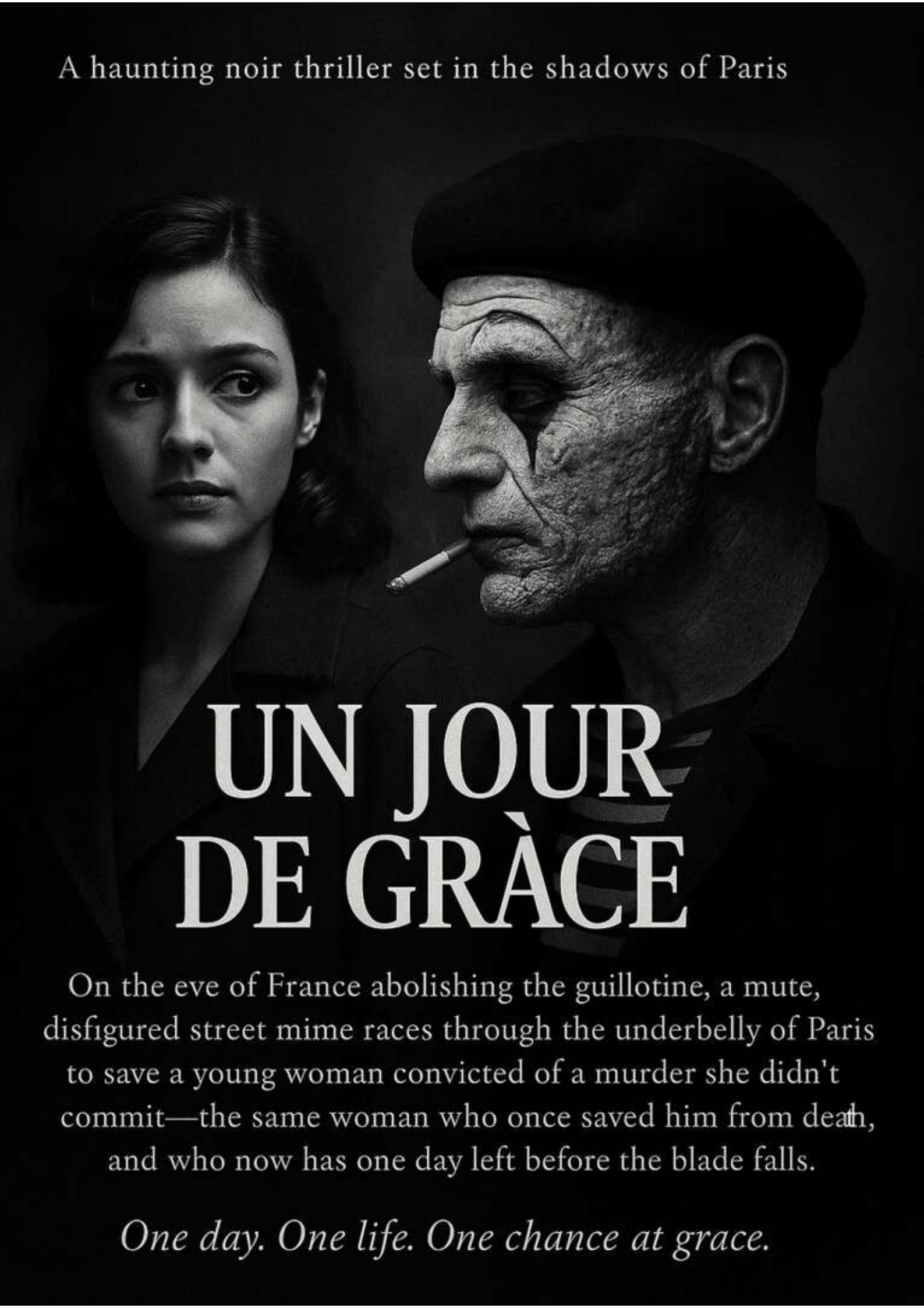


A haunting noir thriller set in the shadows of Paris

A black and white movie poster. The top half features a young woman on the left with dark hair, looking off-camera with a serious expression. To her right is a close-up of an older man's face, wearing a dark beret and smoking a cigarette. His face is heavily wrinkled and disfigured. The title 'UN JOUR DE GRÂCE' is centered in large, white, serif capital letters.

UN JOUR DE GRÂCE

On the eve of France abolishing the guillotine, a mute, disfigured street mime races through the underbelly of Paris to save a young woman convicted of a murder she didn't commit—the same woman who once saved him from death, and who now has one day left before the blade falls.

One day. One life. One chance at grace.

A DAY OF GRACE

By

Rutger Oosterhoff

&

ChatGPT-4

A short of feature ambition, a taut AI-collaborated neo-noir of shadows, suspense, and moral compromise brought to life by a world-class cast.

Slimane Dazi Rebecca De Mornay Adèle Haenel

To be directed by: Alexis Néret

Rutger Oosterhoff
't Schaar 17
1261 MP Blaricum
Noord-Holland
The Netherlands
Mobile: +310624763590
roosterhoff@outlook.com

RADIO ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
Despite the official abolition of
capital punishment, authorities
confirm a final, exceptional
measure will be carried out
tomorrow.

FADE IN:

ACT I: WAITING FOR GRACE

SUPERIMPOSE:

"PARIS — SUNDAY, MARCH 29, 1981 — DAWN"

Fog coils across the cobblestones.

The Seine glistens under the first pale light. A faint WIND
RATTLES IRON FENCES and TORN POSTERS.

A VENDOR (#1) pins up Le Journal du Dimanche on a bulletin
board:

"The GUILLOTINE ABOLISHED — FINAL EXECUTION THIS MONDAY"

Below the headline is a grainy photo of CLAIRE LEMARCHAND
(late 30s) in custody; bruised, *defiant*.

A MIME (50s) stands still nearby, face painted white with a
single black tear beneath one eye.
Scars peek faintly beneath the makeup.

His eyes lock on the poster. A blink. A tremor runs through
him, subtle, but total.

He reaches for the image, misses.
Sways, just slightly, as if the ground shifts.

Steps back. Breath caught.

The street falls silent. Faces blur past. Only her image
stays sharp.

He presses a hand to his chest, and drops to the curb.

3 EXT. PRISON DE LA SANTÉ - MORNING 3

Cold, symmetrical, oppressive.

4 INT. CLAIRE'S CELL - CONTINUOUS 4

Small. Damp. No window.

Claire sits on a cot. Her hair is cropped. Her posture straight.

Across from her a PRIEST finishes a prayer.

PRIEST
You may still speak with God. Even
now.

She looks at him, No anger. No fear.

CLAIRE
God wasn't at my trial.

5 FLASHBACK - INT. POLICE VAN - NIGHT (1975) 5

Dim interior. RAIN SPATTERS the WINDOWS.

Claire, early 30s, sits handcuffed between TWO OFFICERS.

The OFFICER on Claire's left (40s) holds a **clipboard**.

OFFICER
Just sign. It's done either way.

Claire doesn't even look at it.

CLAIRE
I won't confess to a lie.

OFFICER
Suit yourself.

He tosses the clipboard aside. Claire stares forward, fierce, unblinking.

6 INT. CLAIRE'S CELL - MORNING (BACK TO PRESENT) 6

She exhales, slow, steady. Looks down at her hands.

Her wrists are bruised, skin pinched and purpling beneath the steel.

CLAIRE
 (to herself)
 They didn't want truth. Just
 someone to blame.

7 **EXT. CITY STREETS - MORNING**

7

The mime peels off his costume, revealing worn civilian clothes underneath.

From a nearby trash bin, he pulls a scrap of cardboard.

With charcoal, he **draws a single bold line** from a street corner to the prison.

Halfway the line, he presses a dark charcoal dot and quickly scribbles two words next to it:

INSERT - CARDBOARD:

"ELISE'S FLAT"

He folds the paper and starts walking. Past cafes, past tourists, past posters for movies and politics.

Every step *purposeful*. Every second *ticking*.

"UN JOUR DE GRÂCE"

8 **FLASHBACK - INT. PARIS BACK ALLEY - NIGHT (1975)**

8

RAIN LASHES the STREETS. Yellow lamplight flickers over garbage bins and puddles.

A YOUNGER version of the MIME, unpainted, is dragged by TWO COPS in uniform. His coat is torn. Blood on his lip. He doesn't speak. Doesn't resist.

A THIRD COP follows behind, holding a truncheon stick.

COP #1
 Used to be a cop, this one.
 Algiers. Thought he could clean up
 their mess.

COP #2
 Now look at him. Tongue cut, face
 like a puzzle.

A FIGURE steps out of the shadows.

It's CLAIRE. A bag of groceries lies forgotten behind her.
She moves between the cops and the mime.

CLAIRE
He's done nothing. Let him go.

COP #1
Keep walking Miss. Nothing to see
here.

She doesn't move, instead, she pulls something from her coat
— a camera.

FLASH! The bulb explodes with light.

CLAIRE
Try explaining that to the paper.

Tense silence. The mime's nose drips blood. Her jaw clenches.

The third cop lifts the truncheon —
A blur — he swings.

She raises her arm, THWACK! The blow lands on her wrist.

She gasps, just once. But stays standing.

The cops hesitate, then back off. They glance at each
other... Walk away.

COP #2
You're lucky he's mute. Would have
hung himself with his own tongue.

They disappear into the night fog.

The mime slowly straightens, unsteady, stumbles.

She approaches.

From under her coat, she pulls a **soft scarf**.

But she doesn't hand it over yet.

Instead:

With a trembling wrist, she gently dabs his cheek with her
scarf.

Wipes the blood from his nose.

He flinches. Slowly relaxes.

Then — and only then — she offers him the scarf.

CLAIRE
Don't let them break you.

He lifts one hand, pantomimes **"thank you"**.

She half-smiles. Turns. Doesn't look back.

9 **EXT. PARK BENCH - MIDDAY (BACK TO PRESENT)**

9

The mime sits alone.

He opens his sketchbook, the first PAGE CRACKLES. A drawing, old, almost worn through: **Claire dabbing his bloody cheek**. The gesture that saved him.

He stares at it. For a long beat.

He tears the scarf she gave him years ago into a strip, ties it around his wrist: a warrior's binding, a reminder that grace comes at a cost.

He rises.

10 **INT. CROWDED MÉTRO TRAIN (MOVING) - EARLY AFTERNOON**

10

Dark tunnels. Flickering overhead lights.

The mime stands among strangers, invisible in plain sight. He clutches a worn sketch of her face.

His reflection slides across the métro window: a ghost chasing ghosts with nothing but silence and doubt.

ACT II: THE DESCENT

11 **INT. ELISE'S APARTMENT - EVENING**

11

Dust dances in the mime's flashlight beam. Heavy. The room is a time capsule from 1975, lined with notebooks and rotting reel-to-reel tapes.

A cracked photo frame holds a "La Liberté, October 1975" newspaper clipping.

Headline: "Elise Fournier's Final Story — Hidden Archive Scandal Exposed"

Caption below a black-and-white photo: "Elise shaking hands with a union rep"

He bypasses the clutter and locks his flashlight beam onto the wall. The investigative corkboard from 1975 is still here, covered in dust.

The mime steps forward and wipes the cobwebs away with his hand. The headline across the top of the board reads: "THE ILLEGAL LAND DEALS & KICKBACKS"

His eyes widen as he studies the index cards and Polaroids:

A Polaroid labeled: "Michel Deneuvebourg", circled in red. A second Polaroid next to it labeled: "Pierre Lamarque" (Minister's Son), circled in red. A thick, fading black line connects their two photos.

The mime tracks his finger down to the bottom corner of the board. Written in Elise's bold marker:

► "ARCH. 71-A" ► "Hidden basement access - Métro Ligne 9"

The mime's breath rattles. He scans the desk directly below the board and finds a shoe box labeled: "CLAIRE LEMARCHAND - 1975"

Inside:

- A weathered folder stamped:

"EVIDENCE WITHELD - SEE SUBFILE B"

- A typed witness list, one name crossed out in red:

"Mme. Roussel - neighbor"

- A burned letter fragment: "...she didn't do it. She arrived after. I saw—"

- A cassette labeled: "MICHEL - Sept 12, 1975"

He slides it into a battered tape recorder on the desk.
CLICKS PLAY.

MICHEL (ON TAPE)
She said she'd go public. That
letter, you still have it, don't
you? If I don't get the rest,
everyone finds out what I did. You
think I care? Let them. But she'll
go down too. She kept copies,
Pierre! The land deal, the
kickbacks...

(MORE)

MICHEL (ON TAPE) (CONT'D)
If Elise talks, my father's name is ruined. I go to prison. (voice cracks) I never meant to hurt her... But she wouldn't stop.

Silence. Then, a CLICK

12 **FLASHBACK - SILENT**

12

- Claire entering Elise's apartment
- Blood already on the floor
- Michel watching from across the street
- Mme. Roussel's silhouette behind lace curtains

13 **BACK IN THE ROOM**

13

The mime searches deeper into the shoebox. He pulls out a typed note with Elise's handwriting in the margin:

"Roussel confirmed timeline. Met Claire in stairwell 6:17 PM, too late to be killer."

Margin: *"Roussel dead. No witnesses."*

The mime stares back at the corkboard—at the code: "ARCH. 71-A — Métro Ligne 9"

He rips the municipal infrastructure map off the corkboard. Shoves the map, the cassette, and the files into his coat pocket and bolts into the night.

14 **FLASHBACK - INT. PRIVATE DINING CLUB - NIGHT**

14

Crystal chandeliers. Velvet chairs. MICHEL (40s) toasts with a GENERAL, a BANK EXECUTIVE, and PIERRE.

GENERAL

Monday's the last chop, they say.

PIERRE

A shame. Tradition had such... finality.

MICHEL

Some things deserve a clean end.

They laugh. COGNAC GLASSES CLINK. Michel's smile fades for a beat... then returns.

- 15 **MÉTRO TRAIN (MOVING) - NIGHTFALL (BACK TO PRESENT)** 15
- The mime rides again, soot-streaked, eyes hollow.
- In his lap: the folded map. The code. The names.
- A tunnel light flickers. Outside the window: a wall flashes past.
- GRAFFITI** – crude and urgent:
- "→ **ARCH. 71 - KEEP OUT**"
- The mime blinks. Leans forward.
As the train slows, he rises.
- 16 **EXT. SHUTTERED PLATFORM - CONTINUOUS** 16
- The TRAIN GROANS to a STOP. DOORS WHEEZE OPEN.
- He steps out.
- Old TILES CRACK beneath his FEET.
- Across the distant wall, the same message **repeated**, but this time older, **partially eroded**:
- "ARCH. 71 - KEEP OUT"**
- He scans the darkness.
- At the far end, behind broken scaffolding, he finds it: a half-collapsed access tunnel.
- Bricked over, but cracked wide enough to squeeze through.
- Torn tarp flaps across the opening. He pulls it aside. Slides in.
- 17 **INT. ACCESS TUNNEL - CONTINUOUS** 17
- The ceiling barely clears five feet, rough brick and mortar, arched and damp.
- He crawls hunched, knees scraping the gritty floor.
- Rusty pipes crisscross overhead.
- His flashlight beam flickers across rat droppings, a rusted wrench, an old gas mask.

At the far end, the bricks give way to rough, gray concrete.
A jagged opening, just wide enough. He squeezes through.

18 **INT. UNDERGROUND SERVICE CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS**

18

Colder. Narrower.

Flat concrete walls. Paint peeled back like skin.

An empty pipe rack hugs one side. The ceiling sags above.

His flashlight shakes in his hand.

WATER DRIPS, slow and rhythmic.

Up ahead, at the dead end:

19 **A SEALED FIRE DOOR**

19

Stenciled on it, faded and cracked:

"PRÉFECTURE POLICE ARCHIVES - 1970"

He grips the handle. Tries to pull.

Nothing. Stuck solid.

He drops to a knee, studies the base.

The door frame is blackened, a half-melted gasket fused to
the jamb. A burnt matchstick curls in the corner.

He wedges a broken pipe into the frame.

Pushes. Strains.

The PIPE SCREECHES.

Finally:

A dull POP. The latch gives.

The DOOR GROANS OPEN an inch.

20 **INT. ABANDONED POLICE ARCHIVE - CONTINUOUS**

20

Blackened cabinets lean like tombstones. Ash floats in his
lighter's glow.

The mime pries open a drawer: "C. LEMARCHAND - 1975"

One folder survives, charred but intact.

He opens it, carefully.

Inside:

- **POLICE REPORT** (partly burned):

"Witness: Mme. Roussel. Met Claire on Rue Keller at 6:17 PM, too late to commit homicide."

Stamped "**RECEIVED**"

Hand-scrawled: *"Disregard, witness now deceased."*

- **EMERGENCY CALL LOG:**

"Caller: Claire Lemarchand. Café des Deux Mondes, 6:05 PM"

Dispatch notes: "Caller distressed. Claimed to find victim upon entering."

- **ADDITIONAL POLICE MEMO** (burned edges): "Subject claims to have found the body at approx. 18:00"

Handwritten: "Why wait 5 minutes to call?"

Stamped: "INCONCLUSIVE — open for prosecution"

- **SCORCHED LETTER FRAGMENT:**

One torn scrap, ink faded, heat-blistered, but legible:

"... if anything happens to me..."
"she arrived after."

The mime freezes.

With a trembling, soot-stained hand, he pulls a hand-drawn map fragment from his inside pocket—the one he ripped from Elise's corkboard.

He lays it flat on the metal drawer, right beside the scorched letter.

The flashlight beam frames both pieces. The sharp, slanted cursive matches perfectly. Same ink. Same hand.

A chill runs through him.

As his thumb brushes the singed corner—

21 **FLASHBACK - INT. ELISE'S FLAT - NIGHT (1975 - MICHEL'S POV)** 21

The faint CLICK of a door handle.

A shaft of hallway light cuts into the dark as Michel slips inside, careful, silent.

Dim interior. Stifling.

Stacks of papers. Tapes.

A corkboard on the wall is covered in investigative notes. The headline on the board reads: "THE ILLEGAL LAND DEALS & KICKBACKS"

Index cards and Polaroids line the corkboard:

- A Polaroid labeled: "Michel Deneuvebourg", circled in red.
- A second Polaroid next to it labeled: "Pierre Lamarque" (Minister's Son), circled in red.
- A thick black line connects their two photos.

Michel's eyes dart —

On the table: a **complete letter**, crisp:

"... if anything happens to me, the land deal and the kickbacks will surface. He fled, she arrived after."

He grabs it. Folds it. Slides it into his coat.

A voice from the hallway:

ELISE (O.S.)
You weren't supposed to come here.

She appears, defiant.

MICHEL
You sent that letter. You wanted this.

ELISE
You think hush money can bury a murder? If anything happens to me... it doesn't stop.

She moves forward, shoves him.
He stumbles, knocks over a LAMP. CRASH.

She steps back, her heel catches the rug. She slips, hits the edge of the desk. THUD. Blood pools beneath her cheek.

Michel freezes. Trembling.
He wipes the lamp. Puts it upright.

Then—

FOOTSTEPS OUTSIDE.

Claire climbing the stairwell, groceries in hand.

Michel panics. Grabs his coat. The letter secure in his pocket. He starts to run, then stumbles. Nearly falls into the corkboard.

His eyes flick across it —
Everything laid out: the **cover-up**, the **names**, the **archive code**:

- ▶ "ARCH. 71-A"
- ▶ "Hidden basement access - Métro Ligne 9"

Another sound, the STAIRWELL DOOR CREAKS OPEN. CLAIRE'S FOOTSTEPS NEAR.

He bolts out the back. Just before the door shuts, he glances back:

Elise's body.
The empty table.
The corkboard still intact.

Too much to grab. He disappears into the night.

CUT BACK TO:

22 **INT. ABANDONED POLICE ARCHIVE - NIGHT (BACK TO PRESENT)** 22

The mime's grip tightens on the half-burned page.

23 **FLASHBACK - EXT. APARTMENT COURTYARD - NIGHT (1975)** 23

A BREEZE stirs curtains.

Above, MME. ROUSSEL, silver-haired, stern, leans close to the window.

Her eyes narrow as she watches below.

Claire enters the building's stairwell.

Mme. Roussel doesn't move. Watches Claire disappear inside.

24 **INT. ABANDONED POLICE ARCHIVE - NIGHT (BACK TO PRESENT)** 24

The mime tucks Elise's charred page and the notes into his coat.

He pauses, then turns for the exit.

He freezes.

A STRAY DOG sits in the middle of the corridor. Mangy. Alert. Watching him. It must have followed him through the tunnel.

A long beat.

The mime shoos it gently, miming "Go."

The dog cocks its head.

A tense PAW forward.

STRAY DOG

WOOF!

The mime, startled, slips on ash, catches himself, then bolts.

25 **INT. UNDERGROUND SERVICE CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS** 25

He runs back the way he came, the dog bounding after.

26 **INT. ACCESS TUNNEL - CONTINUOUS** 26

He crawls quickly through the jagged break, up the sloped tunnel, lungs burning.

27 **EXT. ARCHIVE TRENCH - CONTINUOUS** 27

He bursts out into the cold air, gasping — the dog scrambles out behind him, tail wagging wildly.

They pause, then split. The mime darts away.

The dog sniffs the air... and **struts** the other way.

28 **INT. MARTINE'S APARTMENT - OFFICE (RUE DU TEMPLE) - NIGHT** 28

Books stacked in towers. News clippings on the walls.

INSERT - WALL CLIPPINGS:

"LA GRÂCE REFUSÉE - By Martine Vernet"

"COLD JUSTICE: The Guillotine's Last Victims"

MARTINE (60s), sharp-eyed, studies a clipping, her jaw tightens.

MARTINE
(to herself)
Wrote it too many times. Never
changed a damn thing...

OFFSCREEN EDITOR (V.O.)
Your column's dead unless you get
Lemarchand. We need something that
sells.

Martine slams a key. The typewriter jams. She lights a cigarette.

She opens a lower drawer.

Inside:

A **black-and-white photo**.

Two young women, **Martine** on the left, the other: **Elise**.
Bright-eyed, alive. Their arms wrapped around each other,
wine in hand.

Martine studies it.

She runs a thumb along Elise's smile, then glances up.

Above her desk:

A newer photo tacked to a **corkboard**: **Claire's mugshot** shows
her, bruised but defiant, beside Elise's press badge.

Martine walks to it. Fingers the corner.

MARTINE
I saw it. I just... looked away.

29

EXT. PARIS METRO STATION - EARLY MORNING (4:15 AM)

29

The mime exits the subway stairwell into the freezing night
air. Soot smears his civilian clothes. He tightens the strip
of Claire's scarf around his wrist.

He checks his wristwatch. 4:15 AM. The numbers bleed under the streetlamps. He runs toward the Rue du Temple.

30 **INT. MARTINE'S APARTMENT - OFFICE - EARLY MORNING (4:30AM)** 30

Martine, still wearing yesterday's clothes, stares at a rejection letter flat on her desk under a single lamp.

INSERT - FORM LETTER:

"Visitation Denied: Claire Lemarchand. Authority signature: M. Deneuvebourg."

MARTINE

Michel Deneuvebourg. You bastard.
You're still protecting them.

A sharp, frantic pounding at the door. BANG-BANG-BANG.

Martine yanks it open. The mime enters, breathless, slamming the door behind him. He pulls the soot-stained files from his coat.

Martine steps back, her eyes widening as she looks past his civilian clothes and focuses on the jagged scars on his jaw.

MARTINE (CONT'D)

(shaken)

Lucien... The Algiers detective.
The Lamarque probe... I thought
they killed you in '75.

The mime doesn't waste time on a nod. He dumps the files across her desk, beside the old photos of Elise.

Martine scans the charred reports and scorched letter fragment.

She stops.

Her eyes flick from one document to another.

MARTINE (CONT'D)

Jesus...

Lucien slams his gloved hand down on the red stamp:

"DISREGARD"

He shakes his head, his fists tight.

MARTINE (CONT'D)

Why bury an alibi?

Lucien points to the cassette labeled "MICHEL".

He pushes it into her desktop recorder and punches PLAY.

MICHEL (ON TAPE)
...The land deal, the kickbacks...
*If Elise talks, my father's name is
ruined. I go to prison...*

Martine hits STOP.

She tears open the document marked SUBFILE B and compares it against the archive records.

Lucien watches.

Martine slowly draws a red line connecting Michel Deneuvebourg and Pierre Lamarque.

MARTINE
The sons. Elise had both of them.

She looks up.

MARTINE (CONT'D)
When she died, their fathers buried everything.

She flips another page.

MARTINE (CONT'D)
Michel's father is the Supreme Judge. Lamarque controls the ministry. No witnesses. No files. No case.

Her eyes move across the evidence spread over the desk.

MARTINE (CONT'D)
They didn't protect the truth. They protected their sons.

She catches a handwritten note at the bottom of Subfile B.

Her breath shortens.

MARTINE (CONT'D)
(shaken)
Michel... Claire... Step-siblings.
Same roof. Two years.

A beat.

MARTINE (CONT'D)
He buried her like she was a
stranger.

She glances at the wall clock: 4:35 AM.

MARTINE (CONT'D)
My contact at Santé called. They're
prepping Claire for six. We have
less than an hour.

Lucien pushes the files toward her.

Martine studies the evidence.

MARTINE (CONT'D)
Then we make it public.

Martine shovels the evidence into her leather bag and grabs
her coat.

MARTINE (CONT'D)
We go together. No masks now.

Lucien nods.

They bolt through the door, disappearing into the dark
stairwell.

31 **INT. PRISON CELL - EARLY MORNING**

31

Claire is alone.

The sun cuts a square on the wall.

A GUARD (#1) opens the door. She rises calmly.

GUARD #1
You have one hour in the chapel.
Then... back here.

She walks with quiet dignity.

32 **INT. PRISON CHAPEL - EARLY MORNING**

32

Claire kneels. Silent. Not praying.

From her sleeve, she slips a folded sketch, drawn by the
Lucien. A child. A street corner. Birds in flight.

Her eyes well. But she doesn't cry.

INTERCUT — Claire hides a scrap of paper under her sleeve:

"REQUEST FOR RETRIAL - NEW EVIDENCE"

— unsigned.

A GUARD (#2) confiscates it, drops it in a trash basket as he exits.

Claire glares at the guard, starts to speak, then turns her head forward, remains silent.

33

EXT. PARIS STREETS - DAWN

33

Lucien and Martine rush through the streets. They stop at a news kiosk.

MARTINE

The minister's already sweating. We get this in print, we walk in and show it to him — he has to choose: her head or his.

Lucien slaps down the **evidence** and...

The VENDOR (#2) shrugs, unimpressed.

MARTINE (CONT'D)

Where's Gérard?

VENDOR

Hungover. Again.

They run on, time is short.

34

INT. NEWSPAPER BASEMENT PRESSROOM - DAWN

34

An old man, GÉRARD (70s), smokes and stares at the file.

GÉRARD

You're serious?

Martine holds his gaze. Gérard hesitates, then glances at the Lucien.

A long pause.

He stubs out his cigarette.

GÉRARD (CONT'D)
 I'll print it. But getting it to
 the Palace in time... that's on
 you.

Lucien clenches his fists, then bows slightly.

35

INT. NEWSROOM - DAWN

35

Gérard hunched over a desk, typing furiously.

Headline takes shape:

"Suppressed Witness Resurfaces in Lamarque Scandal"

A sub-headline:

"Whistleblower Tied to Judge's Murder - Truth Buried for
 Decades"

Photo of young Elise Fournier (archival), beside a **blurry
 surveillance still** of Mme. Roussel at her window - the name
 circled in red pen:

"Mme. Roussel - neighbor"

A reel-to-reel tape recorder plays Michel's blackmail
 confession:

MICHEL (ON TAPE)
 ...The land deal, the kickbacks. If
 Elise talks, my father's name is
 ruined. I never meant to hurt
 her...

Gérard covers his mouth.

GÉRARD
 Jesus...

Lucien trembles, lips cracked...

LUCIEN
 Cl...Claire.

Martine's eyes well up. She nods softly.

MARTINE
 Yes. For Claire.

CUT TO:

PRINTING PRESS CLATTERS. Sheets rush through.

Gérard slaps a finished proof down:

"They Called Her Guilty – But She Was Silenced"

Martine turns—

Lucien is already gone.

She grabs a second proof, rushing after him.

36 **INT. PRISON - DAWN**

36

Claire stands at the small barred window of her cell.

The sky turns **pink and bruised purple**.

She touches the sketch again, presses it to her chest.

37 **EXT. PARIS STREETS - DAWN**

37

Lucien runs, coat flaring, newspaper and files clutched like a lifeline... he stops, reaches into one pocket, then another. Nothing. He turns them inside out.

A single **BUTTON FALLS**.

He **freezes** for a beat. Then takes off, **running**.

CUT TO:

38 **EXT. CHÂTELET MÉTRO ENTRANCE - DAWN**

38

Martine jogs toward the stairs.

She digs into her coat pocket, pulls out her **wallet**.

The coin pouch, empty.

She checks the other pocket — only a lint covered mint.

MARTINE
(under her breath)
Of course.

She turns, scanning the street, then **takes off in the opposite direction**, **HEELS CLACKING** like gunfire on the **STONE**.

CUT TO:

39

INT. PALAIS DE JUSTICE - MINISTER'S OFFICE - DAWN

39

Lucien slams the file down on the desk in front of MAÎTRE
LEBRUN (50s), Chief Legal Officer to the Minister of Justice.

LEBRUN

Jesus... they said it was clean. No
witnesses. No surviving files.

(slower)

That's what was in the report.

Lebrun places the folder down, gently. Doesn't meet the
Lucien's eyes.

LEBRUN (CONT'D)

I remember her name. Fournier. She
was... loud. Determined. Made
enemies.

(beat)

Then one day... her name stopped
coming up.

He steps to the intercom.

LEBRUN (INTO INTERCOM) (CONT'D)

I need two minutes with the
Minister. Urgently.

INTERCOM (V.O.)

He's preparing for the Palace.
You've got one.

LEBRUN

(to Lucien)

Wait here.

Lebrun exits through the side door.

The clock: **5:43 AM.**

Lucien waits, anxious.

Lebrun returns, holding a signed and stamped order.

*****STAY OF EXECUTION - MINISTERIAL ORDER*****

LEBRUN (CONT'D)

Effective immediately.

(beat)

But it's not valid until they have
it in hand.

Lucien grabs it, already running.

40 INT. PRISON - DAWN 40

Claire is taken to the...

41 INT. PREPARATION CELL - DAWN 41

A black dress lies folded on a chair.

The GUARD (#1) closes the door slowly. The bolt echoes.

42 EXT. PALAIS DE JUSTICE - DAWN 42

Lucien stumbles down the steps. Martine runs to meet him.

MARTINE
What did they say?

Lucien holds up the document.

She grabs his arm and flags down a passing **yellowed Peugeot taxi.**

MARTINE (CONT'D)
(to driver, urgent)
La prison de la Santé. Vite!

43 INT. TAXI - MOVING - MOMENTS LATER 43

Lucien and Martine jolt in the back seat.

Martine fumbles for **paper bills**.

MARTINE
(to driver)
There's no time. Don't stop.

She presses the money forward. The driver nods, accelerates.

ACT III - THE SACRIFICE

44 EXT. STREETS OF PARIS - DAYBREAK 44

The **taxi** tears through the sleeping city.

Time: 5:50 AM.

45 **INT. TAXI - MOVING - CONTINUOUS**

45

Martine leans forward, urging the driver on.

Beside her, Lucien clutches the **stay of execution**, creased and damp from his hands.

They swerve through alleys, and bypass blockades.

46 **INT. PRISON - PREPARATION ROOM - DAYBREAK**

46

Claire stands, hands cuffed, dressed in plain black, hair tightly pulled back.

TWO GUARDS (#3-#4), escort her toward the yard.

47 **INT. PRISON - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS**

47

Claire passes a window; the faintest blue light peeks through.

A tear rolls down her cheek. She breathes deeply – one last act of courage.

48 **EXT. PRISON YARD**

48

The PRIEST waits near the **guillotine**. His lips move in silent prayer.

GUARD #3 glances at his **wristwatch**, an old government-issue timepiece.

INSERT - WRISTWATCH:

5:59:30 AM.

The SECOND HAND TICKS.

The **guillotine** looms, metallic, cold, **final**.

She kneels. Her head is positioned in the lunette. No resistance.

GUARD #3
CLAIRE LEMARCHAND... une dernière
déclaration?

SILENCE.

49

EXT. PRISON GATES - DAYBREAK

49

The TAXI SCREECHES to a halt.

MARTINE
...Shit. Daylight Saving started
today... Claire is dead... unless
they forgot to change the
clocks...?

Lucien bursts out, clutching a **folded document**, running full-tilt toward the gate.

A RIFLE-BEARING GUARD (#5), steps in his path, weapon rising.

MARTINE scrambles from the car, waving another copy of **the order**.

MARTINE (CONT'D)
Stay of execution! Signed by the
Minister!

The GUARD keeps the rifle trained. Lucien closes fast, then stop.

Martine plants herself between barrel and Lucien.

MARTINE (CONT'D)
Shoot him and every paper in Paris
runs your face above the fold.

The guard hesitates, eyes flicking to the **official seal** on her paperwork.

He lowers the weapon.

Lucien slips through the gates; he's inside before anyone else can react.

50

EXT. PRISON YARD - CONTINUOUS

50

Guards raise their rifles. One yells.

GUARD
Intruder!

LUCIEN
St...st...stop!

Lucien waves the paper — but it's too late.

A SHOT RINGS OUT.

He **staggers**, clutches his chest, but keeps walking.

Another shot, he falls to one knee, then **drags** himself toward the scaffold.

The executioner hesitates.

A SENIOR OFFICER yells:

SENIOR OFFICER
Hold your fire!

A beat of stunned silence.

51 **INT. GUILLOTINE PLATFORM - CONTINUOUS** 51

Claire raises her head slightly. She blinks, eyes soften. A breath escapes. Her body relaxes.

Lucien trembles. He lifts his sleeve, revealing Claire's scarf tied around his wrist.

Claire's eyes fill with tears. She whispers, barely audible:

CLAIRE
It's you.

Lucien nods. Collapses at the base of the scaffold.

52 **EXT. PRISON YARD - LATER** 52

Claire walks out of the gates — **free**.

Martine stands nearby, speechless.

Lucien's body is gone.

But in Claire's hands:

His **sketchbook** and **white gloves**.

53 **EXT. SEINE RIVERBANK - MORNING (AFTER SUNRISE)** 53

A gentle breeze.

On a small platform, near the water, a **new mime** performs.

It's Claire.

No makeup.

Just a coat, and his white gloves.

She performs the mime's old gesture, the one he once made for her:

"Merci, LUCIEN..."

FADE TO WHITE.

FINAL TITLE CARD:

Un Jour de Grâce
One day. One life. One chance at grace.

A woman with dark, wavy hair stands in profile, facing right. She is wearing a dark, knee-length coat and white gloves. Her hands are held out, palms up, in a gesture of offering or prayer. She is standing on a stone ledge or walkway. The background is a body of water reflecting the warm, golden light of a sunset. The sky is filled with soft, hazy clouds. The overall mood is contemplative and serene.

Merci, Lucien.