find a bedspread.

He takes the money and exits into the shop.

EMILIE

To Jules

Are there very many like you in the…

JULES

In the Bastille? Oh, Madame, there are all kinds -- a world like no other. All kinds.

EMILIE

Are you all so -- busy? Selling painting sand looking after girls who've fainted?

JULES

No. Pleasant things like that don't often come our way.

Crosses left to the armchair. Joseph returns.

JOSEPH

Ten francs extra, Madame.

He gives her the money.

EMILIE

Extra?

JOSEPH

For the frame. A painting, after all consists of two items, the canvas and the frame. The canvas is an intangible. A matter of taste. Worth a fortune or zero. But, the frame - ah, that's the real value, an investment.

EMILIE

I'm a little dizzy.

She puts the money in the cash box, and returns it to the bureau drawer.

ALFRED

Are you going to faint, too?

JULES

Let the young faint. At our age, we can ill afford to miss anything.

JOSEPH

And, life is full of so much not to be missed.

Spying the books on the table.

Books! I have a passion for books. Account boos. Jules, did I ever tell you about the night I had to doctor the books for a company that presumably owned three factories?

JULES

Tell Madame.

JOSEPH

They were air factories, Madame.

EMILIE

Air?

JOSEPH

NOT COMPRESSED AIR, JUST AIR
FOR INVALIDS AND CONVALESCENTS.
THE VERY THING THEIR DOCTORS PRESCRIBED.
A CHANGE OF AIR IS VERY EXPENSIVE

NO RIVIERA FOR THE PEASANTS.
SO, OUR FACTORIES AT RESORTS
SOLD THE STUFF IN QUARTS.
AIR.

ALFRED, JULES

AIR.

JOSEPH

AIR.

ALFRED, JULES

AIR.

JOSEPH

EVERYONE WAS TRYING IT AND EVERYONE WAS BUYING IT.
“THE NEXT BEST THING TO REALLY BEING THERE (THERE) THERE!”
OUR AIR WAS CORNERING THE MARKET
WITH A NEVER-ENDING TARGET GROUP AT HAND.
THAT SOMETHING IN THE AIR WAS GRAND!

WE HAD TWO KINDS OF BOTTLES
SMALL INHALATORS FOR YOUR POCKET.
AND THE LARGER ONES TO CHANGE AN ENTIRE ROOM.
WE EVEN PLAYED WITH THE NOTION
OF PUTTING SOME IN A LOCKET.
THOSE WERE REAL HEADY DAYS
AS WE DREAMED UP ALL THE WAYS TO SELL AIR.
(AIR) AIR (AIR)
STOCKHOLDERS BY THE DOZEN.
DOCTORS, LAWYERS, AND ONE COUSIN
WERE LINING UP TO BUY THEMSELVES A
SHARE (SHARE). OUR AIR
BY MY BOOKS WAS GOOD AS GOLD.
BUT, TRUTH BE TOLD, WE NEVER SOLD IT, HOME OR ABROAD
AND THAT SOMETHING IN THE AIR WAS FRAUD.

JULES

The judge ordered a change of air for him, and here he is.

JOSEPH

The judge, unfortunately, was one of our stockholders.

IT'S FUN TO BE A CLEVER SORT
AND FIND NEW METHODS TO EXTORT.

ALFRED, JULES

UNTIL YOU HAVE OUR DAY IN COURT AND SAY
WE GOT CAUGHT.

JOSEPH

THE PERFECT CRIME.

JULES

IT HAS BEEN SAID.

ALFRED

IS GENERALLY INSIDE YOUR HEAD.

ALFRED, JULES

WE BROUGHT IT OUT AND THOUGH IT SEEMS INCREDIBLE
WE GOT CAUGHT.

YOU HAVE TO FEIGN OBEDIENCE,
BUT BENDING THE RULES IS JUST COMMON SENSE.
THE EASON WE'RE ON THIS SIDE OF THE FENCE IS THAT
WE GOT CAUGHT.

JOSEPH

YOU AHE A LIVING YOU HAVE TO EARN

ALFRED

WHICH MAY MEAN CUTTING CORNERS YOU'RE MEAN TO TURN.

JULES

THE ONLY DIFFERENCE WE CAN DISCERN IS THAT

ALFRED, JULES

WE GOT CAUGHT.

ALFRED

YOU'RE ALL CLOSET KLEPTOMANIACS.

JULES

WHO HAVE LEARNED TO COVER ALL YOUR TRACKS.

JOSEPH

WHILE WE'VE GOT NUMBERS ON OUR BACKS, 'CUZ

ALFRED, JULES

WE GOT CAUGHT.

ALFRED

OUR WORLDS ARE REALLY QUITE AMAZINGLY SIMILAR OF LATE.

JULES

EXCEPT OUR BIGGEST LIARS ARE IN SOLITARY.

JOSEPH

YOU TEND TO MAKE YOURS HEADS OF STATE.

JOSEPH

YOU KILL IDEAS.

ALFRED

MURDER SONGS.

JOSEPH

STEAL A HEART.

ALFRED

FAKE A CHART.

JULES

TINY WRONGS.

ALFRED, JULES

BUT PUT THE BLAME WHERE IT BELONGS, MY FRIEND,
WE GOT CAUGHT.

ALFRED

LIKE EVE AND ADAM

ALFRED, JULES

WE GOT CAUGHT.

JULES

LIKE BLUEBEARD'S MADAM

ALFRED, JULES

WE GOT CAUGHT.

JOSEPH

LIKE THE MARQUIS DE SADEM

ALFRED, JULES

WE GOT CAUGHT.

JOSEPH

Shall we run along?

JULES

I guess so.

ALFRED

C'mon Adolph.

Picks up cage.

EMILIE

What have you got there?

He shows her.

Oh, a snake! What a horrible creature!

ALFRED

Why, that's Adolph. He's our pal.

EMILIE

Is he poisonous?

JOSEPH

Deadly.

JULES

We're very fond of Adolph. Last year when we worked in the jungle, we used to be watched by a guard.

JOSEPH

Extremely unpleasant man. Incorruptible. A combination of honesty and brutality, Madame, is unbearable.

JULES

He loved to sweat us like slaves, while he lolled under the trees, in the shade. Well, one morning this little fellow dropped down from a branch right onto his red neck.

Snaps finger.

Adolph's a pal.

Pats the snake's cage.

Well, let's get going.

ALFRED

Wait a minute.

He quickly hands Jules the cage and goes into Marie-Louise's room.

JOSEPH

Alfred must have heard something. Did you?

JULES

I didn't hear anything.

Emilie runs after Alfred into Marie-Louise's room.

JOSEPH

Ah, youth! Keen ears, keen eyes. Of course, Alfred's the athletic type.

With a glance towards the books on the table.

My exercises were always mental.

Emilie returns.

EMILIE

I don't understand it. She's not in her room. Her window is open.

JULES

And, Alfred?

EMILIE

I didn't see him.

JOSEPH

Going to the gate.

Her window opens on to the garden.

EMILIE

Garden?

JULES

Suddenly, crosses the gate.

The river! Right off the garden.

Emilie moves to go.

EMILIE

I must stop her.

JOSEPH

She's been stopped.

EMILIE

BY your friend?

JULES

Of course.

JOSEPH

Reporting from the lookout.

She's arguing.

EMILIE

I'm going to her.

JOSEPH

Too late.

EMILIE

Too late?

JOSEPH

Alfred won the argument.

Crosses to the table. He laughs.

He's convinced her.

EMILIE

Are you sure?

Crosses to the left of Jules.

JOSEPH

Laughing as he goes to the table.

Alfred has a striking eloquence. Your daughter, Madame, is no longer thinking o fending it all. In fact, your daughter is no longer thinking.

EMILIE

What?

JOSEPH

Knockout!

He sits down at the table, puts his glasses on, and examines the books and papers.

EMILIE

What?

She starts towards the gate. Jules stops her.

JULES

Only thing to do, Madame. If she jumped in the river, what would Alfred do? Jump, too. And then she would struggle. He'd use the approved technique to knocking her out before he could swim back with her. The technique's just as effective ashore. And, dryer.

Crosses back to the gage. Alfred enters from the garden, carrying a limp Marie-Louise.

ALFRED

All present and accounted for.

His hair is mussed, his face scratched.

EMILIE

Crossing to them.

Marie-Louise!

ALFRED

She's all right, I assure you, Madam, as a sportsman. Pulse normal. I pulled my punch, of course.

JULES

Your efficiency is monotonous.

JOSEPH

Straightening up books, papers on table.

I really don't approve of all this disorder.

EMILIE

To Alfred.

Oh! You're bleeding.

ALFRED

A scratch or two.

EMILIE

How could Marie-Louise…

ALFRED

She wasn't herself, Madame.

EMILIE

Let me put some iodine on it. In this climate the slightest cut becomes infected.

She exits to the kitchen. Felix enters from the shop, hangs up his hat, moves down in time to see Alfred carrying Marie-Louise towards her room. Jules blocks his way.

FELIX

Marie-Louise! What are you doing with my daughter? Come back here!

Goes towards the shop, calling.

Police! Police! Police!

EMILIE

No! No! Felix, not the police!

Felix crosses back to Jules, trying to get around him.

FELIX

Marie-Louise, your father's coming to defend you. Courage. Courage.

Alfred re-enters.

EMILIE

Crosses to him.

You don't understand, Felix.

FELIX

What don't I understand?

EMILIE

He had to hit her.

FELIX

Hit whom?

EMILIE

Marie-Louise.

FELIX

Why?

EMILIE

She scratched him.

She goes to Alfred to treat the scratch.

FELIX

Are you mad?

Going to her.

Defending this -- this-- beast! Nursing him like a Florence Nightingale!

Turns to see Joseph very busy with the papers, goes to him.

And, what are you doing with my papers?

JOSEPH

If you'll forgive me for saying so, I find unspeakable confusion. There's a place for everything and everything has its place! But, this is ridiculous.

FELIX

What? What the devil do you…

EMILIE

Goes to him and takes his arm.

Please, Felix.

FELIX

But…

EMILIE

To convicts as she pulls Felix toward Marie-Louise's room.

Don't go before my husband comes back. He'll want to thank you.

FELIX

Thank them?

EMILIE

Pushing him ahead of her.

You don't know what we've been through. Just come along. I wonder if a hot compress…

Felix exits to Marie-Louise's room.

JOSEPH

Cold, Madame, as cold as the climate will permit.

EMILIE

Thank you.

She exits to Marie-Louise's room.

ALFRED

Dreamily.

You know…

JULES

What?

ALFRED

That girl is as light as a feather.

JULES

Crosses left.

Forget her! Remember! We have one advantage, only one, over people. We can live without passions -- without emotions.

JOSEPH

I have no passions. None, except…

Shop bell rings.

A customer!

Rises, but hesitates.

Should I?

He eyes glow.

JULES

Oh, go on, enjoy yourself.

JOSEPH

Just this once.

He exits to the shop.

ALFRED

Moving toward the shop.

He really gets a kick out of it.

JULES

Looking around.

It's wonderful, isn't it?

ALFRED

What?

JULES

A home!

ALFRED

Oh, yes.

JULES

Flowers.

ALFRED

Yes.

JULES

This chair, a picture, the evening paper. Her knitting.,,

Emilie enters from Marie-Louise's room, followed by Felix.

EMILIE

Whispers to Felix.

My husband has something to say to you.

Crossing left after a warning glance back at Felix, she exits into Marie-Louise's room. Jules rises.

FELIX

My wife has just told me -- I apologize for the misunderstanding, for my outburst ... Where's the other fellow?

Joseph returns from the shop, carrying a white linen jacket over his arm.

JOSEPH

The customer wants a larger size - 14. This is a 12.

FELIX

I don't believe I have a 14.

JOSEPH

You don't. That's why I told him I'd get one back here, from stock.

FELIX

From stock? I have no clothing stock back here.

JOSEPH

I know that. I don't sell a piece of goods. I sell an idea. I'll just take this one right back to him.

He exits into the shop.

FELIX

But, he's out of his mind. That man'll know it won't fit. He can see it, feel it.

JULES

He won't see or feel anything. He won't get a chance to.

FELIX

But, it's not fair. It is not ethical. Of course, I suppose you fellows aren't concerned with ethics, naturally. I mean, I don't want to hurt your feelings, but…

JULES

Not at all. No, some of us are downright crooked. Our world's like yours. All kinds. The only difference is we're caught!

FELIX

Oh yes. My wife told me, and I wanted to thank you. I'd like to repay you.

JULES

Not necessary.

ALFRED

Wouldn't dream of it. It was a labour of love.

Jules looks at him.

FELIX

Well, my wife thought -- I'm not sure it's a practical idea. In fact, I'm sure it's not.

ALFRED

What'd she have in mind?

FELIX

I know it's impossible. But, she thought if you wanted to, and could spend the evening here, since it's Christmas Eve and all that.

JULES

Touched.

That's very kind of her. Very kind.

Joseph enters from the sop, shows Felix the money.

JOSEPH

Sold! Fits him like a glove when he doesn't button it.

He goes to the bureau, puts the money in the cash box.

Oh yes, I sold him some cleaning fluid for spots.

FELIX

There were sots? The coat was spotted?

JOSEPH

Crosses to Felix.

I made the spots myself. A little grease. The spots explain the bargain.

FELIX

Bargain?

JOSEPH

At the regular price of 27 francs, he wouldn't touch the jacket; but at the reduced price of 27 francs, he snapped it up.

JULES

Crosses to Joseph.

Joseph, the gentleman has invited us to spend Christmas Eve here.

FELIX

Well, my wife thought…

JOSEPH

An enchanting prospect!

FELIX

Of course, I realize you can't..

JULES

Oh, but we can. We accept.

ALFRED

With thanks.

FELIX

But, won't the authorities object? They'll miss you at roll call!

ALFRED

They'll forgive us.

JOSEPH

It can be arranged.

FELIX

It can? I must warn you, I haven't any spare beds.

JOSEPH

We're insomniacs.

JULES

Moving to the chair.

Louis Sixteenth. Imitation.

Crosses to Jules and to the left of Alfred.

FELIX

And, I must warn you. My wife hasn't prepared anything special. You now how expensive fowl is.

JOSEPH

With a knowing look to Jules and Alfred.

Christmas dinner without a turkey or at least a chicken?

Shop bell rings.

Another customer! Business is brisk tonight.

Starts towards the shop.

FELIX

Preceding him.

If you don't mind.

JOSEPH

I beg your pardon?

FELIX

Allow me.

JOSEPH

By all means.

Felix glares at him and exits into the shop. A look of disappointment comes over Joseph.

I'll just coach from the sidelines.

Exits into the shop. Jules returns to his chair.

ALFRED

Who gets the chicken?

JULES

Rises. Goes towards the garden.

I'll get it.

ALFRED

I'll set the table. Pick a plump one.

JULES

One takes what one can find.

He exits into the garden. Alfred begins setting the table. He takes the ledgers and papers to the bureau and opens the bureau drawer. Then he removes the brocaded cloth from the table, folds it, and places it on a tall basket standing near the bureau. Marie-Louise enters from her room, carrying a small suitcase, hat, gloves, et cetera. She's obviously leaving. She stops as she sees him.

MARIE-LOUISE

Still here?

She puts down her hat and suitcase on the chair on the right, and puts on her gloves.

ALFRED

How many for dinner tonight? Let's see. There's your father, mother, uncle, Paul, you…

Gets dinner cloth from bureau, opens it onto the table.

MARIE-LOUISE

I'm not having dinner. I'm leaving tonight.

ALFRED

You are?

MARIE-LOUISE

Oh, don't worry. I won't try it again. I'm going to the Dominican convent first. Then, I'll see.

Alfred gets plates from the bureau, sets them.

The Mother Superior will understand. My life is finished.

She picks up her suitcase and hat and starts towards the shop.

At least I can be of service to others.

ALFRED

Arranging plates.

You want to sit next to Paul, or course.

MARIE-LOUISE

I told you I won't be here. How dare you meddle in my affairs.

ALFRED

I asked a civil question. I don't get it. A man travels on a stinking ship for weeks to see you, and you run away from him.

He gets silver from the bureau drawer an sets places.

You're mad about this man. You don't want to live if you don't get him. He's here. He wants to see you.

MARIE-LOUISE

See me?

Song #4: It's So Clear, Clear To Me

ALFRED

WHY DID HE COME? WHY IS HE HERE IF HE DIDN'T CARE?
IGNORE ALL THE LIES AND JEALOUSY, DEAR. LET THEM ALL STARE.
YOU ARE THE ONE THAT HE COMES TO SEE.
IT'S SO CLEAR, CLEAR TO ME.

MARIE-LOUISE

His uncle made him come.

ALFRED

NOBODY COMES FOUR THOUSAND MILES TO SAY GOODBYE.
WHERE IS YOUR TRUST? WHERE ARE YOUR SMILES? WON'T YOU JUST TRY?
GIVE HIM A CHANCE. HOW WRONG COULD THAT BE?
IT'S SO CLEAR, CLEAR TO ME.

YOU'VE BEEN TOLD BY ANOTHER THAT EVERYTHING'S CHANGED,
THAT SHE'S TAKEN HIS HEART FOR HER OWN.
AND SHE TELLS YOU THAT SHE'S GOT A WEDDING ARRANGED.
STOP AND THINK - WHY IS HE HERE ALONE?

GIVE HIM YOUR LOVE. GIVE HIM YOUR ARMS. GIVE HIM SUPPORT.
HE WILL RESPOND TO ALL OF YOUR CHARMS. MEN ARE THAT SORT.
DON'T CLOSE THE DOOR. NO, GIVE HIM THE KEY.
IT'S SO CLEAR, CLEAR TO ME.

MARIE-LOUISE

You seem to know so much, and yet you're…

ALFRED

A criminal? I wasn't always.

MARIE-LOUISE

You loved?

ALFRED

Yes!

MARIE-LOUISE

Who?

ALFRED

A beautiful woman. The most beautiful woman I'd ever seen. We were friends. To keep her friendship, you'll pardon me, to keep her, I needed my stepfather's generosity.

MARIE-LOUISE

And, he gave it?

ALFRED

Yes! But then my mother died and…

MARIE-LOUISE

No!

ALFRED

Yes! So, I went to see him…

MARIE-LOUISE

Yes?

ALFRED

Well, actually, I went to see his safe.

MARIE-LOUISE

Oh!

ALFRED

But, he was a light sleeper. He suddenly appeared in the library. A very imposing figure, my stepfather. Legion of Honour. Very deep voice. Old soldier. He roused the servants, called for the police. I lost my head, I killed him.

MARIE-LOUISE

How could you/

ALFRED

With a poker, Mademoiselle. For love.

MARIE-LOUISE

Yes, for love.

ALFRED

TAKE A LOOK AT THE FACTS AND THINK YOU'LL AGREE
HE'S REPENTANT, HE'S PLEADING, HE'S MEEK.
HE'S COME MORE THAN HALFWAY 'CROSS A TURBULENT SEA.
HOW CAN YOU NOT ALLOW HIM TO SPEAK?

MARIE-LOUISE, ALFRED

YOU'VE GOT TO BELIEVE, OR YOU DECAY AND CRUMBLE TO DUST.
WHO CAN DENY THIS IS A DAY FOR OFFERING TRUST.
THE CLOUDS ARE ALL GONE. THE SUN IS SET FREE.
IT'S SO CLEAR, CLEAR TO ME.
IT'S SO CLEAR, CLEAR TO ME.

Joseph enters from the shop carrying a peignoir on a hanger and a nightcap. He goes to the table, and to himself counts to ten on his fingers. Then he hurries back into the shop to complete the sale. After his exit, Jules enters from the garden with a struggling chicken, which he keeps shoving under his pajama jacket. Alfred exits to Marie-Louise's room.

MARIE-LOUISE

Startled by the noise and the fluttering of the chicken.

Oh!

Jules exits into the kitchen as Felix enters from the shop. He spies Marie-Louise and goes towards her.

FELIX

My poor Marie-Louise.

MARIE-LOUISE

It's all right now, Papa. Funny…

FELIX

What?

MARIE-LOUISE

I can hope again.

FELIX

Of course. Of course.

MARIE-LOUISE

He gave me hope.

FELIX

Who?

MARIE-LOUISE

A murderer!

Emilie enters from Marie-Louise's room.

MARIE-LOUISE

Embracing her parents.

We're going to have a lovely Christmas.

EMILIE

Of course, we are.

Alfred enters from Marie-Louise's room. Takes in the situation, goes to the chair, and carries and places it at the table.

MARIE-LOUISE

We're going to be very festive, very gay.

The family group move to the table.

I shall sit next to Paul. His uncle, of course, will sit over there. His uncle will grunt as he always does. Paul will be so tactful, as he always is.

Alfred carries a chair to the left, and places it at the table. Then picks up a footstool and places it against the wall to the left.

Then we'll drink lots and lots of wine -- especially his uncle. And, he'll turn mellow gradually and begin to laugh. We'll sing, and then we'll leave Paul alone with his uncle. And, Paul will say, "You see, sir? Our love is steel. No one, no one can break it."

EMILIE

Yes.

FELIX

The only thing is…

MARIE-LOUISE

What?

FELIX

They won't be here for dinner.

EMILIE

They won't? They have other plans? So much has happened I forgot to ask you if you'd got them out of quarantine.

FELIX

Well, as a matter of fact, I didn't see the Health people. I thought it over. It occurred to me … well, I just couldn't face it tonight. And, they'll be comfortable on the ship.

Alfred takes two settings from the table to the bureau.

EMILIE

Oh! Well, we'll get their rooms ready for after dinner in any case. They're sure to be here by morning.

MARIE-LOUISE

And, I wanted to see Paul tonight.

FELIX

You'll see him tomorrow.

Alfred goes to the table.

You can dream about him tonight.

MARIE-LOUISE

I've dreamt so long.

EMILIE

Well, with our without Paul, we still must have dinner, and I'd better see to it.

The harmonica, playing "Frere Jacques" is heard from the garden. Emilie exits to the kitchen as Jules enters from there. He goes below the table, brushing chicken feathers from his hands, and exits into the garden. Alfred goes to the table and returns one of the chairs.

FELIX

Crosses left as Alfred takes other chair from the table.

I may be selfish, but I know I'm not sorry to be alone in the bosom of my family.

Sees Alfred as he is placing chair.

Well, practically alone.

Alfred picks up chicken feathers from floor.

That reminds me, we ought to get the tree out. Young man…

ALFRED

Yes, sir?

FELIX

Can you open that box?

He indicates a box standing on the commode.

ALFRED

Got a poker?

Marie-Louise starts.

FELIX

Over there. In that drawer.

Alfred goes to the drawer and takes out a chisel. He begins to open the box.

ALFRED

Right. Here we go.

FELIX

Careful now. Mind your hands.

ALFRED

As he opens and takes out a small, untrimmed tree.

Well, they certainly got this one young.

MARIE-LOUISE

It's beautiful.

ALFRED

And, here are the trimmings.

He takes them all from the box.

MARIE-LOUISE

It's France! It's home!

ALFRED

Uh-uh.

MARIE-LOUISE

That lovely pine fragrance we knew as children, in the forest near the sea.

ALFRED

Uh-uh.

Joseph enters from the garden with another tree. Larger and trimmed.

JOSEPH

Oh, you have a tree!

FELIX

Where on earth did you get that?

JOSEPH

I'd better return it.

He starts to exit, then stops, swaps trees, and exits to the garden with the small tree, bowing to Jules, who passes him entering from the garden with an orchid and a camellia.

EMILIE

From the kitchen.

Felix, Felix.

She enters.

FELIX

Yes, my dear?

EMILIE

Felix, I found a chicken in the oven. Where did it come from?

JULES

Praise the Lord, from Whom all blessings flow.

He hands the orchid to Felix.

An orchid for Madame.

Felix hands it to her with ceremony.

EMILIE

For me?

JULES

Crossing to Marie-Louise.

And, a camellia for the young lady.

MARIE-LOUISE

Why, thank you.

EMILIE

I've never seen a more beautiful orchid, except in the Governor's garden.

JULES

Neither have I.

He goes to the tree. He, Alfred and Marie-Louise add more trimmings.

EMILIE

Oh, Felix.

Song #5: Christmas Eve

CHRISTMAS EVE, TIME FOR PLACING ANGELS ON THE TREE.
CHRISTMAS EVE, TIME TO TREASURE EVERY MEMORY.
TIME FOR CHILDREN BASKING IN THE JOY OF LOVE AND CARING,
FRIENDS AND SHARING DREAMS.
IT ALWAYS SEEMS THEY COME ON
CHRISTMAS EVE, TIME FOR COUNTING BLESSINGS BY THE FIRE.
CHRISTMAS EVE, TIME FOR COUNTING ANGELS IN THE CHOIR
TIME FOR SANTA'S SLEIGH UP IN THE CLOUDS WHERE DREAMS GO FLYING.
NO USE TRYING TO PRETEND THAT YOU DON'T WANT TO BELIEVE
IN CHRISTMAS EVE, THAT HOLY NIGHT WHEN ONE SMALL HYMN
CAN TAKE YOU BACK TWO THOUSAND YEARS,
OR BRING SUCH WONDER WHEN THAT STAR APPEARS
ON CHRISTMAS EVE - TIME TO GIVE THE WORLD ANOTHER CHANCE.
CHRISTMAS EVE, TIME FOR REMINISCING AND ROMANCE.
TIME FOR OLD TRADITIONS HAND IN HAND WITH NEW BEGINNINGS
THAT SOMEHOW SEEM SO EASY TO ACHIEVE
AMIDST THE GLOW WE'VE COME TO KNOW AS CHRISTMAS EVE.

Jules has stopped decorating and placed himself in the corner watching her. Felix is now helping at the tree.

MARIE-LOUISE

Oh, Mama, isn't it going to be beautiful?

EMILIE

It certainly is. Felix, get a bottle of wine.

FELIX

Of course.

He goes looking for wine and finds a bottle in a basket near the tree. A choir is heard outside singing, "Hark, the Herald Angels Sing."

MARIE-LOUISE

Oh!

ALFRED

Indicating the tree.

Shall we put it on the table?

MARIE-LOUISE

Oh yes, let's.

JULES

Carrying it to the table.

Here, let me. Ah! A real tree! A real Christmas in a real home!

EMILIE

With carolers, no less.

Alfred takes the wine from Felix and begins to open it. Once he has, he hands it to Jules to place on the table.

Well, I must get back to the kitchen.

JULES

Stopping her.

Oh no, Madame. Tonight we are going to prepare, cook, and serve your dinner. Tonight we are your servants.

EMILIE

ALFRED, JULES

But…

He sits her at the table. Joseph enters from the garden.

JOSEPH

Beautiful! I've commissioned a group from the local parish to sing for us.

FELIX

With what? You have no money?

JOSEPH

Barter, my friend. An age-old custom.

FELIX

But what could you possibly offer them?

JOSEPH

The greatest gift of all -- their lives!

Alfred brings wine glasses from the bureau to the table. Joseph examines the label on the wine bottle.

A Beaujolais! Not bad! May I?

MARIE-LOUISE

Please.

JOSEPH

Pouring a glass.

Colour perfect. Bouquet exquisite.

He tastes the wine.

Ah. Mmm! Yes, 1987. Bottled the same year I was.

He hands the bottle to Jules.

I once organized a winery that was the marvel of the trade. Chateau Joseph! We had no wines, no bottles, not even a cork. But, the labels were museum pieces. The Prosecuting Attorney gave me a one-man show.

Jules has poured for the others.

MARIE-LOUISE

Listen.

The carolers are singing "Christmas Eve". She gets the three angels decoration from the bureau.

What could be more perfect?

The three convicts are standing together, by the table. Marie-Louise looks in their direction.

And, my three angels. We've had these on our Christmas tree as long as I remember.

She takes them to the tree and places them on.

I wouldn't replace them for the world, even though they are a little … shopworn, a little…

JOSEPH

A little unlucky, Mademoiselle. Damaged by the long, rough journey here. Bruised by unfeeling hands. Fallen angels, Mademoiselle.

MARIE-LOUISE

I don't care.

She lifts her glass and proposes a toast to the three.

I'm going to drink to … to… my three angels.

ALFRED, JOSEPH, JULES

Thank you, Mademoiselle.

She turns to them. They toast her and all drink.

EMILIE

TIME FOR OLD TRADITIONS HAND IN HAND WITH NEW BEGINNINGS
THAT SOMEHOW SEEM SO EASY TO ACHIEVE.

FELIX, EMILIE

AMIDST THE GLOW

FELIX, EMILIE, MARIE-LOUISE

WE'VE COME TO KNOW

ALL

CHRISTMAS EVE.

Lights dim to black.

END OF ACT I

ACT II

At rise: Several hours later. The table has been cleared. The bottles and baskets have been taken off the commode, and the decorated Christmas tree placed there. Otherwise, the room arrangement is the same as in the previous act.

Jules is sleeping in his armchair. Alfred is stretched out on the floor near the gate, the coconut cage near him. Joseph is asleep in a chair, his head on the table. The lamps are turned low and the moonlight illuminates the room and the sleeping figures. We hear thunderous knocking on the outside door of the shop. The knocking is repeated. Jules is the first to wake. He yawns, stretches, and goes to the lamp on the left wall, and turns it up. The knocking is heard for the third time, louder. He goes to Joseph and wakes him.

JULES

Someone's trying to get in.

Turns up lamp upstage left.

JOSEPH

Huh? Probably the Three Wise Men paying us the traditional visit.

Knocking is heard again, still louder.

JULES

Impatient, aren't they?

Turns up lamp upstage right.

JOSEPH

I'll take a look.

He goes into shop. Presently an angry voice is heard.

HENRI

Are they deaf in there? Where the devil is everyone?

Alfred wakes, gets up, joins Jules, puts cage on commode.

JULES

Doesn't sound like the Three Wise Men to me.

Joseph holds aside the bamboo curtains. Henri and Paul enter. They react to the two men in prison uniform. Paul carries two suitcases. Henry carries his portfolio.

Song #6: Introductions

(I assume that this song is to be inserted here. The next page starts with "Continue after Paul's line - "Neither did I Uncle Henry."…??)

JOSEPH

Allow me to introduce myself. I'm 3011. My good friend 6817…

JULES

Enchanted.

JULES

And, my esteemed colleague, 4707.

ALFRED

Hi.

Felix enters.

FELIX

I thought I heard the bell … Henri!

HENRI

Good evening. Or, rather good morning.

FELIX

Embracing them.

My dear Henri, welcome. Welcome. My dear Paul, welcome. Welcome. I had no idea you'd come tonight. Naturally we'd have waited up for you.

Henri sits at the table. Paul places chair for him, then puts hats on pegs.

Marie-Louise was very anxious to see you, Paul. Keenly disappointed.

HENRI

Was she? And, were you…

FELIX

What, Henri?

HENRI

Keenly disappointed?

FELIX

Well…

HENRI

Did you get my note?

FELIX

Well…

HENRI

Don't lie.

FELIX

Henri, I never lie. You know that. I don't know how I manage it, but I never do.

HENRI

I asked you to use your influence with the health officials. Did you?

FELIX

Well, Christmas eve and all that.

HENRI

They said you hadn't been near them. And, if I hadn't threatened to have them all fired, we'd still be on that garbage scow they call a ship.

PAUL

They heat was stifling.

HENRI

Opens portfolio, arranges papers.

A drunk cab driver was inflicted upon us. Even his horse was drunk! By great good fortune we managed to weave our way here without being killed. We are then greeted by your menage.

FELIX

Menage?

HENRI

Don't tell me they're not your servants. What are they? Your friends who are spending Christmas Eve with you?

FELIX

Well, as a matter of fact they are, in a way.

JOSEPH

Coming forward.

The boss means a good servant is always a friend. A bad servant is bound to be an enemy.

Steps back.

HENRI

Have our bags taken to our rooms.

FELIX

Certainly.

He's about to pick up bags when Alfred forestalls him.

ALFRED

Allow me.

FELIX

Thank you.

HENRI

Paul, go with him and be sure and lock your door when you retire.

PAUL

Yes, sir.

Exits into Marie-Louise's room followed by Alfred. Closes door.

HENRI

I'm no more fluid than the next man, but these fellows look dangerous. I suppose you always go armed.

FELIX

No.

HENRI

Well, I intend to sleep with a revolver in my hand.

To the convicts.

Bear that in mind.

JULES

Yes, sir.

JULES

We clean, oil, and polish revolvers - par of our daily impeccable service.

HENRI

You won't get your hands on mine. The rest of our luggage is in the shop.

Joseph exits to get luggage.

JULES

Would the gentlemen care for something to eat?

HENRI

You're the cook, I suppose.

JULES

Yes, sir.

FELIX

He's very good. He did a chicken with almonds tonight that was superb.

HENRI

You dined well?

FELIX

Oh, very well.

HENRI

Congratulations! I had a nauseating dinner. Chicken with almonds! Business is suddenly booming, I take it.

JOSEPH

Chickens cost nothing here.

HENRI

Bring me some fruit.

Paul enters.

JULES

Very good, sir.

Turns to Paul.

And you, sir, would you care for something to eat?

PAUL

Hesitating.

I'm famished. What have you got?

HENRI

Whatever it is, have it brought to your room.

PAUL

Sir?

HENRI

I want to have a little talk with Felix.

FELIX

Oh!

PAUL

Yes, sir. I wouldn't mind some cold chicken.

JULES

Yes, sir.

Exits to kitchen.

HENRI

Good night, Paul.

PAUL

Good night, sir.

Alfred enters from room right of arch, centre stage.

You there…

To Alfred, picking up suit, tossing it to him.

I have a suit for you to press.

Paul exits to room right of arch, centre stage. Joseph enters from shop with bag. Alfred exits to Paul's room with bag, after swapping the suit for the bag. Closes door. Joseph continues to study Henri after throwing suit on the chair.

HENRI

You!

JOSEPH

Yes, sir?

HENRI

Get out!

JOSEPH

How can I resist such a cordial invitation?

Exits to the kitchen, followed by Alfred, who re-enters from Paul's room. Felix crosses upstage left, watching them off.

HENRI

Starting after them.

Assassins!

FELIX

Crossing to the table.

They're really not bad fellows. For criminals, I mean.

HENRI

Now, let's get right down to it. I have very little time to give you.

Winds watch, looks business-like.

I have a factory to inspect and some mines. I have only two days here. Now…

FELIX

Henri, you're tired. It's awfully late. Hardly the time to talk business.

HENRI

I'm not talking business, yet. I've sent Paul to bed so that you and I can straighten out this nonsense without a lot of silly chatter.

FELIX

Nonsense?

HENRI

Rises. Crosses left.

I suppose you know Marie-Louise had an affair with Paul before she left?

FELIX

Affair?

HENRI

At least I assume there was an affair. You are fortunate there were no consequences.

FELIX

Good God!

HENRI

At least I assume there were no consequences. You're not a grandfather, I take it.

FELIX

Do you mean to tell me … are you implying …

HENRI

So, there the matter rests.

Crossing right to chair.

You may be an idiot, but even you must know I would never tolerate such a ridiculous marriage for Paul who is, at the moment, my legal heir.

Sits in the chair.

So, if you're dreaming of a return to France via Marie-Louise, wake up! I don't blame you for trying. I don't blame Marie-Louise. As a matter of fact, I find the matter amusing. Where the devil is my fruit?

Marie-Louise and Emilie enter from door leading to the rest of the house. They have dressed hurriedly.

FELIX

Miserably.

Emilie, Henri's here.

EMILIE

How are you, Henri?

HENRI

Rises.

Good to see you, Emilie. You, too, Marie-Louise.

He kisses their hands.

You look charming.

Emilie joins Felix.

MARIE-LOUISE

Is Paul …

HENRI

He sits.

Gone to bed.

MARIE-LOUISE

Oh! Did you have a good trip?

HENRI

Sardonically.

Delightful.

MARIE-LOUISE

Was Paul seasick? He's such a poor sailor. I remember once he took me sailing, and it wasn't really rough at all, but poor Paul suffered so, we came right back.

Henri glares at her.

He was furious with himself.

HENRI

You little fool.

FELIX

But, jut a moment. The child merely…

EMILIE

Crosses left of Marie-Louise.

There's no need to insult my daughter, Henri.

HENRI

I have no patience with fools, male or female. Paul's engaged. Damn good family and damn good business. I couldn't buy old Audibert out, so I'm marrying him. The girl's a cow, but she'll give milk.

Felix turns away in embarrassment. Henri returns to his papers.

MARIE-LOUISE

Oh!

EMILIE

If you'll excise me, we're going to bed. Good night, Henri.

HENRI

Good night.

EMILIE

Come, Marie-Louise.

MARIE-LOUISE

With dignity.

Good night, Mr. Trochard.

HENRI

Good night, Marie-Louise.

Emilie and Marie-Louise go out downstage left.

FELIX

As Henri makes no move.

I must register my protests against your rudeness, your -- your insults -- your arrogance! You had no right to upset Marie-Louise -- and, her mother. Marie-Louise is a very sensitive girl. A good girl.

His voice breaks.

HENRI

Dear, dear.

FELIX

Drawing himself up.

It's very late. If you'll excuse me, I'm going to bed.

He starts off to bed.

HENRI

I'm not excusing you.

Felix stops.

I'm not at all sleepy. Now that I've disposed of the affair with Marie-Louise, let's get down to business. How's it going?

FELIX

Well, I've spent the first year getting adjusted, acclimated. Getting used to the local conditions, so to speak.

HENRI

And, are you acclimated?

FELIX

I think you'll find the second year a great improvement. A great improvement. I know the obstacles, so to speak. I know the market.

HENRI

You do?

FELIX

Oh, yes.

HENRI

How much business did we do last month?

FELIX

Last month?

HENRI

Impatiently.

November!

FELIX

November?

HENRI

November's always preceded December. Let's have the figures for November, if you don't mind?

FELIX

I don't remember.

HENRI

Where's the books? Look up the figures, man.

FELIX

I'm not sure what the figures are. I haven't added up the totals yet.

HENRI

It's the twenty-fourth of December. Technically the twenty-fifth, and you haven't closed your books for November?

JOSEPH

Entering from the kitchen, carrying a large piece of cardboard and a bamboo stick.

Of course we have, sir.

Felix turns in surprise.

HENRI

What do you know about it?

JOSEPH

I'm the bookkeeper, sir.

HENRI

The bookkeeper! Congratulations. How much did you embezzle last month?

JOSEPH

Our gross receipts were thirty-two thousand, eight hundred and fifteen francs and forty-two centimes, sir. An advance over the preceding month of exactly eight thousand, five hundred and eighty-one francs and to centimes.

HENRI

An advance?

JOSEPH

Our figures for October were twenty-four thousand, three hundred and forty-seven, and forty-eight centimes.

Showing cardboard.

I'm preparing a chart, a graph. Do you mind, sir? You'll forgive the crude quality of cardboard and ink. Would you mind?

Felix holds one end. Joseph uses pointer.

You will observe here that business declines steadily in the first few moths, due to new management, conservative clientele skeptical of anything new, et cetera. Then observe that suddenly in August, with the reawakening of confidence, M'sieu's grasp of the affair, et cetera, the line rises, steadily up and up and up. I expect, and I am a cautious observer, a record breaker for December. Right up here. I'll need more cardboard.

He indicates the line has run off the cardboard. He places the cardboard and pointer back on the bureau, and comes back to the right of the table.

HENRI

Tell me, Felix, is it still your policy to extend credit right and left?

FELIX

Well…

JOSEPH

Certainly not, sir. The boss always says that giving credit to a customer is like making him a gift of the merchandise.

HENRI

You said that, Felix?

FELIX

Well…

JOSEPH

The boss always says, I'm a businessman, not a philanthropist. Let others play Santa Claus. I'll play safe.

Henri looks left to right.

Hard as a rock, the boss. He had one God -- cash on the line.

HENRI

Perhaps I never appreciated you, Felix.

FELIX

Just a moment.

HENRI

What about shortages?

JOSEPH

Inconceivable. The boss has an eye like a hawk.

HENRI

Losses due to thefts?

JOSEPH

Try it some time.

HENRI

What's that?

FELIX

As a matter of fact, I've just had some trouble about a case of Chartreuse -- which did disappear mysteriously and…

JOSEPH

Pardon me, sir. The Chartreuse was delivered by mistake to the Café de La Poste. I forgot to tell you. These bungling wholesalers! Call themselves merchants! No system, no organization. If you knew the difficulties the boss has to contend with!

HENRI

Well, we'll see.

Closing his portfolio.

When we take inventory tomorrow.

JOSEPH

Inventory, tomorrow? But, sir! You realize tomorrow is Christmas?! A holy day!

HENRI

Good. Then the shop will be close, and we won't be disturbed.

FELIX

Can't we wait until the day after?

HENRI

The day after I'm devoting to somewhat more substantial matters. I've some mines to look into.

Rising, crossing left to Felix.

We'll go over everything tomorrow. I hope, for your sake, everything's in order. Where do I sleep?

FELIX

Pointing to a room left of centre arch.

In here, Henri.

HENRI

Going to his room.

Good. I rise at 6:00. We can start at seven, promptly. Good night.

He exits.

FELIX

Have you gone mad?

JOSEPH

Sir?

FELIX

Fake charts, graphs, preposterous statements. I didn't have sense enough to stop you. Or, the courage. I'm ruined.

JOSEPH

Nonsense. The situation seemed to call for boldness.

FELIX

It's not enough to pull figures out of the air, I must produce books tomorrow.

JOSEPH

Ah, books!

FELIX

What do you mean “ah, books”?

JOSEPH

Listen!

FELIX

To what?

JOSEPH

Shhh.

FELIX

What is it?

Song #7: The Old Book Cooker

JOSEPH

DO YOU HEAR THE DISTANT DRUM
THAT INFORMS YOU HE IS COMING?

FELIX

Who?

JOSEPH

COULD THAT BE A BASS TROMBONE?
YES, I DO BELIEVE IT IS.

FELIX

Have you gone mad?

JOSEPH

LISTEN TO THE CROWD REACT WITH A CHEER
REST ASSURED HE WILL BE HERE.

THERE'S NO NEED TO BE AFRAID
YOUR FAVOURITE COOK IS ON PARADE.

FELIX

Cook? What are you on about? I've eaten.

JOSEPH

HE GOES ON THE MARCH
WHEN A NEW CRUSADE IS CALLING

FELIX

I'm afraid I don't …

JOSEPH

HE IS FULL OF FIRE AND STARCH
AND THE ARTISTRY YOU NEED.

FELIX

I need?

JOSEPH

PUT YOURSELF INTO HIS OLD TRUSTY HANDS
HE'S A MAN WHO UNDERSTANDS.
AND, BEST OF ALL, HE WORKS FOR FREE
BECAUSE HE HAPPENS TO BE -- ME!

I'M THE OLD BOOK COOKER.
WHEN YOUR GOOSE IS COOKED
I'M THE MAN WITH THE RECIPE.
I'M THE OLD BOOK COOKER
THOUGH I CAN'T COOK CARP, MY PENCIL'S SHARP
AND I'M THE DARLING OF THE BOURGEOISIE.

GIVE ME A SET OF BOOKS
UNBALANCED AS A BILL COLLECTOR,
OVERNIGHT THEY WILL APPEAR
IN THEIR PRISTINE GLORY
TO BE THE VERY STORY OF THE
BEST COOKED BOOKS OF THE YEAR.

I'VE GOT THE RECIPES

I'M BEGGING ON MY KNEES
JUST LET ME TREAT YOU TO MY SKILL.

YOU'LL NEVER REGRET IT
YOU'LL NEVER FORGET IT.
BROTHER YOU AIN'T SEEN NOTHIN' 'TIL
YOU'VE SEEN THE OLD, THE LEGENDARY CHEF
THE TOP BOOK COOKER.

Watch me do my number!
I CAN TAKE ANY COLUMN AND PROVE TWO AND TWO MAKE FIVE

Get a ref'rence from Marquis de Canterbury
AS ABOUT THE OLD BOOK COOKER.

The booker's been booked!
I'M A WHIZ AT MATH
AND I'LL WALK A CROOKED PATH
TO SEE THAT YOU STAY ALIVE.

Sir, you appear to be a cad!
The picture that your books give is one no one should trust.
Sir, a better picture can be had
Do not presume an option, this menu is a must!
I'll cook 'em to perfection
No one will ever know that they were anything less than grand!
I'M A BREED APART, 'CUZ I LOVE MY ART
I'M THE BEST!
THE BEST COOK IN THE LAND.

I'll cook 'em for you, clean 'em up for you
Scrub and polish 'til they shine
Give 'em to me
This moment is mine!

Joseph prepared to go to work. Henri enters in dressing gown.

HENRI

I thought I'd find you still up.

FELIX

Startled.

Can I get you anything, Henri?

HENRI

Just your books.

FELIX

My books?

HENRI

Crosses left.

The accounts.

FELIX

Oh yes, the accounts.

HENRI

Crossing to left of table.

Don't tell me you want to do a little work on them. I'll keep them in my room tonight. I want them just as they are now, in all their pristine purity.

FELIX

Henri, your suspicions are … are…

He stops.

JOSEPH

Assembling the books.

I'm sure the gentleman will apologize in the morning, but if it's the books he wants, sir, the books he shall have.

Crosses below the table to the room left of the arch. Felix crosses to the right of the table.

HENRI

Are they all there?

JOSEPH

Yes, sir. I'll put them in your room.

At the door to Henri's room.

The fourth page is loose.

Exits.

HENRI

You don't seem to share your accountant's confidence?

FELIX

Well…

HENRI

Let's hope I can say I'm sorry in the morning.

As Henri reaches the door of his room to exit, Joseph opens the door. He fills the narrow doorway so that Henri cannot pass. Joseph turns sideways, but this does not create any more space. Realizing the impasse, Joseph backs in the room to allow Henri to exit. Then Joseph enters, closing door behind him.

JOSEPH

Admiringly.

Sharp as a razor, isn't he?

Crosses right to table.

I thought of dumping the books in water, making the ink run, the figures blur, but he'd have caught on. He's so damn suspicious. Besides, there was no water in there.

FELIX

I'm relieved.

JOSEPH

Relieved?

FELIX

Yes, because I was tempted. I might have let you doctor the books. I would have lived to regret it.

JOSEPH

Regret?

FELIX

Oh, I know I'm ridiculous. But, I still have honour left.

JOSEPH

There must be something that could be done.

FELIX

I forbid you to do anything. I'm an honest man. I don't say that boastfully, nor apologetically. I state a fact. I don't know how to be anything else.

Song #8: Honest Man
(Not sure this is the name of the song … I named it. It isn't listed in the musical score listing.)

I'VE TRIED BEING DECEITFUL
AND I'VE TRIED BEING TOUGH.
I'VE TRIED TO LEARN TO CHEAT AND
THOUGHT I REALLY TRIED IT WASN'T ENOUGH.
IN MY ROOM ALL ALONE LOOKING INTO THE MIRROR
I CAN LIE LIKE THE OTHERS CAN.
BUT THEN I WALK OUT THE DOOR
AND I'M WHAT I WAS BEFORE
AN HONEST MAN.

I'VE HEARD POLITICIANS
AND I'VE HEARD LAWYERS TOO.
MY WORD, THEIR SUBMISSIONS ARE ALWAYS CLEVER
BUT SELDOM TRUE.
YET THEY DON'T BLINK AN EYE
THROUGH THE MUST AUDACIOUS LIE.
AND BEST OF ALL
THEY RECALL, WHERE THEY BEGAN.
WELL, I'VE A ROTTEN MEMORY
SO, I'M WHAT I'LL ALWAYS BE
AN HONEST MAN.

I'M WELL AWARE THAT A LOT OF PEOPLE FIND IT HARD
TO DEAL WITH ME.
I DON'T FIT INTO ANY MOLD THEY KNOW
AND WHILE I'D REALLY LOVE TO CHANGE.
I DON'T NOW HOW TO ARRANGE

TO BE A MORE ACCEPTABLE ME.

I'M SORRY, I GUESS I ACCEPT IT AND OH YES
I CAN COPE. AND, MAY I CONFESS,
I'M SO INEPT AT BEING NORMAL
I'VE LOST ALL HOPE.
IS IT TOO MUCH TO ASK THAT
YOU LET ME BE ME?
I'VE EVEN HEARD THERE'S ANOTHER IN MILAN
I WONDER IF HE'S ALSO FOUND PEOPLE SQUIRM AROUND
AN HONEST MAN.

DON'T TRY TO IMITATE ME.
BUT, PLEASE TRY NOT TO HATE ME.
I JUST DON'T KNOW WHAT WENT WRONG
I'M AN HONEST MAN.

HONESTLY!

JOSEPH

Sits above table.

Isn't that interesting? My dear sir, you're a phenomenon!

FELIX

You may laugh at me, but that's the way I am. I'm going to bed. I think I may even sleep.

Crossing left below table.

In fact, I'm sure I will.

Stops at chair left.

For an honest man I am a dreadful liar. How can I close my eyes tonight? What's to become of us? And, Marie-Louise -- Paul didn't even ask for her. Good night!

Exits downstage left. In the pause that follows, Joseph devises a plan. After a look in the direction of the room that houses Paul, then towards Henri's room, he quickly puts on his glasses, goes to the bureau for writing paper, returns to the table and begins writing. Jules, carrying a plate with a chicken wing, followed by Alfred, enters from the kitchen headed towards Paul's room. Joseph interrupts them. They stop.

JOSEPH

What have you got there?

JULES

I'm bringing the young man his cold chicken.

Holds up chicken wing.

JOSEPH

He shouldn't be thinking of food at a time like this.

ALFRED

Takes chicken wing and nibbles on it. Jules puts the plate on the table.

That's what I say! Here he is under the same room with a girl who adores him, worships him…

JOSEPH

Too bad I haven't got a sample of the young man's handwriting.

JULES

Handwriting?

JOSEPH

So, I'm printing it.

Reads note he has written.

"My darling! My own! Come to me! I wait! I tremble! I pant! Oh, my adorable, my beloved! I shall always ben your Paul." Alfred, give this to her. Her room is back of her parents' room. Be quite as a cat.

ALFRED

Right.

Takes note and exits.

JULES

She's not sleeping. I'll guarantee that.

JOSEPH

You get the young man.

Jules goes to the door of Paul's room and knocks. Joseph returns the paper to the bureau. Paul emerges in a robe.

I feel like cupid.

PAUL

Yes?

JULES

Pardon me, sir. I'm awfully sorry, but there's no cold chicken left.

PAUL

Oh, what a nuisance!

Crosses down between the two convicts.

JOSEPH

It wouldn't have been cold in any case. You know what our climate is like. We blow on all our food to cool it.

PAUL

Well, damn it, haven't you got anything else?

JOSEPH

We have warm centipede. With spider sauce.

PAUL

What?

JULES

A native delicacy.

PAUL

I'd rather go to sleep hungry.

Starts to head towards his room. Jules stops him.

JULES

Sleep? You haven't seen her yet.

PAUL

What?

JOSEPH

Do you think she's still sleeping?

PAUL

Staring from one to the other.

Marie-Louise?

JOSEPH

Who else?

JULES

She needs you, my boy. She needs you desperately. She loves you.

PAUL

What the devil?

JOSEPH

She waits! She trembles! She pants!

JULES

She's here.

PAUL

Marie-Louise…

MARIE-LOUISE

Paul. Dear, dear Paul…

She runs to him and throws her arms around him. Mission accomplished. The three angels go quietly into the garden.

It's been so long. I couldn't sleep. I couldn't think…

PAUL

Neither could I, of course. It's been a wretched trip. Wretched. The God-awful heat … the filth … and Uncle Henri isn't the easiest travelling companion in the world.

MARIE-LOUISE

Tell me everything.

PAUL

Everything?

PAUL

Where does one begin?
If you only knew what I
Sacrificed to be - here.
What a state I'm in
This is an exhausted and
agitated me - here.

Never mind the cost
I have gone and paid it to
Be here tonight.
No, it wasn't fun
But it's done.
And, my darling you are
A beautiful sight.

Can't you hear my heart
is beating oh so madly?
And, you know I'd give
it to you oh so gladly.
If you'd only promise that
You'll always be there
For me.

Can't you see the pain and
Know that I am aching?
You would be insane to ever be
Mistaking it for something
Other than the source
Of my fervent
Plea.

Let me hold you.
Let me keep you.

MARIE-LOUISE

Start at the beginning

To think that I doubted you.
I thought Suzanne was winning.

I might have clouted you.

Oh, what you've given me.

I'm so honoured
That's clear.
Poor dear.

All
my
dreams
are
an -
-answered
now.

Can't you see tonight's
the
night
for our
we-
-ding vow

Yes.
Yes.

PAUL

And enfold you
As you weep
Your tears of joy
And understanding

What did you say?

I'm pleading

I'm bleeding

Wait…

What?
Uh … see
me?

What plantation?

I hate sun.

What the devil's this about?
If my uncle should find out
there'll be a price to pay.

So what
Is the wisest move?
I find that the body
beats the mind and
what's a promise?
if I win?
The prize is waiting
for me.
Where does one begin?

MARIE-LOUISE

As your wife
For life.

Let's get married
Now -- here.
Where does one begin?
There's so much planning
to do for our
future.
Is that shock you're in
Oh, you've gone and cut yourself.
I'll do the suture.

What a joyous pair.

You'll be disinherited -- still
I'll be here
always at your side
as you ride
the plantation
in your fancy new pith helmet
a sensation
in the sun.

How does one begin to
count the blessings
love has won?

There'll be a price to pay,
so what?

We show such promise.
We shall win.
The prize is waiting
for us.
Where does one begin?

They kiss. Henri's door opens. He carries one of the account books. He sees them, stops, and closes the door.

HENRI

Charming!

The two separate quickly.

Well, Paul, since you have so much excess energy, I suggest you expend it on something useful - these accounts. They're a mess.

Paul crosses to him. Henri gives Paul the book and starts to exit towards his room.

I want a report on them in the morning. Go to your room.

MARIE-LOUISE

Moving to block his way.

Paul, don't go!

PAUL

Crosses back to Henri.

Sir, I wanted to explain…

HENRI

Didn't you hear me? Go to your room!

PAUL

Yes, sir.

He goes towards his room. Marie-Louise is still standing where she blocked his way before. He cannot look at her. After a pause, he circles her and exits into his room. Marie-Louise crosses below the table, downstage left.

HENRI

Now, you listen to me, young woman.

She stops.

Apparently, I didn't make myself clear earlier.

Crossing to her.

For the rest of my stay, twenty-four hours precisely, I don't want you to exchange one single word alone with Paul. Is that clear?

MARIE-LOUISE

Turns to him.

That's what you want, yes. That's clear. What's also clear is you've frightened Paul, made him timid, abject, servile. How could you?

HENRI

You're wasting your time. I'm not going to let Paul make an ass of himself. He owes you nothing. It takes two to indulge in these little affairs. If your parents had taken proper care of you, it wouldn't have happened.

Stops, eyes her shrewdly, curiously.

HENRI

I take it you have had an affair,

The three angels appear at the garden gate.

MARIE-LOUISE

That's not true!

HENRI

You resisted, bravely? Be that as it may…

MARIE-LOUISE

I didn't want our love to be furtive, and cheap. I wanted everything, or nothing. I still do. Paul understands. It's difficult for him, because he's a man, but he understands.

HENRI

Be that as it may…

The three angels open the gate and enter the room.

I suggest you turn your attention elsewhere. You can find yourself a young man, or an older man. I suggest an older man with a little money in the bank whom you can hoodwink into an ironclad religious ceremony. On the other hand, if ceremonies don't interest you, but the comforts of life do, I should say your future was very bright. Very bright indeed.

Now the three convicts move slowly forward.

You're young, pretty -- you have a desirable air of innocence.

As he turns away from her towards his room, he sees the men.

What the devil do you want?

Convicts do not move.

Are you all deaf?

Silence. Finally, he turns to Marie-Louise.

Well, I've nothing more to say to you, in any case. Good night.

He exits into his room.

MARIE-LOUISE

Sits downstage left, Joseph comes to her.

There's something I must know. Now. Tonight!

JOSEPH

Indicating bedroom.

Go ahead!

MARIE-LOUISE

Crosses to centre stage, above table.

I can't go into his room. I want you to tell him I'm waiting in the garden.

Crossing to Jules and Alfred, right.

Please hurry.

She exits into the garden.

JULES

To Alfred.

Go get him.

Alfred cracks knuckles, then crosses up to Paul's room.

JOSEPH

Wait a minute! I wonder if this is wise.

JULES

Shrugs.

Who knows? She wants him. She shall have him.

JOSEPH

To Alfred.

Go get him.

Alfred goes into Paul's room. Joseph crosses to table.

I'm not sure she's going to be grateful to us for this.

JULES

Perhaps she's impatient to now the worst.

JOSEPH

The young man -- and, mind you, I'm pretty tolerant -- is even more of a stinker than I thought.

JULES

Perhaps he's just cautious. Let's be fair. Caution is a virtue I've learned not to despise.

Alfred enters with Paul from a door left of the centre arch. He pushes him forward. Paul is in his shirtsleeves. Alfred carries his jacket, stands blocking the door to his room.

ALFRED

Come on.

PAUL

Where are you taking me?

ALFRED

Get going.

PAUL

What do you want?

JULES

Crossing to him.

We're concerned with your happiness, my boy.

PAUL

What?

JOSEPH

Someone is waiting for you in the garden.

JULES

Under the bougainvillea. Hurry.

PAUL

Marie-Louise?

JULES

Correct.

PAUL

Looking from one to the other.

I warn you!

He looks about.

I'm going to call for help.

JOSEPH

Just because you're asked to meet a lovely girl in the garden on a gorgeous tropical night? Gentlemen, what has become of France?

JULES

Song #9: Be Young, Young Man

BE YOUNG, YOUNG MAN, THERE'S SO LITTLE TIME.
WHILE AGE HAS ITS MERITS, YOUTH IS SUBLIME.
DON'T PLAY THE GAME OF "I CAN'T WAIT UNTIL"
YOU WONDER IF YOU'LL GET THERE
I PROMISE YOU WILL.

JOSEPH

SO BE YOUNG, YOUNG MAN, WHILE YOU STILL HAVE THE CHANCE
YOUR AGE WAS INVENTED FOR TOO MUCH ROMANCE
DON'T BE TOO CAUTIOUS TOO SOON WITH SUCH EASE
OR YOU'LL BE THE MAN YOU SEE HERE
BUT SANS MEMORIES.

Alfred enters and signals to the others that Marie-Louise is coming.

JULES, JOSEPH

BE CRAZY, UNINVITABLE, ORIGINAL, EVEN WILD -- FLY!
BE OBNOXIOUS, INDICTABLE, DON'T SAY YOU CAN'T BE A CHILD -- TRY!
YOU CAN OPEN ANY DOOR AND GO BURSTING ON THROUGH
YOU CAN CLIMB, JUMP, DIVE, SLIDE, EVEN BE NEW.
YOU CAN CUT THROUGH THE LIES LIKE A DANGEROUS KNIFE,
BUT YOU CANNOT, YOU DARE NOT BE SOLD
ON THE WISDOM OF "FINALLY I'M OLD".

PAUL

I know what you're suggesting, but it's absolutely impossible.

JOSEPH

You do love her?

PAUL

I've told her. Of course.

JOSEPH

Tell her again.

JOSEPH, JULES, ALFRED

BE YOUNG, YOUNG MAN - THOSE THREE WORDS ARE KEY
JUST SAY “I LOVE YOU” AND WIN YOUR DEGREE.
WOMEN ADORE THAT REPETITIVE PHRASE
THOUGH AND THEN EMBELLISH …

PAUL

How?

JOSEPH, JULES, ALFRED

YOU’LL THINK OF THE WAYS.

PAUL

I will?

JOSEPH

I’m sure.

ALFRED

I’ll help.
USE “ALWAYS” OR “FOREVER”, THOSE WORK WELL FOR ME. TRY.

PAUL

You make it sound so easy.

JULES

It is.

JOSEPH

SHE WON’T SEE YOUR FACE IN THE DARK, SO YOU’RE FREE TO LIE.

ALFRED

Could you handle that?

PAUL

If I don’t get caught.

JULES

GO OUT ON A LIMB
AND THE LIMB MIGHT BE HERS.

JOSEPH

SHE'S WAITING.

ALFRED

WANTING.

JULES

LISTEN, SHE PURRS.

JOSEPH

DON'T PASS UP THIS CHANCE FOR A MEMORABLE TRISTE.

ALFRED

THE PRINCESS IS DYING.

JULES

SHE'S DYING TO BE KISSED.

JOSEPH

FREQUENTLY, TENDERLY -- NOW.

ALFRED

Is that necessary?

JOSEPH

DO ALL THAT THE LAW WON'T ALLOW.

JULES

It's customary

PAUL

If you put it that way.

JULES, JOSEPH, ALFRED

BE YOUNG, YOUNG MAN - BEYOND ANY DOUBT
THIS IS WHAT VOLTAIRE WAS TALKING ABOUT.

JOSEPH

IT'S ONE THING TO READ IT, TO LIVE IT IS MUCH MORE.

JULES

OPPORTUNITY'S KNOCKING
JUST ANSWER THE DOOR.

PAUL

I will!

ALFRED

WE'RE IMPLORING YOU HERE AS ONE VOICE.

JOSEPH

YOU REALLY DON'T HAVE A CHOICE.

JULES, JOSEPH, ALFRED

DESPITE WHAT YOUR UNCLE'S MADE YOU
JUST FOR AN HOUR OR TWO, BE YOUNG
BE YOUNG, BE YOUNG.

JOSEPH

We make progress.

JULES

It's what she wants.

ALFRED

Women!

JULES

Crossing to Joseph.

Don't you think they ought to be chaperoned?

JOSEPH

Chaperoned?

JULES

She's overwrought. They have only this night. Perhaps their last night, the garden, the moonlight…

ALFRED

I'll break every bone in his body.

Exits to the garden.

JOSEPH

That is not the function of a chaperone!

Follows Alfred out into the garden. Jules closes the gate, goes to the door of Henri's room, and peeks through the keyhole. Emilie enters from stage left to find Jules at Henri's room.

EMILIE

Amazed.

What are you doing?

Church bells are heard chiming.

JULES

Crossing to her.

Two o'clock and all's well. Our dear uncle sits with one hand clutching the bedpost as if it was a competitor's throat. With the other, he slashes at your husband's books with a pencil. He's broken three pencils in the last two minutes.

EMILIE

Crossing centre about the table.

Where's Marie-Louise? She's not in her room.

JULES

She's … around.

EMILIE

She's not in the garden with that young man, is she?

JULES

As a matter of fact, she is.

EMILIE

At this hour?

JULES

Don't be afraid, Madame. They're being chaperoned.

EMILIE

Chaperoned?

JULES

Properly. My friends are out there.

EMILIE

Moving towards the garden.

Marie-Louise!

JULES

Please, Madame, why spoil the happiness she's been dreaming about for so long?

EMILIE

Turning to him.

She's only a child.

JULES

Only in your eyes. And, if you must think of her as a child, then Madame, remember it's Christmas. Children want toys for Christmas. Let her have her toy.

EMILIE

This is a very dangerous toy.

JULES

Why break her heart? No, it's better to let her have her toy, until in the natural course of events it gets broken, and she'll no longer care.

EMILIE

Crossing to below table.

If I only knew what to do.

JULES

Believe me, I've given the matter considerable…

Crosses left to chair and sits.

--- thought in the last few minutes. You see, Madame, I'm playing father to the child I never had.

EMILIE

Oh!

JULES

I sit in this armchair, with eyes closed, and imagine myself the head of this house.

EMILIE

Poor man.

JULES

We must see her through this trying moment, Madame. Patiently. One false step, and she's lost. Go to bed, Madame.

EMILIE

Crossing left below table.

I won't sleep.

JULES

You must. You owe it to her. There's nothing you can do tonight, believe me. We're here.

EMILIE

As I listen to you, look at you, I don't know whether I'm awake, or asleep, or dreaming.

JULES

Good night, Madame.

Emilie exits. Jules closes his eyes. Alfred and Joseph enter from the garden. He opens his eyes.

How's it going?

JOSEPH

Crossing to Jules to above table.

Beautifully.

ALFRED

Looking off stage to the garden.

He's a cold fish.

JOSEPH

On the contrary, I'll admit that at first it didn't sound promising.

JULES

And then?

ALFRED

He sat there -- mumbling about his damn uncle.

JULES

And then?

JOSEPH

Then they were silent. They looked at the stars.

ALFRED

Not a word from him! Like a mute! Then he talked. Dribbled. He's quoting poetry right now. It took him all this time!

JOSEPH

Crossing to Alfred.

Some men respond slowly. Be fair, be tolerant. I had the feeling that if the boy were free to think for himself, one could hope…

ALFRED

He's a spineless flounder.

JOSEPH

You're prejudiced.

Crossing center to table.

I tell you, the boy wouldn't be half bad without his uncle.

Indicates Henri's room.

One man capable of so much mischief.

ALFRED

Yeah.

JOSEPH

Ironical, isn't it? He's free and we're in prison. There's no justice.

Sits above table.

JULES

Let's bring him to justice. Court is in session. The case of humanity versus Henri Trochard! Bring in the prisoner.

Alfred goes to chair, left, places it facing upstage, in the area between the table and the chair Jules is sitting in. then he goes back to right of table

To Joseph.

JOSEPH

Stand up! Do you deny the evidence? Hurry up! I haven't got all year.

JULES

Please, this is a solemn occasion.

JOSEPH

I'm in a hurry! I need another reconviction. I am ambitious. I mean to be Prime Minster some day, or at least Deputy Administrator of Outdoor Comfort Stations.

ALFRED

I object.

JULES

Sustained.

JOSEPH

Overruled.

JULES

I am the judge.

JOSEPH

I'm in a hurry.

JULES

Mr. Defense Attorney?

JOSEPH

Rises. Crosses to left of table.

Gentlemen of the jury, I say to you my client is no criminal. He is a patriot. He has contributed to the greater glory of our beloved country.

JULES

How?

JOSEPH

Who cares? Gentlemen of the jury, I say to you my client is directly responsible for the tremendous increase in our country's birth rate. Consider how he overworks and underpays his many employees. After a fourteen-hour day, do they patronize the haunts of sin, the theatres, the concert halls, the cafes? No. They totter home to their wives and enjoy the only diversion left open to them. Vive la France.

Crosses to chair above table and sits.

JULES

Rises. Crosses to empty chair.

Prisoner, stand up! A stupid jury which understands nothing of the nature of man nor of the world he lives in, has found you guilty as charged.

Henri's door opens and he enters, stares at them for a moment. He carries a sheaf of papers. He goes to Paul's room.

HENRI

Paul … Paul …

Tries the door, opens it, goes in. Jules returns the chair to its place at the left of the table. Alfred goes to the gate. Henri re-enters.

Where's my nephew?

JULES

Isn't he in his room?

HENRI

He is not. And, you know he's not. Where is he?

JOSEPH

Rises.

If you must know, he's in the garden, with the young lady. They make a charming couple.

Henri moves toward the garden. Alfred blocks his way.

They don't wish to be disturbed. This is their moment.

HENRI

Out of my way. I've had just about enough of your damned impertinence.

Reaches in his pocket. Obviously does not find what he's looking for. Jules follows Joseph right.

JOSEPH

Alfred, the gentleman is looking for something.

ALFRED

Producing gun.

This, sir?

HENRI

Give me that.

He snatches it. Alfred doesn't resist.

ALFRED

I cleaned it.

JOSEPH

It was in dreadful shape. The barrel was filthy. Naturally we removed the cartridges. We had to, they were damp anyway.

JULES

The climate, you know.

JOSEPH

Frightful.

JULES

Very unhealthy.

JOSEPH

I'd never bottle this air.

Henri meanwhile examines his gun and confirms the facts. He puts the gun back in his pocket.

You've got your nerve, you scoundrels!

JULES

You've no use for a revolver anyway.

JOSEPH

We're here. We'll protect you lovingly. We make ideal watchmen! We never sleep. Twenty-four hour service.

HENRI

I'll have you all arrested in the morning.

Convicts laugh.

JOSEPH

Indicates Jules and Alfred.

I'm afraid you're a little late, sir. They've been arrested permanently. I'm only in for a brief twenty years. Sounds long, but when one things geologically, historically, a mere flicker of time.

HENRI

Crossing left to his room.

Murderers!

ALFRED

Correct!

JOSEPH

Except for me. I was like yourself, a businessman.

HENRI

Turns to him.

You're a thief.

JOSEPH

Crossing left to Henri.

You're not very polite. I don't think I want to take inventory for you tomorrow!

HENRI

Crossing to the door.

Don't worry. You won't. I'll settle your hash in the morning. They have ways of punishing scoundrels like you. I'll see to it that you pay for this outrage. I'll report you to the Governor, first thing in the morning.

Exits into his room, slamming the door. In the pause that follows Joseph goes to his chair. Jules goes to Henri's door.

ALFRED

He's going to see the Governor in the morning.

Joseph sits. Jules looks at Henri's room.

JULES

Sixty days solitary.

JOSEPH

Or, six months in that hellish jungle.

Shudders.

I'm not normally a pessimist, but I say again: there's no justice.

ALFRED

No.

JULES

Crossing to the table.

Sixty days solitary, if we're lucky.

Sits.

JOSEPH

If only our dear uncle would disappear! Vanish!

JULES

Yeah.

Sits left of the table.

ALFRED

He's human.

JOSEPH

I doubt it.

ALFRED

Sitting right of the table.

I still say he's human. Know what I mean?

JULES

Know what he means?

JOSEPH

Now, gentlemen, please. I'm not a man of violence. Anything physical is repugnant to me. Besides we may get caught.

ALFRED

Well?

JULES

I want to live.

ALFRED

Why?

JOSEPH

I want to now what tomorrow will bring.

ALFRED

I know now.

JOSEPH

There are other tomorrows. Listen to me! I have a plan. If you help me escape.

JULES

Yes?

JOSEPH

I'll go to Cherbourg. I'll assume another name, another personality.

JULES

And then?

JOSEPH

I'll go to work for him and at the end of the year he'll go bankrupt and blow his brains out.

Looks left, then right.

JULES

It doesn't sound very practical to me, your plan.

ALFRED

Always the promoter -- escapes -- bankruptcy -- a year.

JULES

Just a moment…

ALFRED

You're not weaseling out, too?

JULES

No.

ALFRED

Well, let's go.

JULES

Just a moment. Every man's entitled to a fair trial.

JOSEPH

He's already had his.

JULES

True.

They think.

JOSEPH

How? That is the question.

ALFRED

Simple.

JOSEPH

How?

ALFRED

Rises. Crosses right, picking up cage.

Adolphe!

JOSEPH

Adolphe!

JULES

Of course.

JOSEPH

An inspiration! Quick, humanitarian and safe.

ALFRED

An accident.

JULES

Only too common in the topics.

ALFRED

Here we go!

Rises, picks up coconut cage from the commode. Goes below table to the door of Henri's room.

JOSEPH

An accident is about to be arranged.

Rises, crosses to Henri's door.

JULES

Let justice be done.

ALFRED

Go, Adolphe!

He opens the box against a crack in the door.

Right through the crack. Go, Adolphe!

JOSEPH

Has he gone?

ALFRED

Looking into the cage.

Gone.

Song #10: You've Been Bitten

DO YOU FEEL YOUR SKIN STARTING TO CRAWL?
DO YOU TRY TO WALK, BUT STUMBLE AND FALL?
ARE YOU FINDING IT HARD TO MOVE AT ALL?
MY FRIEND, YOU'VE BEEN BITTEN.

JOSEPH

DO YOU FEEL AS THOUGH YOU'RE WALKING IN FOG?
IS THE WORLD A WHEEL AND YOU ARE THE COG?
ARE YOU FLOATING AT SEA WITHOUT A LOG?
HEY FRIEND -- YOU'VE BEEN BITTEN.

JULES

DON'T TRY TO FIGHT IT.

JULES, JOSEPH

YOU CAN'T REQUITE IT.

JULES, JOSEPH, ALFRED

THOUGH YOU DIDN'T INVITE IT
NOW YOU CAN'T TELL NORTH FROM SOUTH.

ALFRED

RELAX AND ENJOY IT.

JULES, ALFRED

YOU CAN'T DESTROY IT.

JOSEPH

IN FACT, IN ILLINOIS IT LEADS TO FROTHING AT THE MOUTH.

JULES, JOSEPH, ALFRED

DO YOU FEEL YOUR TONGUE GETTING NUMB?
IS TWO PLUS TOW A DIFFICULT SUM?
ARE YOU WONDERING WHERE THAT HAZE IS FROM?
MY FRIEND, YOU'VE BEEN BITTEN.

ALFRED

Peering through the keyhole.

Thataboy!

JULES

What's he doing?

ALFRED

He's climbing up the bed.

JOSEPH

Right up the post?

ALFRED

He sees that hairy hand. And, the hand is open - palms up.

JOSEPH

Saying, "I want mine".

JULES

Well, you can have it all.

JOSEPH

Keep the change.

DON'T THROW THE THRILL OUT.

ALFRED

LET YOUR EMOTIONS SPILL OUT.

JULES

BUT DO WRITE YOUR WILL OUT
'CUZ HEARTS ALL EVENTUALLY STOP.

JULES, JOSEPH, ALFRED

THESE ARE MOMENTS TO BE TREASURED.

LIKE BEING OVER-LEISURED.

JULES

BUT YOU WILL SOON BE MEASURED,
WHEN YOU … HOW CAN WE SAY IT?

JULES, JOSEPH, ALFRED

DROP!

ARE YOU RIDING ON A CAROUSEL?
ARE YOU GLIMPSING HEAV'N OR IS THAT HELL?
ARE YOU FEELING, IN A WORD -- UNWELL?
MY FRIEND, YOU'VE BEEN BITTEN.

ALFRED

NO TURNING BACK.

JOSEPH

YOU MUST HAVE BEEN A BEAUTIFUL SNACK.

JULES

FADE TO BLACK.

JULES, JOSEPH, ALFRED

YOU'VE BEEN BITTEN.

JOSEPH

Funny, I never thought of it.

JULES

What?

JOSEPH

A snake farm. There's a fortune in it!

ALFRED

I can't tell if he's asleep or dead.

JOSEPH

Rattle a few coins.

ALFRED

Hasn't moved.

JOSEPH

We shall know in the morning.

During the following speech, Alfred goes to the lamps on the wall and turns them down, one after the other. He then stretches out on the floor prepared to sleep.

JULES

Quietly, as he gets up.

Those who should be asleep are asleep. Those who should be dead are dead.

He looks offstage into the garden.

Our young lovers are neither dead or asleep. Just halfway in between, as they should be.

He goes to his chair, stretches out in it. As Alfred turns out the last lamp, Joseph who has been sitting quietly, thinking, gets up and moves to the bureau, where he picks up a stack of writing paper, inkwell and pens, and brings these supplies to the table.

JULES

What are you going to do?

JOSEPH

I'm going to write the last will and testament of Henri Trochard.

JULES, JOSEPH, ALFRED

HE'S BEEN BITTEN.

Black out.

END OF ACT II

ACT III

At rise: The next morning. Early morning sun is pouring into the room. Alfred is still asleep. Joseph is seated at table with collection of pens, inks, paper, and labouriously writing. Jules enters from kitchen with coffee, cheese, bread and mugs on a tray.

JULES

Placing tray on table.

How's it coming?

JOSEPH

The last will and testament of the deceased is practically ready. One more sentence and I'm finished.

JULES

One more sentence and we're all finished.

Pouring coffee for the three.

Anyway, you're enjoying the job.

JOSEPH

Showing letter.

Why not? This is my masterpiece! Here is the note from dear Uncle Henri. Here's my sample effort. Compare! Ink, handwriting! Perfection!

JULES

Don't as me. I'm no expert.

Takes his and Alfred's mugs, goes to Alfred, wakes him. Alfred sits up, drinks. Then Jules crosses to right of table.

JOSEPH

I challenge the experts! There isn't a court in France that won't honour the deathbed request of our poor old uncle.

Reads.

"My conscience has been bothering me grievously of late. I have a curious premonition of death, somehow. I am writing this shortly after midnight and ask that this constitute a codicil to

my will. If anything should happen to me, I implore my nephew, Paul, to restore to Felix Ducotel, my cousin, the Gallery Moderne in Cherbourg, which I acquired by sharp practice. I could not face the judgement of Providence if this were not done. Paul, you are my heir, and I beg you to help a repentant and tortured my heir, and I beg you to help a repentant and tortured sinner by making generous amends to my cousin, Felix.

So, moved by the following sentiments that a tear comes into his voice.

Please, Paul, respect my wishes. Be happy, Paul, as I was not. Be honest, Paul, as I was not… Henri Trochard."

JULES

Crossing left below the table to his chair.

Be happy! Be honest! Damn good advice to a young man.

Gets French bread from left of table.

Starting out in life with a fortune. And, easy to follow for a young man with a fortune.

Sits.

JOSEPH

I'm deeply moved by the old sinner's repentance. It just goes to prove - there's a little good in the worst of us.

Dunks his bread in coffee, proceeds then with his work. Alfred, having finished his coffee, places mug on the table, then goes to chair and picks up the coat of Paul's suit that has been there since the previous act.

JULES

By the way…

Dunking his bread in coffee.

JOSEPH

Yes?

JULES

Before you finish his will…

JOSEPH

Only a codicil, technically.

JULES

Don't you think it would be a good idea to make sure the deceased -- is dead?

JOSEPH

I have the utmost confidence in Adolphe.

JULES

As soon as I finish my coffee, I'll take a look.

Alfred takes off his convict's coat and slips into Paul's jacket.

ALFRED

How do you like me?

JOSEPH

Splendid.

ALFRED

Going to the mirror.

He's got a good tailor. I once had a wonderful tailor. I think I still owe him some money.

JOSEPH

Working.

Naturally! You were a gentleman!

ALFRED

Stroking cloth. Crossing to Jules.

Feels good. Look at that lining.

Strokes lining.

Feels like a woman's skin.

JULES

Why torture yourself?

ALFRED

No harm in pretending I'm human again.

JULES

You're an adolescent.

ALFRED

That's what my stepfather used to say! "Grow up!" he used to say. You know, I was thinking out there -- it's all his fault.

JULES

Whose?

ALFRED

My stepfather's.

JULES

Because you smacked him over the head with a poker?

ALFRED

I wouldn't just be wearing Paul's jacket. I'd be in Paul's shoes. If it weren't for the old bastard.

JULES

I don't follow you.

ALFRED

Look! That night I dined with Jeannine at Maxim's. Suppose the old bastard were a different kind of old bastard. A real father. Someone like you.

Indicates Jules.

I'd come up and see you. I'd say, "Good evening, sir."

JULES

Entering into spirit of the thing.

What do you want now, you young scoundrel. More money?

ALFRED

How'd you guess, sir?

JULES

A girl, I suppose.

ALFRED

Yes, sir.

JULES

Sowing a few wild oats, eh?

ALFRED

Yes, sir.

JULES

Well, you're only young once. How much do you want?

ALFRED

Five thousand, sir.

JULES

Here you are, you rascal.

ALFRED

Thank you, sir.

JULES

And then?

ALFRED

I'd find out Jeannine was a tramp.

JULES

And then?

ALFRED

And then I'd go on a long journey to forget her. I'd try this place -- that place -- and then I'd wind up here. I'd walk into this shop. I'd see her. She'd see me. I'd wire you -- my stepfather. "Have found the girl. We want your blessing."

JULES

Bless you, my children. Come home. All is forgiven.

ALFRED

Now do you see why it was all his fault?

JULES

Of course! The judge should have given you the Legion of Honour, and put the poker in the Louvre as a national monument.

Alfred looks in mirror. Crossing up.

MARIE-LOUISE

Enters from the left, dressed for church, carrying a hat, gloves, and a prayer book.

Good morning.

The men respond. She goes to the table.

What are you writing?

Alfred breaks D. L. C.

JULES

Covering his work.

My memoires.

Marie-Louise stares at Alfred.

MARIE-LOUISE

Oh, your jacket.

ALFRED

Crossing to her.

It's Paul's.

MARIE-LOUISE

I know. Did he give it to you? You look very handsome.

ALFRED

I do?

MARIE-LOUISE

Of course. Paul wears clothes with such -- distinction. Such elegance.

ALFRED

Glumly.

Yes.

MARIE-LOUISE

But, you look very nice. What is your name? You know, I don't even know your names.

ALFRED

Alfred.

MARIE-LOUISE

You look very nice, Alfred.

As she turns to Jules, Alfred walks away right.

And, you are?

JULES

Papa Jules.

JOSEPH

I'm uncle Joseph.

MARIE-LOUISE

I'm going to Mass. Will you still be here when I get back?

ALFRED

Yes.

MARIE-LOUISE

Crossing to Alfred.

I want to thank you for -- well -- for everything you said yesterday. About Paul, I mean. You were right, you know. And, oh, I know he'll never love me as I love him. Afer all, I'm only a small part of his life. He has so many interests. But, I don't mind. I want so little. Even his uncle must know that.

JOSEPH

His uncle knows everything now. I'll think you'll find he's acquired wisdom overnight. In fact, he's a changed man.

Beams.

MARIE-LOUISE

Puzzled.

He is? How?

JULES

You'll be late for Mass.

MARIE-LOUISE

Since you're so anxious to get me off to church, I'm going to say a little prayer to St. Anthony for all of you, and for myself.

Exits to shop.

JOSEPH

Done! My masterpiece! My magnum opus!

Rising.

The codicil to Uncle Henri's will be discovered here.

Puts it on bureau in a prominent position, and the writing materials in their place.

JULES

We have a will, but have we a corpus delicti. Suppose -- now just suppose Adolphe missed him, or ignored him.

ALFRED

Adolphe wouldn't let his pals down.

JULES

Doubtfully.

I don't know.

JOSEPH

Shall we have a little bet?

ALFRED

I'm a sportsman.

Crosses right.

JOSEPH

I'll hold the stakes.

JULES

Ten centimes our dear uncle's alive and snoring.

ALFRED

Giving coin to joseph.

Take you.

JULES

Right.

Joseph gets coin from Jules then crosses to above table.

ALFRED

Picks up cage at chair, right, and goes toward Henri's room, crossing below table.

I'll go see.

JULES

Stopping him.

Just a minute. I don't trust you. if he's still alive, you might bash his head in just to win a bet. You go, Joseph.

JOSEPH

Sits facing table.

Me? I'm squeamish. I don't like looking at dead people. It offends me esthetically.

JULES

Somebody's got to go.

JOSEPH

You go.

JULES

Oh, no. I'm the judge. I never look at my victims. I like to sleep nights.

JOSEPH

Well, somebody…

Mme. Parole enters from the shop, wearing the same hat she wore in Act I, but a different dress. She carries an open bottle of cognac and her purse.

MME PAROLE

Well, making yourselves at home, are you?

JOSEPH

Sorry, I didn't hear the bell.

Rising. Crossing to her.

I'm Mr. Ducotel's new assistant. May I assist you?

MME PAROLE

I want to see M. Trochard.

ALFRED, JULES

What?

JOSEPH

Mr. Trochard?

MME PAROLE

Oh, don't stare at me so stupidly. I know he arrived last night. I want to tell him a few things about M. Felix Ducotel -- the swindler!

Showing the bottle.

Here, taste this cognac.

JOSEPH

Taking the bottle.

You want me to … thank you. Season's greetings.

MME PAROLE

Delicious, isn't it?

JOSEPH

Well, you've got to remember the thousands of miles this bottle has travelled -- and the climate. Travel broadens us all, including cognac.

MME PAROLE

Really? How profound!

JOSEPH

I'll admit it has a little taste of -- of …

MME PAROLE

Exploding.

There's no taste at all. It's plain water.

JOSEPH

Water? Madame exaggerates.

MME PAROLE

So, I'm exaggerating, am I? Read that label!

JOSEPH

For window display purposes only.

MME PAROLE

Of all the outrageous … ruining my Christmas!

JOSEPH

This is the wrong label. You don't think a company in its right senses would send a sample bottle thousands of miles. For what? This is a sound cognac, Madame. I say that not only as a merchant, but as a connoisseur.

MME PAROLE

Are you mad? Read that label.

JOSEPH

Do you believe everything you read?

MME PAROLE

I want to see M. Trochard.

JOSEPH

Somebody should see M. Trochard.

Putting the bottle on the table.

It might as well be you.

Indicates to the left.

Please. This way, Madame.

She starts toward the kitchen. Alfred blocks her way at the same time as Joseph speaks.

No, no. Right in here.

Points to Henri's room.

MME PAROLE

Doubtfully.

He's in there?

JOSEPH

Don't worry, Madame. It's not his bedroom. He's converted it into his office. M. Trochard is famous for converting everything into an office. Even his church pew on Sundays.

She knocks.

Don't bother knocking. He may not hear you. Step right in, Madame.

MME PAROLE

You're sure it's all right?

JOSEPH

Of course. After all, Madame, it's very important for you to see M. Trochard. The cognac is just an excuse. You've come because your husband is unhappy in the Customs Service and wants to be a merchant again. He wants to take over this shop. You want to help him get it.

MME PAROLE

Of all the…

She enters Henri's room.

JOSEPH

We'll know soon.

JULES

This is one bet I hope to lose.

Mme. Parole's suppressed shriek is heard. Alfred, with extended hand, goes to Joseph, who pays off the bet. Mme. Parole enters from the room, dazed.

Song #11: He's Dead, Oh Dear!

MME PAROLE

HE'S DEAD.

JOSEPH

OH DEAR!

ALFRED

LIFE PASSES BY SO QUICKLY.

JULES

AND HE DIDN'T SEEM THAT SICKLY.

JULES, JOSEPH, ALFRED.

IT DOES GIVE YOU PAUSE TO THINK.

MME PAROLE

Indicating.

IN HIS BED.

ALFRED

Listening.

SO I HEAR.

MME PAROLE

QUITE DEAD.

JOSEPH

WITHOUT WARNING.

JULES

THERE WILL BE SOME CHRISTMAS MOURNING.

ALFRED

SOMEONE'S SURE TO RAISE A STINK.

TO DIE…

JULES

WITHOUT A FOND GOODBYE.

JOSEPH

IT MAKES YOU WONDER WHY WE ALL ARE TOLD TO TRY TO BEHAVE.

MME PAROLE

MY GOD!

JULES

THIS LIFE IS VERY OLD.

ALFRED

HE WAS A GOOD OLD SOD.

The other two look at him in disbelief, and he shrugs as if to say "I had to say something".

JOSEPH

SO JUST BEFORE WE PLUNK HIM IN THE GRAVE.
A TOAST.

They grab glasses.

JULES, JOSEPH, ALFRED

TO HIM!

JULES

HE'S GONE TO HIS REWARD.

JOSEPH

SO ALL THOSE TIMELESS EULOGIES CAN NOW BE READ.

ALFRED

IF THEY'RE ALIVE NEVER TRUST 'EM.

JULES

BUT IT IS A CIVILIZED CUSTOM.

JULES, JOSEPH, ALFRED

ALWAYS TO PRAISE THE DEAD.

MME PAROLE

Realizing she has a glass in her hand and setting it down quickly.

OH NO!

ALFRED

Going to fill it.

IT'S EMPTY.

JOSEPH

DO HAVE SOME MORE LIBATION.

MME PAROLE

THIS PREPOSTEROUS SITUATION NEEDS A CALL TO THE POLICE.

JULES

HOW SO?

MME PAROLE

DON'T TEMPT ME TO SAY WHAT I'LL REGRET,
ALTHOUGH IT SEEMS A REASONED BET

YOU HAD A HAND IN THIS DECEASE.

JOSEPH

DO CALL, BUT MADAME AFTER ALL
IT WASN'T ONE OF US WHO HAD THE RENDEZVOUS WITH HENRI.

JULES

BY LAW WE MUST TELL WHAT WE SAW.

ALFRED

WE HATE TO RAISE A FUSS,
BUT SEEING YOU LEAVE HIS BEDROOM, YOU'LL AGREE

JULES

WE MUST CONFESS.

JOSEPH

JUST THINK OF ALL THE HEADLINES
"FAMOUS VISITOR EXPIRES IN ECSTASY."

ALFRED

ONE FAMOUS TOSS IN THE BUNK'LL
MAKE YOU AS KNOWN AS THIS UNCLE.

JULES, JOSEPH, ALFRED

BRAVO MADAME!

MME PAROLE

YOU WOULDN'T!?

JULES, JOSEPH, ALFRED

OUI.

MME PAROLE

I'm not going to the police. I'm going home.

JOSEPH

By the way, I just remembered. You have a bill. Quite a large bill. Its time you paid.

MME PAROLE

I'll take care of it.

She tries to leave. He stops her.

JOSEPH

How about a little something on account?

He eyes her bag.

MME PAROLE

I haven't any money with me.

She backs away from him, she runs into Jules.

JOSEPH

Let's look together.

They seize her bag.

MME PAROLE

How dare you?

JOSEPH

What did you say?

MME PAROLE

Frightened.

Nothing.

Joseph goes through the contents of her bag.

I need that money. I have some shopping to do.

JOSEPH

Don't tell me this is the only shop that gives you credit.

MME PAROLE

Certainly not!

JOSEPH

Fishing out bills.

Here we are. Three hundred francs. Congratulations, Madame.

He hands her the bag.

I'll credit them to your account.

MME PAROLE

But…

JOSEPH

Don't forget your cognac.

He gives her the bottle.

Keep it well corked and at room temperature. I recommend you use a snifter. Warm it with your hands to bring out the bouquet. And sip -- don't swill!

Mme. Parole exits into the shop, bewildered and dazed. Jules and Joseph chuckle. Joseph places the money in the cash box in the bureau drawer.

JULES

To Alfred.

You'd better get Adolphe.

ALFRED

Right.

JOSEPH

Better use a towel on Adolphe.

ALFRED

I'll handle Adolphe.

Exits.

JULES

Godspeed.

Rises and crosses left.

JOSEPH

I say this objectively, despite his sudden repentance, I think the world will be a better place without our dear uncle.

JULES

Hands him his mug.

Still we face the old, old problem. Does the end justify the means?

JOSEPH

Puts the mug on the table.

Of course.

JULES

I wonder.

Crosses left and sits.

JOSEPH

My philosophy is simple. If I perpetrate an outrage, it's justifiable. It's moral! It's noble! If someone else does it, it's an outrage.

Alfred enters from Henri's bedroom.

ALFRED

I can't find Adolphe!

JULES

Galvanized.

What?

JOSEPH

Did you look in the bed?

ALFRED

Of course.

JULES

We've got to find him.

ALFRED

I looked everywhere. The window is shut tight. He may have crawled back in here.

Jules quickly rises and looks under his chair cushion, then under the chair.

JOSEPH

We can't leave Adolphe loose. The poor little thing has no judgment when he bites. How can he differentiate between good and evil without us to guide him?

ALFRED

Anxiously crossed right to chair.

Maybe Adolphe's crawling off somewhere, sick. Maybe he's dying.

JOSEPH

It's possible. Our dear uncle was highly indigestible, even for a snake.

All three are looking as Paul enters from his room. Joseph and Alfred are on their knees on the right, Jules is searching on the left.

PAUL

Where are my…

JOSEPH

Sees him, straightens up.

We were just looking for a collar button.

PAUL

Crosses down, stares at Alfred.

What the devil are you doing with my jacket?

JOSEPH

The valet was just brushing it, sir.

Rises.

PAUL

Does he have to wear it to brush it?

JOSEPH

It's a quaint local custom he's acquired. Alfred, take the gentleman's clothes to his room.

Picks up pants.

And, while you're there, I suggest you look for the collar button.

He undulates his hand at Alfred as Alfred exits to Paul's room.

PAUL

What collar button? Mine?

JOSEPH

No. A native product.

PAUL

I can't wait to get out of this damn country.

Exits, following Alfred.

JOSEPH

Going to ladder and climbing it three steps.

It just occurred to me. We should look in the rafters. Adolphe likes trees, maybe he likes rafters. If he's strolling out into the garden, we're going to have a sweet job finding him.

Emilie enters from downstage left.

EMILIE

Looking for something?

JOSEPH

Yes, Madame -- a collar button.

EMILIE

Crossing to centre.

On the ceiling?

JOSEPH

Like other laws, the law of gravity doesn't always work.

Climbing down the ladder.

If you will excuse me, I will continue my exploration in the Garden of Eden, looking hither and thither for the source of all our human wisdom.

Exits to garden.

EMILIE

Takes cup and saucer from the bureau, crosses to the table.

What a strange man! Is M. Trochard still asleep?

JULES

Nodding.

Dead … to the world.

She starts to sit in a chair left of the table. Jules quickly stops her, picks up the chair, examines it, taps it on the floor. Then, sure Adolphe is not on it, places the chair for Emilie to sit. She does. Jules continues to look for Adolphe.

EMILIE

Pouring her coffee.

You'll be leaving us today, won't you?

JULES

Yes, Madame. We'll be off soon. All four of us, I hope.

EMILIE

Four?

JULES

Adolphe, our pet.

EMILIE

Shuddering.

Oh!

After a pause, during which she pours coffee for him…

It's been interesting, your visit here.

JULES

Tuns to her.

It's been interesting for us, too.

Picks up his mug.

EMILIE

I want you to know -- I don't know how to say this -- but I want you to know that I don't blame you for what you did.

Jules listens, puzzled.

This isn't what I meant to say. About your wife, I mean. It may console you a little to k now that others, too, have these impulses -- wild, almost uncontrollable impulses. I had such an impulse last night, as I was trying to fall off to sleep.

JULES

You? You wanted to kill somebody?

Crosses to the right of the table.

EMILIE

Henri. M. Trochard.

JULES

Him? You wanted to kill him?

He begins laughing.

EMILIE

Oh, I know you think me ridiculous.

JULES

Not a bit.

EMILIE

It's absurd, of course.

JULES

Crosses and sits in the chair above the table.

Of course. Just how did <u>you</u> plan to exterminate M. Trochard?

EMILIE

My crime was all in my mind.

JULES

Smiles.

Of course. No, you could never do it, Madame, under any circumstances. Think it? Yes. Perhaps even plan it. But, actually do it…

Shakes his head.

EMILIE

Felix wouldn't even let himself think it. Poor Felix.

JULES

Why poor Felix? He's happy. And, you're not happy.

EMILIE

I suppose not. I know that in a few hours, many dreadful things may happen. We may be shipped back to France, penniless, with no prospects, nothing. God knows what we'll do. But, somehow I'll find myself echoing Felix: "Things will work out somehow. There's always hope."

JULES

He is right. Hope is everything. Even we have hope. We hope to escape, although we know we'll never do it. We hope for a pardon, although we know we'll never get it.

EMILIE

You know, sometimes I can't help wondering if I wouldn't have made a better wife for a man who wasn't a child, someone who didn't believe in fairy tales, who depended not on others, but on himself … and a little on me.

JOSEPH

Men like that have no reason to marry.

EMILIE

You did.

JULES

Me? I believe in fairy tales, too. And, when I stumbled on reality, I killed it.

EMILIE

What?

JULES

I was thinking. If I had married a woman like you, well, chances are I wouldn't be here. One never knows, but -- one wonders.

Song #12: Someone Like You
(Not sure this is the name of the song … I named it. It isn't listed in the musical score listing.)

IF SOMEONE LIKE YOU HAD COME ALONG,
SOMEONE WHO KNEW THE RIGHT FROM WRONG,
MAYBE MY STORY COULD BE TOLD WITHOUT A TRACE OF SHAME.
IF ONLY ONE HAND LIKE THIS HAD TOUCHED MY FACE,
ONE HAND TO KISS AND THEN EMBRACE,
MAYBE THAT SOMEONE THERE TO HOLD WOULD HAVE FOUND LESS TO BLAME.

BUT IT WASN'T TO BE, ANOTHER WAS THERE
WHO FOUND IN ME MY ARROGANT AIR,
WHILE UNDERNEATH, HIDDEN AWAY
A TENDER PART OF ME WAS LEFT TO SAY:

IF SOMEONE LIKE YOU HAD HAPPENED BY,
SOMEONE ON CUE TO MAKE ME TRY,
MAYBE THE FATES MIGHT HAVE LET ME SLIP THROUGH
WITH SOMEONE SIMPLE AND HONEST
AND OPEN, AND BEAUTIFUL TOO.
OH, WHAT A LIFE MIGHT HAVE BEEN
IF I'D ONLY KNOWN SOMEONE LIKE YOU.

EMILIE

Touched and excited.

More coffee?

JULES

Thank you.

He extends his mug.

EMILIE

I'm beginning to wonder what is the matter with me this morning. I'm really feeling -- thinking -- saying the most absurd -- ridiculous -- Forgive me, but you have to understand that we really are so cut off here. The thoughts that go through a woman's head.

She takes the coffee to the bureau and sings in soliloquy.

IF SOMEONE LIKE YOU HAD HAPPENED BY,
SOMEONE LIKE YOU TO CATCH MY EYE,
MAYBE THE FATES MIGHT HAVE LET US SLIP THROUGH.
YOU'RE SOMEWHAT LESS OF A DREAMER,
MORE WORLDLY AND WISE THAN I KNEW.
OH, WHAT MY LIFE MIGHT HAVE BEEN
IF I'D ONLY KNOWN SOMEONE…

She catches herself.

What am I saying?

JULES

Madame?

EMILIE

Please. I don't want you to misunderstand what I've been saying. The words just somehow…

JULES

Stopping her.

Thank you. This Christmas will be a treasured memory. A man in my position doesn't store up many memories. And you, when you get back home to Brittany, to the kind of home you should have, all this will be an amusing story for a dull dinner party.

EMILIE

I don't see a future of dinner parties, dull or otherwise.

JULES

Remember: Hope! Thing will work out somehow.

Paul enters from his room.

Perhaps he'll work them out.

Emilie looks up. Jules gets a cup and saucer from the bureau, pours coffee and takes it to Paul.

PAUL

Crosses to Emilie and kisses her hand.

Good morning, Madame.

EMILIE

Paul, it's nice to see you.

PAUL

To Emilie.

I'm sorry I missed you last night.

EMILIE

That's quite all right.

PAUL

That's a strange valet you have.

EMILIE

Valet?

JULES

Alfred!

PAUL

He's standing on the bed in his muddy sandals and staring at the ceiling.

JULES

Gives coffee to Paul.

He's looking for native wild life. He's a great student of nature.

Felix enters from downstage left, and crosses to the table.

FELIX

Good morning. Where -- where is Henri?

Jules hands Felix a cup and saucer, then goes up to the corner of the bureau. Felix puts cup on the table. Emilie pours.

EMILIE

He's still asleep.

PAUL

Asleep?

Puts cup on the table.

But that's impossible.

EMILIE

Why?

PAUL

He never sleeps this late.

Looking at his watch.

He's always up at 6:30, no matter where he is. No matter how late it is when we get there. I don't understand it.

Goes to Henri's door.

I'm sure he'd want me to wake him. He said he had a heavy schedule.

Knocks on the door.

FELIX

Well -- why not let him sleep?

PAUL

Then he'll think I overslept. I'd better go in and see.

Paul exits into Henri's room. Felix picks up his cup and crosses right.

EMILIE

I hope nothing's happened.

JULES

Do you?

FELIX

Beautiful day.

He looks at the thermometer.

Only 104.

He goes back to the table. Alfred enters from Paul's room, shakes his head. Jules signals him to wait quietly. There is a pause before Paul enters from Henri's room, dazed.

FELIX

What's the matter?

PAUL

Shaken.

Uncle Henri … he's … dead.

Alfred, Joseph and Jules look at each other.

ALFRED

Song #13: ??

HENRI IS DEAD?

JOSEPH

HE DIED WHILE HE WAS SLEEPING?

JULES

THIS IS SURELY CAUSE FOR WEEPING.

JOSEPH

DO YOU THINK IT WAS HIS HEART?

JULES

Aside.

Did he have one?

ALFRED

DID YOU SEE IF HE BLED?

JOSEPH

OH, DEAR.

JULES

HOW VERY TRAGIC.

JOSEPH

IT'S SO SUDDEN.

JOSEPH

JUST LIKE MAGIC.

JOSEPH

IT'S ASTOUNDING.

JULES

IT'S AN ART.

ALFRED

A FREAK. HE SEEMED RIGHT AT HIS PEAK.
IF ONLY HE COULD SPEAK
HE'D REGISTER NO LITTLE SURPRISE.

JOSEPH

HIS DAY OF JUDGMENT, I DARE SAY
MIGHT FINALLY SEE <u>HIM</u> PAY.

JULES

To Emilie.

YOU SEE, MADAME, FATE HAS A THOUSAND EYES.

JOSEPH, JULES, ALFRED

A TOAST TO HIM.

JOSEPH, ALFRED

DIE BORGIA, UP HIS KILT.

JULES

DO TAKE A GLASS AND MAKE IT TILT TO HENRI'S BED.

To Emilie.

TO MERELY THINK ISN'T CRIM'NAL

SO LET US TURN TO A HYMNAL
AND SOLEMNLY PRAISE THE DEAD.

ALFRED

Approaching Paul meekly, hat in hand.

YOUR UNCLE'S GONE NOW TO A BETTER PLACE
NO NEED TO WORRY -- PUT A SMILE ON YOUR FACE
HE'S BETTER OFF THERE, SO I'VE BEEN TOLD
LOOK ON THE BRIGHT SIDE.
HE'S GONE TO THE RIGHT SIDE
IN THIS KIND OF HEAT, IT'S BETTER TO BE COLD!

EMILIE

I think I'll go to my room.

JULES

A very good idea.

FELIX

Of course, darling.

Emilie exits.

I'll get a doctor to take care of the formalities. Paul, will you stay here, my boy?

Joseph enters from the garden. Jules goes to him

I'll be back as soon as I can.

JOSEPH

I've just heard the news. We've lost a great man.

FELIX

I would never have forgiven myself if I'd deceived him last night.

JOSEPH

You were right. Once again, we see that virtue is its own reward.

FELIX

Extraordinary. To die so suddenly.

JOSEPH

The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away.

Felix exits to shop. Joseph and Alfred look about, still seeking Adolphe. Paul starts towards Henri's room. As he reaches the door he becomes aware that the three convicts have their eyes on him. He stops and moves to the chair.

PAUL

Mopping his brow elegantly.

What a thing to happen. I can't believe it.

JULES

My I offer my sympathy?

PAUL

Thank you.

JOSEPH

Your uncle's death must be a great loss to you. I speak emotionally -- not financially.

PAUL

Oh, yes.

JOSEPH

A great loss.

Joseph finds himself near the bureau by the forged note.

Oh! There seems to be a note here for you.

PAUL

For me?

JOSEPH

Here it is.

Taking it to him.

PAUL

Thank you.

Takes it. Stares at writing.

From Uncle Henri?

JOSEPH

I wouldn't know.

Paul opens the envelope. Joseph watches him warily, then casually.

I hope you didn't mind our little joke last night?

PAUL

Absently, staring at note.

Little joke?

JOSEPH

The episode in the garden -- under the bougainvillea -- the bench ---

PAUL

Oh, not at all.

Stares at the letter.

It was very pleasant -- very…

His voice trails off as he studies the letter. Then crumbles it and is about to tear it up.

JOSEPH

Seizing his hand.

That's no way to treat a letter from your Uncle Henri, and he is barely cold in bed.

Jules and Alfred and move to the table.

PAUL

Let me go.

JOSEPH

All communications from the deceased must be preserved. Have you no respect for the law?

Straightening out the letter.

All communications! Not matter how trivial.

Pretends to study it.

And, this doesn't seem trivial at all. Not at all!

Gasps.

A dying man's last request -- his last gasp. A voice from the grave!

JULES

Really?

PAUL

I'm … so upset… naturally. I didn't understand it … I …

He gets up to reach for the letter, but Joseph passes it to Jules.

JOSEPH

It's clear.

To Jules.

It's clear to you, isn't it?

Paul turns away.

JULES

Pretending to read.

I have a curious premonition … to restore Felix Ducotel, my cousin … be happy as I was not. Be honest, as I was not…

Hands letter to Joseph.

JOSEPH

Glaring at Paul.

Your fiancee's father! Cheating him! Cheating the dead! Sir, you're a cad!

ALFRED

With all that money he's inheriting! He wants more -- the swine!

PAUL

Crossing to Joseph.

I have every intention of respecting my uncle's wishes.

JOSEPH

Now that we have his codicil to his will securely in our possession!

PAUL

Crossing to the chair, left.

I won't contest it.

Sits.

If the document is genuine!

JOSEPH

If? You doubt this document?

ALFRED

Going to Paul below the table.

What about Marie-Louise?

PAUL

What about her?

ALFRED

Are you marrying her?

PAUL

I don’t see how that concerns you.

JOSEPH

Stopping Alfred from attacking Paul. Alfred moves away.

We went to some considerable trouble last night to smooth the path of love.

Jules crosses to Joseph.

PAUL

After a pause.

In this, as in all other matters, I shall be guided by my uncle’s wishes.

JOSEPH

You realize, of course, that you're now free to do as you please.

PAUL

Yes.

JULES

You’re rich. Your own master.

PAUL

Yes.

JOSEPH

But, Suzanne Audibert, whose complexion cleared up miraculously, still attracts you?

PAUL

After a pause

Yes!

JOSEPH

Gentlemen, a strange thing has happened. His uncle didn't die after all. He lives on -- in him!

PAUL

Rising.

I find this conversation distasteful -- and impertinent.

Crossing to below table.

Once and for all -- my relations with Marie-Louise are my business, not yours. I'm not free to do as I please -- wealth is a responsibility!

JULES

Going toward him above the table.

Get out! Before I forget myself!

PAUL

What?

ALFRED

Crossing to Jules.

I'd like to bash his head in.

PAUL

You can't intimidate me. I'll report you.

JULES

Ominously.

Your uncle wanted to report us.

ALFRED

Yeah.

JULES

We don't like being reported.

ALFRED

No.

PAUL

I believe the authorities have ways and means of punishing scoundrels like you.

PAUL

Crossing to Joseph below the table.

I was planning to call the Governor with my uncle. Now I'll go alone, and I'll tell him how his convicts behave. As for that -- forgery…

JOSEPH

Forgery?

PAUL

Suddenly a note appears a moment after my uncle's death. Suddenly! Suddenly he's repentant. I'll tell you what I thin. I think you concocted this little scheme. And, if M. Ducotel was party to this, and I suspect he was, you may tell him I shall demand an official inquiry. Handwriting experts. And, you can also tell him I'm going to have his books audited. A man capable of forgery is also capable of embezzlement! Now, with your permission, I'm going to pay my respects to the dead.

He exits into Henri's room. There is a long silence, during which Jules moves to the right of the table. Joseph moves to above the table.

JULES

Shall we hold another trial?

JOSEPH

Now, please, not <u>two</u> accidents!

ALFRED

Why not?

JOSEPH

We'll never get away with it. Besides we've lost our executioner.

ALFRED

I'll do his job myself.

Crosses to the door of Henri's room.

JULES

No, Alfred. Don't lose your head.

Moving to the right.

JOSEPH

No! Very distasteful business -- the guillotine.

ALFRED

He doesn't deserve to live.

JOSEPH

This isn't the issue. The issue is, do we deserve to live? The answer, in my slightly biased opinion is, yes.

Sits above the table.

JULES

Moving back to them.

At least we want to -- even in solitary.

ALFRED

All our work down the drain!

Sits.

JULES

We tried.

Sits right of the table.

JOSEPH

We failed. We've learned that virtue is not it's own reward.

JOSEPH

And, that good does not always triumph over evil.

Song #14: Christmas Is Over

PAC AWAY THE TINSEL
STORE THE TREE, SWEEP AWAY THE DEBRIS.

JOSEPH

AND HAUL DOWN THE DECORATIONS
THE MISTLETOE SIMPLY HAS TO GO INTO HIDING

ALFRED

IT ISN'T EASY, BUT WE HAVE TO ADMIT THAT
CHRISTMAS IS OVER, FOR ANOTHER YEAR.

ALFRED, JOSEPH, JULES

TAKE DOWN ALL THE CARDS NOW, AND IF YOU
DIDN'T SPILL BEETS ON THE CAROL SHEETS
THEN SAVE THEM FOR THE FUTURE AND
REST ASSURED EVERY SINGLE WORD WILL HAVE
MEANING NEXT DECEMBER - BUT FOR NOW
LET'S ADMIT THAT CHRISTMAS IS OVER
OR SO IT WOULD APPEAR.

TIME FOR PLANNING NEW YEAR'S EVE
AND MAKING RESOLUTIONS
WE CAN BREAK WITHOUT A LOT OF PAIN.
NO TIME TO GRIEVE
BECAUSE ANOTHER YEAR HAS GONE AND
TUCKED ITSELF AWAY.
SIMPLY SMILE AND SAY

PACK AWAY THE ANGELS
TAKE THE LIGHTS OFF THE STRINGS
PUT THE MOST PREVIOUS THINGS
WHERE THEY WON'T CHANCE BEING
BROKEN.
THERE'S A STAR OVER THERE

MARIE-LOUISE

ST. ANTHONY
LISTEN TO MY PRAYER.
ST. ANTHONY
IF YOU'RE REALLY THERE.
THANK YOU FOR BRINGING HIM
BACK TO ME.
JUST WHEN MY WORLD WAS LOOKING
BLACK TO ME.

OH YES
DID I MENTION THAT
I FOUND THREE NEW FRIENDS?
DO BLESS THEM
DESPITE THE FACT THEY'RE
WICKED AS CAN
BE -- THEY'VE BEEN GOOD TO ME.

ST. ANTHONY
UP THERE ON YOUR CLOUD
ST. ANTHONY

IF IT IS ALLOWED

ALFRED, JOSEPH JULES

THAT DEMANDS SPECIAL CARE
IT BELONGED ONCE TO A WISE MAN
WHO SAID, “DON’T EVER CRY WHEN
CHRISTMAS IS OVER
THAT’S NO WAY TO BE”.
IT WAS FUN WHILE IT LASTED
AND WHAT A WONDERFUL MEMORY

MARIE-LOUISE

SEE THAT THIS FAIRY TALE
PRINCE OF MINE
DOESN’T VACATE
THE PREMISES
ST. ANTHONY
PLEASE
ST. ANTHONY
PLEASE

Lights fade on Marie-Louise and rise on the main scene once more. Paul enters quickly.

PAUL

Call a doctor, quick!

JULES

What’s the matter?

PAUL

For Heaven’s sake!

JOSEPH

What’s wrong?

PAUL

I’ve been bitten by a snake!

JOSEPH

What’d you say?

JULES

He said he’s been bitten.

ALFRED

How? Where?

Song #15: You've Been Bitten

ALFRED

SHOW US.

JOSEPH

REALLY, IT WON'T THROW US,

JULES

AND IT'S NOT BELOW US TO WANT TO HELP YOU OUT.

PAUL

Please! It hurts! A doctor!

ALFRED

DON'T CRY FOR MAMA.

JULES

OR RESORT TO MELODRAMA.

JOSEPH

JUST FIND THE NEAREST PYJAMA
AND ENLIST SOME TIMELY CLOUT!

JOSEPH, JULES, ALFRED

DO YOU FEEL THE LIGHTS STARTING TO DIM?
ARE YOU CONSCIOUS OF A DISTANT HYMN?
IS LIFE'S FAIRY-TALE BECOMING GRIM?
OH, FRIEND, YOU'VE BEEN BITTEN.

ALFRED

IT'S NOT SOMETHING YOU ATE.

JULES

IN FACT, YOU WERE ON THE PLATE.

JOSEPH

LIKE CLEOPATRA'S FATE.

JOSEPH, JULES, ALFRED

YOU'VE BEEN BITTEN.

JOSEPH

Was it a little snake?

PAUL

Yes.

JOSEPH

On the floor?

PAUL

No.

JOSEPH

On the bed?

PAUL

No.

JOSEPH

On the dresser?

PAUL

No.

JOSEPH

On the ceiling?

PAUL

No! In his trousers -- in the pocket!

JOSEPH

What were you doing with your hand in your uncle's pocket?

JULES

He was taking inventory.

They all laugh, as Paul's discomfort increases.

JOSEPH

This is no laughing matter. This young man has shown admirable industry -- and thrift. His uncle may have had cash stowed away in his pockets. Possibly only a few sous -- rich men generally pride themselves on never carrying cash, so that others will always pay their dinner cheques, their cab fares, their tips … but, the young man overlooks nothing!

PAUL

I want a doctor!

JOSEPH

Why waste your money?

PAUL

I don't feel well.

JOSEPH

Damn nuisance to have him die in here.

The three hold a conference, with appropriate gestures, and heated discussion.

ALFRED

It's the only answer.

JULES

Of course. Marie-Louise will be back soon. Imagine the shock. We've simply got to prepare her -- and the family.

PAUL

What are you talking about?

Starts towards the shop entrance. Grabs on to ladder for support.

I want a doctor, I tell you.

JOSEPH

I have it. The garden!

Rises.

Let him die in the garden.

Crosses to Paul. Alfred goes to the door of Henri's room.

JULES

Crossing to Paul.

Good. We'll take him to the bench.

JOSEPH

Yes, the bench -- the same bench as last night…

Joseph and Jules walk Paul to the gate.

PAUL

You're always sending me to that damn bench!

The three exit into the garden. Alfred, with the coconut cage, goes into Henri's room. Marie-Louise enters from the shop. She looks about. Alfred re-appears. He hides the cage behind him.

MARIE-LOUISE

Oh, you're still here.

ALFRED

Yes.

MARIE-LOUISE

Crossing to him.

Where's Paul?

ALFRED

Oh, here and there.

MARIE-LOUISE

Is he … very upset?

ALFRED

Well, yes. I should say that Paul is very upset.

MARIE-LOUISE

I met Father coming out of church. He told me.

ALFRED

Told you?

MARIE-LOUISE

Don't you know? About Uncle Henri.

ALFRED

Oh, that one! Yes.

MARIE-LOUISE

How awful!

ALFRED

I don't see why you should go into mourning -- considering.

MARIE-LOUISE

You don't understand. I said, how awful, because I should feel sorry, and I don't. Why are you staring at me?

ALFRED

Staring? No. I was just thinking of what you just said.

Joseph and Jules enter from the garden.

You know, you might think you're losing something, when you're really not. Sometimes you can be in love with something that doesn't even exist.

MARIE-LOUISE

What are you hiding from me?

ALFRED

Well…

Looks to Joseph and Jules for help.

MARIE-LOUISE

What's happened? Where's Paul? Are you trying to hint he -- he doesn't love me? Is that it?

Crosses right between the two convicts.

Now that he's free, he doesn't want me? Is that it?

JOSEPH

He wants you, and loves you madly.

JULES

As much as you love him.

JOSEPH

He said something to us this morning that you should know.

MARIE-LOUISE

What?

JOSEPH

He said, "Gentlemen", he said, "death has made me free to marry my adorable Marie-Louise, and only death can part us now."

MARIE-LOUISE

He said that?

JULES

Even more eloquently.

JOSEPH

If that's conceivable. He said, and these are his very words: "She doesn't realize how shy I am. How can I tell her nothing in this world matters as much to me as her love? Ambition? Wealth? Pouf!"

JULES

Snaps his fingers.

"For her", he said, "I'd dig ditches…"

JOSEPH

"Or pick pockets…"

JULES

Yes.

MARIE-LOUISE

This is amazing. He's so reserved, generally, and he confided in you,

JOSEPH

The shock of his uncle's death, you know? He had to talk to someone.

MARIE-LOUISE

And, I wasn't here. Where is he?

JULES

I think he's with your mother.

MARIE-LOUISE

Excuse me.

She exits downstage left, crossing below the table.

ALFRED

Puts the cage on the bureau.

What's the idea?

JULES

It's a civilized custom to praise the dead. It helps the living.

JOSEPH

Crossing to chair, right. Sits.

We wanted to give her a memorial. She'll need one.

JULES

Time will heal the wound. Let her at least cherish the memory.

JOSEPH

She's young. Someone'll come along. Someone always does.

JULES

It won't be you, Alfred, unfortunately. It could have been. It'll be someone else.

Crosses to the back of Joseph.

She won't love him a much as the mythical Paul, but she'll love him enough.

JOSEPH

The bell will ring -- and there he'll be.

Shop doorbell rings. The three start. Joseph rises, moves to Alfred. But it is Felix who enters. He hands up his hat.

FELIX

Crossing to them.

What a time I've had. The doctor'll be along soon.

JOSEPH

Good. He has his work cut out for him.

FELIX

My wife still in her room?

JULES

Yes.

FELIX

Crossing left.

I thought last night I'd be spending an entirely different kind of Christmas.

Turns to them.

Life is strange.

JULES

Isn't it?

FELIX

Cheerfully.

Things work out somehow.

Stops.

What am I saying?

Guiltily.

I've got to see my wife.

Exits.

ALFRED

Well, back to the roof!

JULES

I guess so.

JOSEPH

It's too much to ask destiny to send along the young man we're waiting for at this precise moment. Still it would have been neater somehow.

The shop bell rings. They look at each other, then step up towards the shop entrance, stop and wait. An extremely handsome young man in white naval uniform enters. They stare at him.

Yes?

LIEUTENANT

I beg your pardon, but there was no one in the shop. This is M. Ducotel's, isn't it?

JULES

It is.

LIEUTENANT

I suppose you work for him?

JOSEPH

We do.

LIEUTENANT

I've just landed, and I have a letter of introduction from friends in Cherbourg. May I see him?

JOSEPH

Crossing to him.

Forgive a question, sir. Are you married?

LIEUTENANT

I beg your pardon?

ALFRED

Well, are you?

LIEUTENANT

No. Why?

JULES

Crossing to Joseph.

We were just wondering.

JOSEPH

You'll have to make certain allowances -- have a little patience -- you've chosen a rather peculiar time to appear.

LIEUTENANT

Peculiar?

JOSEPH

There's been a death here.

JULES

Two, in fact.

LIEUTENANT

I'm sorry to hear that.

JOSEPH

You needn't be.

LIEUTENANT

Perhaps I should come back later.

JOSEPH

Oh no, no. Don't move. You stay right there.

JULES

Life's too short. Have a chair.

Points to armchair.

LIEUTENANT

But…

JOSEPH

Sit down, sir.

The lieutenant moves towards the chair. Marie-Louise enters from downstage left and as she moves towards the garden comes face-to-face with the young man.

MARIE-LOUISE

Seeing the stranger.

Pardon me…

Crosses to the gate below the table. The lieutenant turns to watch her.

Why didn't you tell me Paul was in the garden? There he is. He's sitting out there on the bench. He looks as if he's fallen asleep…

Turns to the three convicts.

… waiting for me.

JOSEPH

It's nice to know someone's waiting for you.

Looks at the lieutenant.

MARIE-LOUISE

Smiles.

Yes.

She exits to the garden.

LIEUTENANT

Was that Mademoiselle Ducotel?

JOSEPH

Uhuh.

LIEUTENANT

She's charming!

ALFRED

Turns to him.

Yes, she is.

JOSEPH

You're charming, too.

LIEUTENANT

I beg your pardon?

JOSEPH

You even look intelligent, which is more than we'd hoped for.

LIEUTENANT

Well, now, really!

JULES

Sit down. Relax. Close your eyes. You've got nothing to do -- except wait.

The lieutenant sits. Jules crosses left to him. Alfred picks up his hat at the foot of the ladder, then goes to the bureau.

LIEUTENANT

If I closed my eyes, I'd be asleep in a minute. I was up all night on the ship.

JOSEPH

Well then, sleep, sir, sleep.

Felix enters, followed by Emilie.

FELIX

Staring.

Who's he?

JOSEPH

The future.

Marie-Louise's cry is heard.

EMILIE

Marie-Louise!

She moves towards the garden and exits, followed by Felix. The lieutenant hasn't stirred.

JOSEPH

She's found happiness -- and doesn't know it. Let's pack for the final departure of our beloved departed.

They exit solemnly into Henri's room. Mme. Parole enters from the shop.

MME PAROLE

Hello! Mme. Ducotel? Monsieur? Marie-Louise? I just heard the tragic news.

She sees the lieutenant's arm hanging over the side of the chair.

Such a shock -- so suddenly -- unexpected -- I have come to express my condolences.

She squeezes the hand. The lieutenant startles and jumps up.

LIEUTENANT

Pardon me. Mme. Ducotel?

MME PAROLE

Who are you?

LIEUTENANT

I have just landed. I have a letter of introduction from your sister in Cherbourg.

MME PAROLE

I don't have a sister in Cherbourg.

Joseph, Jules and Alfred enter from Henri's room, in solemn procession, carrying two suitcases, Henri's coat and hat.

Who is he?

They ignore her and place the suitcases side by side, drape the coat over it, and place the hat on top of the "coffin". Felix enters from the garden, shaken.

FELIX

I can't believe it. First Henri -- now Paul.

LIEUTENANT

Crosses to Felix.

M. Ducotel? I have a letter of introduction from Mme Ducotel's sister.

FELIX

In a trance.

I can't understand it.

LIEUTENANT

Well, I have just landed…

FELIX

Paul -- Paul is dead.

Joseph, Jules and Alfred exchange glances, expressing deep felt sympathy to Felix and exit into Paul's room.

MME PAROLE

Paul? I thought it was M. Trochard. In fact, I know it was M. Trochard. I saw him with my own…

FELIX

They're both dead.

MME PAROLE

Both? How dreadful. Are you certain?

Joseph, Jules and Alfred re-enter from Paul's room, place suitcases and Paul's coat and hat in same arrangement beside Henri's.

MME PAROLE

This is an outrage! Unheard of. Incredible! I must inform the authorities immediately.

Joseph, Jules and Alfred step into her path and indicate to her to be quiet in the presence of death. Emilie and Marie-Louise enter from the garden. Marie-Louise is sobbing and clinging to Emilie. Alfred goes to them and provides support for Marie-Louise as Emilie goes to Felix. They embrace quietly, with dignity. The orchestra plays a solemn requiem. Joseph leads Mme. Parole to between the "coffins", and makes her kneel down. Jules leads Emilie and Felix to Henri's "coffin" They also kneel to pay their respects.

Alfred leads Marie-Louise to Paul's "coffin". She breaks down beside it. Joseph leads the bewildered lieutenant to beside Marie-Louise. Having arranged the grouping, they arrange themselves and take off their hats.

JOSEPH

Song #15: Kyrie Eleison

KYRIE ELEISON! CHRISTE ELEISON!

ALFRED

GLORIA IN EXCELSIS DEO, ET IN TERRA PAX
HOMINIBUS BONAE VOLUNTATIS.

JULES

LAUDAMUS TE, BENEDICIMUS TE,
ADORAMUS TE, GLORIFICAMUS TE.

MME PAROLE

GRATIAS AGIMUS TIBI PROPTER MAGNAM GLORIAM TUAM.

EMILIE

DOMINE DEUS, REX COELESTIS!
DEUS PATER OMNIPOTENS!
DOMINE, FILI UNIGENITE, JESU CHRISTE!

FELIX

DOMINE DEUS! AGNUS DEI! FELIUS PATRIS.

ALFRED

FELIX EST BETTER OFF.

EMILIE, FELIX

QUI TOLLIS PECCATA MUNDI.

JOSEPH

MONDAY THEY'LL BE SAILING HOME.

EMILIE, FELIX, MME. PAROLE

MISERERE NOBIS, SUSCIPE DEPRECATIONEM NOSTRAM.

JULES

NOT SO BAD THE WAY THINGS TURNED OUT.

EMILIE, FELIX, MME. PAROLE

QUI SEDES AD DEXTERAM PATRIS, MISERERE NOBIS.

ALFRED

MISERABLE NOT FOR LONG.

EMILIE, FELIX, MME. PAROLE

QUONIAM TU SOLUS SANCTUS,

JOSEPH

THEY'LL THANK US, IF THEY EVER PUT IT TOGETHER.

EMILIE, FELIX, MME. PAROLE

TU SOLUS DOMINUS, TU SOLUS ALTISSIMUS, JESU CHRISTE!

JULES

CUM SANCTO SPIRITU IN GLORIA DEI PATRIS

COMPANY

AMEN.

Marie-Louise has composed herself. The convicts move away to the ladder.

MARIE-LOUISE

SANCTUS DOMINUS DEUS SABAOTH.

PLENI SUNT COELI ET TERRA GLORIA TUA.
OSANNA IN EXCELSIS!

COMPANY

BENEDICTUS QUI VENIT IN NOMINE, DOMINI!
OSANNA IN EXCELSIS!

Alfred collects the cage. They start up the ladder.

ALFRED

Come along, Adolphe.

JOSEPH

Well, Your Honour, didn't we have a wonderful Christmas?

JULES

Yes, we did.

JOSEPH

Let's do it again next year.

As they reach the top of the ladder, they disappear from view.

COMPANY

AGNUS DEI, QUI TOLLIS PECCATA MUNDI,
MISERERE NOBIS, DONA NOBIS PACEM.

In a break in the music, hammering is heard from the rooftop as at the beginning of the play. All look upward. Mme. Parole makes sign of the cross. Emilie and Felix join hands and smile contentedly. Marie-Louise is shaken by her most violent sob of despair, an throws her arms around the lieutenant. He sheepishly puts his arms protectively around Marie-Louise.

Behind the house an enormous hot air balloon begins to rise into the sky. When the gondola comes into view, it contains three angelic looking convicts. We see them above the rooftops slowly rising higher and higher as the music swells to a crescendo.

Curtain.

END OF PLAY