

THE NAME HAS A PRICE

Written by

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MAIN CHARACTERS:

MANETTE MAUDET – Protagonist and antagonist. Partner of Maurice.

NOEMIE MAUDET – Sister of Manette and writer.

MAURICE DECHANET – Engineer and partner of Manette.

JEAN CLARK – Police officer from London and antagonist.

LUCIE – Friend of Manette & Noemie's

MANON MAUDET – Manette and Noemie's mother

NOTE:

When the text has an underline, it means that the word is emphasised upon.

Though set in France, the script is entirely in English. There are some French phrases or words that are used for cultural reference.

"Two traits are essential in a criminal: boundless egoism and strong destructive urge – caused by an absence of love, and lack of emotional appreciation of human objects"
– Sigmund Freud

ACT ONE.

EXT. TOULOUSE CITY CENTRE, 1964 – DAY

Across town, MANETTE MAUDET and her school friend, LUCIE, are talking. They are to meet Manette's sister, NOEMIE, at the train station.

They quickly walk arm in arm.

The mood is lighthearted and warm, as the scene and dialogue bear positivity.

MANETTE

I had a job at St Paul's Cathedral for years.
I pretended to be catholic so much
that I thought I was!

Lucie giggles.

MANETTE

I always thought that people used
to sneak in there as nuns?
In the 40s?

Manette gives a look of amusement to her friend.

LUCIE (CONT'D)

How many days until...or do you
think Maurice will ask you?

MANETTE

Seven days? I saw the ring already.

LUCIE

I mean, he's stolen his grandfather's inheritance now

MANETTE

Stolen is a bit harsh, cherie.
But he pretty much is a disjointed reinterpretation
of Victor Hugo's Marius Pontmercy.

Lucie's eyes widen as they walk away laughing and heels clicking. They arrive at the train station.

INT. TRAIN STATION – CONTINUOUS

They are looking around for Noemie. A train whistles. A sophisticated Noemie smoothly gets off the train, the script in hand, and walks outside the station to find her sister.

Manette and Lucie turn around to see Noemie running towards them. Manette shouts, surprised.

MANETTE

Ahh! Mi Amor!

The sisters hug enthusiastically. Noemie bashfully and playfully admits how she missed her sister, in a sing-song tone.

NOEMIE

How are you? I missed you.

MANETTE

Well, new look, 'Mi?

NOEMIE

Always.

The three girls link arms as they stridently walk. Noemie yawns loudly.

NOEMIE (CONT'D)

Uhhh, I'm tired!

MANETTE

I'm hungry, can we stop somewhere?

NOEMIE

Here.

Noemie hands Manette some disheveled looking pastry she picked up from Paris. Manette takes it like a greedy child.

MANETTE

Yes!

Lucie interrupts their usual complaining and dramatically flings her arms into the air, her voice echoing throughout the train station.

LUCIE

It's Manette and Maurice's fault!

Manette is eating a pastry. She leans over to Lucie, who walks on the far end.

MANETTE

What's my fault?

LUCIE

Noemie's book!

NOEMIE

My book.

Manette gives a worried look and sighs as they leave the station, walking in sync.

NOEMIE (CONT'D)

Manette, it will be a daring masterpiece.

MANETTE

Oh, so we're talking about this again.
You really can decide not to
write on my life.

NOEMIE

You love the attention, you're a Leo.

MANETTE

Well, I don't...oh! If it is possible, well
I could earn enough to move
out of that dingy rental.

MANETTE (CONT'D)

And I don't believe in star signs.

LUCIE

Oh! Ok, just hand over the royalties, Noemie.

Noemie ignores Lucie, leaning over to respond to her sister.

NOEMIE

Or go further south, to the seaside.
Not breathing in toxicity.

MANETTE

Hush-hush, I know you do like the city.

NOEMIE

Then you don't know me at all.

Manette rolls her eyes at her sister.

LUCIE

Is this the exit? Finally.

The girls walk into a lavish arts store, excitedly eyeing out the bouquet displays, as Manette sneakily meanders around.

Manette sifts through a rack of paintings, looking judgementally at the selection. She eyes one out, a copy of Caravaggio's 'Young Sick Bacchus'.

MANETTE

This could be good for my room.

NOEMIE

Eh.

MANETTE

Looks a bit like Maurice.

NOEMIE

Oh yeah!

MANETTE

After I make him drink too much wine.
Or it could be me.

LUCIE

Looks like me after a night out.

Lucie curiously searches, almost dancing as she tap walks past the artworks. Noemie reads her script as she steps nonchalantly through the store. Manette skeptically strolls towards the till, watching to make sure that no one can see her. Looking suspiciously at the cash register, she leans over to see further. She eyes out a stray cat on the cobblestone street out of the window, whilst it watches her shoplift some charcoals. She puts her finger up to her lips.

MANETTE

Shhhh.

Manette nods at the cat, as though it can understand and trusts her.

Noemie and Lucie leave, waving goodbye from the door of the shop. Straying off on her own in the opposite direction, Manette nonchalantly strolls into a chocolate shop and walks towards the chocolate stand with the stray cat in her arms. She walks towards a truffle stand. She speaks to the cat.

MANETTE

Not a three-box? Ok, we'll get a dozen.

Manette hurriedly puts the chocolates in her bag as she chats up the shopkeeper. Sparkling from the corner, she notices a glistening pistol, her eyes widening. She wanders a lap around the shop.

MANETTE

Have you seen anyone looking for a cat, by chance?
I found this guy wandering alone.

SHOPKEEPER

I'm afraid I haven't, my dear!
Are you taking him home?

MANETTE

No...

Manette thinks about how to distract the owner.

MANETTE

Do you know if you could call someone?
It'll be dark soon, now that we're in autumn,
you know? I don't know what to do.

SHOPKEEPER

Uh, I don't. I don't...let me get the phone.

As the store owner strolls away to find a phone, Manette sneaks behind the counter, picking up the shop's pistol as she begins to wander out.

As she closes the side door of the counter, the shopkeeper hears her, leaving the storeroom herself.

She notices the glint of the gun in Manette's coat pocket.

Manette blows her a kiss and exits clumsily out the door before the woman understands what is going on.

SHOPKEEPER

H-hey, what!? Wait, I am definitely using that phone!

The shopkeeper bursts out the door, starting to chase down Manette, before Manette herself turns around and slowly lifts the gun to point it up at the woman.

The shopkeeper stands still, terrified, as Manette slides the gun back into her coat pocket & instead makes a finger gun gesture, whispering 'bam!'.

Manette runs out and down the road, still clutching the cat and manically giggling to herself.

The sound of a crescendoing train on tracks is heard, signifying the oncoming danger for and immorality in Manette.

MUSIC CUE: 'The Chocolate Song' (joyful and old-school track)

We hear the lyrics: "*chocolate store, chocolate store
luxurious moments at the chocolate store
you will not regret your purchase for sure
here at the pleasing chocolate store...*"

INT. NOEMIE'S BOHEMIAN STYLED APARTMENT – DAY.

Noemie's lavishly styled apartment is filled with wooden antiques and victorian lights hanging from the ceiling, exuding comfort and charm.

Manette has already casually walked into Noemie's lounge area, with the cat in her arms.

Leaning over her writing desk, Noemie turns to glance over at her sister; a bewildered look on her face. She squints at Manette in amusement.

NOEMIE

Manette, you can't just steal cats!

MANETTE

But I didn't steal him,
he was just lonely, a stray I think.

Manette kisses the top of the cat's head whilst she strokes it as it begins to purr and smile. Noemie rolls her eyes and cracks a smile.

Interrupting the scene, Maurice surprisingly walks in and Noemie screams excitedly. Manette runs to embrace her fiancé as Noemie catches the cat falling from her sister's arms.

MANETTE

You cannot have him Noemie, I have told you
this before!

NOEMIE

Was just excited for him to write with me.

Maurice says nothing, but sweetly smiles and sits down with Noemie, Manette hugging him from behind.

MAURICE

Ok, what have we got?

Noemie responds theatrically, putting on an Italian accent.

NOEMIE

Amoré.

NOEMIE (CONT'D)

But it is a tricky one.

Diverting the attention back to herself, Manette reaches into her coat pocket, laying the stolen charcoals on the table for Noemie to see.

MANETTE

Welcome home. I know Paris
doesn't do the originals.

NOEMIE

Ohhhh!

Noemie hugs Manette, as Maurice admires his girlfriend and her sister bonding.

NOEMIE

Maurice, these will help. Won't they, Manette?

MAURICE

For making the writing very obviously obnoxious?

MANETTE

(teasing)

The illustrations, dim-dum.

MAURICE

I'm just guessing!

MANETTE

Well, Noemie does like the attention on her most days

NOEMIE

Hey! It is for illustrations.

MANETTE

Yes, Noemie was thinking of that. If we pose.

They all chuckle, sharing a moment. Maurice turns back to Noemie, excited and confident in sharing his ideas. He quickly stirs the conversation into a writing session.

MAURICE

It needs to be something original,
no one likes cliché. It can
be a tale about anything, as long
as it's convincing and intriguing.

NOEMIE

But don't...don't you think it's convincing?
I am confident that it will be.

MANETTE

(indifferent)

I suppose.

MAURICE

I don't just sell and repair cars,
I do the same for stories.

NOEMIE

I agree that it does need to be something wonderful,
but thank you, I also think it already is.

Noemie and Maurice talk over each other, getting into a groove whilst
sharing ideas. Manette hones in with comments to distract.

MAURICE

I don't know. You say you think it needs
to be something wonderful.

NOEMIE

Ok?

MAURICE

So you know something's wrong. You do need a
deeper complication in the root of the story.

NOEMIE

Oh, ouch.

MAURICE

No, not ouch. It's honest, where is the
interest? I don't feel anything that packs a punch.

NOEMIE

What?

MAURICE

It's all nice. Fluffy though.

NOEMIE

I don't know where you're getting this wondrous advice from. What did you study, M?

MAURICE

I didn't, but it's obvious.

As Manette interrupts to make a joking comment, the three's voices layer on top of each other, an impassioned discussion beginning.

MANETTE

(sarcastically)

You still don't have a degree?

Manette teases Maurice.

MANETTE

Oh my god, I've never seen you so critical!

MAURICE

What!? I know what can make it good, my uncle was a novelist and made over 40 francs a day.

MANETTE

That's because he's rich, chérie.
You now sit on a throne of assets.
I saw the Lagerfeld chaise in your sister's
strange, posh lounge

NOEMIE

Oh wow, Mazzetti. I know I want to make a fuck ton more than that to get by.

MANETTE

(slightly offended)

Hey!

MAURICE

(poking fun)

She's right, hey!

Maurice pouts cheekily at Manette, his eyes widening. Manette smiles, in awe of her partner at that moment.

MANETTE

Isn't he sweet, Noemie?

Maurice looks back to Manette. Manette mouths 'I love you' to him. He diverts his attention back to Noemie.

NOEMIE

I'm actually very hurt by your words.

MAURICE

Well, I'm the first to say them.

MANETTE

Oh, well done.

MAURICE

How often are you speaking with your publishing company?

NOEMIE

Always, but I don't have just one set up yet. It's difficult but I'm confidently speaking with advisors. It's for me to convince each of them that the story is worthy for the bookstands.

MANETTE

Yeah, maybe you should actually get one.

NOEMIE

Why is no one taking me seriously? I'm asking for help, not mockery.

MAURICE

(confused)

Why has this gotten so heated?

Manette is standing, watching the scene play out with her arms crossed.

MANETTE

You should look at the scene structure.

ONE WEEK LATER.

INT. MANETTE'S APARTMENT. DAY.

Manette's small apartment bursts with charm, her bedroom resembling an elegant, sensual boudoir.

In her room, she wakes up with Maurice, as he spoils her with kisses all over her face. Manette squeals and giggles excitedly.

MANETTE

Stop! Stop, my love.

Maurice grins widely and gets off of Manette. He goes on to surprise her with the chocolate truffles that she had shoplifted herself. He doesn't know where they came from.

MAURICE

Where did these come from?

MANETTE

I bought them. For you, my love.

Maurice stares at Manette in wonder. He sighs gently.

MAURICE

Then can I do something for you?

MANETTE

(hesitant)

I don't know.

Manette sits up in bed as Maurice shuffles closer to her. He takes out a 'chocolate box' and opens it up, revealing an engagement ring. His face twists in anticipation, staring directly at Manette. She ceases up, not knowing how to respond.

MAURICE

Say something, lovey.

Manette smiles widely as tears of 'joy' roll down her face as she still stares at the ring in adoration.

MANETTE

Yes, of course. Oh god, how could I say no?

Maurice breathes a sigh of relief, smiling.

Manette's reaction is brittle, the words feeling weak. She goes into hug Maurice, and he smiles shyly, grabbing her hand in comfort. Manette gives a malicious look over his shoulder, as she is unsure about her decision and takes more pride in the look of the ring.

MAURICE

(breathlessly)

God, I love you, I love you, I love you.

After leaving his embrace and giving him a peck on the lips, Manette gets out of bed and walks to the window. It is still dark and raining. Yawning, Maurice follows as he kisses her neck and smiles into her. As he leaves, beckoning Manette back into bed, her joyful tears turn reveal themselves to be ones of sorrow, as she frowns harshly. She cries, her face pressed on the cold window.

INT. NOEMIE'S APARTMENT – LATER THAT NIGHT.

Manette and Maurice meet to write with Noemie. They agree to not tell her of the news until she spots the ring, but Manette cannot help herself, as she knows that her sister would want to know immediately. Manette shoves open the door, her purse almost falling off of her shoulder.

MANETTE

(obnoxiously)

Ring ring, ring ring!

Noemie jumps on her sister's arrival, not expecting such a dramatic entrance.

As Noemie wanders over and Maurice enters the room, Manette wiggles her fingers to show off her ring.

Noemie looks at Maurice and, with a delayed response, shrieks in excitement, running to hug her sister.

Holding her sister's hand to see the ring, Noemie still stares up at Maurice with light in her eyes, her mouth slightly agape.

NOEMIE

Oh congratulations, congratulations.
I'm still working, but you need to help me and tell
me everything.

MAURICE

It was just, it just made sense. I don't know if
there's anything really to tell.

Manette smiles widely, already adoring the novelty of and attention that
comes with being engaged.

MAURICE

But have you started writing about me, N?
Made me sound better than I am?

NOEMIE

You are better than you think.

Manette is taken aback, wondering why her fiancé isn't talking about
their engagement. Her brow furrows, as she immediately grows nervous,
twisting her ring anxiously.

Maurice smiles and tickles Noemie, spilling the ink over the desk and
causing Manette to grow suspicious of their interaction. Manette walks
over to Maurice to grab his hand for some reassurance.

But before she can, Noemie goes to find more ink, Maurice hastily
following. Manette listens at the door, her breathing short. Noemie
stumbles out smiling, almost bumping into her.

MANETTE

What did he tell you?

NOEMIE

Nothing, he went home to get more
of the charcoals you gifted me.
Can I ask you something?

MANETTE

Can I ask why you're so quickly moving past such
an announcement of your own sisters?

Manette shifts her eyes to the ground. She then looks back up at Noemie,
questioning whilst squinting her eyes.

MANETTE

You said you needed more ink.

Noemie already knows that something is off with Manette, as her attitude towards her engagement is definitely not as enthusiastic as it should be. Without warning, Noemie questions her sister.

NOEMIE

What? How old are we?

NOEMIE (CONT'D)

Sorry...are you happy?

Do you love him?

Manette gives an exaggerated, fake smile.

MANETTE

Yes. I love him.

CUT TO:

EXT. NOEMIE'S APARTMENT – LATER THAT NIGHT.

Noemie stands speaking with Maurice outside of her apartment building, as Manette is late to leave with him. Maurice reaches for his key.

NOEMIE

You're so in love with her, aren't you?

Maurice bluntly answers, offended that Noemie would even ask that.

MAURICE

Yes, Noemie. For the rest of my life.

Manette walks out on them speaking, staring her sister down.

The idea that he is involved with Noemie sickens her, but she already has a delusional hunch that he is unfaithful, as her face contorts in distress at the thought.

She walks towards them

MANETTE

(timidly)

Cou Cou!

Noemie jumps at Manette's arrival.

NOEMIE
(dramatically)

Oh, hello.

MANETTE
Maurice, let's go.

MAURICE
What's wrong?

MANETTE
What're you doing at my sister's apartment?

MAURICE
Visiting her?

MANETTE
(serious)
I was going to cook for you at home.

MAURICE
(calmly)
You didn't tell me that.

Manette ignores his comment as they leave together, holding hands.

MANETTE
Oh god.

MAURICE
What's wrong, my love?

MANETTE
Nothing, no, I'm just tired.

EXT. TOULOUSE POLICE HEADQUARTERS – DAY

French-English police officer JEAN CLARK has moved to France from London. He walks into Toulouse's police headquarters, where he interrupts a man named Andre; the lead constable.

ANDRE

I can promise he will bring
greatness to the arrondissement. My father had
met him before and...Oh, welcome, welcome Jean.

JEAN

Jean Clark. I'm the constable transferring
from London, monsieur.

ANDRE

Fancy a drink with us at the bar?
Or the chocolate store,
where they sell shots perhaps?

He laughs at himself.

ANDRE

Oh, maybe another time –
I get carried away.

JEAN

Too lassiez-faire in Toulouse?

ANDRE

Lassies-Faire is taking one's time,
Jean. Too carried away in
Toulouse, it would appear.

JEAN

Pardon me.

ANDRE

In all seriousness, we have great expectations for
you and are not Lassies-Faire in our approach
to working here at all. London is full
of business, yes?

JEAN

Mmm.

ANDRE

We do still absolutely expect the same mindset here.

Andre walks through the halls of the office stridently, Jean following
along to view the new workspace.

ANDRE

I'm afraid there aren't any singular offices here,
but here is the one officer's office. Funny, right?

Jean nods sarcastically in agreement, so far worried about his leading managers' character. He still looks around at the empty space.

JEAN (*with judgement*)

I shall be right at home, your accent is already
rubbing off of me.

ANDRE

But you are French yourself, no?

JEAN

My father is. No accent for me.

ANDRE

Ah, but that may change.

ANDRE

You'll start with volunteer work at...on traffic
control around central. Nice and busy.

Andre chuckles, which turns into hysterical laughing, as he still stares at Jean. Jean looks perplexed, as though encountering a friendly madman.

EXT. RIVER GARONNE – DAY.

Manette meets Maurice outside of his work, walking to the River Garonne. Maurice jogs up to Manette, his floppy hair bouncing in the wind as he smiles.

MANETTE

You look like a happy puppy.

MAURICE

A yes, certainly right.

MANETTE

How was work then?

MAURICE

Oh, Manette, I love you. You get to be the first one I tell about how work was. How lucky am I?

MANETTE

(playing along)

Extremely.

MAURICE

(sarcastic)

Aren't you so delighted to hear about my day?

MANETTE

No. I want to ask you something.

MAURICE

Can I tell you about my day first?

Manette ignores his question, too preoccupied with her own thoughts.

MANETTE

Why did you ask me...do you really care about me? Enough to stay with me for my whole life?

As they walk alongside each other, Maurice grabs Manette's hands in reassurance.

MAURICE

What? Of course, why do you doubt it so?

Manette stares discreetly at Maurice as they walk along the riverside.

MAURICE

I don't understand.

Manette stays silent.

MAURICE

We feel the same about each other.
Manette, there's no need to be insecure.
With your looks, your elegance, your levelheadedness.

MANETTE

You might know why I doubt it.

Maurice stares at Manette contemplatively, his brow furrowed.

MAURICE

I don't understand why you're insecure? You've got so many people who love you. Me being one of them.
Probably the one who does the most at times.

Manette nods along unenthusiastically, not buying a word of Maurice's spiel.

MANETTE

(inattentively)

Mm-hmm.

MAURICE

I know that you think some morals are out of place with us, but I don't care.

MANETTE

You can't believe I'm still insecure?
Have you met my mother?

MANETTE (CONT'D)

But you don't love anyone else or want anything else?

MAURICE

No, do you?

MANETTE

I think you do. You'll grow tired of me and want someone else.

MAURICE

I want only you. What, where is this coming from?
I am promising, I swear it. I did before & I am again.

MANETTE

I just want someone to prioritise me.

She begins to whimper.

MAURICE

(sympathetically
and sarcastically)

Oh, Manette.

MANETTE

I am happy, but I don't know if you are.
Do you view me well? Or am I an
asset with your status and money?

MAURICE

Oh, you like the status. Are you happy with me,
or are you happy with the circumstances?

Manette looks away sheepishly with her mouth slightly agape, a
completive look on her face.

MANETTE

I do.
But I also think about us and it only makes me
love you more, Maurice. I do so want to be in love
and I do want to be married.

MAURICE

I am going to be there, no matter how much you may doubt it.

MAURICE (CONT'D)

How do you want me? What can I do?

Maurice continues to comfortingly hold Manette's hand as they walk home
silently.

That night, the couple celebrate their engagement by going out to dinner
with friends. Before they leave, Manette is in the bathroom getting
ready. With an already destructive attitude that she'd blame on her and
Maurice's talk, Manette looks in the mirror wide-eyed and pouting. She
pours perfume out of one of her bottles before casually dropping it onto
the floor. It shatters.

MANETTE

(monotone)

Whoops.

Manette leaves the broken glass there, putting her red high heels on as
she steps over it, manically whistling to herself.

ACT TWO.

INT. 'LES P'TITS FAYOTS'. TOULOUSE CITY CENTRE – NIGHT

Sitting down in a chic little restaurant is Manette, Maurice, Maurice's mother, JEANETTE, Sacha, Lucie & Lucie's boyfriend, MARK.

Amongst all the lively atmosphere, Manette sits in silence, Maurice's hand grabbing hers under the table.

Though dressed up to the nines in a Tiffany blue, chiffon ensemble, Manette stares paranoid, worrying about Maurice. Her expression is bleak, and her lip begins to quiver.

EXT. 'LES P'TITS FAYOTS' – TOULOUSE CITY CENTRE

Manette and Maurice exit an upper-class restaurant, 'Les P'tits Fayots'. Leaving her friends to go, Manette stumbles over her heels, draped in a cape-like shawl. Jean hails a taxi to take them home.

She talks to the taxi driver.

MANETTE

Thank you, my love.

TAXI DRIVER

Where can I take you two?

MAURICE

Downtown, please.

He turns to Manette.

MAURICE

Darling, can you get my diary out of my coat, please?

Manette sighs and hands over the diary hesitantly, as she plays with Maurice, grabbing and pretending to hand the book over. She eventually does, as he snatches it from her, as they jump into the car, giggling like schoolchildren.

The taxi driver drives off quickly.

MANETTE

So I suppose that 'date night' was a surprise, my love?

Maurice chuckles bashfully

MAURICE

You got me.

MANETTE

Oh, Maurice, Maurice. I suppose you're going to brag about this to your mates at work?

Maurice licks his lips, looking at Manette. He throws his head back softly, gently giggling.

Maurice

Ahahaha, my fiancé. fiancé Manette.

Manette ignores him, and removes two joints from her handbag.

MANETTE

I bought those joints for you. The ones rolled really awkwardly.

MAURICE

So romantic, I was just about to kiss you, but I think you've killed this.

MANETTE

Don't be such a pussy. Smoke with me.

MAURICE

Not in the car, what's wrong with you!

MANETTE

(excitedly)

It's legal in Paris!

Maurice tries to steal the joint out of Manette's hand, fumbling over Manette, as they tackle in the backseat of the car.

The taxi driver speeds when turning onto the main road, running a red light. Manette drops her joint, losing it under the seat.

MANETTE

Hey, wait a minute!

MAURICE giggles hesitantly.

MAURICE

Shit.

The taxi driver attempts to remain calm, playing it off. He assumes that he wasn't seen by anyone, yet as it's late at night, a breath-test site has a police officer call him over. He sighs in upset.

TAXI DRIVER

Oh, not tonight.

After pulling over, an officer steps smoothly out of the police car, approaching the taxi. It's Jean Clark. Manette leans out of the window to watch him, already intrigued by what she sees.

The taxi driver rolls down the window, clearly in annoyance as he answers Jean's questions.

JEAN

Hello sir, license, please?

The taxi driver rolls his eyes and hands it over.

JEAN

I mean, you just ran that red light, it was more than obvious. There's no need to already be so stroppy.

TAXI DRIVER
(perplexed)

Stroppy?

Jean stares back at Manette as the driver shows his license. She looks at him curiously, tilting her head.

JEAN

I might just take four to five points off your license for that offence.
Maybe more, considering you're driving others...around.

MANETTE

I think he's English.

Maurice hears Manette and interrupts.

MAURICE

Can you say 'evening all!'

The taxi driver looks back at the couple in his car, scoffs, and starts an argument with Jean. Yet Jean walks towards Manette and Maurice. He shines a torch in the backseat as he eyes out Manette. She stares innocently at him, intending to make Maurice jealous.

MAURICE

Manette.

She holds out her hand as he awkwardly shakes it. Manette squeals obnoxiously and blows him a kiss. He smiles and turns back to the driver. Maurice glares at her.

Jean responds in a flustered rush, yet still remains confident.

JEAN (CONT'D)

(distracted by Manette)

You'll be having 2 points off of your license for tonight, and you'll need to be in touch when the station commander contacts you.

MAURICE

(perplexed)

You'll be having?

MANETTE

He's from England, my love.

As an amateur officer, Jean is not so well versed in pulling over cars, having worked in a station back in London. He circles the taxi a bit, whilst still eyeing out Manette. He winks at her before leaving and the taxi driver sneers, sighing, as he throws the ticket given to him in the glove box before driving off.

MAURICE

(harsh tone)

Manette.

MANETTE

Isn't he dreamy?

MAURICE

What was that?

MANETTE

You've done it before, love.

MAURICE

What? How drunk are you? Did he see the joint?

MANETTE

I don't know. What do I care about tonight?

The taxi speeds off as Jean yells and Manette screams excitedly.

INT. CENTRE OF TOWN, PUBLISHING OFFICE – DAY.

Noemie argues with book a publisher, JAY ROBERTO on her novel.

NOEMIE

How? Tell me how it's so mundane. It's realistic.

JAY

Perhaps too realistic. Noemie, you need to make it intriguing. Obviously, no one wants to read a dull romance. It's just...mundane.

NOEMIE

If you write anything well it can be good.

JAY

Well, you need to be doing that. Write something I actually care to get through. A 'page turner' at the least.

NOEMIE

Are you saying my ideas aren't good because there isn't suffering in a successful love story?

JAY

There is always suffering in a successful love story. Ask your little sister if she's seen that yet.

JAY (CONT'D)

But also, it has to have a purpose to it, a zest. I don't taste that.

NOEMIE

It has plenty of zest to it-

JAY

No, it doesn't.

NOEMIE

Why not? Is it
because I'm a woman.

Jay quickly interrupts

JAY

No, it's because
the novel isn't good.

Noemie looks down quietly and goes to open
her mouth to defend herself, but remains doubtful.

NOEMIE

(defensively)

I scoured every publishing office to find you,
can I get any constructive criticism,
rather than 'this is shit'.

JAY

If you want any chance at all, come back
next fortnight with a substantial plot. And don't
swear at me. Professionalism, that language is
not artistic.

Noemie does not want to be walked over, so though he is her superior,
she ignores him to again defend her position.

NOEMIE

So you'd consider a dramatic change in the plot?
Even if that's not the truth.

JAY

It's a novella, not non-fiction.

NOEMIE

Well, I think it could be a novel eventually.
I'll brainstorm some more. Won't let you down.

JAY

I don't buy it until I see it slam-dunked on my desk,
sweetheart. A beautiful, fresh stack of
luscious words on white paper, mmm.

Noemie sits back, sighing, arms folded & glaring gently at Jay.

INT. MANETTE AND MAURICE'S APARTMENT – NIGHT.

Noemie opens the door to Manette's run-down and small, but well-decorated apartment. As she struts in, Manette is slowly swaying along to uplifting, classical music.

NOEMIE

M, help. I need to draw inspiration.

Manette turns down the music a touch as she looks at her sister. She continues to sway as she speaks.

MANETTE

(playfully)

A yes?

MANETTE (CONT'D)

Wait, what about Maurice?

NOEMIE

He's at work, and I need your brain, not his.

MANETTE

Why is it that you know he's at work & I don't?

NOEMIE

That made no sense, are you on something again?

Noemie ignores and points to her sister, beckoning her over.

Manette stops dancing and looks surprised but smiles. She waves her hands, beckoning Noemie to move closer.

MANETTE

(theatrical)

Ok? You may ask me for advice.

Noemie bursts into a conversation.

NOEMIE

It's about the novel.

MANETTE

Well, duh.

NOEMIE

Ok, so I need to dig into your
psyche to make this story stronger.
I know it's already got charms,
but I want to make it something more.

MANETTE

I thought so, Maurice really picked your brain
about it.

Noemie ignores this comment.

NOEMIE

Do you have any fears in terms of
Maurice? How have you two made it work
so well? Not that I ever did, but
I cannot understand. Why does it work so well for you?

Manette turns up the music and
dances more than before, swaying still.

MANETTE

I don't know that
it is successful. I hope.

Noemie struggles to hear her sister
properly as the music is too loud.

NOEMIE

What? Turn that down!

MANETTE

It's not just successful because it is, it demands
so much more that I don't even know I have inside of
me, emotionally. And physically.

MANETTE (CONT'D)

But it's about trust, loyalty, chivalry.

Noemie starts slowly swaying along to the music with her sister, as she looks at her writing in one hand. Manette starts speaking again, pausing occasionally.

MANETTE

I fell in love with him because of his...sweetness and his...professionalism. One of you needs to know how to manage a life in a pledged relationship.

MANETTE

(imitating Maurice)

Give me zest in the story, Noemie!

NOEMIE

That's what my fat publisher said!

Noemie starts swaying more than before, putting her writing on a desk and joining her sister. As the music crescendoes, the two sisters hold hands and dance, laughing together. The music slows down as Noemie and Manette stop dancing. Smiling, they face each other. Manette pauses before speaking.

MANETTE

It's about choosing. Wanting to choose him. Finding reasons why I should.

Noemie gives a sympathetic smile to her sister. Manette takes a sip from a coffee cup sitting idle on an old desk.

The phone rings. Manette answers the telephone to Maurice.

MAURICE

(swallowing through coffee)

Hello, my love.

MANETTE

Oh, hello, we were just talking about you!

MAURICE

I needed to call you
to tell you I can't make the lunch at
the bistro tomorrow, I'm still working.

Manette pauses in disappointment.
Noemie looks on at her sister, not
suspecting that anything is wrong.
Manette timidly responds.

MANETTE

But it's a Sunday.

MAURICE

I know that my love, but the dealership isn't open
early tomorrow & we need to finish off the
last wheel repair.

MANETTE

I don't understand, I--are you even open on a Sunday?

MAURICE

This Sunday we are, not most, but this one.

MANETTE

Hmm. Nice and vague.

Manette barely listens to Maurice rambling on
as she looks out the window, with grief
and anger on her stern face. Her suspicions
of him being unfaithful grow stronger very quickly.

MAURICE

My darling, I was up 'til three on the phone
with Sacha, discussing the different techniques
in which we could fix this the best and
quickest we can.

MAURICE (CONT'D)

Did Sacha ever get back to you about how
much he fancies Luella? I actually think
that was a funny story, love.

MANETTE

Who's that?

MAURICE

Oh, this young woman who works alongside us.

Manette puts down the phone, a lump in her throat growing as she again jumps to conclusions about her fiancé being unfaithful. The thought sickens her. As her eyes already start to water, she wipes her face on the back of her sleeve, mascara printing onto the light jumper. Manette chuckles at the sight.

EXT. CENTRE OF TOWN, TOULOUSE – DAY.

It's the following day at noon and Manette is smiling whilst strolling, almost skipping down the main street. She passes a grand police station, eyeing it out. As she begins to skip slower, she spots policemen smoking in an alleyway. Content with having her Sunday off, she is looking for Jean.

Meanwhile, she runs into Lucie in town who is carrying a history book from university. Manette gives an exaggerated grin when seeing her, as the two girls hug.

Seeing Jean walk past her and Lucie, they stare as he walks by them, like teenage girls pining over a heartthrob. The two friends hold hands in anticipation, as they watch Jean hug and blatantly flirt with a stranger on the sidewalk. They both quietly sigh in disappointment.

MANETTE

Why didn't he go for me?

LUCIE

What? Manette.

MANETTE

I'm...I'm joking.

Lucie laughs, worried as Manette still watches Jean intently.

MANETTE

Actually...do you ever feel like...that there's someone else you could...never mind.

Manette kisses Lucie goodbye as she rushes after Jean, the closer she gets to him the wider her smile gets. The wind whips through her hair over-dramatically.

Lucie watches, perplexed.

Manette skips into a side street, slowing down to find Jean. The bustle from the main street has died out after running into the alleyway nearby. She spins as she looks around and into an empty shop window. She stares closely as a pair of eyes appear on the other side. They stare for a while at each other, winking and crinkling their eyes, flirting.

Jean makes the move to walk out in front of the glass slowly and playfully. He slowly grabs Manette's hand as she stares at him, not knowing what to say. He tips his police hat at her. Manette's eyes widen playfully in excitement.

WORKER FROM POLICE STATION

Jean!

Jean slowly blows a kiss to Manette as he backs away, still facing her. Manette gradually follows Jean into the street and they joyfully dance in silence, smirking and laughing on the way. Manette leaves once Jean has returned to work. Watching as he leaves, she blocks her eyes from the blinding sun.

INT. MANETTE'S APARTMENT BEDROOM - THAT NIGHT.

Manette walks in on Maurice anxiously shuffling through a pack of cards and puffing a cigarette. She pauses, putting her coat on a chair before speaking.

MANETTE

What are you doing?

MAURICE

Oh, darling, I tell you, I'm so sorry for today. I'm too busy as you can see.

Manette responds with almost a whisper.

MANETTE

I don't see it.

MAURICE

These cards are cars, the number I have to sell within the next week. I'm not working after that, let's go to dinner. Or tonight actually. Lets do that, we haven't been spontaneous in a good year.

MANETTE

For someone who works so much, I don't where it's going.

MAURICE

Do you know that song by Billy Joe? Vienna.

Manette ignores Maurice and gets changed into a nightgown before climbing into bed to lie next to him. Her back faces him in protest as she looks down at the floor.

MAURICE

(singing 'Vienna')

"You know that when the truth is told, you can get what you want or you can just get old."

Manette smiles slightly, remembering her love for Maurice. Yet her smile turns into a grimace. She turns off the main light from a switch at the bedside.

MAURICE

Hey!

As she drifts off, a nightmare sequence ensues. Manette's brow furrows as she dreams of Maurice with a mystery brunette woman in their bed. Cunning as ever, she manipulates his gullible self into pretending that Manette doesn't exist, so that they can spend the night together. The mystery brunette climbs into Manette's side of the bed.

Maurice looks fearful as this woman approaches him, moving from sitting under the covers innocently, to moving up behind him.

MYSTERY BRUNETTE

It's ok. You can touch me.

She wraps her arms around his bare chest,
sighing into his neck sensually. He stares, his eyes
frighteningly wide and looking ahead, thus breaking the fourth wall.
Maurice stares on, his eyes wide with fear. The woman's hand slides down
his stomach, as Maurice turns to kiss her deeply.

CUT TO:

The dream sequence cuts to Manette outside their home, speaking with the
mystery brunette woman. The world around her looks faded, as though life
is colourless and quite foggy. Maurice is there. Manette questions her.

MANETTE

Do you love him well? And you treat him right?

BRUNETTE

I do.

MANETTE

And he's in love? You're both very happy?

BRUNETTE

Very much.

MANETTE

So what do I do?

What do I do?

I can't live without him. I won't do it.

BRUNETTE

We've all come across this problem.

It's one of life's trivia's.

MAURICE

It's nothing personal. You're just too insecure, M.

It's not for me, a need a woman with zest.

BRUNETTE

Where is the confidence?

MANETTE

The...clarity.

MANETTE (CONT'D)

Now, that's not like you. I do love you,
isn't that what should be enough?

BRUNETTE

No, you are not his type anymore. You are too dramatic,
just destructive.

MANETTE

I really am not, it's all a facade. I-

Manette begins to weep, breathing heavily
before she takes a breath so sharp it pains her. A tear falls
down her face as she does so. She watches the girl
walk away & out of sight, arm in arm with Manette.

CUT TO:

Back in Manette's bed, Maurice and the Mystery Brunette lay together,
nude, at the edge of the bed. Only sheets covering them, Maurice looks
at her lovingly, his eyes glazed over. She gives him a contemplative
look of wonder before smiling bashfully. A grin on both of their faces,
they giggle childishly, knowing the secret they share. They lean in to
kiss each other once again.

INT. MANETTE AND MAURICE'S APARTMENT - DAY.

Early the next morning, Manette sits on a decorative armchair and
lights a cigarette. Next to her are two more
packs of cigarettes.

Maurice waddles in, slowly scratching his
head and looking at Manette in confusion.

MAURICE

Good morningggg, Mi Amor.

MANETTE

You didn't take me to dinner.

Maurice chuckles

MAURICE

You fell asleep, love.

Manette glares at him as she lights a cigarette and puffs out hard. She slouches all the way down the sofa, stretching her foot to grasp the bar cart and pull it towards her.

Pushing the telephone off of the top shelf, Manette pours wine into a glass. She holds the drink up to Mazzetti, showing it to him with a sarcastic, devilish smile on her face before taking a sip. She stands up and begins to walk out of the room, saying nothing.

Mazzetti gently touches
Manette's shoulder to comfort her.

MANETTE

Don't- don't touch me.

She sighs and places her drink down on a cabinet in the next room as her shoulders drop and face scrunches in upset.

MAURICE

Manette.

MANETTE

Yeah, fuck you too.

Mazzetti looks at Manette in distress and surprise. With a pained look on his face, he shuts his eyes in pure disappointment.

Manette sighs to herself as Mazzetti cautiously walks towards her in an attempt to calm and comfort her, though he does not understand. He leans his head on her shoulder carefully.

Manette whispers to herself.

MANETTE

It's not just me you're seeing, is it?

Maurice does not hear her.

MAURICE

Hmm?

MANETTE

(condescending)

Why don't you ever listen?

MAURICE (CONT'D)

What have I done, Manette?

Why are you punishing me?

Can we speak, I really don't-.

Manette rolls her eyes at him and walks away, clearly annoyed.

MAURICE

(serious)

Manette. Manette!

EXT. TOULOUSE CITY CENTRE - NIGHT.

Manette walks home alone down the main road very late at night. With her arms crossed, she strides through the night. About 3 A.M., a man in his 50s pulls up in a Mercury beside her.

MAN

Gorgeous girl!

Manette cocks her head towards the vehicle in disbelief, her jaw slightly ajar in anger. She unfolds her arms, holding them out & gawking at the passerby. She points dramatically, signalling up and down to her obviously covered body. Wearing a jumper, pants, and a thick coat, she shakes her head as to reject and question the mans' attempted advances.

MANETTE

Can I go for a walk, please?

MAN

Oi, shut up! It's a compliment, darl!

MANETTE

Haven't you got a wife at home?

Does she know you do this in your spare time?

Before he can answer, Manette flips her hair and walks off home, as her stride turns into a worried jog.

INT. MANETTE AND MAURICE'S APARTMENT. NIGHT.

As the couple sits apart in the living room, the blue television light reflects dramatically onto Mazzetti's face in the dark. He looks at Manette, cigarette in hand.

MANETTE

Why have a cigarette if you're not even going to light it?

MAURICE

Love, I want to ask you-

MANETTE

If you don't like the ones I buy you, then just tell me. You're so bloody quiet.

Maurice ignores her.

MAURICE

There are cracks in the road, Manette. I know. I don't know why, but I'll do anything to fix it. Isn't that what we agreed?

MANETTE

A man hit on me last night. He drove a Mercury.

Mazzetti hesitates before responding, trying to reach for a response.

MAURICE

Sounds like a creep.

MANETTE

Why have you changed so much? You're pathetic now. I remember when you were so exciting...nothing now.

MAURICE

What? I-

MANETTE

And your job? My god, how have you not grown out of something so mundane?

MANETTE (CONT'D)

I can't be with you like this.

MAURICE

I'm getting the feeling that there's a lack of communication at the moment.

MANETTE

Don't psychoanalyse me.

MAURICE

Love, I want to help!

MANETTE

I just-

Manette attempts to explain, yet only ends up tearful, a lump in her throat emerging. She stutters through her words.

MANETTE

I just feel like you don't love me...enough.

MAURICE

That is seriously-

MANETTE

Oh my God, please let me fucking finish, Mazzetti.

MANETTE (CONT'D)

Maybe there's too much pressure now that you've engaged me -we're engaged. I just don't believe when you say you feel for me, because there's, it's like there's something in the way.

MAURICE

I really am struggling to understand.

MANETTE

I know what it is.

Maurice pauses, clearly baffled by Manette's spiel. Manette stares on, waiting in anticipation for his response. She sighs deeply.

MANETTE

Oh, God.

MAURICE
(confused)

What is it?

Manette walks off, her imagination running wild as she paints a scene in her mind of her in hospital, giving birth with Maurice by her side. The baby, just born, whimpers and cries as Manette holds it in her arms, with tears staining her face.

INT. MANETTE'S HOSPITAL DAYDREAM SEQUENCE

MAURICE
Oh, love. Look at what-

Manette, distracted by the beauty of the baby, turns to Maurice with a smile across her face, her eyebrows furrowed with emotion.

MANETTE
Hmmm, it's not yours.

Maurice's expression completely changes as his smile drops into a look of shock and distaste.

Manette zooms back into reality, her face plastered with amusement.

Back in the sequence, through the door bursts the man from the street, who previously had catcalled Manette late at night. Mazzetti looks on in horror, sweat beading at his forehead over-dramatically, as his head turns side to side, watching the scene unfold.

The man approaches Manette, tearfully stroking her hairline, as she holds the hand that he has on her head. She then moves his hand away from her, as her prideful smile drops and she stares at him in anger.

MANETTE
Not yours either.

INT. NOEMIE'S APARTMENT – DAY.

In the morning, Manette meets her sister at her home when she calls her over.

Noemie walks around the room carefully, almost pacing, but attempting to remain relaxed as she looks at things in her living room.

NOEMIE

Are you happy?

Manette sharply turns and looks at Noemie questionably.

NOEMIE

To be getting married, Manette!

MANETTE

Why do you keep asking me?

NOEMIE

What do you mean? I never ask you that!

NOEMIE (CONT'D)

When are you going to pay mind to what he actually wants, how much he adores you? How lucky you are!? You're not there for him, that's what I'm saying, your fiancé Manette!

MANETTE

Where is this coming from?

NOEMIE

He's told me that you're struggling.

MANETTE

Oh, and he's talking to you about that. Not me, who's struggling. Yay.

Manette says 'struggling' in a sarcastic tone, her eyes widening.

NOEMIE

I've worked with him since his graduate year, you know how much he tells me, M. He's not happy–

Manette interrupts angrily.

MANETTE

Oh, he's fine! I'm
too busy to give a fuck.

NOEMIE

Why are you so defensive? I'm just questioning you.

MANETTE

(condescending)

That's why sis.

NOEMIE

That's not what marriage is about.
You do these things together.

Manette glares at Noemie and then at her writing.

MANETTE

Oh, do you?

NOEMIE

Do you even love him?

MANETTE

I really don't understand why everyone asks me that.

Noemie ignores. Manette sighs dramatically.

MANETTE

Yes, of course. I'm just so stressed
with everything. It's only been a week
since he proposed, but it feels like months.

Manette begins to shake as she holds back tears, clenching her jaw.
Noemie pauses for a short time to reflect, staring at her sister.

NOEMIE

Talk to him then. You know how he
is Manette, I even think you intimidate
him a bit too much with your ideas.

Manette explodes in anger.

MANETTE

He's not interested in me!

NOEMIE

With the way you act around him.

MANETTE

Unfaithful! someone he's seeing.

It's so unlike him, that's why I'm scared.

Noemie strains her voice when responding to Manette, she sighs.

NOEMIE

You're so paranoid.

MANETTE

You never talk to me! I love you
and you never talk to me!
How do you think I feel?

Manette lets herself cry as she stifles through tears.

MANETTE

You're always working. I'm not
worried about me and my lover,
I'm worried about me and you.
You don't care. I have nothing!

MANETTE (CONT'D)

I cry...and you just stand there. Maman's the same.
Nothing. I love him. But don't feel loved.
How do you all deal with being alive?
No one rings me anymore.

BEAT.

Manette calms down slightly.

MANETTE

Why are you even writing about us?
What interest do I have?
I am not a stand-out rose.

NOEMIE

It's getting more interesting, you're life.
But you're not my artistic subject, I can assure you.

BEAT.

NOEMIE (CONT'D)

Do you remember how Maman used to treat us? Held us down to study, instead of understand who we were growing into as teenagers? You hated yourself as a teenager, and I know you wanted love. Romance, and I love romance.

BEAT.

NOEMIE (CONT'D)

Manette, I'm worried about you.

Manette starts to quietly sob.

MANETTE

(tearful)

Yeah, no shit you are. Thank God.
I don't act like a teenager anymore. I can try to find Romance though.

INT. CITY BALLROOM. NIGHT.

Noemie has set up a charity party to support her book getting published. She, her friends, and colleagues are all colourfully dressed up to the nines. Noemie lures over Manette to make sure that she isn't acting up.

Manette is shaking hands with many guests, charmingly handing them copies of Noemie's book and business card. Noemie looks back to Maurice as she walks over to him to discuss his unrest with Manette.

MAURICE

What a charm.

NOEMIE

Are you in love with her?

MAURICE

I don't know.

Noemie pauses as she looks around at the party, thinking of how to positively turn the conversation.

NOEMIE

At least everyone's having a good time.
Manette is good at pretending to endure these things.

MAURICE

Oh, She loves events like this. To support you
and get attention.

They discreetly chuckle.

MAURICE

I do love her dress though, picked it out myself &
for once she didn't have a complaint.
I thought she'd comment on the fabric, or ask
for the custom interpretation. Or the original,
if it was custom.

NOEMIE

I've been thinking of...of changing the narrative.

Mazzetti looks back towards Noemie curiously.

NOEMIE

You can say no.

MAURICE

It's okay. What narrative?

NOEMIE (CONT'D)

To write about you and Manette's downfall. Not
downfall, but struggle as of late. I think it might be
something that publishers will like, Maurice.

MAURICE

I don't want my relationship to be a piece of material.

NOEMIE

Well, it is already, with what I'm writing.

Maurice takes a sharp breath in to say something before Noemie
interrupts, attempting to change his mind.

NOEMIE

I know, but didn't we agree to write and do this together?
If I want to stand a chance, I need to give it some...pizazz.

MAURICE

Are you saying my relationship just is pizazz?

NOEMIE

Does honest love exist without it?

MAURICE

Is this actually what you want to write about,
or you're just listening to advisors to get
your fifteen minutes of fame?

Noemie sticks her tongue out in the air.

NOEMIE

Oh, pfft.

Across the room, Manette is showing off her white tiered gown to others before smiling back at Maurice. He grins back. She watches her fiancé's smile drop as he turns his back on her, walking away through the crowd. Manette rolls her eyes at Maurice and continues mingling. She speaks to Maurice's father, GREGOR feeling that by staying in contact with his family, she still has him.

MANETTE
(timidly)

Hello.

GREGOR

Oh, hello there Manette. It's been such a
long time since I've seen you, how are you?

MANETTE

Has it? Been a long time?

GREGOR

I think so, yes. You know, we've been home in
Nantes for a good several months.

Manette tries to get her engagement ring to glisten, wondering if Maurice's own father knows of the proposal. She gets no response and instead, a friend of Manette's, YOLANDA, approaches her.

YOLANDA

Ahhhh! Manette!

Manette gets a fright, putting her hands up to her chest in shock before smiling. She still looks to Gregor for reassurance.

MANETTE

Hello.

YOLANDA

Did you see the saffron flower decorations?

Manette pays no attention to the over-pompous comment or luxe food decor. Instead of getting wrapped up in hedonistic glamour at the party, her mind is on something else – her fiancé.

MANETTE

Where's Maurice?

YOLANDA

(jokingly)

Op! Manette's mind is acting up again.

MANETTE

(defensively)

No, it's not, where is he?

Paranoid and suspicious, Manette gently glides through the crowd to follow him.

Suddenly, she begins to experience an overwhelming sense of vertigo. She cannot feel her extremities as she stumbles through the party. Stomach dropping and nausea swirling, she runs, slipping as she discovers that she cannot keep up. She decides to leave, bursting through the doors.

Jean is standing outside, Manette catches his eye which causes her to trip as she runs.

Looking back through the stained-glass window into the party, she thinks she spots Maurice with a mystery woman. The brunette from Manette's dream lures over the shadow of her fiancé.

INT. MANETTE AND MAURICE'S APARTMENT – DAY.

Manette wakes to the infamous 'chocolate song' playing on the radio. She groans in an upset, not wanting to open her eyes.

As Manette sits up, she realises that Maurice is not there. This time she is thoroughly convinced that Maurice has been unfaithful. She spends the morning walking around in a state of shock. The house is silent. Manette sits on the edge of the bed, an emotionally exhausted look on her face as she stares at the ground.

Maurice jogs up the stairs and walks in from work. He opens the door and sets a newspaper down. As Manette walks in from the bedroom, she glares at him with a look of disgust. Maurice walks right past her into the kitchen.

MANETTE

I heard the chocolate song. It made me think of you.

MAURICE

What's the chocolate song?

MANETTE

Where were you?

MAURICE

Working?

Maurice seems almost stupidly unaware & unable to see the state of Manette. He ignores her questioning.

MAURICE

What's the chocolate song?

MANETTE

I'm so bored of that.

MAURICE

Of...working?

MANETTE

Of you lying.

Maurice responds defensively, not understanding.

MAURICE (chuckles)

Sweetheart, I was working!

Maurice looks in the glass cabinet across the room to see the box of chocolates sitting in there. He immediately points to them.

MAURICE

Did you steal those?

MANETTE

I don't steal things.

MAURICE

Yes, you do.

Manette rolls her eyes and walks away annoyed.

Maurice looks fearfully at Manette as she walks into their bathroom. Tears form in her eyes as she softly closes the door behind her.

Manette stands in front of the long bathroom mirror, lighting and sucking in a cigarette before carelessly tossing it aside. She stares at her body and lifeless expression in the mirror, as, without moving a muscle, tears roll down her cheeks effortlessly.

She breaks down in front of the mirror, realising that she cannot recognise who she once was, now that her world has shifted. She looks at herself audibly sobbing and begins to panic, hyperventilating as her face distorts in turmoil.

Throughout the day, Manette lures over Maurice, hatred raging. Carrying and sneakily hiding the pistol she shoplifted, she follows him throughout the house. When he is watching television, she is right behind the door. When he is reading a book by the fire, she touches the trigger. When thinking about him not being around, she tears up and puts the gun back in the drawer of the bedside table. She sits down beside him as the fire dies out.

We hear Manette's inner monologue.

MANETTE (V.O)

Even the things that I used to love.
His feet on the dashboard, his curiosity.
They only irritate me now. Like another
problem in my day. I couldn't stay if he didn't
love me, but I don't love him well either,
so I might as well leave.
Love takes work, and I don't even really do
anything for a living.

Maurice goes out for a smoke. This time she doesn't follow
but stares at the burnt-out fire. Maurice returns after a long time,
Manette frantically standing once he sits beside her.

MANETTE

Why didn't you even ask where I went when
I left the charity ball? I could have died.

MAURICE

I'm sorry, I didn't see, my love.
I did wonder where you went.

MAURICE(CONT'D)

Wait, died?

MANETTE

But you didn't ask?

MAURICE

I thought you might have been with Jean.

MANETTE

I was panicking, I said I could have died.
I would never cheat.

MAURICE

I didn't say that you-

MANETTE (CONT'D)

Well...I'm saying that I could have died because
you're not in love with me anymore. Are you?

MAURICE

If I'm not in love with you,
why did I ask you to marry me?

Manette pauses at this, noticing that he didn't deny her comment.

MAURICE

I hate you. all of the things you do.

BEAT.

MAURICE

Darling, did those chocolates you stole have
rum in them?

Manette ignores Maurice's comment and interrupts him, walking swiftly to the kitchen.

MANETTE

No, caffeine does not help me at all.

Manette pours a lot of coffee grinds into a coffee machine and presses them down quickly. She takes them out too early and dramatically pours herself a mug of steaming coffee.

Manette races to the bedroom to retrieve the gun. She stares at it for a moment, wondering whether this is what she wants to do. After a moment's consideration, she puts the coffee down, spilling some of it over the bedside table. Picking up the gun, she comes to a halt once she points the gun right at Maurice.

He is now standing in front of the television set, still holding his book. Manette's hand shakes as she tries to steady the gun, her eyes wide and tearful. Maurice responds with a restrained voice.

MAURICE

Manette, I think we've both known for some time that-

Manette shrieks in response.

MANETTE

Who the fuck are you sneaking into our bed?!
Why don't you talk to me?! No one does!
Why would you even ask me to marry you?!

MAURICE

Manette, I love you. I never wanted us to
be like this, trust me.

Manette sobs before she sighs and Maurice responds quietly.

MAURICE

It's not like that, me...I don't know how to tell you.

MAURICE (CONT'D)

Ok, if I, we can explain that...

MAURICE (CONT'D)

I had promised-

Manette closes her eyes and steadies the gun again, holding it with two hands like a child, shooting Maurice right between his ribs. Silence. She takes a deep, unsteady breath and opens her wet eyes. Maurice is on the floor, blood flooding out onto their Persian rug. Manette snuffles, shaking wildly as her hands almost lose grip of the pistol. She looks at Maurice and Exhales out through her lips as if she is relieved.

EXT. NOEMIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Across town, Noemie bickers with Jean, attempting to convince him that Manette is not in the right headspace for a new relationship.

Noemie stands with her arms crossed, staring at Jean in silence.

JEAN

Your sister called me.

Noemie smirks.

NOEMIE

I think she likes you.

Jean chuckles, revealing a smile. The two walk into the building and up the staircase to Noemie's apartment.

JEAN

I know that.

Noemie rolls her eyes at Jean's unapologetic ego.

NOEMIE

Look, before you say anything about her.
She's engaged.
And it's not a good engagement,
but there is one there.

NOEMIE (CONT'D)

Jean, I know how you think she is because she's
good on the surface. And she is a good girl,
but she really is not well.
I need to be there for her this time.

JEAN

Why can't that be me? If she's struggling,
that is.

Noemie tries not to roll her eyes at Jean, seeing that he doesn't
understand & is too full of himself.

NOEMIE

Because her emotions are too messy to be toppled
over again by a new relationship.

JEAN

They won't be toppled over, they'll be enhanced-

Noemie sharply inhales and interrupts.

NOEMIE

No, they won't. She'll get herself hurt...she does
it all the time.

JEAN

I'll call her.

NOEMIE

Jean! Don't talk to her. Don't you do that!

JEAN

She invited us over. And sent me a telegram.
A bit strange,
but old-fashioned and romantic, I think.

Noemie's eyes widen, not believing how much of a player she sees Jean
as.

JEAN

Oh, also Niomi-

NOEMIE

Noemie.

JEAN

Noemie...ok! She tells me that you wanted drama in your story, for it to be a success, yes? Well I can give you a copy of a police report, some wife found her husband mashed up on the side of the road this July. His feet were burnt red. Maybe I could even be in your little novella? That report and me...chaos.

Jean hands Noemie the report as she looks bewildered. Jean stops at the top of the staircase before leaving.

Noemie picks up her phone nonchalantly to ring Manette, her ear pressed to the phone so that she can read Jean's witness statement. Manette picks up, whispering.

MANETTE

Yes?

Noemie

Hi M, it's me.

Manette looks over at Maurice's body, still on the rug.

MANETTE

Okay?

NOEMIE

Well, Jean said that you approached him the other day.

MANETTE

What do you mean?

NOEMIE

That he wanted to maybe be a character in my novel. To cause some stir in the story, I was talking about it with Maurice. About the fact that there need to be dramas for something to be interesting. And – yes I know that it's not strictly non-fiction, involving him, but I thought it'd be good to brainstorm ideas about it with everyone tomorrow morning.
I can't talk at mine because of the renovations.

MANETTE

What renovations?

NOEMIE

I'm moving the kitchen downstairs.

Manette looks at Maurice, face down on the rug. She timidly responds.

MANETTE

N-no.

NOEMIE

What?

Manette attempts to sound cheerful over the phone, as she recognises her gained freedom, having rid Maurice.

MANETTE

I can do tomorrow night, darling!?

EXT. CENTRE OF TOWN, TOULOUSE – DAY.

Manette walks through side streets.

MUSIC CUE:

We hear the chorus of 'At Last' by Etta James playing, as Manette sings along in time. She spots Jean walking in the same direction, on the opposite side of the road. She watches as he nonchalantly strolls up a paved slope and away from her, thinking of him as her next potential love.

She waves, grinning as he walks away, imagining that he can see her.

INT. MANETTE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT.

Manette, Jean, and Noemie sit in silence at the dinner table. Manette is clutching her wine glass, the seat next to her empty, where Maurice should have been. Manette's school friend Emma joins them.

NOEMIE

Is Maurice going to be joining us?

MANETTE

He's at a conference.

Manette shows a brittle smile.

NOEMIE

At night?

MANETTE

Yep.

MANETTE (CONT'D)

All I know is that he was saying the amount of cards in a deck is the number of cars he needs to sell. He doesn't say much.

NOEMIE

Just gets the coins, I guess!

The four laugh together.

JEAN

And you don't want it to be 'written by Noemie Maudette and Maurice Dechanet'. Just Noemie, right?

NOEMIE

He did say that he was ok with it.

MANETTE

Perfect.

Manette looks over at Jean, attempting to hide a smile as he stares back at her. She then turns to her friend, Emma, changing the conversation.

MANETTE

Emma, where's Leon?

EMMA

He's climbing the alps at the moment.
Bringing awareness to the importance of nature.

MANETTE

Where in the alps?

EMMA

Oh...I don't know.

NOEMIE

How is he bringing awareness to the alps?
Aren't they still standing?

EMMA

Yes, but he's photographing them.

NOEMIE

Oh. Of like, endangered species and the lack
of wildlife?

EMMA

Well, he's just photographing the beautiful
mountains to show people how precious they are,
and that we shouldn't be doing deforestation.

Noemie looks on concerned as Manette tries not to laugh. Noemie whispers
to her sister.

NOEMIE

Stop it, Manette. Just because her
boyfriend brainwashed her.

NOEMIE

How about setting up donations towards
deforestation?

Emma ignores Noemie's comment and interrupts the discussion.

EMMA

You don't like my boyfriend?

MANETTE

No, I don't.

Emma reacts offended, screeching as her face contorts in mild disgust.

EMMA

What!? I-

MANETTE

He tried to tell me that the Irish have been oppressed, Emma!

EMMA

Fuck you, Manette.

Manette smiles sarcastically at Emma. After bursting out, Emma refrains and attempts to change the subject.

EMMA

Ugh, I love skiing.

MANETTE

Okay. In terms of the novel, I'm happy to change the narrative.

NOEMIE

Well...cheers!

They clink their glasses together and Manette absents herself to the kitchen.

Upon entering the kitchen, Manette sees her white blouse, with a blood-stain on the sleeve. In a flash, she pushes it off the counter and into the bin. She returns to the dining room with three fish dishes in hand. Hours pass as the three chat amongst themselves, getting drunk. Noemie gets her coat to leave, before throwing her dessert scraps in the bin. The blood-stained blouse is seen.

Jean helps Manette clear up, as she inches closer towards him with each move. Manette leans on a chair in the dining room.

MANETTE

Have you read what she's written? About me?

JEAN

I haven't actually.

Manette takes a copy of the book from behind her back, waving it teasingly at Jean.

JEAN

Am I mentioned in it?

Manette says nothing, handing Mazzetti the book. As he goes to grab it, Manette runs with it into her room, shutting the door playfully. Jean knocks and she opens it, bringing him into the room.

MANETTE

You will be mentioned in it.

Jean goes into kiss Manette and she sinks into him, wrapping her hands around his neck. The two start kissing in bed for a while, petting each other affectionately.

They stop and look at each other, pausing for a moment.

MANETTE

My neighbours don't like visitors.

JEAN

Why not?

MANETTE

Too disturbing.

JEAN

What, you make a lot of noise?

Manette furrows her brow at him, playfully frowning in pretend annoyance.

JEAN

But you like me, don't you?

MANETTE

We'll see.

INT. MANETTE'S BEDROOM – NIGHT

Manette stares at the television whilst lying on the sofa, her faced pressed up against it's side, pouting. Watching a film with a happy, romantic ending, she clutches the telephone, hoping for a call from Jean.

The two characters proclaim their love for one another over-dramatically.

WOMAN IN MOVIE

I can't believe this is happening.

The man in the film smiles gently, leaning in to kiss the woman again.

MAN IN MOVIE

It's so easy to love you, my dear. And love you, I do.

Manette clutches the telephone, staring at the screen & looking back to the phone, quiet as ever.

MANETTE

Come on, I'll even let you have sex with me, just call me back!

Manette cries dramatically, hanging her head. She then is on the bed crying with her head in the duvet.

The phone rings.

MANETTE

Hello?!

JEAN

Hello?

Manette hangs up, as she is too nervous to speak to Jean.

MANETTE

What's wrong with me?!

Manette cries again, screaming and laughing at herself.

CUT TO:

INT. MANETTE'S APARTMENT. NIGHT.

Manette stares into Jean's eyes, giggling as she remembers how she acted about him.

Manette goes to the bathroom to change into a nightgown, as Jean follows, chasing her. Flirtatiously, she giggles and slams the door, for him not to see her.

JEAN

I know what would annoy the neighbours!
Call them, tell them I'm here.

Manette goes to pick up the phone, trying not to laugh. Jean takes it from her gently.

The two prank call the neighbours, laughing together as the caller responds in annoyance.

JEAN

Hello sir, I don't mean to disturb you,
but I'm at Manette's. And I'm not her sister,
I am a male visitor.

Manette leans in to yell into the phone.

MANETTE

But you could begin to like him!

JEAN

No, I don't think so...so I will say goodbye!

Jean puts down the phone and the two lie back on the bed, laughing out loud like children.

Manette, trusting Jean, but knowing he is a police officer takes a risky chance. She puts the pistol with which she shot Mazzetti behind her back.

Manette bites her lip as she smiles, revealing the pistol to Jean. He stands still.

MANETTE

Do you trust me?

She widens her eyes as she smiles somewhat psychotically.

JEAN

Yes.

MANETTE

I always keep one beside my bed.

Manette dances around with the gun, pretending to aim it at Jean, purposely frightening him with it.

Jean gives Manette a funnily shocked look as he moves towards her.

Manette jokingly responds.

MANETTE

Move and I'll shoot, Jean!

JEAN

You wouldn't have the heart to use that.

I bet you don't even know how it works.

I would need to show you.

As it begins to rain outside, Jean takes Manette in his arms, swaying as he takes the gun from her fingers delicately. They kiss again, as the pistol drops on the bed.

INT. MANETTE'S APARTMENT – DAY

Manette wakes very early alone, as she had made Jean leave the night before. Creeping out of bed, she takes a murdered and bloody Mazzetti out of the dumpster bin. She sets him down onto the floor of the living room, where he was originally. She shakily positions him the way he was before. Sitting in a steaming bath, her blood-stained hands not washing out.

MANETTE

Out. Out damned spot, out I say!

She lays her head back, sighing and staring vacantly at the damp ceiling.

That afternoon, Jean knocks on Manette's door, surprising her with gifts from the chocolate store. There is no response. As he lifts the letter slot, to his surprise, he sees Maurice, dead on the Persian rug. Immediately he busts the door down, mainly concerned that Manette is hurt.

JEAN

Manette! Manette! Answer me, my love!

After searching the entirety of the apartment, he rushes to the telephone, flicking through the phone book to ring Noemie.

Manette and Noemie rush to her apartment in response to Jean's call. Another police officer, PERCY, follows. They stride into the living room to see Maurice.

NOEMIE

Oh-my...good God.

Manette stares wide-eyed at Maurice, unsure of how to respond.

Manette then slowly trudges towards Maurice, ruminating on what to say. Her bottom lip quivers before she begins to hyperventilate, acting beside herself. Stooping down, she holds Maurice's bloody hand, looking back up at a shocked Noemie.

Noemie walks to comfort her, closing her eyes and leaning on her shoulder to stroke her back. Noemie audibly shrieks, sobbing, and Jean stifles a cry.

As Manette looks on at a dead Maurice, she sees the intensity of the murder, her jaw clenching. She however does not shed a real tear.

JEAN

I am so so sorry.

Manette screams.

MANETTE

I don't understand! Who is storming into my home?!
And sleeping-killing-

She acts as though she cannot finish her sentence. Jean leans in close to Manette.

JEAN

We'll do whatever it takes,
for as long as we can. Percy, I...

Percy draws the chalk outline around Maurice, as Noemie and Manette steps back. Jean holds them and looks on.

All is photographed by Jean. The girls and officers are joined by the forensics team, as they take samples of Maurice & his surroundings. Manette gives a subtly suspicious look and takes Jean aside.

MANETTE

Take me away from this, Jean.

JEAN

Manette. I have to stay.

MANETTE

No. Stay with me.

She nuzzles into him. Jean sighs.

JEAN

What about Noemie?

MANETTE

Stay with me.

JEAN

I can't have you how I want you. Or how you want me.

MANETTE

I don't care.

She takes his hand to distract him, looking at him seductively. They walk downstairs and out of sight.

INT. MANETTE'S APARTMENT. NIGHT.

As Manette stays with Jean, Noemie sits at the desk in the living room to write her novel, just meters away from the scene of Maurice's murder. A tap drips. Her pale face stays stagnant, her hands resting on the journal, with the pen ink dripping onto the page.

Noemie scraps a page from the typewriter, throwing it into the kitchen bin. There she comes across Manette's discarded blouse. At the very bottom of the bin, Noemie pushes through the garbage to pick it up. She spots the bloodstain on the sleeve amongst the dust. She debates whether to call Jean, trying to understand, as she cannot suspect the worst – her sister being the murderer.

She returns to the sitting room timidly, looking at Manette in fear as she walks back to her desk.

Debating what to do, Noemie eventuates in calling the police department, shaking through tears as she walks to the phone.

POLICE DEPT. SEARGENT

Hello, Toulouse Centre Police Department.

Noemie sniffles before inhaling shakily to speak.

NOEMIE

Hello, yes –

CUT TO:

EXT. TOULOUSE CHOCOLATE STORE – DAY.

Noemie meets Manette on her way to the Police Department, attempting to appear emotionally stable.

Noemie softly talks to her sister, who is with their mother, MANON.

NOEMIE

Hello.

Manon laughs with Manette, in an attempt to distract her from Mazzetti's death.

MANON

Manette is just telling me about this new friend, Jean?

NOEMIE

You're at the chocolate store again. For who though.

MANETTE

Jean said that he's into women who buy him chocolates.

Manon's smile drops as she turns to her daughter.

MANON

Manette...

Noemie sharply turns away from her sister, walking towards the Police Department, her back turned on her. Staring in shock at the ground, she walks into the Police Department, meeting Sergeant Andre at the main desk. As her mother and sister wait outside, Manette has an anxiously worried look on her face, knowing that they are at the police station.

NOEMIE

I called yesterday, about some possible evidence on Maurice Dechanet?

ANDRE

Oh, thank you, thank you, bravissimo. I know just how desperate Manette was for something like this.

NOEMIE

She was?

ANDRE

Absolutely, she was crying to me on the phone the other afternoon, Noemie.

Noemie reaches into the inconspicuous shopping bag, pulling out the blood-stained blouse and slowly handing it to Andre.

ANDRE

That's alright, my love, just keep it in the bag.

NOEMIE

How long until we can find out who's blood it is? Or who's shirt it is?

ANDRE

You'd have to ask uh, uh, Adrien. He specialises in forensics, but I'd say about 3 days, Noemie. It's not often this happens in Toulouse, or in Paris? Yes. But not here.

Noemie takes a deep breath, sighing out dramatically and shakily, attempting to hold herself together.

NOEMIE

I'll be going now.

ANDRE

We'll be in contact. Tut tut.

INT. NOEMIE AND MANETTE'S MOTHER'S HOME – DAY.

Noemie and her mother, Manon, discuss Manette's troubling behaviour. Noemie stands, looking at her mother, as she watches her light a cigarette. Noemie is annoyed with Manon's casual attitude, given the fact that her daughter has been involved in a murder case. Noemie paces to and fro in their disheveled, dusty lounge room.

NOEMIE

There's something wrong with her.

Manon casually glances over to Noemie before shrugging her shoulders.

MANON

Death in paradise?

NOEMIE

Something more, I don't understand her.

MANON

Didn't they close down those awful asylums years ago?

NOEMIE

They've just started doing it...why?

MANON

Maybe that's where she should go! My poor Manette!

They both laugh, Noemie not so loudly.

NOEMIE

Maman, I really am worried about her.

MANON

Really? You've never seemed to be until now.
She was a fascinating child.

Noemie hesitantly responds

NOEMIE

What?

MANON

I just mean that I never thought you two were that close.

Noemie is offended by her mother's assumption of her and Manette's relationship.

NOEMIE

Yes, yes we are.

MANON

Alright, don't get emotional about it, I'm only wondering.

NOEMIE

Sounds more like you're assuming. In fact,
you don't really know the slightest about me and Manette.

Manon immediately raises her voice at Noemie, suddenly bursting with anger.

MANON

Noemie, I will not allow you to speak to me like this!

NOEMIE

I am just trying to-

MANON

Don't talk back to your mother!

BEAT.

MANON

That's better.

NOEMIE

This uncomfortable silence?

MANON

Exactly. Learn to hold her tongue. I know how you see your sister. You worry about her, but I think you want rid of her to be the centre of attention. You always have.

NOEMIE

No. All my life you've stopped me from speaking. You think I'm too loud, but I'm not.

MANON

You are an author Noemie, or you are trying to be one. Of course you want to be the prized offspring. But I love you both so much and so equally.

NOEMIE

Not enough to know about our relationship.

MANON

I know you, Noemie. You don't really like your sister, you love her, but you don't really like her. A bit like myself.

Noemie stands in shock.

NOEMIE

You really still are so heartless. So French, Maman. How very French of you, you are the stereotype that we are seen to portray.

MANON

Well, generations of French kids made that come true, and I'm just one of them, baby.

INT. MANETTE'S APARTMENT. NIGHT.

Noemie is visiting a 'distraught' Manette when the doorbell rings with the results of Noemie's evidence of Maurice's murder. A package is at the door.

Manette is on the phone with Jean, giggling about their affairs.

MANETTE

What? I only asked when you told me to!

Noemie slyly steps by with the package, walking into a bedroom. Opening the evidence, it clearly states that it is Manette's blood on Maurice's shirt.

She freezes, not knowing whether to confront Manette or escape the scene out of fear. She decides on confronting her, slyly tip-toeing into the living room, towards Manette.

NOEMIE

Did you even notice I was here?

Manette puts down the phone.

MANETTE

Of course, I was just speaking with –

NOEMIE

Manette, did you see what came at the door?

Can I tell you something that you might find unsettling?

Manette scoffs nervously

MANETTE

I do not understand why you're like this.

Noemie keeps an eye on Manette and her movements as she takes the blouse out of the package, revealing it to her sister.

MANETTE

What's that?

NOEMIE

Manette, I went to the police.

MANETTE

I know, I was there with you and Maman.

NOEMIE

I went to the police...about you.

There is a moment's silence between the sisters.

NOEMIE (CONT'D)

I love you, but I cannot love you and lie to everyone else
I love. Do you know what's in that bag?

Manette looks over, seeing the slight bloodstain of the shirt through
the clear packaging.

Manette stares, struggling on deciding what to do, as this is her first
and only murder. She decides on denying, attempting to smirk her way out
of trouble.

MANETTE

No?

NOEMIE

I'm not scared, and I thought I would be, M.

NOEMIE (CONT'D)

But, if you are certain that you don't know...it is a shirt.
One I found after dinner late last night.

MANETTE

A gift?

BEAT.

NOEMIE

It was Maurice's.

Manette breathes in deep, tears beginning to form in her eyes, as she
clenches her jaw. She bursts into tears, confessing her side of the
story.

MANETTE

Ok.

She bursts into tears, waving her hands in the air as she speaks.

MANETTE

I didn't know what to do! He never answered my calls!

Noemie stares wide-eyed, her eyes beginning to water.

MANETTE

I really, really regret it now.

NOEMIE

Manette, I love you, but this can't-

NOEMIE

I told you I went to the police, and I need to go back.

MANETTE

You've already been?

NOEMIE

(hesitant)

Yes, I have.

MANETTE

And Jean is there.

NOEMIE (CONT'D)

Manette, I love you, but I
need to tell him that -

MANETTE

No! I'd rather die than have him know! I need him.

NOEMIE

Fucking hell, Manette. You hardly know him.

MANETTE

I don't care! Don't tell him. I do know Jean.

NOEMIE

No, you don't! It's some fucking mindless, illogical affair.
You can't love. You are genuinely incapable.
You killed, you can't love.

MANETTE

Please. I'd rather rot in here than in jail,
seeing him every day far from me. And I know you
loved Mazzetti, maybe more than me,
but I loved him too.

NOEMIE

You're going to die on that hill, even though it's not true.

Noemie sighs deeply, tears staining her cheeks. She vigorously shakes her head in protest.

MANETTE

I'm sorry.

NOEMIE

I think it's too late.

Noemie breathes deep as Manette sits on the couch, sobbing as she waits for a response from her sister.

Noemie walks towards Manette to sit down beside her. She slowly takes a telephone set out of Manette's hands and lap. Manette watches her dial Jean, tears falling from her face.

Manette suddenly grabs the telephone forcefully, breaking its cord. Noemie is overcome with emotion and confusion. Her sister leans in to hug her and she backs away. Feeling guilty, Noemie leans her head on her shoulder, knowing that she does love her.

Jean visits. Noemie does not tell him, as he and Manette go to bed.

INT. MANETTE'S APARTMENT – DAY.

The next morning, Jean is peacefully asleep. Manette left a note for him on the one bedside table.

We hear a reciting of Sandra Cisneros' 'One Last Poem For Richard', as Jean stirs in bed.

MANETTE (V.O)

December 24th and we're through again. This time for good. I know because I didn't throw you out, and anyway we waved. Jean, it's Christmas Eve again and old ghosts come back home, I'm sitting by the Christmas Tree, wondering where did we go wrong?

THREE MONTHS LATER

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. TOULOUSE TRAIN STATION – DAY.

Early morning, Manette is waiting at the train station, suitcase in hand. She does not feel exposed or on edge, though having known her crime has been found out.

The train leaves for Nice, as houses and fields roll by. As Manette aggressively struggles to roll her luggage along, a woman in the compartment speaks up.

WOMAN ON TRAIN

Excuse me, this is the quiet carriage.

MANETTE

Then you should be quiet.

She takes her seat quietly. Despite the beauty of the scenery, Manette does not look out of her window once. She is leaning against the glass, blankly staring at the table with wide eyes, zoned out.

INT. MANETTE'S APARTMENT – DAY.

Jean is still sleeping in the afternoon as Noemie heaves open the heavy bedroom double doors. Nibbling nervously at a piece of toast, she spots the letter next to a drooling Jean.

Reading the letter, she pauses to think of what to do. Staring at Jean, she knows that he is no help. Although he is a police officer, he hopelessly lies there in silence.

Noemie investigates the letter, looking for clues to where her sister could've gone. Scanning the writing, there isn't any hint as to where Manette is.

After looking through the room and leaving all drawers and cabinets open, Noemie spots a faded and flaked-off stamp from Nice on the back of the letter – one from Hotel 64 in the city centre. Noemie smirks.

Finding the telephone's cord broken from the previous night, Noemie runs downstairs to use the apartment's reception telephone. Looking up the hotel's number, she dials it.

HOTEL RECEPTIONIST

Hello, Hotel 64.

Noemie lowers her voice, as though to disguise it as a man jokingly.

NOEMIE

Salut! Has a Manette Maudette checked in today?
My name is Jean Clark. I am her boyfriend.

HOTEL RECEPTION

No, Monsieur Clark, no Manette has checked in.

NOEMIE

May I ask if she is expected to arrive tonight?

HOTEL RECEPTIONIST

Ahh, let me check. What is this about?

NOEMIE

I'm- one of our friends is joining but was struggling
to get through to you.

The line is put on hold, as elevator music plays through the phone.

HOTEL RECEPTIONIST

This is her husband?

NOEMIE

Boyfriend.

HOTEL RECEPTIONIST

You're not visiting with Ms. Maudette?

NOEMIE

No, unfortunately not.

HOTEL RECEPTION

Yes, Mr. Clark, Manette Maudette is checking in this
evening at 4:15 pm.

Noemie sighs in relief.

EXT. TOULOUSE TRAIN STATION – DAY.

Noemie arrives at the train station, in the same spot where Manette was standing. She boards the same train, her novel, and suitcase in hand, like her sister. Noemie looks out of the window as the fields pass her by, thinking of how to approach her sister successfully.

JUMP CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL 64, NICE – DAY.

It is late in the afternoon, the sun is setting. Manette sticks her head and body out of her hotel window, leaning into the wrought-iron balcony to turn and look at the city streets. She feels freer than before, though a worried look is still on her face.

JUMP CUT TO:

INT. TRAIN TO TOULOUSE – LATER THAT DAY.

Noemie sits on the train with her script, staring at the blank pages left of it. Wondering what is left of her story, she is reminded of the current drama in her world. Although it hurts to write the tale of her sister's act of murder, she knows that it is the twist in the story that could create interest.

As she writes, the words come to her easily. The train pulls into the station, seemingly quicker than it did when Manette rode it. Noemie nearly misses her stop, being so focused on her powerful plot. The outside is near darkness by this point, it being winter.

As Noemie arrives at Hotel 64 in Nice with nothing but herself, she does not find Manette in her room. She does see her suitcase, clothes hanging out of it, knowing that she was there.

Noemie sets her writing down to look at it in full form, breathing in slightly shakily, feeling that what she has written could be her big break.

Taking her writing with her, she goes for an aimless walk around town, hoping to find her sister.

As Noemie walks along the coast and up the hill, she sees police cars lining the road up the hill. She passes them by, thinking that they might have something to do with Manette.

Upon walking up a massive, yellow concrete staircase, she sees her sister wandering around an empty, stone rooftop.

Manette sharply turns to look at Noemie, almost sensing that she's there.

Manette stares at her sister. They stand six feet apart.

MANETTE

Don't hurt me.

Noemie blankly stares, her eyes squinting from the setting sun and wind softly whipping through her hair.

NOEMIE

No.

NOEMIE (CONT'D)

Are you ok?

MANETTE

Are you actually here?

Noemie responds in a serious tone.

NOEMIE

I followed you. I called the hotel pretending to be Jean.

Manette giggles softly. The mood is still very eerie, scarily uncomfortable, and awkward.

NOEMIE

Let me help. I don't know why I want to help.
I shouldn't want to help, but I think it's because
I finished the novel.

MANETTE

Did you write about what has happened?

NOEMIE

About what you did?

Manette sighs.

NOEMIE

I just finished it. It's all I brought.
I don't know why I came.

MANETTE

Because you love me?

Noemie looks off into the distance, police sirens lightly whirling behind her.

Noemie shakes her head as if to say, 'I don't know'.

Noemie just hands Manette the script of the completed novel.
Manette stifles a cry as she takes it.

MANETTE

I just want to go to the beach, I want to be free.
I want to feel included. Never had I ever before.

MANETTE (CONT'D)

I have a heart, I do!

NOEMIE

Well, I don't know where that's gone.

CUT TO:

Noemie and Manette sit on the edge of the rooftop. It is exactly two hours later, as the sun begins to set. The silence between the two girls is deafening.

NOEMIE

You know, I thought you were going to hurt me next.
I still do, so I don't know why I'm telling you this
when I know you have the potential
to lodge an axe through my head.

Manette doesn't respond, but looks on in shock, dissociated from what she had done to Mazzetti.

NOEMIE

Do you love yourself?

BEAT.

MANETTE

No.

NOEMIE

Do you like yourself?

MANETTE

I don't know.

NOEMIE

Name one thing you like about yourself.

Manette's face scrunches up in pain as she begins to stifle a cry before quietly sobbing.

NOEMIE

I just always thought that was why you did it...to Mazzetti.
You needed some sort of control?

Manette bursts into tears, her head in her hands dramatically.
Noemie is concerned, yet can't help but roll her eyes, assuming that her sister is putting on a facade. Manette calms down and lifts her head, staring out towards her with a lifeless expression.

MANETTE

I don't even know what to tell you. I-my mind is...

NOEMIE

Your mind is not ok if those are the words you're reaching for?

MANETTE

I think I might miss him now.

Noemie tries to stir the conversation, knowing that Manette is going to become too emotional.

NOEMIE

I should publish the book. I'll call Jay tonight.
Is there a telephone at the hotel for visitors?

MANETTE

Yes.

Manette stares blankly at the ground, exhaustion in her eyes.

MANETTE

But I don't know if it will call to Toulouse,
it's only for national calls.

Noemie looks worriedly at her sister, knowing she is losing her mind, yet ignores her comment.

NOEMIE

I'll go tomorrow, sis.

MANETTE

I'll wait here forever. They're not allowed to cross into this building. It's Grandmere's private property.

Noemie stares at the police cars parked behind Manette, before making the decision to sneak her sister out of being arrested.

NOEMIE

So let me take you home.

MANETTE

Are you turning me in now?

NOEMIE

I don't know, not yet. I should, but I'm not going to.

MANETTE

You'll be persecuted for helping your cute murderer sister.

NOEMIE

I don't know that I support you.

MANETTE

But you love me, no?

NOEMIE

I don't know, but the answer I will give you is most definitely yes.

Noemie and Manette stand up, as they manage to sneak out of the police's sight by walking down the building's wrought iron, spiral stairway. Noemie drags Manette along, pulling her hand to follow her.

INT. NICE ST. SHAW PUBLISHING HOUSE – DAY

The next morning, Noemie is sitting in a publishing house, one that is partnered with the company in Toulouse. She smiles discreetly, knowing that she has a compelling story.

CALLER

Noemie Maudette?

NOEMIE

Oh!

Noemie is introduced to Frankie Johnson, the main literary agent.

FRANKIE

Frankie Johnson.

They shake hands firmly before Noemie walks by him to sit down in his office.

NOEMIE

I'll be frank.

INT. MANETTE'S APARTMENT – DAY.

Two days previous, it is the morning in Manette's apartment. As Jean wakes in the morning, he stretches before turning to see the letter left for him from Manette.

As he picks it up, he stretches before reading it, expecting to see a love note. Once he understands the message, he pauses suddenly and, looking up from the letter, rushes out of bed.

Jean stumbles out of the bedroom, wearing Manette's robe loosely wrapped around him. He tries to call Noemie, but there is no answer. He looks around, stunned that Manette has left him.

JUMP CUT TO:

INT. NICE ST. SHAW PUBLISHING HOUSE – DAY

Noemie is with publishing agent, Frankie, in Nice.

FRANKIE

I haven't heard of you, in terms of upcoming young French writers. Where are you from?

BEAT.

NOEMIE

I'm from Toulouse. My publishing agent advises that I make a strong story. I have done just that. A crime drama.

FRANKIE

We've got plenty of those.

Noemie interjects defensively.

NOEMIE

This one is different. I've been writing it for months now, but something came up, and...it was perfect for the story.

FRANKIE

Is it a true crime?

Noemie lies to protect her sister.

NOEMIE

No.

NOEMIE (CONT'D)

Do those sell well?

Frankie Johnson looks at Noemie sympathetically. But he ignores her.

FRANKIE

Noemie, have you published before?
Written before in this entirety?

NOEMIE

Of course, short stories. Some other drafts.
I was lead in my final year of Literature in High School.

FRANKIE

High school. Anything else?

NOEMIE

I have potential, I graduated with gold recommendations from Toulouse-Jean Jaurès University.

Frankie continues to stare at her judgementally. Noemie notices his reaction, which only upsets and begins to fire her up.

NOEMIE

But what does that matter? You haven't even read a page.
Give it a chance, I know that I am so much more driven
than any other young writer around Toulouse.
Because they have awards to get them published.
I don't, so I work harder. Talent isn't proven by credits
every time.

Frankie is surprised and almost impressed by Noemie's
blunt attitude, however, offended.

FRANKIE

How long are you in Nice?

Noemie sighs to calm herself down.

NOEMIE

I don't know. Until you read this book.

CUT TO:

EXT. CAPITOLE DE TOULOUSE – AFTERNOON.

It is late afternoon in the centre of Toulouse Capitole and the sun is
beginning to set as Jean trudges around in a white button-up shirt and
corduroy pants. The lights of the square begin to illuminate as Jean
trudges onwards across town, helpless now that he knows Manette is gone
without a trace.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL 64, NICE – DAY.

It is Nice the next day. Noemie is running up the hotel stairs
enthusiastically, but with a worried look on her face towards Manette
with the news of her book being published. As she gets to the door of
Manette's hotel room, she stops suddenly.

She knocks on the door.

There is no answer so Noemie tries to open the door by twisting the
door, but it's locked.

NOEMIE

Manette.

Manette opens the door cautiously, having heard her sister's voice.

NOEMIE

Manette. I have good news.

MANETTE

You forgot everything that I did.

Noemie blinks blankly, seeing the sadness in her sister's face, yet not being able to sympathise with her, because of the fact that she killed her friend. Noemie sighs, furrowing her eyebrows before revealing her news

NOEMIE

My book. I know you never read it, but it's getting published. By 'Naïve Paris'.

Manette doesn't know how to respond to her sister, knowing that it was Noemie's greatest dream to get her writing recognised, but their relationship is not the same.

Noemie smiles weakly, as a tear of happiness and confusion falls down her face. She did not want to be celebrating her accomplishment with her sister like this.

MANETTE

By 'Naïve'?

Noemie responds cheerfully, getting choked up already.

NOEMIE

Yep.

NOEMIE (CONT'D)

I'm so happy.

Manette blankly stares, her expression flat.

MANETTE

Me too. It's about me?

NOEMIE

Yep.

Manette nods slowly and not encouragingly, looking at the ground.

MANETTE

My life is over then, isn't it?

NOEMIE

Yes. Can I come in?

JUMP CUT TO:

INT. TOULOUSE CAR DEALERSHIP – DAY.

Maurice's friend, Sacha talks to one of his employees about Jean, him being a friend of his.

SACHA

Jean isn't going to Paris anymore.
He's also not visiting the
bar, just working, barely.

EMPLOYEE

I think he's obsessively in love with Manette,
Maurice's girl, you know? She disappeared just this weekend.

SACHA

So I heard.

EMPLOYEE

He's always telling funny stories.
About her, mostly, as though he really knows her
through & through, you know? It's entertaining, so I
just nod along really.

Sacha says nothing, believing that Manette is with Maurice.

EMPLOYEE (CONT'D)

Did you hear about Maurice?

SACHA

No?

EMPLOYEE

Really!? He was killed, son.

Sacha lifts his head immediately upon hearing the news, glaring at his employee.

SACHA

What?

JUMP CUT TO:

INT. MANETTE'S APARTMENT – NIGHT.

Two weeks have passed & it is the evening in Manette's apartment. Jean is sitting on the couch, hugging his legs. The lights of cars passing by outside are illuminating his face and whirling around the room dramatically. He has a shellshocked, yet confused look on his face.

JUMP CUT TO:

EXT. HOTEL 64, NICE. DAY.

Manette and Noemie are sneaking back into the hotel after a day out, trying not to be seen by the police. As they both look behind themselves to make sure no one is following them, they tip-toe into the hotel lobby. The sun is beginning to set beautifully. They run up the stairs, Manette is laughing as Noemie shoots her a look as if to say "that's not appropriate"

Before Noemie and Manette reach the hotel room door, Noemie stops her sister suddenly. She sharply addresses Manette.

NOEMIE

Do you know that I'm the only one who
knows what you did?

Manette is surprised by her sister's sudden outburst.

MANETTE

Yes.

NOEMIE

Ugh.

Noemie walks into the hotel room in front of Manette.

JUMP CUT TO:

INT. TOULOUSE CAR DEALERSHIP – DAY.

Sacha is washing a car very slowly, staring wide-eyed out into the distance. He is clearly distracted from doing his job, which he normally enjoys, as he attempts to comprehend the news of his friend. He drops the sponge he is using in a dramatic moment of shock.

JUMP CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL 64. NICE – DAY

It is nearing evening as Noemie looks at her sister before shutting the door of the hotel room, leaving for the Gare de Nice Ville. Noemie boards the train to Paris, jumping on the carriage. A tearful smile breaks out of her as she reflects on how proud she is to get her book published, yet scared and still depressed from her sister's actions. She sighs, her breath shaking and a tear falling down her face quickly, as she watches the train leave the station, stretching her arms out slowly.

JUMP CUT TO:

'NAÏVE PARIS' PUBLISHING COMPANY.

Noemie swiftly walks up to the large, wooden door to the printing room of 'Naïve Paris'. The door opens to a woman wearing a white blouse who guides Noemie into the printing room's waiting area. Noemie waits anxiously, twiddling her fingers together. She smirks, trying not to smile too obviously. Her eyebrows are still furrowed. She is called in, as she watches her book being printed, her tears drying and eyes widening.

A WEEK LATER

JUMP CUT TO:

INT. MANETTE'S APARTMENT – DAY.

Jean is sitting on the couch in Manette's living room, smoking a cigarette and looking suave. The doorbell rings and he goes to answer it nonchalantly. Jean swings open the door unenthusiastically, and, to his surprise, a brown parcel is left on the doorstep.

Jean opens it at the doorstep, revealing a book titled 'Love Has A Price'. Jean sees Noemie's name on the cover in bold and his eyes widen in terror immediately. He sharply shuts the door in fear, as though Noemie was the one who delivered it.

JEAN

Ooh, my God.

Jean reads through the book slowly. He reads it over making dinner, making calls for work, getting ready for bed, and before he goes to sleep. He does not understand how the book relates to Manette so far.

JUMP CUT TO:

EXT. TOULOUSE CITY CENTRE – DAY.

It is the morning and Jean is strolling carelessly through the city streets, hands firmly gripping the book as he reads with a look of confusion. Having gotten halfway, he looks at the name that Noemie has used: Marie. He suddenly realises that Marie IS Manette, meaning that Manette is in Nice.

JEAN

Merde.

JUMP CUT TO:

INT. BOOKSHOP IN NICE – DAY.

Noemie is browsing the shelves, touching each spine of the books as she passes to look for her own novel. As she takes a sip from the coffee she bought, stumbling across it and taps her finger on the spine, before pulling it out of the shelf.

JUMP CUT TO:

EXT. TOULOUSE CITY CENTRE – DAY.

Jean walks quickly through the bustling city crowd to return to Manette's house, knowing that he must follow her to Nice. He hops on the back platform of a train, which leaves the scene quickly, and Jean cannot be seen.

JUMP CUT TO:

INT. BOOKSHOP IN NICE – DAY.

Noemie is strutting up to the counter proudly to buy her own novel, she places it upon the counter. Her smirk turns into a wide smile this time.

NOEMIE

I-I'm the author.

BOOKSHOP CLERK

Noemie.

Noemie nods happily.

BOOKSHOP CLERK

Well, I say!

They both laugh overzealously, saying cheers with their coffee cups.

BOOKSHOP CLERK

How exciting, miss!

JUMP CUT TO:

INT. MANETTE'S APARTMENT – DAY.

Jean is re-reading the book in Manette's bedroom just to be sure if what he heard is right. He picks up the bedside phone to call the Nice Police Department, dialling slowly whilst still reading.

We hear a dial noise.

POLICE DEPARTMENT RECEPTIONIST

Hello, you're calling Nice Police Department number #3.

Jean pauses, not knowing what to say.

JEAN

Hello, I'm – I'm calling in regard to a, eh, missing person?

POLICE DEPARTMENT RECEPTIONIST

In the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur area?

JEAN

N-No.

POLICE DEPARTMENT RECEPTIONIST

You can call your local Police Headquarters if your missing persons are outside of Nice's region.

JEAN

I understand, however, I suspect tha-think that they might be in Nice.

POLICE DEPARTMENT RECEPTIONIST

Apologies sir. Do you have the name of your missing person?'

BEAT.

JEAN

Manette Maudette

POLICE DEPARTMENT RECEPTIONIST

Manette Maudette?

JEAN

Yes.

POLICE DEPARTMENT RECEPTIONIST

Ok, I just have to note your telephone number.

JEAN

Mine?

POLICE DEPARTMENT RECEPTIONIST

Is your name Jean Clancy?

JEAN

Why?

BEAT.

JEAN (CONT'D)

Yes. I am.

POLICE DEPARTMENT RECEPTIONIST

I just need to put you on hold for a little bit.

Indistinctive chatter is heard.

POLICE DEPARTMENT RECEPTIONIST

As far as we are concerned, Manette
Maudette was actually staying at Hotel 64 in Nice.

JEAN

Is she still there?

POLICE DEPARTMENT RECEPTIONIST

Wouldn't you know? You called her and came to visit.

JEAN

I...I thought that too.
But I was told that she left.

POLICE DEPARTMENT RECEPTIONIST

Okay...then why did you want to report her missing?

JEAN

(under his breath)

Fuck.

JEAN

I wasn't sure of where she went from there.
I need to know, I'm her boyfriend.

POLICE DEPARTMENT RECEPTIONIST

I have your number, and the 1st Precinct knows
about Manette -. She is actually a suspect in
the murder of Mazzetti Dechanet,
so we are also trying all we can to find her.

JEAN

Thank you so much. I did just want to check in,
as she isn't at Hotel 63 anymore.

POLICE DEPARTMENT

That's Hotel 64, sir.

JEAN

Oh, silly me. I'm just so worried!

POLICE DEPARTMENT RECEPTIONIST

That's alright sir, I understand.

They both laugh.

JEAN

Thanks again, have a wonderful afternoon.

POLICE DEPARTMENT RECEPTIONIST

Bye-bye now.

Jean licks his lips in anticipation, feeling confident that he knows where Manette is. He doesn't even pack a suitcase but does book a train for the next morning at 6. He swiftly takes Noemie's book, a change of clothes, his wallet, and hairbrush, shoving them into his designer satchel. He breathes heavily before climbing into bed, staring at the ceiling.

We see the landscape of Toulouse at sunset, sweeping across the tops of the old town.

Jean sits on the first-class passage of the train, writing out what he is going to say to Manette upon finding her. He writes.

JEAN (V.O)

Manette, my Cicco,
I think I know why you left,
and I am in the classic situation of me not knowing
you for long, but knowing that I want to be with
you for a long time. I read your sister's book and
it hurt, for her to even accuse you of that
wrongdoing is despicable and you have all my love.
You don't have to take what she is saying personally.
I am writing this to let you know that I know that
isn't you. I can stay with you in Nice if you
like, that'd be nice. Or we can go home.
I'm yours,
Jean C.

Jean's taxi is dropped off outside of Hotel 64 in Nice. He cautiously approaches the reception, hoping with everything in him that Manette is there.

Jean nervously waits for the receptionist to show up. A woman dressed in black, matching the Hotel's interior, walks up to Jean.

HOTEL 64 RECEPTIONIST

Hello sir, how may I help you? Checking in or checking out?

Jean whispers in response.

JEAN

Has a Manette Maudet checked in?

The receptionist searches on her computer, looking intently.

HOTEL 64 RECEPTIONIST

She has, but she's not in right now. She left this morning.

JEAN

Where to?

HOTEL 64 RECEPTIONIST

I'm not sure, sir. The centre, probably.

The beaches are very popular.

JEAN

Thank you.

Jean leaves quickly with his backpack. His taxi has obviously left, to which he sighs dramatically and rolls his eyes childishly.

He arrives at one of the beaches and the sun is beaming into his eyes. Tourists are bustling around him in groups, strolling the promenade – it seems impossible to find Manette. Jean's head starts swirling as he tries to think of where to start.

CUT TO:

EXT. NICE BEACH HARBOUR BAR – DAY.

Manette and Noemie are sitting at a small bar by the beach. Noemie is staring despairingly at her sister. Manette keeps her head down, wearing a huge pair of sunglasses and a coat to keep discreet.

MANETTE

Is this working?

NOEMIE

What?

MANETTE

My disguise

NOEMIE

Well, I'm sitting closest to you &
have no trouble recognising this criminal before me.

MANETTE

Alright, but from far away.

NOEMIE

You want me to move far away to tell you if your disguise works or not when I know that it doesn't & that you shouldn't be outside in the first place?

Manette stirs her drink with its straw slowly, slouching over the bar & looking very disheveled compared to Noemie.

Noemie just sighs, looking out at the beach and squinting her eyes at the sun.

NOEMIE

I despise you, you know that?

Manette responds in a childish, teasing tone.

MANETTE

That's not very nice.

NOEMIE

But I think that I still love you. I don't know that I do, but I think I might for whatever Godforsaken reason.

MANETTE

No. You despise me...

NOEMIE

Yes. This is true.

Jean is pushing through the crowds, appearing in a drunken state as he, overwhelmed, stumbles through the crowds. He looks at every towel and picnic blanket on the beach to see if Manette is there.

CUT TO:

Two hours later of searching, Jean reaches the far side of the beach, where the crowds split and only visitors lounge outside their resort hotels. The sun is beginning to slowly set as Jean shuffles through the sand, squinting and still determined to find Manette.

He spots Noemie sitting at the 'Beach Harbour Bar'. Jean's eyes widen and he walks quickly to the bar, still trying to appear nonchalant.

Noemie does notice him, though.

NOEMIE

Jean?!

Noemie's upper lip lifts in disbelief and amusement. She regrets calling him now.

Jean stops in his tracks and stares widely at Noemie.

JEAN

Hi...there.

NOEMIE

You read the book?

JEAN

Manette's with you.

NOEMIE

Wow.

Jean looks around for Manette, twisting and biting his bottom lip whilst concentrating.

He spots Manette at the bar but does not recognise her until she walks over to Noemie.

She spots Jean, dramatically removing her sunglasses to look at him. Noemie scoffs up a laugh in a surprised manner quietly as she watches the scene play out.

JEAN

Oh, my love.

JEAN (CONT'D)

Let's walk.

Manette puts her sunglasses back on, knowing that she should not risk being recognised. She bundles up in her coat and walks away, leaning into Jean, as he has his arm around her. They walk side by side quietly, the ocean waves calmly moving.

JEAN

You look gorgeous, my love.

Manette stares up at Jean, pouting her chapped lips in upset. Her hair is a frizzy mess blown by the now cooling wind and she does not exude any sense of fashion like she usually does.

Manette licks her lips before speaking.

MANETTE

I know you read Noemie's book, so...I don't know what to really say to you.

JEAN

You look so pretty.

Manette notices that he ignores her statement. However, she responds, appreciating the compliment.

MANETTE

I'm pretty?

MANETTE (CONT'D)

He never called me that.

JEAN

Mazzetti.

Manette audibly sighs melodically.

MANETTE.

Ahh. Please don't...

JEAN

I missed you.

MANETTE

I think I missed you more.

Jean and Manette embrace, kissing passionately. Manette holds her arms out in joy near the end of the kiss.
Manette giggles slyly.

JEAN

I wrote you a letter, Cicco.

MANETTE

A letter?

Jean smiles bashfully as he hands Manette the letter.

It reads:

Dear Manette, my Cicco,

I think I know why you left,
and I am in the classic situation of me not knowing you for long, but
knowing that I want to be with you for a long time.

I read your sister's book and it hurt, for her to even accuse you of
that wrongdoing is despicable and you have all my love. You don't have
to take what she is saying personally. I am writing this to let you know
that I know that isn't you. I can stay with you in Nice if you like,
that'd be nice. Or we can go home. I'm yours,
Jean C.

Manette's mood swings dramatically as she grumbles whilst reading the
crumpled piece of paper. She crumples it up & unenthusiastically shoves
it into her pocket. Her heavy grey coat starts to fall off her shoulders
and she walks away from Jean, with her arms crossed, in distress.

JEAN

I know it's difficult!

Manette walks further away in protest.

JEAN

I'm in love with you!

MANETTE

I know.

Manette looks on at Jean, trying to understand his blatant idiocy with
him not being able to believe that Noemie's novel is what's true.

JEAN

Why would you ever do something like that? Why?!

JEAN (CONT'D)

You didn't.

Manette looks on with her head condescendingly tilted, her eyes
squinting in the glowing sunset.

JEAN

You wouldn't do that.

Manette ignores him.

MANETTE

Do you want to stay here with me?

Jean is out of breath at this point, as sensitive as he is, he's emotionally exhausting himself already.

JEAN

Whatever you want. I don't care.

Noemie watches the two, as she has gotten up from the bar and walked over to the side of the beach. She is listening to the dispute.

JEAN

She can't publish that book. It's bullshit.

Noemie strides into the moment, angrily defending her position and unexpectedly exploding. She shuffles through the sand.

NOEMIE

She did it! She did, I don't care. I cannot watch you two manipulate each other.

Jean looks at Noemie and then back to Manette, his mouth stupidly agape.

NOEMIE

She murdered Maurice! I know.

Manette's eyes widen as she turns to look at her sister, in shock at her mood swing. Noemie begins to get choked up.

NOEMIE

I can show you what happened. My sister.

JEAN

What?

MANETTE

Jean, she's so into her book.

NOEMIE

No, I'm not! Yes, I am, but it's true.
It's based on truth.

MANETTE

No, it's not, my love.

NOEMIE

Why the fuck would I write about- what I wrote about was Manette and Mazzetti's relationship. You know that! We were talking about it.

JEAN

You were talking about how you needed to make it more dramatic, though. They're still looking for the murderer.

NOEMIE

Yes, that's why-

MANETTE

Don't believe her, Cicco.

Manette takes a quick, deep breath, her eyes darting around, trying to think of what to say next.

MANETTE

I wasn't home that day. I was at the gym.

JEAN

What gym?

Noemie chuckles sarcastically.

MANETTE

In town, the one you go to, my love. Remember we went together?

JEAN

Oh, yes.

MANETTE

You're out of your mind, Noemie.

Noemie's face scrunches up in distaste.

JEAN

I don't see why you have to make this about yourself, Noemie.

Manette looks at Noemie, knowing that was a stupid remark. Noemie slightly looks back at her sister, but with great apprehension and little connection.

Manette sighs deeply.

NOEMIE

It's just not true, Jean. I have no one now.
Manette is far gone.

MANETTE

I'm right here, girl.

JEAN

Noemie—

NOEMIE

Stop fucking saying my name. Doesn't help.

Jean interrupts dramatically, turning to face Manette.

JEAN

There's nothing you can say to make me not want you.

Noemie harshly interrupts, stopping Jean from speaking any further.

NOEMIE

How about blood on her hands?

MANETTE

I want to stay here, my love.
I just wanted to move to the seaside.

As Manette and Jean continue speaking softly to each other, Noemie continues to interject, trying to stir the conversation back to the murder.

NOEMIE

Do you want to see Maurice's blood-stained shirt?

JEAN

No. I don't.

NOEMIE

So you believe me?

JEAN

No, Noemie. Just leave.

NOEMIE

(under her breath)

Oh, fuck this guy.

Noemie stands her ground, not moving from where she is standing, her hair aggressively whipping in the wind & sand blowing into her face. Manette notices that her sister hasn't moved, and takes Jean's hand to lead him to another side of the beach. She leans in close to him to whisper.

JEAN

Did you?

MANETTE

No, I promise you, I would never lie to you, Jean.
How could I ever hurt someone, when I am so
capable of loving so deeply?

MANETTE (CONT'D)

Stay with me. We can be here together, without Noemie.

JEAN

I'd like that a lot. She sure knows how to cause drama.

Manette agrees quickly, yet, we see how heartbroken she is that her sister now views her this way.

MANETTE

Exactly. Exactly right. I don't need that.

Manette worriedly looks at Noemie standing far from her, still there with her arms crossed and eyes squinted.

JEAN

I'm happy to be here, with you. And she is
ruining your happiness.

Manette shifts her attention back to Jean, sympathetically looking into his eyes, forcing a sweet and fake smile. In reality, Manette completely disagrees with the idea that Noemie ruins her happiness, as she looks back to her sister for reassurance.

MANETTE

I love you, Jean. I'm so happy...with you.

Manette begins to cry out of frustration from Jean, disguising it as adoration.

Jean smiles softly and widely at Manette, putting his arm around her and strolling off.

MUSIC CUE: We hear the chorus of 'The Shadows of Paris' play:

*'Why must we meet in the shadows of Paris?
Where hardly a star seems to shine
Why can't we meet in the sunlight of Paris?
Where Paris can see you're mine*

*Why am I cold in the sunlight of Paris?
Where laughter and songs fill the skies'*

Manette tearfully looks back over Jean's arm to see Noemie still standing there in the same pose. She turns back to walk along the beach with Jean, her head heavy.

INT. HOTEL 64, NICE. DAY.

As the morning light comes through the curtains onto the pristine white bed, Jean leans up beside a sleeping Manette, admiring her beauty and peacefulness.

Jean smiles, before his look diminishes into distaste, as he suddenly considers Noemie's claims about Manette. His eyes are swollen red from previously crying in fear of Noemie's allegations towards Manette.

Jean leans onto the side of the bed, his head in his hands. As he steps out of bed, he stares back at Manette, silently whimpering in dread/apprehension.

Manette stirs before waking and reaching out for Jean.

Manette speaks lazily and in a silly tone.

MANETTE

Mon amourrrr.

Jean leans down to kiss Manette's forehead, smiling wickedly as he leaves the room, undressed.

JEAN

I'll see you tonight.

MANETTE

Wha-what?

Manette sits up to look at Jean, pouting her lip and furrowing her brow cheekily.

Jean throws on only a blazer, trousers, and brogues to leave for the Police Station. The same dreadful look is still plastered on his face as he parades down the hotel hall, lazily jogging down the grand spiral staircase, passing reception, and pushing his way out the door onto the street. Silence is deafening as he leaves the hotel, anxiety filling his body.

INT. LYON EAST POLICE STATION. DAY.

Jean walks into the small station, immediately spotting the television in the corner showcasing Maurice's murder story. Crime in Southern France was never booming, so this story is paramount & Jean now realises this.

Jean slowly walks up to the counter, timidly asking about the case. At almost a whisper, he stutters. His attitude and shyness is very French.

JEAN

Um, I've come to uh, ask about, on,
or enquire about something-something I may know
about the case?

The station's receptionist/officer looks up at Jean, his face moving from disinterest to keen interest as he hears Jean's claim.

STATION OFFICER

What is your name, sir?

Jean considers changing his name, as he doesn't want Manette to find out about his visit. He then changes his mind.

JEAN

Jean Clark.

STATION OFFICER

What information do you have about this instance?

JEAN

I'm not sure that I do, but I've been hearing things. That-that, I wondered who the main suspect in all of this is. I may be able to help.

The station officer looks at Jean with concern and judgement, eyeing him up and down & noticing Jean's unstable look.

STATION OFFICER

I'm afraid I cannot disclose that kind of information sir.

JEAN

Do you know Manette Maudette?

Jean immediately regrets speaking of her, his face shrivelling in pain.

EXT. NICE CLIFFTOPS – DAY.

In the morning, Noemie, Jean, and Manette all meet up. Silence is deafening.

Noemie and Jean stand together, this time Manette is separated from him. They stare at her, squinting in the dim sun, with their arms crossed.

Jean wanders towards Manette slowly, kissing her on the cheek hesitantly. He holds her hand, clearly sweating. Jean breathes in sharply, closing his eyes.

MANETTE

Why have you brought her?

Jean lifts his sleeve a bit, revealing the gun that Manette loaned him. Manette, a girl of the streets, naively thinks nothing of it.

JEAN

Manette, you shot him.

Manette shoots Jean a seductively posing look, tilting her head innocently and giving him a shy smile.

MANETTE

Why would you say that? & you didn't answer my question, Jean.

JEAN

Manette, you shot him. And she told it to everyone.

Jean cocks the gun, lifting it out of his sleeve and pointing it directly at Noemie in a swift movement. He shoots her without hesitation, a stone-cold expression on his face.

Manette turns from looking at Jean to seeing what has just unfolded.

Manette runs towards Noemie in desperation, her face in utter shock. Jean stops her by grabbing her aggressively.

MANETTE

NO!

Manette makes a blood-curdling shriek as she breaks free of Jean's grip, sprinting towards her sister.

Manette screams again as she watches her sister die right before her eyes.

Manette looks over to Jean in contempt and complete disgust, all her feelings towards him that she previously held are diminishing in the moments that she stares at him. She cries real tears this time.

MANETTE

Jean, you, you fucking bastard, I-I, the
love of my fucking life.

MANETTE (CONT'D)

Noemie, Noemie, Noemie.

Manette screams as Jean stares on with wide eyes, tears in them from the wind & brightness of the sunlight.

Jean takes the gun, wrapping it in a sheet carefully before leaving the scene. Manette sits there, staring at Jean as he walks away. A pale look on her face, tears stain her despondent expression and roll down her dry lips. She has lost her sister and her lover.

Manette walks down the steps of the rooftop, walking straight onto the road without any concern, stumbling slightly & lowering her head.

We hear a voiceover reciting Sandra Cisneros' 'One Last Poem For Richard'

MAURICE (V.O)

"December 24th and we're through again. this time for good I know because I didn't throw you out – and anyway we waved. Noemie, It's Christmas Eve again and old ghosts come back home, I'm sitting by the Christmas tree wondering where did we go wrong?"

Manette knows that the road is ending for her, in running away from her crime. She is no longer caught up in emotions and illusions, but logic. With visions of a sheet over Noemie's eyes, knowing she started it, she must hand herself over.

Manette glances to the side of the rocky, raging cliff & the road back to Nice, deciding to walk into town & turn herself in. She trudges away from the scene, her head hanging.

EXT. BACKSTREETS OF NICE – TWILIGHT.

Manette walks into a backstreet as soon as he reaches the edge of Nice's city centre, in a weak attempt to hide herself. In a daze, her eyes are bloodshot and wide. She runs to turn herself in, not wanting to see Noemie. She cannot cry, as her expression and emotion remain frozen.

MUSIC CUE: We hear classical music carry the scene, crescendoing as he is spotted by police officers.

Manette runs amuck as she spots two police officers. They charge towards her, grabbing her by the arms and pulling her towards them in the middle of the backstreet.

JUMP CUT TO:

EXT. EDGE OF NICE CITY CENTRE – EVENING.

Jean walks in the same direction that Manette did, on the verge of sobbing, as his hair frames and strings across his sweated face. He picks up his pace.

TWO WEEKS LATER

JUMP CUT TO:

INT. NICE COUNTY COURT. TWILIGHT.

Manette walks into the courtroom, standing tall with his chin up, but an uncertain and apprehensive expression on her face. She sits down on the old, wooden hearing stand.

The news of Maurice and Noemie's murder has not been released. As only close witnesses know, the room is empty and silent.

The judge walks up to the podium, carrying a single piece of paper & squinting at Manette. Unable to see without his glasses, he takes his specs and stares back at the small jury & Manette herself.

COURT JUDGE

Manette Maudet, evidence is sprawling,
and you are in no state to return to humanity.

Jean is in the jury and we see him staring on wickedly, with a James Dean-like smirk, still seemingly alluring.

JEAN

Not when Jean was the one that was there,
held up at the scene. I think he'll be
coming to tell you about it now.

COURT JUDGE (CONT'D)

A sentence of 22 years, with parole
after 12 years of proven good behaviour.
This is charged guilty as ever. The murder of
Maurice Dechanet and Noemie Maudet.

MANETTE

Absolute objection! How?!

COURT JUDGE

Jean Clark, constable from London has worked his way up
in the ranks to catch criminals like you. France
will never forget your face. He called in, and you
called in for Maurice Dechanet.

Jean stares at Manette blankly, biting his tongue. She stares back in anger and amazement, her jaw slightly agape.

MANETTE

I'm not doing this.

COURT JUDGE

You're done.

INT. LE SANTE PRISON – PARIS – LATER THAT DAY.

A jail door closes shut, Manette walking behind it.

Manette is put on prohibition, sitting in a jail cell, a weak look on her face. She crosses his arms and sighs deeply, thinking about Noemie.

Jean approaches Manette in her room. Even with her hair and face covered in dust and her prison uniform washing out her colour, she manages to remain attractive. She stares him down judgementally, even rolling her eyes.

Her eyes still wide, Manette doesn't engage in conversation with Jean, as he waves pitifully to her from the other side of the bars.

MANETTE

What a mess. A mess.

Manette is more clear-headed than ever before & Jean is rather despondent & twisted since Noemie's murder. The roles of the two have been reversed & Jean has been influenced by Manette.

JEAN

Yes.

Manette looks up to him with a heavy look in her eyes. She responds sharply.

MANETTE

Yes? That's all you say to me?

JEAN

Why do I still love you?

Manette is beside herself with that comment. She gets up out of her seat & walks away, gasping to herself in disbelief.

MANETTE

I-I am not going to argue. I have had so many fucking arguments, Jean. I want to be noble now.

Jean stifles through a cry, as he knows that Manette is not blinded by his love anymore.

JEAN

It's a bit late for that.

MANETTE

How can I stop thinking about you.
Fucking hell, why aren't you plagued by anguish?
I mean...what you did!

Weight of regret is heavy. She sighs and holds weight throughout her words. By questioning how Jean feels, she reveals how she is feeling.

MANETTE

Doesn't it kill you?

Jean ignores Manette's plead, passively answering the question, as though it were easy. He paces back and forth in front of Manette's cell, swinging the jail's keys on a chain.

JEAN

I listen to slow funk on the radio until it
stops hurting.

Manette grows desperate, as though she can find hope in Jean.

MANETTE

But what if it doesn't stop hurting?

Jean nods to himself and pouts his lip sideways in contemplation. Hands in his pockets and glazed-over eyes, he strolls off, slowly and casually.

BEAT.

MANETTE

Wait.

Jean turns around, swiftly turning his head to look at Manette.

MANETTE

Can I say something?

A police officer steps in, curiously observing the interaction between Manette and Jean, clearly confused. Manette looks at him before another guard joins to listen along, knowing Manette's infamous crime. Manette still continues with her intention to speak.

MANETTE

Mistakes I've made that I know I'd want
to change. That I do want to change.

Everyone stares on.

MANETTE

Now that I can see it, I'm not numbed out like before. Now that it has come to my attention properly, I was the one who loved her, and she loved me.

PRISON GUARD NO.1

So you a lesbian?

Manette gives a taunting sideways glance at the officer.

MANETTE

My sister.

MANETTE (CONT'D)

I couldn't even go to her funeral.
I think if she was here, she would say something like,
"why do you need a partner? you can get everything
a man provides, but of higher quality and less
fickleness from me. You can find love in your
friends, sure, not for sex, of course,
Manette! But you get all you
didn't get before from me if you'd just reach out.
It's not weak to reach out." But maybe that's
what I'd want her to say, but she couldn't. And maybe
rather got it all out in her writing. But I didn't
know how...to reach out or reach for anything, really, as
fucking corny as that is. I know I got love for Noemie,
eyes, and desire for men, but true love
for my sister. Um, but I'm having to see this
too late and I'm not blaming it on myself,
but the lack of love from early on.

Furrowing her brow, her eyes dart around when looking down at the ground, as though looking for answers sporadically.

MANETTE (CONT'D)

I committed it, but someone else created it.
A lot of people say that lack of love is being French,
but we French are known for our abundance of love.
So why didn't I get that note?
And I didn't murder her, only Dechanet. But I'm here, so
You might as well keep me, but I adore her.

INT. LE SANTE PRISON – NIGHT.

MUSIC CUE: We hear classical music crescendoing as Jean walks past.

Manette still sees Jean walk by her every few evenings, as he passes her cell to meet with officers, discussing his professional position in the prison. He eyes her out each time, yet she never responds the way he wants her to.

INT. LE SANTE PRISON – EAST WING – DAY.

Manette sits at a long wooden table with other prisoners. As they celebrate around her with an annual dinner, Manette sits in utter silence. With noise and an uncomfortably happy mood from the prisoners around her, Manette rather reflects on the vicious act she has committed. Close-mouthed and staring blankly at the table, she finally sees what she did wrong, and who she is surrounded with.

MUSIC CUE:

We hear the opening and pre-chorus of 'You Don't Own Me' by Lesley Gore playing.

INT. LA HUNE BOOKSTORE & GALLERY, PARIS. DAY

The famed French bookstore is thriving, with customers filling the store & busily shopping. Noemie's novel, 'Love Has A Price' rests on a display counter near the entrance window, on show in Central Paris. Now departed, she has gotten the fifteen minutes of fame that she so desperately longed for. The brightness of the day in Paris fails to reflect the real drama behind the success.

CUT TO:

INT. LE SANTE PRISON – EAST WING – DAY.

Manette, still sitting at the annual dinner, doesn't move a muscle, but glances down to see Noemie's book sitting across the room, in a small bookshelf that the prison guards share. A prison guard is chewing on an apple and walks past to guard the scene, with 'Love Has A Price' open in his hands.

CUT TO:

EXT. LA HUNE BOOKSTORE & GALLERY, PARIS. DAY.

Outside the bookstore stands two elegant women, both reading newspapers – one 'Le Figaro' & the other is holding 'The Paris Review'. Dressed in fur coats, flowing skirts & extravagant hats paired with red lipstick, the women look back to the bookstore dramatically. The newspaper and magazine both blow dramatically in the wind, the print bold and taking the forefront.

CUT TO:

INT. LE SANTE PRISON – EAST WING. DAY.

Manette blankly looks around her, her lip slightly pouted as she stares on at the scene in front of her. Confetti bursts and Manette almost smiles, happy that her sister's book has been published. She grins in a fake way, turning her head as the confetti falls.

END.