

FRENCH EXIT

Written by

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FRANCES PRICE, 60, fashionable, moneyed, striking, is standing outside a pristine brownstone sliding on a pair of gloves. She stands with her son, MALCOLM PRICE, 27, wearing an expensive suit, but the shirt is half-tucked, and the suit is wrinkled, as though he's been wearing it for some days. The windows of the brownstone are illuminated and the sound of a piano is on the air: a tasteful party is occurring.

FRANCES

All good things must end.

She is speaking to the HOSTESS, 65, likewise moneyed though less lovely than Frances. She is somewhat drunk.

HOSTESS

(aggrieved)

But you're certain you have to go?

FRANCES

Yes, and we're very sorry about it. What a shame. We were having such a lovely evening.

HOSTESS

Were you - really?

FRANCES

Such a lovely evening. And I do hate to leave. But it sounds like we've got a proper emergency at home. And what can be done in the face of that?

HOSTESS

(sorrowfully)

Nothing.

A pause. Suddenly the Hostess lunges at Frances and embraces her. She whispers in Frances's ear:

HOSTESS (CONT'D)

I've always admired you, Frances.

Frances is mortified but calm.

FRANCES

Malcolm.

HOSTESS

Actually, I'm sort of afraid of you. Is that very silly of me?

FRANCES  
Malcolm. Malcolm.

Malcolm intervenes, peeling the Hostess away from his mother. He takes her hand in his and shakes it. The Hostess watches her hand going up and down with an expression of puzzlement. A sudden embarrassment comes over her.

HOSTESS  
Excuse me. I'm sorry.

She moves back a step, into her house.

HOSTESS (CONT'D)  
Thank you for coming. Good night.

She returns to her home, closing the door behind her. Frances and Malcolm walk down the steps where their driver opens the door to their waiting town car. Frances pulls out a gold lighter and cigarette. *CLICK!* She lights the cigarette.

The Hostess is now visible in a window, chatting amiably with one of her guests.

FRANCES  
Born to bore.

MALCOLM  
She's just drunk. Hopefully she won't remember in the morning.

FRANCES  
She'll send flowers if she does.

They pass their car, and enter a-

1 A EXT. PARK, NIGHT

1 A

As they enter, a vagrant, DAN, 50, eyes bright with alcohol, approaches and stands before Frances and Malcolm.

DAN  
Got anything to spare tonight,  
folks?

Malcolm is leaning in to shoo the man away but Frances catches his arm.

FRANCES  
Possibly we do. But may we ask what  
you need the money for?

DAN

Oh, you know. Just getting by.

FRANCES  
Could you please be more specific?

DAN  
I guess I'd like a little wine, if  
you want to know.

Frances nods, appreciative of the frank reply.

FRANCES  
What's your name?

DAN  
Dan.

FRANCES  
May I call you Daniel?

DAN  
If that's what you want to do,  
sure.

FRANCES  
Daniel, what would you do if we  
gave you twenty dollars?

Dan whistles a puff of dry air. He squints, realizing the  
scenario in his mind.

DAN  
For twenty dollars I could get a  
gallon of Three Roses, a pack of  
cigarettes, and a weenie.

FRANCES  
And where would you take it all?  
Back to your room?

DAN  
The weenie I'd eat on the spot. The  
rest of it, I'd take it into the  
park with me. That's where I sleep  
most nights, in the park.

FRANCES  
Where in the park?

DAN  
Under a bush.

Frances smiles sweetly at Dan.

FRANCES  
 So you'd lay under a bush and smoke  
 your cigarettes and drink your  
 wine.

DAN  
 Yeah.

FRANCES  
 You'd look up at the stars.

DAN  
 Why not.

FRANCES  
 (thinks)  
 Would you really drink the entire  
 gallon, Daniel?

DAN  
 I really would.

FRANCES  
 But wouldn't you feel awful in the  
 morning?

DAN  
 Yes, but that's what mornings are  
 for, ma'am.

Sufficiently touched, Frances opens her clutch and fishes out  
 a twenty for Dan. He receives the bill and scuttles away.

A BEAT COP, 35, walks up, looking after Dan.

BEAT COP  
 That guy wasn't bothering you two,  
 I hope?

FRANCES  
 Who, Daniel? Not at all. He's a  
 friend of ours.

BEAT COP  
 Looked like he was putting the bite  
 on you.

Frances stares icily at the policeman.

FRANCES  
 Actually, I was paying him back. I  
 should have paid him back a long  
 time ago, but Dan's been very  
 patient with me.

(MORE)

## FRANCES (CONT'D)

I thank God for the fact of a man like him. Not that it's any of your business.

She lights the lighter again: *CLICK!* The flame is positioned between them, as if defining a border.

The Beat Cop looks at Frances, then Malcolm. They're both regarding him with disdain. The Beat Cop shrugs and wanders off, asking sorry, small questions to himself.

Frances turns to Malcolm and claps her hands gently together, communicating a 'job well done' sentiment.

## FRANCES (CONT'D)

Let's.

She wraps her hands around her son's arm as they take a path across the park, a Manhattan skyline looming above.

2 INT. PRICE APARTMENT 2

SMALL FRANK, an elderly cat, walks through the lavish living room apartment, up a spiral staircase and down a long hallway. He enters:

3 INT. MALCOLM'S BEDROOM 3

Malcolm sits on his bed, staring at his telephone. He seems nervous just to look at it.

In the background, Small Frank watches as Malcolm picks up the phone and dials. It goes to voice mail:

Malcolm stands. He moves toward the door as he speaks.

## MALCOLM

Hi Sudsy. It's me.

He closes the door with his foot, barring the lurking cat.

## MALCOLM (CONT'D)

I haven't seen you in a while. . .  
I'd like to see you. . . Do you  
want to see me?

He shakes his head at his own awkwardness, and hangs up.

4 INT. PRICE APARTMENT 4

Small Frank crosses the large, well-appointed living room and moves to stand in the doorway of -

5 FRANCES'S BEDROOM 5

Frances wears a plush robe. She's combing her long, damp hair - she's just taken a bath and is talking on speakerphone in front of a vanity mirror.

FRANCES

It used to be that the seasons  
filled me with expectation. Now  
they seem more a hostile  
encroachment.

JOAN (O.S.)

I thought we'd agreed not to talk  
about death at night?

(pause)

Christmas is coming. I say it each  
year but you're hell to shop for.

Frances notices something in a mirror's reflection that causes her to turn. She and the cat stare at each other.

FRANCES

I'm simple. I want nothing.

She shuts the door on the cat, as Malcolm had.

6 INT. OFFICE, LATER 6

Small Frank is watching the Wall Street wrap-up on television.

7 INT. PRICE MANSION, DINING ROOM, MORNING 7

Frances is eating breakfast. A MAID, 40, refills her coffee and exits as Malcolm enters. He hasn't changed clothes or shaved.

The maid brings him a plate of food and he begins shoveling it into his mouth. Frances watches him with a melancholic endearment. She lights a cigarette: *CLICK!*

FRANCES

Did you drink to the brink of sound  
reasoning?

MALCOLM

No.

FRANCES

Were you driven to insomnia by the  
violence of your Muse?

Malcolm, chewing, shakes his head. Frances reaches over and  
lays a consoling hand atop his.

FRANCES (CONT'D)  
Menstruating?

Malcolm winces and shoots his mother a look. She makes a chaste face.

FRANCES (CONT'D)  
How are things with Susan?

MALCOLM  
We're in our holding pattern. As if you didn't know.

Frances nods.

FRANCES  
Ah, to be young-ish and in love-ish.  
(takes a drag off  
cigarette)  
Will you see her today?

Malcolm's face registers annoyance; he doesn't like speaking with his mother about Susan. Frances takes pity, pats his hand.

FRANCES (CONT'D)  
I can't join you anyway. Mr. Baker insists on a meeting.

Malcolm's face registers a minor concern.

MALCOLM  
Another plea for thrift?

Frances seems uneasy at the question.

FRANCES  
Wait and see.

9 INT. PRICE APARTMENT, VESTIBULE, DAY

9

Frances is sitting in the library with MR. BAKER, a well-heeled professional in his late 50's. He's anxious but trying to control it. He plunges in headlong:

MR. BAKER  
It's all gone, Frances.

FRANCES  
What's all gone?

MR. BAKER  
Everything.

FRANCES  
Everything.

Mr. Baker nods.

FRANCES (CONT'D)  
Not the money in my account.

MR. BAKER  
It's not your account for long.

FRANCES  
It's in my name.

MR. BAKER  
The name you get to keep. But every penny in that account, in addition to the investments and properties, is going back to the bank.

FRANCES  
The properties.

MR. BAKER  
The properties are yours I would imagine until the end of the month. By that I mean you have use of them. But none of them can be sold or rented and you'll be locked out on the first of January at the latest.

FRANCES  
Certainly I'll get to keep the money I brought to the marriage?

MR. BAKER  
That was shuffled into the estate a long time ago and it wasn't, excuse me, a very large sum.

FRANCES  
And Malcolm's legacy?

MR. BAKER  
No.

Frances looks lost, fragile. Mr. Baker is peeved to be party to the event.

MR. BAKER (CONT'D)

I spoke to you about this as a possibility for seven years, and an eventuality for three. What did you think was going to happen? What was your plan?

FRANCES

(exhales)

My plan was to die before the money ran out. But I kept and keep not dying, and here I am.

She takes a moment, then sits up.

FRANCES (CONT'D)

All right. It's all been settled. Now I want you to tell me what to do.

MR. BAKER

Do?

FRANCES

Yes. Tell me, please.

MR. BAKER

What can I say? Take a loan from a friend?

FRANCES

Impossible. Name something else.

MR. BAKER

There is nothing else.

FRANCES

There must be. Name it.

Mr. Baker takes a moment.

MR. BAKER

Speaking off the record, there's only one thing you can do: sell it all.

FRANCES

Sell what all?

MR. BAKER

Everything that isn't nailed down. Sell the jewelry, the art, the books. Sell it privately, quietly, cheaply.

(MORE)

MR. BAKER (CONT'D)

Bring me the checks and I'll have  
it transferred to cash for you.

FRANCES

And then what?

MR. BAKER

And then whatever-you-wish.

Frances watches Mr. Baker.

9 A

EXT. NYC UPPER EAST SIDE STREET - NIGHT

9 A

Malcolm and Susan are walking up a busy block, talking. Susan  
seems amused/incredulous about something.

SUSAN

You went to museums, alone, five  
hours a day, five days a week - for  
four years?

MALCOLM

Yes.

SUSAN

Instead of going to high school?

They are passing the Ritz. Malcolm is looking in the windows  
as they pass; Susan is focusing only on Malcolm.

MALCOLM

Yes.

SUSAN

And Frances was okay with this.

He looks back at Susan.

MALCOLM

It was her idea.

They approach a curb, wait to cross. Susan is so distracted  
by what she's just heard she moves to step into the street.  
Malcolm gently prevents this.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)

Careful.

Pause for a break in traffic. Malcolm takes her hand as they  
step into the crosswalk.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)  
'Education by observation,' she  
called it.

Susan thinks.

SUSAN  
Weren't you very lonely, though?

They step up a curb and continue down the sidewalk. They  
continue holding hands.

MALCOLM  
I was until I wasn't.

Susan squeezes his arm and beams at him. She loves him. He  
smiles back, a tender moment as they continue up the block.

But they're getting nearer to Malcolm's apartment building;  
Susan sees it in the distance.

SUSAN  
Malcolm. . .

Malcolm turns to look at her.

SUSAN (CONT'D)  
What if we went to Frances and told  
her about our engagement. You know,  
together.

MALCOLM  
What - you and me?

SUSAN  
Together, yes.

MALCOLM  
When?

SUSAN  
Now.

Malcolm looks at the apartment as they walk. He takes his  
hand back from Susan and crosses his arms.

MALCOLM  
Talk to my mother, together - now.

Malcolm considers it. He shakes his head and looks at Susan.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)  
No.

SUSAN

Why?

MALCOLM

It's a bad idea. The only way it'll work is if I tell her myself.

Susan takes a step away from Malcolm and studies him critically.

SUSAN

What, exactly, are you afraid of?

MALCOLM

The same thing you're afraid of.

They both look up at the apartment.

10 INT. PRICE APARTMENT, KITCHEN, NIGHT

10

Frances is standing in the kitchen, sharpening a knife in the dark. She works evenly, methodically, muttering lowly to herself. She is drunk.

SOUND OF home door opening/closing. Hallway light goes on.

Malcolm enters the kitchen still wearing his outside coat. He has something weighing on him; he takes a breath, begins:

MALCOLM

Listen, there's something we need to talk about--

He regards his mother confusedly.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)

Are you cooking?

FRANCES

No, I just like the sound it makes.

She stops, looks up.

FRANCES (CONT'D)

What is it?

MALCOLM

(murmurs indistinctly)

FRANCES

What's that Mr. Mumbles? I can't understand you.

(MORE)

FRANCES (CONT'D)

Well, my news trumps yours. Are you  
ready for this?

Malcolm turns.

FRANCES (CONT'D)

We're insolvent. We've nothing  
left. Nothing in the world!

She laughs dementedly, slashing at the air with the knife. It comes away from her hand and clatters down the length of the kitchen table and onto the floor.

Malcolm, unnerved, leaves. Frances collects the knife, and resumes her work of sharpening the blade.

11 INT. PRICE APARTMENT, DAY

11

RALPH RUDY, 55, a swarthy, somewhat sleazy man in an ill-fitting suit, walks around the house, inspecting the paintings and sculpture and taking notes in a pad with a pencil stub so small it's not visible in his meaty hand. France follows behind, holding her finger to her temple, her head aching from the night before.

FRANCES

Do you understand the . . . nature of my situation? The delicacy of it, I mean?

Ralph Rudy nods curtly. He has no thought to put Frances at ease.

RALPH RUDY

About my fee.

Frances raises her eyebrows: Yes?

RALPH RUDY (CONT'D)

It's a straight 30 percent. That's non-negotiable.

FRANCES

Isn't it?

RALPH RUDY

No.

FRANCES

Mightn't it be? Well, it's going to have to be if you want to work with me.

This gives Ralph Rudy pause. He looks at Frances, as if for the first time, and in studying her eyes recognizes his underestimation.

RALPH RUDY

Twenty-seven percent.

FRANCES

I'll give you fifteen percent or  
I'll thank you for your time.

RALPH RUDY

Twenty-five percent.

Frances clasps her hands together. She is enjoying herself.

FRANCES

Mr. Rudy, if you name another  
figure that isn't fifteen percent,  
I'll go to fourteen. Name another,  
I go to thirteen, and on down the  
line until your payment, and your  
sole function in regard to my life  
disappears altogether.

RALPH RUDY

(frowns)

That's no way to negotiate. This is  
a tricky job. It could be  
detrimental to my reputation.

FRANCES

Reputation. That's humorous.

RALPH RUDY

Is that right?

FRANCES

Yes, it is.

RALPH RUDY

And why?

FRANCES

Because I saw the condition of your  
vehicle when you pulled up. Because  
the vehicle wore New Jersey plates.  
Because your socks, while coming  
close, don't quite match. And  
because, and because, and because.  
There's no need to insult each  
other, Mr. Rudy. I have a somewhat  
dirty job that needs doing, and you  
are a somewhat dirty person. You  
seem to think you have me over a  
barrel, but I've other options  
you're not taking into  
consideration.

RALPH RUDY  
 There's no one in North America  
 with my contacts.

FRANCES  
 I don't doubt that. But you miss my  
 point.

Frances pauses.

FRANCES (CONT'D)  
 Have you heard any rumors in  
 respects to my mental health?

RALPH RUDY  
 No.  
 (pause)  
 I heard you're odd.

FRANCES  
 Odd.

RALPH RUDY  
 Odd, yes. Difficult.

FRANCES  
 Difficult.

RALPH RUDY  
 And there's the story about your  
 husband.

Frances raises her eyebrows.

FRANCES  
 Which story is that?

RALPH RUDY  
 You know. About you. . . finding  
 him.

FRANCES  
 Yes?

Ralph Rudy is uncomfortable.

RALPH RUDY  
 You know.

Frances's face brightens, as if the answer's just come to  
 mind.

FRANCES

I found him, but then I left the  
body for a while, didn't I?

There's something self-consciously 'naughty' about her tone.  
Ralph Rudy nods grimly.

FRANCES (CONT'D)

And people still talk about that?

RALPH RUDY

Sure they do. Of course.

Frances shakes her head and laughs to herself. She leans in  
closer to Ralph Rudy.

FRANCES

Well, I'm going to tell you a  
private truth, now: I'm more than  
odd. There's a goodly part of me  
that wants to set this building on  
fire, with myself and my son locked  
in. What do you think of that?

Ralph Rudy looks suddenly adrift, out of his depth.

RALPH RUDY

That's none of my business.

FRANCES

I say it is. Because if I don't get  
my price, this goodly part will  
become ever more goodly. It's  
important that you understand my  
point of view, and appreciate both  
the fact and scope of my nihilism.  
Now, you and I know that many of  
the objects in my house are of a  
museum quality. My effects  
represent a small fortune. Fifteen  
percent of that, even in a rushed,  
hushed sale? Think of how many  
socks that would buy.

Ralph Rudy's eyelids drop, and he becomes pensive.

FRANCES (CONT'D)

Now let's walk together, not  
speaking, to the front door.

They move wordlessly to the vestibule. Ralph Rudy turns at  
the door. He offers Frances his hand.

RALPH RUDY  
Fifteen percent.

Frances nods and shakes his hand.

FRANCES  
That's very good, Mr. Rudy. I'll be  
in touch.

Ralph Rudy is smiling at Frances. He is impressed with her;  
he likes her.

RALPH RUDY  
Why don't you call me Ralph?

FRANCES  
I'll call you Mr. Rudy.

She closes the door on him. He wears an expression of  
befuddlement on his face.

12 INT. N.Y. RESTAURANT, DAY

12

Frances is eating brunch with Joan.

FRANCES  
Are they saying I'm broke?

JOAN  
They are. Are you? Talk to old  
Joan.

Frances nods, slowly. Joan ponders. She bites into a piece of  
celery from her Bloody Mary.

JOAN (CONT'D)  
A plan is coming to me.

Frances sits silently, waiting.

JOAN (CONT'D)  
Possibly it's idiotic, I don't  
know. The more options the better,  
though, right?

Frances continues silently waiting.

JOAN (CONT'D)  
What about my apartment in Paris? I  
haven't even been in a year, at  
least. And it's just sitting there.

Frances's expression describes sorrow, then resignation. Joan reaches over and squeezes her hand.

JOAN (CONT'D)

To get out of New York is the thing, honey. It's only sensible.

FRANCES

Sensible.

JOAN

Sensible.

FRANCES

Sensible.

Frances takes a drink of her Bloody Mary. The check is placed on the table and both women reach for it.

JOAN

Let me get it.

FRANCES

No.

JOAN

Frances?

They pull it back and forth. They begin to laugh at the ridiculousness of the situation. But, Frances's laughter diminishes, and her face becomes more solemn.

She lets go of the check, giving it to Joan.

JOAN (CONT'D)

Thank you.

13

INT. PRICE APARTMENT, DINING ROOM, NIGHT

13

Frances is staring into space. The maid, SYLVIA, moves to stand beside her but Frances does not look up. Sylvia lays a check on the table beside Frances.

SYLVIA

The check bounced again, Mrs. Price.

Frances, still staring, reaches for her purse. She pulls out her checkbook and uncaps a pen.

SYLVIA (CONT'D)

Can I have cash?

Frances puts the cap back on the pen. Malcolm enters the room. Frances addresses him without looking at him.

FRANCES

Do you have any cash for Sylvia?

Malcolm moves toward Sylvia. He pulls out his wallet.

MALCOLM

How much?

SYLVIA

Six hundred.

Malcolm hands her six bills.

SYLVIA (CONT'D)

Thanks, Malcolm.

Sylvia leaves the room. Frances only now comes away from her reverie; she looks at her watch, then at Malcolm.

FRANCES

There's been a change in plans,  
pal.

MALCOLM

Oh? I didn't know there was a plan  
to change in the first place.

FRANCES

Yes, well. It's been decided we're  
going to go to Paris.

MALCOLM

We are?

Frances nods.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)

For how long?

FRANCES

Difficult to say. Possibly for the  
rest of our lives.

Malcolm watches his mother.

Susan sits in a booth alone, looking out the window at the people walking by. A rainstorm has just passed, and the streets and store windows are wet.

Malcolm enters the restaurant, wet through to the skin. He is holding a flower in his hand. He sits opposite Susan and hands her the flower. She accepts it.

Malcolm unfolds his napkin and begins patting his hair. Susan studies him as he does this. She smiles at him; she reaches over and lovingly touches his face.

She pulls her hand back.

SUSAN

So, what can I do for you, Malcolm?

Malcolm cocks his head.

MALCOLM

Do?

SUSAN

Do.

(nods)

You've called me here today. What have you got to report?

Malcolm shifts uncomfortably. Susan folds her hands. Her tone describes patience wearing thin:

SUSAN (CONT'D)

The thing I can't figure out is whether or not you expect me, or if you even want me to wait for you?

MALCOLM

Of course I do. But it wouldn't be very chivalrous to ask, would it?

SUSAN

And chivalry - is that an interest of yours?

Here Malcolm lays the napkin over his head, totally obscuring his face.

MALCOLM

I have many interests.

SUSAN

Would you describe yourself as a coward?

MALCOLM

No.

SUSAN  
How would you describe yourself?

MALCOLM  
I don't know that I'd bother in the  
first place.

Susan pulls the napkin away from Malcolm's head and studies  
his face.

SUSAN  
I want you to know that I'm trying  
to fall out of love with you.

Malcolm's mouth creaks open.

MALCOLM  
Susan.

SUSAN  
What?

MALCOLM  
I'm going to Paris.

SUSAN  
Paris.

Malcolm nods.

SUSAN (CONT'D)  
When are you going to Paris?

MALCOLM  
Soon.

SUSAN  
How soon?

MALCOLM  
I think tomorrow.

SUSAN  
You think tomorrow?

Susan watches Malcolm awhile.

SUSAN (CONT'D)  
When are you coming back?

MALCOLM  
That's the thing. I don't really  
know.

A long pause.

They continue staring at each other.

The answer is clear, but Malcolm can't say it aloud. Susan shakes her head; she laughs bitterly.

SUSAN

Well, it's all very moving, I'm sure.

MALCOLM

What?

SUSAN

Your devotion to a woman who didn't hardly introduce herself to you until you were twelve years old. Your refusal to live beyond the rules she's written for her own benefit.

She holds up the flower.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

You don't bring flowers to someone you're saying goodbye to, Malcolm.

She hands him the flower.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Please leave me alone.

Malcolm pauses, stands, leaves the restaurant.

We soon see him across the street. The rain has stopped; bright sun emerges.

He is watching Susan, the flower in his hand.

His sunglasses are crooked and steam is rising from his damp shoulders.

15

PRICE APARTMENT, DAY

15

The walls are bare; all the furnishings are gone. Small Frank sits on the second floor landing, taking it all in.

16 INT. MR. BAKER'S OFFICES, DAY

16

Frances is sitting in Mr. Baker's plush midtown offices. An ASSISTANT, female, 30, smartly dressed, stands at a buffet table filled with juices, pastries, etc. She pours a coffee for Frances and brings it to her; Frances waves this away.

Mr. Baker sits at his oversized desk. Before him are piles of cash in banded stacks.

MR. BAKER  
Why euro, Frances?

FRANCES  
I'm going to Paris.

MR. BAKER  
That's right, you talk the talk,  
don't you?

FRANCES  
Oui, petit cochon.

Mr. Baker tilts his head, not understanding.

FRANCES (CONT'D)  
Little prince.

She begins transferring the money from the tabletop into her large leather shoulder bag - her cash bag. Mr. Baker watches with a look of concern.

MR. BAKER  
A hundred and seventy-five thousand  
euro loose in your purse?

She stands, hefting the cash bag onto her shoulder.

FRANCES  
You've never been boring before.  
Why start now?

Mr. Baker smiles, holds up his hand: you win.

MR. BAKER  
How will I get into touch with you?

FRANCES  
You won't.

He stands and extends a hand.

MR. BAKER  
I'm going to miss you, Frances.

FRANCES  
Won't you all.

Frances smiles and leaves. Mr. Baker turns to the Assistant with a fond look on his face.

MR. BAKER  
They broke the mold with that one.

ASSISTANT  
Cochon means pig.

Mr. Baker's expression slackens.

17 INT. TOWN CAR, SOON AFTER 17

In the back seat of the town car, Malcolm is looking out one window; Frances the other. Small Frank sits in the middle of them, staring at nothing.

18 EXT. CRUISE SHIP PASSENGER TERMINAL 18

The town car approaches a cruise ship passenger terminal.

19 EXT. HARBOR, SOON AFTER 19

The massive ship is leaving the harbor for Europe.

20 INT. FRANCES CABIN, SOON AFTER 20

FRANCES

. . . Then came Kenneth, WASP wonder-boy. We were involved in the pre-marriage courting ritual when he died in a car accident in Long Island. . . There's something about a person met with tragic death; you recall their living moments in a kinder light.

The suite features large glass French doors which look out over the ocean - the boat is in motion. Malcolm is already sea-sick. He lays in his bed, a bowl on his chest. Frances sits at his bedside with a 'tropical' drink in her hand. Small Frank sits beside her.

FRANCES (CONT'D)

We tell ourselves we knew on a psychic level they were going to die but I didn't know, no. Joan was the one to tell me and it's true I cried but it felt forced and later I lay awake surprised at how little I cared. It's a shame he died that way but I'm glad we never married. He wanted to tamp my spirit and might have succeeded. But he was a beautiful boy - beautiful.

Malcolm sits up and heaves into the bowl but nothing comes. He lays back down.

FRANCES (CONT'D)

I ran from one brightly burning disaster to the next.

(MORE)

FRANCES (CONT'D)

That's the way I was. Possibly you won't like to think of your mother as one who lived, but I'll tell you something: it's fun to run from one brightly burning disaster to the next.

Malcolm points to Small Frank.

MALCOLM

Tell me about him.

Frances stands and carries Small Frank to the door, letting him out into the hall. She returns and sits beside Malcolm. She has a patient expression.

FRANCES

What do you want to know?

MALCOLM

Tell me about your first date.

FRANCES

He took me to Tavern on the Green. He ate his cupcake with a fork and knife and I thought: Who could ever love this man?

MALCOLM

I can't imagine cupcakes at Tavern on the Green.

FRANCES

That's a banal observation, Malcolm, but just to see the thought through, yes, they did for a time serve chocolate cupcakes at Tavern on the Green. He was nervous but hid it admirably. I liked that he wasn't afraid of silence.

Frances becomes silent herself.

MALCOLM

Keep talking about him.

FRANCES

I don't want to.

MALCOLM

But, did you love him?

Frances is surprised by the question. She considers her answer.

## FRANCES

I did, then I didn't, then I did,  
then I really didn't.

A pause. Malcolm begins to vomit loudly into the bowl.  
Frances has a drink of her cocktail.

21 EXT. CRUISE SHIP PROMENADE, MORNING 21

Frances lays on a deck chair wrapped in blankets. She wears sunglasses and reads a book.

22 INT. CRUISE SHIP MAIN GALLERY, DAY 22

Malcolm, having got his sea legs, is walking around the ship in a breezy white suit. He passes a Bingo Hall, a buffet. The passengers are, for the most part, retired seniors.

He approaches a silk tent. A sign hangs outside: Tarot Tent. He steps closer to inspect it; he hears the sound of a woman sobbing from within the tent.

He peers into the moon-shaped window-hole and sees:

23 INT. TAROT TENT 23

An ELDERLY WOMAN, 70, in garish vacation garb, is sitting on a pouf at a low table filled with tarot cards and all manner of antique oddities, candles, etc. She holds her hands over her face; she is weeping and moaning.

Sitting across from her is MADELEINE THE MEDIUM, 35, in silky 'psychic seer' costume clothing. She watches the Elderly Woman with a look of sadness and regret. She reaches out to comfort the woman.

## MADELEINE THE MEDIUM

I'm so sorry. . . I'm. . .

The Elderly Woman stands and rushes from the tent. She pushes past Malcolm and disappears around a corner. Malcolm resumes his spying: Madeleine the Medium is sitting alone, now, eyes closed, massaging her temples, shaking her head, and speaking lowly to herself.

Malcolm is transfixed by Madeleine. She opens her eyes and turns to Malcolm. She is startled, then angry at the realization she was being watched.

## MADELEINE THE MEDIUM (CONT'D)

What!

Malcolm flinches and walks quickly away.

24

INT. CRUISE SHIP DINING ROOM, NIGHT

24

Frances sits at a table with a glum, lost expression on her face. She is wearing a gown, her face and hair expertly made up. Small Frank sits on a chair beside her. They are both staring out the window at the black ocean.

In the background, on a small stage, a trio is playing big band hits of the 1940's. Before them, a pack of old timers are dancing.

Malcolm arrives at the table, in tuxedo, now, and sits beside his mother. She doesn't acknowledge his arrival, or look at him when she speaks.

FRANCES

I heard a man say it was five miles  
to the bottom of the sea.

MALCOLM (V.O.)

Yes?

FRANCES

Well, I wish I didn't know it. What  
a stupid thing to say on a cruise  
ship.

A WAITER, 30, compact, handsome, comes to the table.

WAITER

Excuse me, whose cat is this?

Neither Malcolm nor Frances answer. The waiter picks up Small Frank, who hangs limply in his hands, and walks off with him. Frances watches them go. Soon she follows after them.

Malcolm reaches over for his mother's drink and takes a sip. He takes in the band, the dance floor. He spies the Elderly Woman who'd been crying in the Tarot Tent. She is marching through the audience in a pink gown, tossing handfuls of confetti over the heads of the people on the dance floor. She looks perfectly enchanted to be doing this, as though this was all she ever wanted from life. The crowd eats her up but confetti blasts can still be seen from time to time.

Malcolm is fishing a cherry from the bottom of his mother's drink. He spies Madeleine the medium at the bar. He hails her and approaches, a critical look on her face.

MALCOLM

I'm Malcolm.

She does not respond.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)  
Will you tell me your name?

MADELEINE THE MEDIUM  
Madeleine.

MALCOLM  
Madeleine, will you have a drink  
with me?

MADELEINE THE MEDIUM  
No.

MALCOLM  
Just one drink, Madeleine?

MADELEINE THE MEDIUM  
No.

Frances returns, Small Frank in her arms. At the sight of the cat, Madeleine's attitude changes completely. She drops to a knee and holds Small Frank's head in her hands, looking deeply into his eyes.

FRANCES  
(to Malcolm)  
Who is this person?

MALCOLM  
Madeleine the Medium.

FRANCES  
What's she doing?

MADELEINE THE MEDIUM  
Sorry.  
(points to the cat)  
Do you not know?

FRANCES  
We know.  
(to Malcolm)  
We're going to lie down. Will you  
come visit us later?

Malcolm nods. Frances takes up Small Frank's paw and makes him salute. Madeleine sits beside Malcolm, watching Frances as she departs.

MADELEINE THE MEDIUM  
What's she paying you?

MALCOLM

Paying me?

MADELEINE THE MEDIUM

Aren't you her gigolo?

MALCOLM

(horrified)

Oh my God. That's my mother.

Madeleine holds up a hand.

MADELEINE THE MEDIUM

Excuse me. But you'd be surprised  
at how common it is.

The Elderly Woman dances past them. Malcolm studies  
Madeleine's reaction. She only looks grim.

MALCOLM

What was she so upset about before?

MADELEINE THE MEDIUM

A third of the people on board this  
ship are in the presence of death.  
But if I say a single word about  
it? Off I go.

MALCOLM

You told that woman she's dying?

MADELEINE THE MEDIUM

Yes, because she is.

The Elderly Woman tosses yet another grip of confetti.

MALCOLM

She looks all right to me.

MADELEINE THE MEDIUM

She'll never see land again.

The Waiter approaches.

MADELEINE THE MEDIUM (CONT'D)

Dry gin martini.

Malcolm smiles at Madeleine.

MALCOLM

Two.

25 INT. MALCOLM'S CABIN, LATER 25

Malcolm and Madeleine are drunk. Malcolm lays on his bed, disrobing.

MALCOLM  
(pulling off his socks)  
I won't be needing these!

Madeleine is pulling her dress off over her head. They're both cackling.

26 INT. FRANCES'S CABIN, SAME TIME 26

Frances is in her bed, in an indigo robe, hair upswept, regarding her reflection in a palm mirror. Small Frank is sitting upright before her and listening with what could be interpreted as interest.

FRANCES  
It's like a retirement, in a way.  
(pause)  
Though, no, I've never worked a day, and so what mantle is being retired, even. . .

She shrugs. She lowers her hand mirror and studies the cat.

FRANCES (CONT'D)  
I'm not sure how we're going to get you into France.

She raises her hand mirror and pats her chin.

FRANCES (CONT'D)  
All that lovely money.

She lowers the mirror and clicks the light off.

27 INT. MALCOLM'S CABIN, MORNING 27

Malcolm wakes up alone.

28 EXT. PSYCHIC TENT, LATER 28

Malcolm approaches the psychic tent, in search of Madeleine. A sign hangs over the door: CLOSED.

29

INT. DINING HALL, CAPTAIN'S TABLE, DUSK

29

A large table, filled with well-dressed men and women. At the head of the table is the Captain, middle 60's, traditionally handsome, full head of silver hair. He is staring fixedly at Frances, obviously enamored of her. She is unaware of him, or else ignoring him. He leans in and addresses her.

CAPTAIN

I understand you're moving to Paris? Are you very excited?

FRANCES

I suppose I should be.

CAPTAIN

I admire you for carving out a second act for yourself.

(raises his glass)

Bravo.

FRANCES

Thank you. But it's the third act, if we're to be honest. Or the coda, if you'd rather.

CAPTAIN

And your son is coming with you, isn't that right?

FRANCES

Of course.

CAPTAIN

I find it refreshing to see a child so devote. I was close to my mother too.

FRANCES

I despised mine.

CAPTAIN

Did you?

FRANCES

Despised.

CAPTAIN

The burden of motherhood can be a strain.

FRANCES

She was a demon. And if such a place as hell exists then that's where she collects her mail.

The captain is unsure of how to respond. Another drink for Frances is delivered.

FRANCES (CONT'D)

Is it true that it's five miles to the bottom of the ocean?

The Captain all but jumps up to answer the nautical question.

CAPTAIN

At its deepest it's shy of that, but only just. We're talking about the Mariana Trench, here. That's in the Western Pacific - long ways away from us. Five miles in an uncommon depth, however. Where we are now it's more along the line of two mile.

The news is a balm for Frances. She finishes her martini.

Malcolm, at the other end of the table, is spying on the person to his left. BORIS MAURUS is a 55 year-old alcoholic in an ill fitting and woefully wrinkled linen suit. He is copiously sweating and his face is the color of rare beef. He looks unhappy. A tequila is fitted into his hand.

Malcolm nudges him; the man flinches.

BORIS MAURUS

What?

MALCOLM  
I'm Malcolm Price.

BORIS MAURUS  
Good for you. I'm Boris Maurus.

MALCOLM  
Your name is Boris Maurus?

BORIS MAURUS  
Yeah.

Malcolm thinks.

MALCOLM  
We both have horror movie names.

Boris Maurus takes a drink, issues a small gasp.

BORIS MAURUS  
Yeah? Well, I wouldn't know,  
because I don't watch horror  
movies, because my life is already  
a horror movie, so what's the  
point?

MALCOLM  
Okay.

BORIS MAURUS  
I watch documentaries.

MALCOLM  
All right.

Malcolm studies the man. He seems very agitated.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)  
Are you all right?

Boris Maurus sighs, nods - yes, something's the matter.

BORIS MAURUS  
I'm the ship's doctor, right?

MALCOLM  
Right.

BORIS MAURUS  
Well, yesterday some moron posing  
as a gypsy told one of the  
passengers she was dying, which is  
bad enough, but then the woman  
really did die.

MALCOLM  
You mean Madeleine?

BORIS MAURUS  
The gypsy? I think that's her name.  
You know her?

Malcolm nods.

BORIS MAURUS (CONT'D)  
Yeah, well, they just threw her in  
the jug.

MALCOLM  
The jug?

BORIS MAURUS  
The brig.

MALCOLM  
Can they do that?

BORIS MAURUS  
Goddamned right they can. A  
middling lawyer could prove your  
buddy murdered that woman. Threat  
of violence leading to cardiac  
arrest.  
(snaps fingers)  
These old birds spook to say 'Boo'  
at them. Once Death's on deck? In a  
contained environment? They freak  
fucking out. I've seen it. It's  
grim.

Boris Maurus finishes his tequila.

BORIS MAURUS (CONT'D)  
(leans in, whispers)  
I could show you something very  
terrible, if you'd like.

The Captain is leaning in close to Frances; his hand rests  
atop hers; they are flirting.

Frances takes a drink. She is pleased by the Captain's  
attentions.

FRANCES  
Out of the blue, and I feel so  
happy!

30 INT. SHIP'S MORGUE, SOON AFTER

30

Malcolm is standing over the corpse of the woman he'd seen \*YL0  
throwing confetti on the dance floor - the woman Madeleine  
had said would die. She lays on a gurney; she is still in her \*YL0  
gown, confetti in her hair, but her face is ghoulish and  
gray. Boris Maurus is in the background pulling back sheets \*YL0  
from other corpses on other gurneys. Seven bodies in total. \*YL0

MALCOLM

What happened to them?

BORIS MAURUS

Just that they died.

Boris Maurus pulls a flask from his pocket and drinks. \*YL0

MALCOLM

We've been at sea four days. \*YL0

BORIS MAURUS

You get two bodies a day. That's  
the industry standard for an  
Atlantic crossing. \*YL0

He hands the flask to Malcolm. \*YL0

MALCOLM

I don't want any. \*YL0

BORIS MAURUS

You have to.

MALCOLM

Why?

BORIS MAURUS

Because it's fun. You and me.  
Drinking drinks.

Malcolm is studying Boris Maurus with mistrust, dislike. He \*YL0  
takes a step toward the door.

MALCOLM

Thanks for showing me this.

Boris Maurus shrugs sullenly.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)

I won't tell anyone about it.

BORIS MAURUS

Tell whoever you want.

Malcolm leaves; Boris Maurus a long drink from his flask. \*YL0

32

INT. CAPTAIN'S QUARTERS

32\*YL0

Frances and the Captain are in bed, under the covers. The \*YL0  
coupling has not been successful. \*YL0

CAPTAIN

It's very common.

\*YL0

\*YL0

FRANCES

I've never experienced it.

\*YL0

\*YL0

CAPTAIN

Very, very common.

\*YL0

\*YL0

(pause)

\*YL0

Who's got room for more champagne?

\*YL0

The Captain reaches for the bottle on the nightstand and \*YL0  
pours out two fizzing glasses. He hands one to Frances. \*YL0

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)

We could try again, in Paris.

\*YL0

\*YL0

FRANCES

We could. But we won't.

\*YL0

\*YL0

They clink glasses and drink. \*YL0

\*YLO

34 INT. FRANCES'S CABIN, BATHROOM, MORNING 34

Frances is wearing a chic dress and heeled shoes, hair just so, in sunglasses. We see as she pours out four white pills onto a black napkin on the counter top. She then folds the napkin, removes her shoe, and begins violently banging the napkin with the heel.

She pours the crushed pills on top of a bowl filled with a portion of tuna fish. She mixes the powder with the fish and leaves the bathroom for. . .

35 INT. FRANCES'S CABIN, BEDROOM 35

She is stepping unevenly, as she has only one shoe on. She sets the bowl on the ground. Small Frank approaches the tuna and begins eating.

Frances walks unevenly back to the . . .

36 INT. FRANCES'S CABIN, BATHROOM 36

She walks back to the pill bottle on the table and takes two of the pills herself.

37 INT. FRANCES'S CABIN, BEDROOM, SOON AFTER 37

Small Frank is dead asleep on the floor beside the now-empty bowl. Frances rolls him into her cash bag. A bundle of money spills out; she returns it to her bag.

38 EXT. CRUISE SHIP DISEMBARKMENT, BORDER PATROL 38

Malcolm struggles with his and France's carry-on bags. Frances has only the cash bag, but it's heavy, and the pills have taken effect. She grips the rail and walks cautiously. Malcolm spies Madeleine ahead of them and moves to catch up with her.

MALCOLM

Here's our jailbird now.

MADELEINE THE MEDIUM

Here I am.

MALCOLM

And you've paid your debt to society?

Madeleine only stares.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)

Want to tell me what happened?

MADELEINE THE MEDIUM

I couldn't send her back to the conga line without telling her.

MALCOLM

Maybe people don't want to know.

MADELEINE THE MEDIUM

Of course they want to know. Wouldn't you want to?

MALCOLM

No.

(pause)

How did you even know to tell her?

MADELEINE THE MEDIUM

I've always been able to see when it's going to happen. Towards the end, a color comes.

MALCOLM

What color?

MADELEINE THE MEDIUM

Green.

Frances, on woozy legs, catches up with Malcolm.

FRANCES

Oh, your little witchy friend. How do you do?

MADELEINE THE MEDIUM

Hi. I hope you haven't lost that cat?

Frances opens her cash bag and shows Madeleine. We see the inside of the cash bag: A cat sleeping on top of a mound of banded money. Madeleine stares but says nothing.

FRANCES

He's having his siesta until we're through customs.

Madeleine is called up to a customs official.

Frances and Malcolm are called to a customs official, leaving Madeleine behind. The CUSTOMS AGENT is 50, parted black hair, thin moustache - very French looking.

CUSTOMS AGENT

What is the purpose of your trip?

Frances throws an elbow atop the counter, her head cocked at a jaunty angle.

FRANCES

Chasing after youthful fantasies.

CUSTOMS AGENT

Madame?

FRANCES

We're vacationists. I want to see the Eiffel Tower, then die.

The Customs Agent pauses, shakes his head.

CUSTOMS AGENT

Die? But you are not so old, Madame.

FRANCES

I'm old enough to have received a corsage by a white-gloved West Point cadet with a pomaded ducktail and a solid silver flask of rye in the pocket of his gabardine tuxedo - that's how old I am.

Frances snaps her fingers, once, for emphasis or punctuation. The Customs Agent, flummoxed, turns to Malcolm, who is watching Madeleine depart.

CUSTOMS AGENT

She is sick, monsieur?

MALCOLM

She isn't sick.

CUSTOMS AGENT

She does not die?

MALCOLM

Never.

The Customs Agent looks back at Frances.

CUSTOMS AGENT

No dying in Paris.

He stamps their passports and waves them through.

39 EXT. SIDEWALK OUTSIDE JOAN'S APARTMENT, NIGHT 39

The taxi has arrived and the CAB DRIVER, 40, olive-skinned, is loading the baggage onto the sidewalk in front of Joan's apartment building. Malcolm and Frances climb out of the cab.

Behind them is a small public park, overlooking the Seine.

While the Cab Driver is depositing the last bag on the sidewalk, Frances reaches into her cash bag. She pulls out a banded stack. She breaks the paper seal and the Cab Driver looks on, startled by the sight.

40 INT. JOAN'S APARTMENT, NIGHT 40

Malcolm and Frances enter Joan's modest apartment. It's silent, still, dark. It's a significant shift from the elegant suites we've seen them in before.

Frances sets her cash bag down; Small Frank emerges from the bag and stretches.

41 INT. JOAN'S APARTMENT, MALCOLM'S ROOM, DAWN 41

Malcolm is laying on his side in bed, awake. Frances, in pajamas, enters Malcolm's room.

FRANCES  
I can't sleep.

Malcolm turns over to face her.

MALCOLM  
Me neither.

42 EXT. PARIS, LATE DAWN, SOON AFTER 42

Shopkeepers are raising their shutters and hosing off the sidewalks. Traffic is thin; it is a beautiful time of day, and Malcolm and Frances are taking it in.

Crossing the Boulevard St. Germain, Frances reaches out for Malcolm's hand. Now they walk together, joined in this way.

43 INT. FRENCH BISTRO 43

Malcolm and Frances are eating breakfast. Malcolm takes a bite, scowls.

MALCOLM  
It's cold.

Frances takes a bite of her omelette, sighs lightly, and sets her fork on the table.

A RUDE WAITER is standing at the bar, speaking loudly with the BARTENDER, in white shirt and suspenders.

Malcolm is waving from the table. The Rude Waiter waves back. Malcolm sighs, stands, approaches.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)  
(in French)  
We're ready for the bill-

RUDE WAITER  
(in English)  
Yes, soon, buddy, soon.

Malcolm returns to the table and watches as the waiter walks across the restaurant and to the sidewalk. Looking in at Frances, he ceremoniously lights a cigarette and takes a deep drag. Frances and the waiter stare at each other.

Finally, Frances breaks the gaze and begins calmly rooting around in her purse.

She pulls out a bottle of perfume and begins spritzing the floral arrangement in the center of their table.

Malcolm smiles at his mother; he knows what she's doing. The waiter, however, is mystified. He drops his cigarette and watches her suspiciously. As she pulls out a lighter, he becomes alarmed. She lights the lighter: *CLICK!* and holds it up for the Rude Waiter to see.

Frances touches the flame to the perfume-soaked flowers and it goes up in a great, flaming ball: *WHOMP!*

The Rude Waiter rushes in to stand before the blaze. He has completely lost his cool.

RUDE WAITER (CONT'D)  
(In French) What have you done?  
You're fucking crazy!

FRANCES  
L'addition, sils-vous-plait.

The Rude Waiter rushes off.

RUDE WAITER (O.S.)  
(In French) Where's the fucking  
fire extinguisher?

Frances looks at Malcolm, who is beside himself with pride.

44 INT. JOAN'S APARTMENT, FRANCES'S BEDROOM, DAY 44

Frances wears a silk kimono. She is stacking the banded cash in a neat pile on a shelf in her closet. She regards the stacks. Small Frank, in the background, sleeps atop her bed.

45 INT. JOAN'S APARTMENT, MALCOLM'S ROOM 45

Malcolm is standing in his room, looking out the window which overlooks a city park. He is studying the goings-on when Frances enters his room. She tosses a stack of cash on his bed: ten thousand euro.

FRANCES  
For walking around.

Frances leaves the room. Malcolm realizes something, startles:

MALCOLM  
 (calling after her)  
 Did you know it's Christmas Eve?

46 EXT. PARIS STREET, DAY 46

Frances is looking into a display window. In the reflection, we see a bustling Paris behind her.

47 INT. JOAN'S APARTMENT, KITCHEN, NIGHT 47

The apartment looks more lived in. A miniature Christmas tree is on the table, a single string of lights wrapped around it. Malcolm sits at the kitchen table, drinking one of the bottles of wine from a case with a bow on it - he's bought the wine for his mother.

The door opens and Frances enters pushing a new bicycle. She is exhausted from pushing it up the stairs.

FRANCES  
 Come and get it away from me.  
 Christ, I'm dying.

Malcolm approaches and takes the bike from Frances. He seems confused by the present; it's certainly not something he would have purchased for himself.

FRANCES (CONT'D)  
 Don't you like it?

Malcolm doesn't quite know what to say.

48 INT. JOAN'S APARTMENT, KITCHEN, MORNING 48

Frances and Malcolm are eating their breakfast. Malcolm is reading Paris Match; Frances is scrutinizing a stack of mail.

She reads a particular piece and hands it to Malcolm.

MALCOLM  
 What is it?

FRANCES  
 An invitation to a party.

MALCOLM  
 For us?

Malcolm studies the invitation. It reads: "Please come!! You will find yourself among friends!!!"

MALCOLM (CONT'D)  
Mme. Reynard. Who is she?

Frances shrugs.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)  
She likes her exclamation points.

He hands the invitation back to Frances. She holds this in her left hand, and a piece of buttered toast in the other. She re-reads it.

50

EXT. REMBRANDT STREET, NIGHT

50

Malcolm, in a suit, and Frances walk through the streets of Paris at night, en route to the party. Frances points at a hotel as they pass by.

FRANCES  
Your father and I stayed there on our honeymoon.

Malcolm studies the hotel with interest.

MALCOLM  
I can't imagine you two on a honeymoon.

FRANCES  
He'd never been, and I insisted.  
(pause)  
It was all the normal things.  
Hotels and flowers and champagne.  
It's strange to think he was actually fun, but in the beginning, he really was.

She pauses, and recalls the honeymoon.

FRANCES (CONT'D)  
We were at the Luxembourg Garden, and he was sailing one of those little boats, following after it with the long stick, you know? I started feeding the carp bits of a hot dog I was eating. They went berserk for it. And there was something about all these grotesquely fat fish piling on top of one another -- and for a hot dog. It made me laugh, hard.

(MORE)

FRANCES (CONT'D)

I think your father was startled by it. Well, he went away and came back with six hot dogs.

She looks at Malcolm.

FRANCES (CONT'D)

He'd bought them because he wanted to make me laugh again. Do you understand?

Malcolm nods.

FRANCES (CONT'D)

Such a small gesture. But it couldn't have been farther away from the man I knew later. The man he became.

(pause, sadly)

We were twenty-five years old.

51 EXT/INT. MME REYNARD'S APARTMENT, FRONT DOOR

51

The door opens. MME REYNARD is 65, casually dressed in slacks and baggy sweater. Her eyes are somewhat demented in their enthusiasm. She speaks English with a broad American accent.

MME REYNARD

Oh, hey! You made it! Come on in!  
Let me have your coats!

They are ushered into her luxurious apartment. The dining room table is set for three. Frances sees this and becomes uneasy.

FRANCES

We're not early?

MME REYNARD

No, right on time.

FRANCES

But where are the others?

MME REYNARD

It's just us!  
(clasps hands together)  
Would either of you like a martini?  
I've been waiting all day for mine.

MALCOLM

I would like a martini.

MME REYNARD

All right. Frances?

Frances nods absently; Mme Reynard leaves to prepare the drinks. Frances turns to Malcolm.

FRANCES

What the fuck is going on here?

Malcolm shrugs. Frances sits with an unhappy look on her face.

52

MME REYNARD'S APARTMENT, SOON AFTER

52

They are drinking their martinis while Mme Reynard holds court:

MME REYNARD

. . . My husband died this summer. After, I realized our friends were actually his; and that not only did I not like them but they didn't like me, either. Not a word since the funeral. I don't miss them particularly, but I miss the noise they made. That's why I invited you over.

FRANCES

You want us to make noise?

MME REYNARD

I'm lonely.

Frances all but rolls her eyes.

FRANCES

How'd he die?

MME REYNARD

He choked to death.

FRANCES

That's a new one.

MME REYNARD

It was a very ugly thing.

France scoffs and sips her martini.

MME REYNARD (CONT'D)

Please don't be cruel to me. It was difficult to get up the nerve to ask you over.

FRANCES

I suppose I don't see why we're here, is all.

MME REYNARD

Just that I was curious to meet you. Of course, I know who you are. I grew up in New York City and we're the same age, about. We all thought you were so wonderful, my friends and I.

FRANCES

I see.

MME REYNARD

So wonderful. And so, when I heard you'd come to Paris, I thought we might become friends.

FRANCES

I appreciate that. But the fact is that I've no need of friends in my life at the moment.

MME REYNARD

Well. I'm sorry to hear that that's the way you feel. But, you're here now, and I've made a cassoulet, and I vote we make the best of it. What do you think? Malcolm? Shall we make the best of it?

Malcolm feels sorry for Mme Reynard.

MALCOLM

Of course.

MME REYNARD

Fine. Will you have another martini before the wine?

MALCOLM

Yes, please.

Mme Reynard leaves the room.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)

You're being a dick.

FRANCES

Isn't it awful?  
 (grips her hands to fists)  
 I'm sorry. I'll stop.

Mme Reynard returns with another tray full of martinis.

MME REYNARD

Do you know, he died in that very  
 chair.

Frances grips the arms of the chair.

FRANCES

And what, may I ask, did he choke  
on?

MME REYNARD

Ah, lamb.

FRANCES

And have you eaten lamb since?

MME REYNARD

No, but you know I never liked lamb  
 much in the first place.

FRANCES

I don't either. The gamy meats  
 somehow summon the fact of the  
 animal's existence, which puts me  
 in mind of its death.

MME REYNARD

I'd never thought of it before.

FRANCES

Whereas a steak is simply a steak.

MME REYNARD

Yes, that's right.

Malcolm is bored; he stands and leaves the room.

53

INT. MME REYNARD'S APARTMENT, KITCHEN

53

He opens the freezer, in search of the vodka. He finds the  
 bottle and reaches for it, when something catches his eye and  
 he pauses.

Resting on the shelf below the vodka is a hefty, frost-coated  
 dildo. Malcolm stares awhile, then pours himself a vodka and  
 leaves the kitchen.

54 INT. MME REYNARD'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM

54

Malcolm comes back to sit in his chair. Mme Reynard is standing; she was just about to leave the room.

MME REYNARD

I need to use the powder room  
myself. I won't be a moment. . .

She leaves. Malcolm leans over to speak lowly to his mother.

MALCOLM

Go look in the freezer.

FRANCES

What? Why?

MALCOLM

Go look.

Frances stands and leaves the room. She returns, a faraway expression on her face. She shrugs.

FRANCES

I've never understood them.

MALCOLM

What's to understand?

FRANCES

Is it something one uses alone, or  
with someone there to help?

MALCOLM

Either or.

FRANCES

(taps chin)

But why would you want it cold?

MALCOLM

That's the mystery.

Frances takes a thoughtful sip of her martini. Mme Reynard enters. She stumbles slightly getting into her chair.

MME REYNARD

I'm a little bit crooked, I think.  
Malcolm, would you mind serving the  
cassoulet?

Malcolm stands to go.

MME REYNARD (CONT'D)

Thank you. I'm sure I'll scald myself if I try. It's all ready for you in the kitchen.

He exits and Mme Reynard takes a drink.

MME REYNARD (CONT'D)

It becomes like water, doesn't it?

FRANCES

It's better than water.

Mme Reynard smiles. She feels so pleased that her night has repaired itself. A thought comes into her head.

MME REYNARD

May I share a recollection I have of you?

FRANCES

All right.

MME REYNARD

It must have been twenty years ago. It was in the months after your husband's death. I was eating with a group at Le Circe, and a man at my table had had dealings with your husband and was not at all enamored of him. He'd actually been speaking poorly of him when you came in.

Mme Reynard smiles.

MME REYNARD (CONT'D)

You looked so smart; we couldn't help but stare. As you passed the table, the man stopped you and said, 'Mrs. Price, I knew your husband well. And it's all I can do not to dance on his grave.'

(pause)

Do you remember it?

FRANCES

I don't, no. What did I say to him?

MME REYNARD

That was the thing. You didn't say a word. You drank his drink.

Frances nods. She can remember now, distantly.

MME REYNARD (CONT'D)  
 Straight scotch. You drank it down  
 in a gulp and stared at him with a  
 look of absolute indifference. The  
 poor man didn't know what to do, he  
 was so ashamed.

The women are smiling at each other.

FRANCES  
 I'm sorry I was rude before. My  
 life has fallen completely to  
 pieces and I'm upset about it.

MME REYNARD  
 I know just what you mean.

FRANCES  
 Yes, I think you do.

Malcolm enters the room, cassoulet in hand.

FRANCES (CONT'D)  
 And here comes Malcolm.

MME REYNARD  
 Sustenance!

55 EXT. BASTILLE, DAY

55

Malcolm is riding his bicycle around the Bastille. It's very busy, and cars and mopeds swarm nearby, honking, shouting. He is scared but steadfast; he juts his arm out defensively. He shouts in excitement and terror; he continues pedaling and zips up a side street, away from the chaos of the Bastille.

56 EXT. MARAIS, SOON AFTER

56

Malcolm rides his bike at a leisurely pace through the Marais.

SUSAN (O.C.)  
 Hello?

MALCOLM (O.C.)  
 Hi, Sudsy.

57 EXT. BUTTES CHAUMONT PARK, SOON AFTER

57

Malcolm enters the Buttes Chaumont on foot, pushing his bicycle, winded.

SUSAN (O.C.)  
What are you doing?

MALCOLM (O.C.)  
Just calling to say hi.

He walks through the beautiful, scenic park. It's empty. He walks to the lake and climbs to the Parthenon that sits high above the water atop the island in the center of the lake.

SUSAN (O.C.)  
It's six-thirty in the morning.

MALCOLM  
(snaps fingers)  
Right. Shit. Sorry.

A period of silence.

SUSAN (O.C.)  
Where are you?

He looks out at Paris. He seems happy but some thought comes into his mind and the happiness leaves him.

CUT TO:

58 INT. PHONE BOOTH, CANAL ST. MARTIN, SOON AFTER

58

MALCOLM  
I'm by the canal.  
(pause)  
I'm calling because I wanted to  
hear your voice.

SUSAN (O.C.)  
Here it is. Here's my voice.

But now there comes the sound of another voice, a man's voice, in the background. Malcolm scowls.

MALCOLM  
Who's that?

The voice goes up an octave. Whoever it is, he's unhappy about Malcolm calling at 6:30 in the morning.

SUSAN (O.C.)  
Tom. . . wait. . .

A door slams.

SUSAN (O.C.) (CONT'D)  
Good luck today!

Silence. Susan sighs.

SUSAN (O.C.) (CONT'D)  
Good going, Malcolm.

Malcolm can't speak through the pain. He stands in the phone booth shaking his head.

SUSAN (O.C.) (CONT'D)  
Were you expecting me to mourn my  
loss in perpetuity?

MALCOLM  
(honestly)  
Yes, I was.

SUSAN  
Okay, well, it's beyond all reason  
for you to try to make me feel bad  
about this, so don't you dare, all  
right?

MALCOLM  
Fine, but. . . who is this person?

SUSAN (O.C.)  
Tom. I've told you about Tom  
before. He was my fiance in  
college.

MALCOLM  
(earnestly)  
What were you wishing him luck for?  
Has he entered a dick-sucking  
contest?

SUSAN (O.C.)  
That's very witty, Malcolm. No, he  
has an important meeting today.

MALCOLM  
Oh, an important meeting.

SUSAN (O.C.)  
Yes.

MALCOLM  
That sounds -- important.

SUSAN (V.O.)  
Enough, Malcolm. Listen: He says he  
wants to marry me.

60 INT. PHONE BOOTH, CANAL ST. MARTIN

60

Malcolm is deeply hurt by this. He's trying to take it in.

SUSAN (O.C.)  
Hello?

MALCOLM  
Do you want. . . to come visit me  
in Paris?

SUSAN (O.C.)  
Did you hear what I said?

MALCOLM  
I heard you. But you're already  
engaged to me. That's polygamy.  
It's illegal.

SUSAN (O.C.)  
Malcolm?

MALCOLM  
That's a felony.

SUSAN (O.C.)  
Malcolm.

MALCOLM  
What?

SUSAN (O.C.)  
Will you. . . Can you please not  
call here? At least not for a  
while? I've been feeling better in  
the last couple weeks and I'd  
appreciate your keeping some  
distance.

Malcolm stares out the booth and at the canal. A boatload of  
German tourists sit huddled together, waiting for the lock to  
drain, that they can continue on.

SUSAN (O.C.) (CONT'D)

Malcolm?

Malcolm says nothing. Susan hangs up the phone.

61 INT. JOAN'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM, NIGHT

61

Frances is speaking with Small Frank. The cat is trying to get away from her but she holds him fast.

FRANCES

Wait. I know. Think about what I'm saying to you, though. As if it wasn't correct.

(pause)

What do you propose we do, once the money's gone?

Malcolm enters the apartment; Frances looks up at him. At this moment, Small Frank rears and BITES her, hard, on the hand. She recoils. The cat dashes for the open door and disappears down the stairwell.

She sits there, holding her hand and watching Malcolm with a crazy look on her face.

65 INT. JOAN'S APARTMENT, BATHROOM

65

Malcolm is attending to Frances's injury. Frances stands beside him, hand still clamped to her breast, staring into the middle distance.

The bathroom sink is full. Malcolm delivers his mother's hand to the water and gently washes it with antibacterial soap. He wets a cotton ball with hydrogen peroxide and presses this to her wounds. Frances speaks without looking at Malcolm.

FRANCES

Is he back yet?

MALCOLM

No.

He dries her hand and wraps it in gauze.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)

Does that hurt?

FRANCES

No.

MALCOLM

Thank you.

She looks at him quizzically.

FRANCES

What are you thanking me for?

66 EXT. PARK, NIGHT

66

Frances, hand bandaged, walks alertly, looking up and down each street and alleyway, searching for Small Frank. She still seems unhinged. Malcolm trails behind her, watching her uneasily.

67 INT. JOAN'S APARTMENT, MORNING

67

Mme Reynard sits with Malcolm and Frances. She is pouring orange juice atop a half-glass of fizzing champagne.

Malcolm is still uneasy. Frances scratches absently at her bandage.

MME REYNARD

. . . Perhaps you could take Small Frank's departure as a signal to welcome another animal into your lives.

She takes a sip. Frances begins shaking her head, no.

MME REYNARD (CONT'D)

A kitten is an agent of great good.

Frances continues shaking her head.

FRANCES

I didn't want a cat in the first place. I don't like cats. It was only that Small Frank impressed himself upon us and there was nothing to do but endure him.

MME REYNARD

All right, but if you feel that way, and now that he's run off, can't you simply let him go?

FRANCES

No.

A pause. Frances begins to silently weep. She stands and leaves the room. Malcolm pours himself a mimosa.

MME REYNARD  
I've upset your mother.

MALCOLM  
She's upset in the general sense.

He holds up the bottle.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)  
We're out of champagne.

Mme Reynard nods thoughtfully, as though Malcolm has just said something profound.

MME REYNARD  
Do you ever feel that adulthood was thrust upon you at too young an age, and that you are still essentially a child mimicking the behaviors of the grown ups all around you in hopes they won't uncover the meagre contents of your heart?

Malcolm ponders this. He is opening his mouth to answer when Frances re-enters the room, energized by an idea:

FRANCES  
The witch you fucked on the boat!

CUT TO:

68 INT. JOAN'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM, SOON AFTER 68

Frances is explaining herself as Malcolm pops a bottle.

FRANCES  
Malcolm fucked a witch on the boat over. . .

Mme Reynard pats Malcolm's knee and holds her empty glass out; Malcolm fills it.

FRANCES (CONT'D)  
(to Malcolm)  
She understood him, didn't she?

MALCOLM  
I think she did.

FRANCES

Well, why can't we ask her where he is?

MALCOLM

I don't know that she'd know. And I don't know how we'd find her, either.

Mme Reynard is listening, patiently. But she is confused.

MME REYNARD

I would like for one of you to explain to me just what it is you're talking about, please.

FRANCES

The fucked witch and Small Frank were connected.

MALCOLM

Let's not call her that.

FRANCES

She understood about him.

MME REYNARD

Yes. But what is there to understand about Small Frank, exactly? I'm puzzled, and this is what's puzzling me.

Frances looks to Malcolm with a Should I Tell Her expression. Malcolm shrugs: Why not?

FRANCES

It's not something we typically discuss. But the long and short of it is that my dead husband lives inside that cat.

Mme Reynard's faces twitches slightly.

MME REYNARD

Is that a fact?

FRANCES

An unfortunate fact.

MME REYNARD

And how do you know this?

FRANCES

It's an understood thing.

MME REYNARD

Can you make it understood to me?

FRANCES

I don't know. I wish you'd be good  
and take my word for it.

MME REYNARD

(bravely)

I'll try. . .

Frances once more stares into space.

FRANCES

Frank ran away because I told him  
something he didn't like.

MME REYNARD

And what was that?

Frances pauses, shakes her head. She looks at Malcolm.

FRANCES

I'm sorry but I choose not to say.  
Anyway, I believe she might be able  
to help, and that we should seek  
her out.

MME REYNARD

Seek out the fucked witch.

FRANCES

That's right.

MALCOLM

Let's think of something else to  
call her besides that.

FRANCES

(sitting back)

How might we find her, is the  
question.

The three of them consider it.

MME REYNARD

I've got it!

Jumping to her feet, she knocks the crown of her skull on the  
low iron lamp hanging above the coffee table. She drops back  
onto the sofa, holding her head, her eyes shut in pain.

MME REYNARD (CONT'D)

Private investigator.

69

INT. JOAN'S APARTMENT, NIGHT

69

JULIUS, 50, a shy, smartly dressed Parisian, is sitting on the couch, facing Mme Reynard, Malcolm, and Frances, all of whom have continued drinking. He holds a notebook in his hand. He clicks his pen open.

JULIUS

Who may I do what for?

FRANCES

I and my son need to find a girl, a young woman. She's a clairvoyant from the United States living in Paris. Or is she not living here but visiting, Malcolm?

MALCOLM

I don't know.

FRANCES

Anyway, she's around.

JULIUS

What is your relationship to this woman, madame?

FRANCES

None whatsoever.

(pause)

My son knows her carnally.

Mme Reynard begins choking. She stands and hurries from the room and to the bathroom. There comes the sound of gurgling. She begins humming to herself.

JULIUS

It can be helpful for me to understand the nature of your desire to find this person.

FRANCES

Yes. All right, well, we've lost our cat.

JULIUS

Yes?

FRANCES

And this woman, we believe, might be of assistance in locating him.

JULIUS

She knows the cat's whereabouts?

FRANCES

Not at the moment, no. But, it's  
come to our attention that this  
woman can speak to the cat in her  
mind, you see?

Julius's pen hovers above the pad. He opens, closes his  
mouth.

JULIUS

What is this woman's name?

FRANCES

Madeleine. We don't know her  
surname.

JULIUS

Describe her physically, please.

MALCOLM

She's pretty curvy, actually.

JULIUS

What color is her hair?

FRANCES

Black hair. Brown eyes.

Julius is writing all this down.

JULIUS

Do you believe Madeleine wants to  
be found? That is, do you have any  
reason to believe she wants not to  
be?

FRANCES

No reason.

71

INT. JOAN'S APARTMENT, DINING ROOM, SOON AFTER

71

Frances has walked Julius to the door. She gives the stack of  
money to Julius. He counts it, shakes his head.

JULIUS

This is far too much, Madame.

FRANCES

Keep it. It's like a tip.

He moves to hand some back; Frances returns his hand to him.

FRANCES (CONT'D)  
 Just you find our little witch for  
 us, all right?

She gently pushes him into the hall and closes the door.

72 INT. HALL OUTSIDE JOAN'S APARTMENT 72

Julius regards the fistful of money in his hand.

CUT TO:

73 INT. JOAN'S APARTMENT, NIGHT 73

Frances lays awake in her room, unable to sleep. In the background we can see the stacks of her money -- half the stack has been spent.

74 EXT. PARIS CAFE, LATE MORNING 74

Frances is drinking coffee. Across the road, she sees two SCHOOL GIRLS, 15, in private school clothes. They share an elaborate farewell: They shake right, then left hands, they simultaneously curtsy, then cheek-kiss. They are smiling as they perform the movements. It's a routine, a tradition. Frances watches this with a fond, wistful expression.

She begins to write on a postcard:

FRANCES (V.O.)  
 I saw a man's penis yesterday. He was pissing in the park opposite the apartment. Have you noticed men simply take them out and use them here? No harm in it, I suppose, but it takes some getting used to. Yesterday's was memorably large. What a gift that must be for a man. What a lottery life is. It was nice to see it, I'll admit. Oh, Joan. When the money runs out I'm going to kill myself, but I want you to know that you were the only one, other than Frank when he was himself, and Malcolm. Please will you take care of him, if you can, somehow? I've always admired your heart. Your heart is the rightest of all.

Frances looks at the card. After considering it, she folds it into a square and sticks it under her coffee cup. She leaves a bill on the table and walks off.

After she's left, a WAITER, 60, mustache, comes to her table and collects the money. It's a hundred euro. He's startled by this; he looks up at Frances, in the distance.

WAITER  
(in French)  
Madame! This is too much!

She disappears into the crowd of tourists. The waiter sighs, shrugs. He pockets the money and begins clearing the table. He uncovers the postcard, unfolds, and studies it.

75

INT. JOAN'S APARTMENT, DAY

75

Malcolm, Frances, and Mme Reynard are sitting around the apartment, not speaking. Malcolm is on the sofa eating a carrot. He's wearing a suit, for some reason. Frances is in her robe, though her hair and makeup are perfect. She sits at the dining room table, staring out the window. Mme Reynard sits on the couch, flipping through a magazine.

MME REYNARD  
I don't even know who's famous  
anymore. These people are all  
strangers to me.

Malcolm takes a crunching bite of his carrot. He and Mme Reynard are in their own private worlds; unbeknownst to them, there is an incident occurring in the park: \*YL0

Two POLICEMEN, 30's, uniformed, are harassing THE MAN IN THE \*YL0  
PARK, 45, roguish, handsome, a homeless immigrant sitting on \*YL0  
a park bench. They demand that he exit the park. We can not \*YL0  
hear their words but it is obvious that the police are being \*YL0  
rude, hostile. The man stands and begins collecting his bags \*YL0  
to go, but not fast enough to suit the police, who move the \*YL0  
man along with a shove. The man demands patience; the police \*YL0  
push him harder still. The man turns around and swings at one \*YL0  
of the cops. The cops respond by clubbing the man to the \*YL0  
ground. \*YL0

Frances watches all this, wordlessly, not saying anything to Malcolm or Mme Reynard.

\*YLO

At this moment there comes a KNOCK on the front door, but no one moves to answer it. The door opens, in comes Julius, with Madeleine in tow.

76 INT. JOAN'S APARTMENT, DINING ROOM, NIGHT

76

Frances and Madeleine are sitting at the dining room table. In the background, Mme Reynard is mixing a batch of cocktails and chatting with Julius, while Malcolm is setting up chairs for the seance.

MADELEINE THE MEDIUM

Would you mind telling me the story?

FRANCES

Which story is that?

MADELEINE THE MEDIUM

How the cat came to house your husband?

FRANCES

Oh, all right.

(sips cocktail)

Well, he died in our bedroom one day.

CUT TO:

77 INT. PRICE APARTMENT, TWENTY YEARS PRIOR

77

From behind, we see Frances slowly entering hers and Frank's apartment. The room is bright; she enters slowly, with trepidation.

MADELEINE THE MEDIUM (V.O.)

Okay.

FRANCES (V.O.)

A heart attack, and he did die, but it was unexpected, and I found I couldn't face it, somehow. . .

(MORE)

FRANCES (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I was leaving for Vail for the weekend, the car was idling in the street, the driver loading up my luggage.

FRANCES (V.O.)

I remember thinking it was silly to explain to Frank I was going; because he wouldn't care, and what was the point? But I decided I would tell him, and up the stairs I went, and he was dead in our bed, naked and uncovered. There was a cat sitting on his chest.

77 B INT. PRICE APARTMENT, BEDROOM

77 B

We see this scenario realized: a corpse on the bed, cat sitting on its chest.

FRANCES (V.O.)

It was licking his face and making the most awful noise. A wanting, almost a whining - needful.

CUT TO:

78 INT. JOAN'S APARTMENT, DINING ROOM, RETURN TO REAL TIME

78

Frances looks shocked from the memory. All in the background are still, listening.

FRANCES

It was simply the ugliest thing, unbearable, actually. I chased the cat away, down the stairs and out the garden door, then I went back upstairs to sit with Frank awhile.

Malcolm sits watching his mother.

FRANCES (CONT'D)

I couldn't seem to feel anything besides a sense of hopelessness, that there was nothing to be done.

(MORE)

## FRANCES (CONT'D)

Then came the feeling of wishing to leave; and then needing to.

A pause.

## FRANCES (CONT'D)

I returned Monday evening and he was right where I'd left him, only he was blown up like a balloon, and as colorful as one. I called the paramedics, who called the police. When I returned home from the precinct the paparazzi were on the stoop, and so was the cat. He followed me inside, as though it was a natural thing. I knew just to look at him.

Madeleine ponders the story.

79 EXT. SMALL PARK IN PARIS, NIGHT

79

It is raining, and Small Frank is huddled underneath a bench, shivering, mangy. His eyes are closed but slowly they open, and he sits upright. A strange light occurs in his eyes and his mouth slowly opens. He looks possessed.

80 INT. JOAN'S APARTMENT, DINING ROOM, SAME TIME

80

## MADELEINE THE MEDIUM

We're here with you, Franklin.  
Won't you please speak with us?

The candle flickers. A man's deep voice emanates from the flame itself; it flickers in time with the words.

## FRANKLIN PRICE (O.C.)

Who are you?

## MADELEINE THE MEDIUM

Madeleine. We met on the boat, on the way to France. Do you remember?

## FRANKLIN PRICE (O.C.)

(pause)

What do you want?

## MADELEINE THE MEDIUM

Just to speak with you. I'm here with Frances and Malcolm. Will you say hello to them?

Franklin is silent.

FRANCES  
Hello, Frank.

FRANKLIN PRICE (O.C.)  
Hello.

FRANCES  
How are you?

FRANKLIN PRICE (O.C.)  
Oh, you know. Malcolm?

MALCOLM  
Yeah, Dad?

FRANKLIN PRICE (O.C.)  
What's this all about?

MALCOLM  
All what, Dad?

FRANKLIN PRICE (O.C.)  
The hocus pocus.

MALCOLM  
Just that you ran off, you know.

FRANKLIN PRICE (O.C.)  
Yes?

MALCOLM  
And we were curious where you'd gone to.

FRANKLIN PRICE (O.C.)  
No one place. I'm behaving nomadically.

MALCOLM  
Are you in or outdoors?

FRANKLIN PRICE (O.C.)  
Out.

MALCOLM  
What do you do all day?

FRANKLIN PRICE (O.C.)  
Not much. Walk around.

MME REYNARD

You're living by your wits. I admire that.

FRANKLIN PRICE (O.C.)

(pause)

Who said that?

MME REYNARD

Mme Reynard is my name. And I'm so very happy to meet you. I'm a great friend of your wife and son. Honestly, they've had the most remarkable influence on me. I believe friendship is a greater force for good than any religion ever was, don't you agree?

FRANKLIN PRICE (O.C.)

Frances, who is this person?

FRANCES

She just told you who she is, Frank.

MME REYNARD

Reynard. Can you not hear us well?

FRANKLIN PRICE (O.C.)

I can hear you.

MME REYNARD

Well, I want you to know that I think of you already as a friend. I have friendly feelings toward you. I find your plight ever so fascinating, and I have so many questions I want to ask you. For example: do you think cat thoughts or man thoughts?

FRANKLIN PRICE

Frances.

MME REYNARD

Have you fallen in with a mad cast of plucky, down at heel characters?

FRANKLIN PRICE (O.C.)

Frances, please.

Frances lays a hand on Mme Reynard's arm to quiet her.

MALCOLM  
Why'd you run away, Dad?

FRANKLIN PRICE (O.C.)  
Good question. Great question. Why  
don't you ask your mother?

Malcolm turns to Frances.

MALCOLM  
Why'd Dad run away?

FRANCES  
It's pretty complicated.

FRANKLIN PRICE (O.C.)  
It's not that complicated.

She stares with a eerie expression at the candle flame.

FRANCES  
Where are you, Frank?

FRANKLIN PRICE (O.C.)  
I choose not to answer that. Does  
anyone want to know why?

MME REYNARD/JULIUS  
(simultaneously)  
I do.

They look at each other, smile.

MADELEINE THE MEDIUM  
I do, too.

MALCOLM  
I do and I don't.

FRANKLIN PRICE (O.C.)  
It's just the small matter of  
Frances's intention to kill me with  
her bare hands.

All in the room look to Frances. She holds her noble bearing  
for a moment, but then she sputters, laughing dementedly.

FRANKLIN PRICE (O.C.) (CONT'D)  
Hey, Malcolm?

MALCOLM  
Yes, Dad?

FRANKLIN PRICE (O.C.)  
What do you think of all this?

MALCOLM  
Of all what?

FRANKLIN PRICE (O.C.)  
Your mother wants to kill your  
father.

MALCOLM  
Yeah.

FRANKLIN PRICE (O.C.)  
Any thoughts on it?

MALCOLM  
To be honest, Dad, I'd just as soon  
not get involved.

FRANKLIN PRICE (O.C.)  
Nice. That's nice. That's family  
for you.

Malcolm makes an odd face. He clears his throat. He speaks slowly, but with mounting anguish:

MALCOLM  
I guess what I really mean to say,  
Dad, is: I don't know that it's  
fair for you to ask me to weigh in  
on something so personal as this  
considering the fact that I don't  
know who you are, have never known  
who you are, and not because I  
didn't want to but because you  
never so much as parted the curtain  
for me, never showed me the  
slightest preference or kindness,  
even as a child, when I worshipped  
you and all I ever wished for was  
for you to take me by the hand and  
walk me through any motherfucking  
park, pat me on the fucking head,  
for Christ's sake was I that  
repellent a creature to you?

Malcolm stands and hurls his cocktail glass across the room. It smashes off the wall and he leaves the living room for his bedroom, slamming the door behind him.

An awkward pause.

FRANKLIN PRICE (O.C.)  
What's eating him?

FRANCES  
(patting hair)  
He just told you what's eating him,  
Frank. He hates you.

FRANKLIN PRICE (O.C.)  
Right. Right. Well, it's been great  
catching up with you, Frances, but  
I think I'm going to go back to  
starving to death, if no one  
objects.

MME REYNARD  
I object.  
(pause)  
Excuse me; but please won't you  
speak with us just a little longer?

FRANKLIN PRICE (O.C.)  
What do you want?

MME REYNARD  
(ponders best way to put  
it)  
I suppose I'd like to know, in a  
general, an overall fashion, just  
what has it been like, this  
experience of becoming a cat?

Franklin thinks a moment.

FRANKLIN PRICE (O.C.)  
On the whole it's been frustrating,  
I guess is the word. I miss being  
alive, as a man. I enjoyed it.

FRANCES  
You always seemed so angry to me.

FRANKLIN PRICE (O.C.)  
I was. But I loved being angry.

FRANCES  
You did not.

FRANKLIN PRICE (O.C.)  
I absolutely did. That's something  
non-angry people never give angry  
people credit for. It's fun, being  
mad. I loved my work.

(MORE)

FRANKLIN PRICE (O.C.) (CONT'D)

I loved the game of it. I loved money. I loved getting away with it.

FRANCES

But, you didn't get away with it, did you?

FRANKLIN PRICE (O.C.)

I got away with a lot. More than most, anyway.

FRANCES

Yes. But look at you now.

No reply, at first. The candle flaps.

FRANKLIN PRICE (O.C.)

Fuck you.

The candle snuffs itself. All at the table contemplate the drift of smoke.

81 INT. JOAN'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM, NIGHT 81

The couch is folded out. Mme Reynard is sleeping.

82 INT. JOAN'S APARTMENT, MALCOLM'S ROOM, SAME TIME 82

Malcolm and Madeleine are both in the bed. She is under the covers; he is fully dressed, above the covers, wide awake.

83 INT. JOAN'S APARTMENT, FRANCES'S BEDROOM, MORNING 83

Frances stands at the bedroom window, looking down over the park.

Frances moves to the closet where she keeps her money. There are only a few stacks left.

84 EXT. PARK BEFORE JOAN'S APARTMENT 84

Frances looks very chic as she crosses the park and sits on the bench beside The Man in The Park. He notices her arrival and turns to look at her. His battered, handsome face breaks into a wide smile. He recognizes her.

MAN IN THE PARK  
 (in French) The Woman in the  
 Window!

She smiles bashfully, knowing he has spied her spying on him.  
 He holds up his sack.

MAN IN THE PARK (CONT'D)  
 May I offer you an orange, Madame?

FRANCES  
 No, thank you.

The Man lowers his sack. He continues staring at Frances.  
 Finally he gestures to his own face.

MAN IN THE PARK  
 Forgive me for my state. Normally  
 I'm quite handsome, and not just my  
 friends would say it.

FRANCES  
 I'm sure that's the truth.

MAN IN THE PARK  
 Rest assured. And know that I shall  
 be handsome again!

FRANCES  
 (nodding)  
 Do you know. . . I saw what  
 happened yesterday.

MAN IN THE PARK  
 Is that right? Well, it was a big  
 show. What did you make of it?

FRANCES  
 Just that I thought you behaved  
 very bravely.

The Man dips his head shyly. But he is proud, too.

FRANCES (CONT'D)  
 How is it that you're not in jail?

He holds up his wrists; they are welted and bruised.

MAN IN THE PARK  
 Thick wrists, Madame. It was the  
 same way with your Billy the Kid.  
 You know Billy the Kid?

Frances nods.

MAN IN THE PARK (CONT'D)  
 He always slipped out of his  
 handcuffs, and I always do, too.

FRANCES  
 (smiling)  
 I've changed my mind about the  
 orange.

MAN IN THE PARK  
 Ah!

The Man begins searching for an orange.

MAN IN THE PARK (CONT'D)  
 Only the finest orange for you,  
 madame. The finest, most delectable  
 orange in this sack? That is the  
 orange you will receive on this  
 day, for you are my guest, the  
 mysterious, the beautiful woman in  
 the window.

He locates the winning orange and peels it on her behalf.

MAN IN THE PARK (CONT'D)  
 Hold out your hand.

Frances does as she's told and the Man places the orange in  
 the dell of her palm. He assumes a grave expression.

MAN IN THE PARK (CONT'D)  
 May I have some of your orange,  
 Madame?

Frances is charmed. She gives the Man a piece of the orange;  
 they sit together, chewing.

She produces a thick fold of money and sets it on the bench  
 beside the Man. His chewing slows. He swallows.

FRANCES  
 I'm very ill.

The Man picks up the money and inspects it.

MAN IN THE PARK  
 Oh?

FRANCES  
 I haven't got very long to live,  
 actually. You'd be doing me a great  
 favor if you accepted this.

## MAN IN THE PARK

Why?

## FRANCES

It would make me happy.

The Man counts the money. Five thousand euro. The Man peels off a thousand euro; the rest he hands back.

## FRANCES (CONT'D)

Won't you take it all?

The Man points to a Man Under A Tree, 50, homeless, extremely dirty and unsavory looking.

## MAN IN THE PARK

That man there? He'll take your money.

The Man in the Park stands, hefts his sack of oranges over his shoulder. He bows and walks away, toward the river. Frances watches him go, then walks over to the Man Under a Tree. He looks up at her, eyes swimming with drink. She holds out the money and he snatches it from her. He rolls over and stands and, without a word of thanks, hurries off with the money clutched in his hand. Now Frances watches him go.

She turns to look up at apartment. Malcolm is standing in the window; he has seen what she's just done. She waves. He doesn't wave back.

86 INT. JOAN'S APARTMENT, BATHROOM 86

Frances is sitting on the lip of the bath, watching the tub fill. She turns the water off: drip, drip.

87 JOAN'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM, SOON AFTER 87

Mme Reynard is vacuuming. Julius is sitting on the couch, reading a book and eating strawberries. He raises his legs so that Mme Reynard can vacuum where his feet had been.

Malcolm is sitting around the living room.

The front door opens; Joan enters in a dead panic.

## JOAN

(to Malcolm)

Where is she?

MALCOLM

In the bath.

Joan drops her bag and runs to the bathroom door. She pounds on it; nothing, at first. Then:

FRANCES (O.S.)

What?

Joan is so relieved she nearly collapses. She stands in the hall holding her face in her hands and weeping silently.

88

INT. JOAN'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM, SOON AFTER

88

Frances, in her robe, sits beside Joan, comforting her, her arm around her. Joan is nodding; she feels better.

Malcolm sits across from them, Julius beside Malcolm. Mme Reynard is standing by, studying Joan. She is suspicious, and dislikes the attention Frances is paying her. She interrupts:

MME REYNARD

(to Joan)

How long will you be staying in Paris?

JOAN

(surprised)

I. . . I can't say.

(puzzled)

May I ask who you are?

MME REYNARD

Mme Reynard is my name.

JOAN

How do you do?

MME REYNARD

I do well. In fact I do very well.

Joan looks at Frances, who is smiling knowingly.

MME REYNARD (CONT'D)

Where will you be staying? It can be difficult finding a hotel at the last minute.

JOAN

This is my apartment.

Mme Reynard bobs her head back and forth, as if doubtful.

89 INT. JOAN'S APARTMENT, FRANCES'S BEDROOM

89

JOAN

Who is this horrible woman in my home?

Joan and Frances are in the bedroom. Frances is changing out of her robe and into her day clothes.

FRANCES

Give her a chance. She isn't so bad.

JOAN

(pause)

Since when do you humor your admirers?

FRANCES

It's strange, isn't it? Perhaps I'm simply tired. Yes, I think that's what it is.

Joan holds up Frances's postcard.

JOAN

And this?

Frances ducks her head, embarrassed.

FRANCES

Well, I have no idea how that was sent.

JOAN

Its delivery wasn't my concern so much as its contents.

FRANCES

A low day. And the mood has passed.

JOAN

Has it?

Frances takes up Joan's hand and kisses it.

FRANCES

Yes, dear.

90 INT. JOAN'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM, LATER

90

Joan is shaking Julius's hand with a curious expression on her face.

JOAN  
Nice to meet you.

Madeleine comes out of Malcolm's bedroom in a shirt, hair mussed.

MADELEINE THE MEDIUM  
I slept in!

She looks at Joan.

MADELEINE THE MEDIUM (CONT'D)  
What's your name?

Joan turns to Frances.

JOAN  
Ball park figure. How many people are staying here?

FRANCES  
This is it, dear. I -

Over top of this, there comes a KNOCK on the door. Mme Reynard calls from the kitchen:

MME REYNARD (O.S.)  
Entrez!

In walks Susan and Tom. As they set their baggage in the vestibule, Frances turns back to Joan.

FRANCES  
Okay, but this is everyone, I promise.

91 INT. JOAN'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM, EARLY EVENING

91

The entire group is there: Frances, Malcolm, Joan, Madeleine, Julius, Susan, Tom, and Mme Reynard. They sit in the living room in a loose circle, drinking.

TOM  
Before I met Susan I thought I knew what it was to be in love. I had said it and meant it. I'd heard it said to me, and been so glad to know. But what were those feelings, compared to this? This is something else. This is the love poets aspire to.

MME REYNARD

Are you a poet?

TOM

I work in finance. There is, I feel, a sort of poetry in numbers.

MALCOLM

(quietly)

Gross.

TOM

(sharply)

What did you say?

MALCOLM

I said gross.

Tom stares at Malcolm. Then looks back at Mme Reynard.

TOM

I asked Susan to marry me, and it was looking good. Then she gets this late night telephone call. She won't so much as paraphrase the conversation, but from the moment she hung up the phone I've been playing catchup trying to figure out what she wants. If I'm not mistaken, she wants him.

(points to Malcolm)

Mme Reynard is thoroughly immersed in the story. She nudges Susan.

MME REYNARD

Well?

SUSAN

It's like Tom says. I thought I was happy. I was happy. But Malcolm called me, now I don't know what I'm doing.

She looks at Malcolm

SUSAN (CONT'D)

What am I doing, Malcolm?

Malcolm shrugs. Susan stares.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

I wonder if you could take your head out of your ass for just the briefest moment.

Now Tom leans in.

TOM

Wait. It's a complicated situation but I believe we can express our respective points of view while maintaining our dignity.

MME REYNARD

Bravo.

TOM

Which isn't to say we should hide our emotions.

MME REYNARD

Oh, never.

TOM

For example, I feel that I could kill Malcolm. Actually murder him, here and now.

A pause. Tom seems sincere. He's much stronger than Malcolm.

TOM (CONT'D)

Here and now. After all, if he wasn't around, wouldn't my problems all be solved?

MME REYNARD

(sympathetically)

They would. They really would.

TOM

But, no, I won't do that.

Mme Reynard pinches Malcolm.

MME REYNARD

You're lucky.

MALCOLM

I've always been lucky.

MME REYNARD

Have you?

(thinks)

(MORE)

MME REYNARD (CONT'D)

I've been neither lucky nor  
unlucky. I've been luckless - such  
a bore.

FRANCES

I've been incredibly lucky at  
times, but tragically unlucky at  
others.

MADELEINE THE MEDIUM

I've only been unlucky but I have a  
sense this'll change at some point,  
suddenly, and permanently. Anyway,  
that's what I tell myself.

JULIUS

I've only been unlucky and I  
believe I'll always be.

A thoughtful pause. Some in the group sip from their drinks.

93

INT. JOAN'S LIVING ROOM, LATE

93

Susan has laid out her mattress. Tom regards it.

TOM

It's not big enough for the two of  
us.

She crosses her arms.

SUSAN

No, it's not.

She looks at him with an expression of: tough luck.

On the couch, Mme Reynard and Julius are getting ready for  
bed.

MME REYNARD

I talk in my sleep.

JULIUS

That's all right.

MME REYNARD

Also, I gnash my teeth.

JULIUS

All right.

MME REYNARD

And I have sleep apnea, and sometimes I sleepwalk. If you see me set out to wander, you mustn't wake me. But if I try to leave the apartment, will you guide me back around?

JULIUS

Okay.

She pauses.

MME REYNARD

Occasionally I suffer from nightsickness.

JULIUS

What's nightsickness?

MME REYNARD

I sometimes - rarely - vomit the bed.

JULIUS

Sweet dreams, Mme Reynard.

94 INT. JOAN'S/FRANCES'S BEDROOM 94

Joan and Frances are in pajamas, in bed, in the dark, laughing, cackling, at some private joke.

FRANCES

We're just two little old ladies!

95 INT. JOAN'S APARTMENT, MALCOLM'S BEDROOM 95

Malcolm, in terrycloth robe, enters the bedroom, fresh from the shower. Madeleine is in bed, sleeping. He does not lay in the bed, as before, but sits in the deep leather chair beside the bed, covering himself with his trench coat.

The apartment is dark, still, peaceful.

96 INT. JOAN'S/FRANCES'S BEDROOM, MORNING 96

Frances opens the closet. There is one stack of cash left. She regards it, then tucks it away into her purse.

In the background, Joan stirs in bed.

97 INT. LE GRANDE EPICERIE, DAY

97

Joan and Frances walk through the market together. Frances puts several bottles of something into the cart. Joan is holding a list; she shakes her head.

JOAN

Saffron isn't on the list.

FRANCES

It's a needed thing.

JOAN

Three bottles of saffron?

FRANCES

We'll use it, later or sooner.

(pause, scans shopping  
list)

Darling, will you please grab us a  
cheese plate?

Joan walks off to do this. Frances leans in at the wine counter.

FRANCES (CONT'D)

(quietly, in French)

Give me something worth five  
hundred.

CLERK (O.S.)

(in French)

Case or bottle?

FRANCES

(in French)

Bottle.

98 INT. LE GRANDE EPICERIE, CHECKOUT

98

Joan and Frances are in the checkout aisle. The CHECKER, 45, male, adds up their many purchases. The number on the checker reads: 15 hundred euro -- and rising. Joan is concerned.

JOAN

Oh, let me pick this up.

Frances has the cash in her hand. She watches the number as it rises.

FRANCES

No, it's all budgeted out.

JOAN  
Dutch, then.

FRANCES  
No, I have to spend it all.

A pause.

JOAN  
Why?

FRANCES  
You're supposed to spend it all.  
That's the object of the game.

Frances is watching as the number rises up, higher, higher. Suddenly, she relaxes: It's all gone. She exhales; she's relieved.

She hands over all her cash to the Checker. She drops her remaining change into the penny jar.

FRANCES (CONT'D)  
We're going to need these  
delivered, is that all right?

CHECKER (O.S.)  
Oui, madame.

Joan watches her friend with concern.

99

EXT. PARIS, PARK, AFTERNOON

99

Frances and Joan are walking through a park in the golden afternoon sun. They pass a couple kissing in the grass; Frances nudges Joan; they both smirk and smile.

FRANCES  
Do you and Don still make love?

JOAN  
Every year, on his birthday.

FRANCES  
But not your birthday.

JOAN  
Just a nice dinner for me, thanks.

Frances lights a cigarette with her gold lighter: click!

FRANCES

Do you ever regret not having children?

JOAN

Never once. Do you ever regret having one?

Frances smiles, as though it's a joke.

JOAN (CONT'D)

I'm being serious.

FRANCES

Oh. Well, sometimes I do, to be honest.

JOAN

But you wouldn't change him.

FRANCES

Yes, I would.

JOAN

But you wouldn't change him much.

FRANCES

I'd change him quite a bit.

JOAN

But you love him.

FRANCES

(lays her palm to her heart)

So much that it pains me.

Joan reaches for Frances's cigarette, takes a drag, hands it back. She's smiling.

JOAN

I told Don I had to run to Paris because I thought you were going to kill yourself. He was fiddling with the remote, and he told me, 'Tell her hello, if you get there in time.'

Frances smiles. Joan takes another drag of the cigarette.

JOAN (CONT'D)

I had a moment earlier this year where I realized that I am, at the base of it, happy;

(MORE)

JOAN (CONT'D)

and that Don and I have fulfilled what we set out to fulfill for each other. Can you understand how startling this was for me?

FRANCES

Startling because you shouldn't be satisfied with what you've got?

Joan shakes her head. She thinks a moment.

JOAN

You get older and you don't even want love. Not the love we believed in when we were young. Who has the energy for that? I mean, when I think of the way we used to carry on about it.

FRANCES

I know.

JOAN

Men and women throwing themselves out of windows.

(pause)

What you want is to know someone's there; but you also want them to leave you alone. I've got that with Don. But, I was startled because I suddenly understood that the heart takes care of itself. We allow ourselves contentment; our heart brings us ease in its good time.

Frances keeps a blank expression.

FRANCES

It's a nice thought.

JOAN

You don't agree with me?

Frances flicks her cigarette away.

FRANCES

It hasn't been that way for me.

JOAN

I'm sorry. . .

They are sitting on a bench in the park drinking hot chocolate. Joan looks at Frances in a sidelong way. Frances looks back with an open expression, as if saying: What?

JOAN (CONT'D)

I just find the whole thing contemptuous. The very idea of a suicide note, the idea of suicide coming from you. It's such a cliché, isn't it? Someone so bright and promising killing herself after the glamour has passed.

Frances's expression has become colder, more remote.

FRANCES

Well, for one: that's an extremely shitty thing to say to me. Two: the glamour passed a long time ago and you know very well that it did. And third, three: yes, my life is riddled by clichés. But do you know what a cliché is?

A slight smile grows on Joan's face.

FRANCES (CONT'D)

It's a story so fine and thrilling that it's grown old in its hopeful re-telling.

The smile on Joan's face grows. She admires Frances so much.

FRANCES (CONT'D)

People tell it. Not so many live it.

They take a sip of their hot chocolates.

JOAN

Do you want to go to the Louvre?

FRANCES

Fuck the Louvre.

102 INT. JOAN'S APARTMENT, DINING ROOM, EARLY EVENING 102

Post dinner. All are once more present. The group looks decidedly more dapper this evening. Everyone is drinking, already drunk in fact.

In the background, on the dining room table, Tom is arm wrestling Julius.

In the foreground, Mme Reynard is passionately, worriedly speaking with Susan and Madeleine.

MME REYNARD

I can't claim to know either of you well, or at all, but I can see you're above such petty jealousies. Ugliness begets ugliness. I volunteer we strive for grace.

SUSAN

Neither of us is bothered, Mme Reynard.

MME REYNARD

You say that, but you obviously don't mean it.

MADELEINE THE MEDIUM

But I'm not in love with Malcolm. To be honest, I don't even like him very much.

Malcolm sits to the side, listening to the conversation.

In the background, Tom defeats Julius, bringing his hand down on the table with a BANG. He levels a look at Malcolm.

103 INT. JOAN'S APARTMENT, DINING ROOM TABLE 103

Malcolm and Tom sit before each other. They clasp hands, Tom focused, Malcolm more relaxed, amused. Julius is officiating: he holds their hands together.

JULIUS

Ready? Steady? Go!

Tom slams Malcolm's hand down on the table. Malcolm hasn't tried at all.

MALCOLM

You win.

TOM

Come on. Do it right!

Malcolm nods; they clasp hands again; and again, Julius sets them off: another easy win for Tom.

TOM (CONT'D)

(complaining to Julius)  
He's not even trying!

MALCOLM

You're the big winner.

TOM

It's not winning if I win like that.

Malcolm is amused. He looks up at Susan's pretty, drunk face.

MALCOLM

(to Tom)  
If I win, you take your bag and leave - alone.

Tom's expression grows steely. He nods his acceptance of the challenge. For the third time the men clasp hands. Julius sets them off. The result is identical to the earlier rounds: Malcolm doesn't try at all.

TOM

(panting)  
Wait a minute. What do I win?

MALCOLM

Nothing. Everything's exactly the same as before.

MME REYNARD

This reminds me of the performance artist I saw on the television. She walked the length of the Great Wall of China, then broke up with her boyfriend, then everyone paid good money to watch her go to the bathroom in a bucket in a museum.

Malcolm is absently rubbing his smarting knuckles. Susan kneels beside him; she takes up his hand in hers. She pulls his hand to her mouth and lightly kisses it.

Tom stands apart from the group, outraged.

TOM

I don't like you people.

He addresses Susan.

TOM (CONT'D)

I don't like these people. They're not normal people.

Mme Reynard approaches Tom and puts her hands on his shoulders.

MME REYNARD

Couldn't you please find it in your heart to like us just a little bit?

TOM

No.

Mme Reynard sits on the sofa.

Julius stands to face Tom. He is swaying in place. He opens, then closes his mouth. He sits on the sofa next to Mme Reynard. He looks at her.

JULIUS

I'm not used to drinking this much.

Malcolm stands to address Tom.

MALCOLM

Tom.

Tom punches Malcolm in the nose. Malcolm fall/sits on the sofa, nodding, as if in agreement with the sentiment.

Frances moves to Tom. She slaps him in the face and sits on the now-crowded sofa.

Tom stands in place holding his face. His feelings are deeply hurt. He looks to Susan with a plaintive expression.

TOM

We're leaving, Susan.

Susan and Malcolm are staring at each other affectionately.

SUSAN

You go ahead.

Tom takes a step.

TOM

I'm really going to go. This is  
your last chance. Now or never.

She doesn't look up at him.

SUSAN

Never, please, thank you.

Tom grabs his bag and leaves the apartment in a state of mortification and bafflement. There is a moment of discomfort created by his abrupt absence.

Malcolm leads Susan away by the hand. He removes Susan's father's watch from his wrist and puts it on Susan's, tightening the band

MALCOLM

I asked you to come and you came.

He is attentive to the act of putting the watch on. She looks at Malcolm lovingly. She touches his face with her free hand.

SUSAN

You're dripping blood on my  
sweater, honey.

Mme Reynard's voice can be heard in the background. Malcolm and Susan turn to find her, face bright, reciting an Emily Dickinson poem to the guests:

MME REYNARD

I sing to use the waiting/My bonnet  
but to tie/And shut the door unto  
my house;/No more to do have  
I,/Till, his best step  
approaching,/We journey to the  
day,/And tell each other how we  
sang/To keep the dark away.

The remaining partygoers look up at Mme Reynard smiling, amused, moved, even, by her little performance.

104

INT. JOAN'S APARTMENT, KITCHEN, LATER

104

The group is quieter, fatigued from the late night and alcohol. Frances and Malcolm are doing the dishes, separate from the rest; Frances is building up to saying something:

FRANCES

. . . I'm bothered by the thought  
of you hating your father.

(pause)

(MORE)

FRANCES (CONT'D)

I don't like you carrying that around with you. Also I don't quite feel your father warrants it.

MALCOLM

This coming from the person who wants to strangle him.

FRANCES

Yes. But my offense is greater than yours. My wanting to kill him is due to his prior kindnesses.

MALCOLM

(pause)

Can I ask you a very dramatic question?

FRANCES

Yes.

MALCOLM

Why did you have me in the first place?

Frances makes a face.

FRANCES

That is dramatic.

(pause)

It wasn't planned, of course. I thought I couldn't have children, and had never wanted one. Then, when it happened, we thought your presence could help us come together. You were a last ditch effort, in effect. But then, when he saw you, it clarified something for him, and he turned away forever, from you and me both.

MALCOLM

But I shouldn't hate him.

FRANCES

Your father is an emotional moron, but he isn't evil.

Malcolm listens. He looks at Frances with a searching look on his face.

MALCOLM

What happened when you saw me?

Frances smiles.

FRANCES

I've never been so hurt by something in my life as when I saw your face for the first time. And I asked them to take you away, because I felt I'd die if they didn't.

MALCOLM

(pause)

And why did you come to me when you did?

Frances's face brightens at the memory.

FRANCES

That was strange, wasn't it?

MALCOLM

It was unexpected.

(pause)

I'd wanted you to come, you know. But I'd wanted you to come for so long that when you finally did, I was confused.

FRANCES

I'm sorry.

MALCOLM

I know you are. But don't be. I was happy, really.

FRANCES

Were you?

MALCOLM

Yes.

Frances watches her son with a sly fondness.

FRANCES

I didn't know you were you. I'd have come right away, if I had. I'd never have let you go in the first place.

She passes him a plate to dry. She can't quite look at him when she asks:

FRANCES (CONT'D)

You understand what it did for me?

MALCOLM  
Yes, I know.

FRANCES  
Do you?

MALCOLM  
Yes.

FRANCES  
I hope you do.

MALCOLM  
I do.

FRANCES  
I love you, pal.

MALCOLM  
I love you, too.

The dishes are done.

105 INT. FRANCES'S BEDROOM, SOON AFTER

105

Malcolm walks his mother to her room. Together they stand in the open doorway. She kisses him on the cheek, crosses the room and drops into her bed. Malcolm moves, smiling, to the hall.

In the background we see Julius and Mme Reynard moving Madeleine onto the floor mattress. They're laughing; they're trying not to disturb her drunken slumber.

Joan is brushing her teeth in the bathroom.

Susan has changed into her pajamas. She smiles at Malcolm and enters their room. He follows after. He calls to his friends:

MALCOLM  
Good night.

ALL VOICES TOGETHER (O.S.)  
Good night!

106 JOAN'S APARTMENT, NIGHT

106

The apartment is dark, quiet, still. It is very late. The door to Malcolm's room opens slowly and Susan, in pajamas, sneaks out, into the hall, then moves to the

107 INT. JOAN'S APARTMENT, KITCHEN

107

She is surprised to find Frances standing in the dark, smoking. She's changed into a red Chanel cocktail dress. She watches Susan, saying nothing.

SUSAN

Hello.

No reply.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

FRANCES

Just what it looks like.

Susan feels awkward. She puts the kettle on.

SUSAN

I can't sleep. I thought I'd make a cup of tea.

Nothing from Frances. Now the women wait in the darkness together, Frances smoking, Susan waiting for the kettle to boil.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

I don't know Paris, hardly at all, you know?

Nothing.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

I want to know it.

The kettle boils, Susan turns it off. She looks at Frances directly.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Why are you always so vicious to me, Frances?

FRANCES

Because you want to take him away.

Susan opens her mouth to argue, then stops - after all, it's true.

SUSAN

All right. But what if you're getting in the way of his happiness?

FRANCES  
He's happy with me.

Also true.

FRANCES (CONT'D)  
I don't like myself when I'm around  
you. I don't like the way I behave.  
Of course this is my own fault, but  
in the end it's just another reason  
to disapprove of you.

Frances shrugs. Susan find the conversation amusing; she  
smiles at her enemy.

SUSAN  
I can't win, then.

FRANCES  
No, you can't. But perhaps that  
doesn't matter so much.

SUSAN  
It matters.

FRANCES  
Perhaps it will matter less soon.

Frances stubs out her cigarette and selects a tea bag from  
the assortment on the counter.

FRANCES (CONT'D)  
This one, and you'll sleep.

She drops the bag in the cup and fills it with hot water. She  
hands the cup to Susan.

FRANCES (CONT'D)  
(casually)  
Is Malcolm waiting up for you?

SUSAN  
No, he's asleep.

FRANCES  
You're sure?

Susan looks at Frances with a curious expression.

SUSAN  
I'm sure.

Frances smiles.

FRANCES  
Good night, Susan.

SUSAN  
Good night. . .

Susan leaves. Frances stays behind.

108 INT. JOAN'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM, NIGHT 108

Madeleine is sleeping on the floor.

FRANCES (O.S.)  
(whisper)  
Madeleine.

Madeleine doesn't move. Frances's hand shakes her shoulder.

FRANCES (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
(hissing whisper)  
Madeleine!

Madeleine opens her eyes. We see Frances from her point of view. She is LIME GREEN.

109 INT. JOAN'S APARTMENT, BATHROOM, NIGHT 109

The bathroom is dim, a candle flickers on the counter top. Madeleine, groggy, sits before the candle; Frances sits opposite her, the candle flickering in between them.

FRANCES  
(speaking to the candle)  
Were you sleeping?

FRANKLIN PRICE (O.S.)  
No.

FRANCES  
What are you doing?

FRANKLIN PRICE  
Just sitting here, under this bench.

FRANCES  
Well, I was just thinking about you. I thought I'd give you a ring.

Franklin says nothing.

FRANCES (CONT'D)

Don't you want to know what I was thinking about?

FRANKLIN PRICE

All right.

FRANCES

It's three things, actually. Number one is: do you remember our first date?

FRANKLIN PRICE

I don't, no.

FRANCES

Yes, you do. You took me to Tavern on the Green. You ate your cupcake with a fork and knife. No?

FRANKLIN PRICE

No.

FRANCES

(amused)

Why did you do that? With the fork and knife I mean?

FRANKLIN PRICE

(peevish)

I don't know, Frances. Who knows?

FRANCES

The second thing I want to talk to you about is that I'm feeling badly about our last conversation, and I want you to know I don't hate you anymore.

A silence.

FRANKLIN PRICE

It's late to be telling me this.

FRANCES

Late in the night, or late in life?

FRANKLIN PRICE

Both, but mainly late in life.

FRANCES

I can't understand that as an attitude.

(MORE)

FRANCES (CONT'D)

Your wife of long years, who only days earlier wanted to murder you, has experienced a sudden and mysterious shift in feeling for the good. Is that not noteworthy?

FRANKLIN PRICE

I guess so. But Frances?

FRANCES

Yes?

FRANKLIN PRICE

I'm a cat.

FRANCES

I know that.

FRANKLIN PRICE

I'm a cat living under a bench, and it's raining, and I've got worms and fleas and, you know, I'm not much concerned about anything besides the unhappy facts of my horrible -- my truly horrible, miserable fucking existence.

FRANCES

I see. Well, whether or not you care to know it, I felt compelled to tell you, and now I've done that. Are you ready for the third thing?

FRANKLIN PRICE

Sure.

FRANCES

When I came to Paris for the first time, do you remember what I told you about it? About how I felt startled to be here?

FRANKLIN PRICE

I remember you telling me.

FRANCES

Oh, you remember something? How nice that is for you. And me. It's nice for the both of us. Hail, hail.

Franklin clears his throat but says nothing.

FRANCES (CONT'D)

Well. I've figured out what I was startled by.

FRANKLIN PRICE

And what's that?

FRANCES

I recognized Paris as the eventual location of my death.

FRANKLIN PRICE

(pause)

And what does that mean?

FRANCES

Just what I said. Something in the sight of this city sent up an alert. Now I understand what startled me was the presentiment of what was to come, do you see?

FRANKLIN PRICE

Frances--

Frances snuffs the flame.

FRANCES

Thank you.

The women watch each other.

FRANCES (CONT'D)

That's all.

Frances exits the bathroom; Madeleine watches her go. We hear the sound of the front door opening and closing.

110 EXT. SIDEWALK OUTSIDE JOAN'S APARTMENT

110

Frances, still in the Chanel dress but now with a coat on, exits the building. She walks purposefully, away from the apartment, as if she has a destination in mind.

After a while the door opens again; Madeleine, struggling under the weight of her duffel bag, exits the building, looking around for Frances.

Frances is far down the sidewalk. Madeleine seems to be considering giving chase. She decides against it, and walks away, in the opposite direction Frances had.

111 EXT. PARIS, LATER

111

Frances is walking down a narrow, lampless passageway. She still wears the cocktail dress, with her coat over top. It is late at night, no one is around. She walks slowly, looking into the middle distance, lost in thought.

A man's voice becomes audible off camera. Frances looks up the passageway to locate the sound.

112 PARIS, NIGHT, UP THE PASSAGEWAY

112

A MAN, 65, is walking in Frances's direction. He is unaware of her being there; as he walks he is reproaching, in French, an unknown antagonist with great bitterness, hatred, even:

MAN  
(subtitled)  
And what is that to me, you shit?!  
Eh?

Frances stops walking; she witnesses the hostile man's approach with concern.

MAN (CONT'D)  
(subtitled)  
Who the fuck do you think you are  
to me, even?!

At first glance the man perhaps seemed a crazed homeless person. But we now see he is a successful professional, his clothing tailored, etc.

The man notices he is not alone and comes to an abrupt halt. There stands Frances: an incongruous vision of loveliness in the dark, isolated alley. Frances holds his gaze a moment, then drops her head and continues on, in the direction of the man. She passes him by.

FRANCES  
Excuse me.

He turns to watch her go. She takes a half dozen steps before he addresses her, in English, and in a much kinder tone:

MAN  
Are you all right, madame?

Frances stops, turns to look at the man. He had been so angry only a moment ago, but now his face is settled, warm.

FRANCES  
Why wouldn't I be?

The man thinks, lifts his arms.

MAN  
Just that it's quite late to be  
out.

FRANCES  
You are.

MAN  
That's true.

He shrugs. He nods his head and turns to go. Frances starts, calling after him:

FRANCES  
I've lost my cat.

The Man stops, studies Frances.

MAN  
Yes, you've got the look of someone  
who has.  
(pause)  
And that's why you're out so late,  
on your own?

She nods, yes.

MAN (CONT'D)  
You want me to help you look?

FRANCES  
Oh, no, thank you.

The Man raises his hat to Frances. He performs a small bow and turns to go, heels clicking in the night. Frances watches his departure. After he has gone, she turns and resumes walking.

She walks further down the darkening passageway. Unbeknownst to Frances, Small Frank steps out from the shadows, sits and watches Frances for a time.

He follows after her.

113 INT. JOAN'S APARTMENT, MORNING

113

The apartment is quiet. Joan emerges from her bedroom, hair mussed. She moves about the apartment, looking for Frances.

She knocks on the bathroom door: no reply. She opens the door.

JOAN

Frances?

She isn't there. Joan stands a moment, thinking, concerned. She moves to Malcolm's room and knocks.

JOAN (CONT'D)

Malcolm?

114 INT. JOAN'S APARTMENT, KITCHEN, SOON AFTER

114

Malcolm sits alone at the kitchen table. The camera holds on his face as we hear the background chatter. He looks desolate, alone.

MME REYNARD (O.S.)

We'll fan out and meet back here in an hour, right?

JOAN (O.S.)

All right.

JULIUS (O.S.)

Right.

MME REYNARD (O.S.)

Susan, will you stay here, in case she comes back?

Susan murmurs a yes. A pause.

JULIUS (O.S.)

Madeleine's bag isn't here.

MME REYNARD (O.S.)

There you go. Frances probably walked her to the train.

Malcolm takes a sip of coffee.

Mme Reynard stands beside him and lays a hand on his shoulder.

MME REYNARD (CONT'D)

Get your coat on, Malcolm.

Malcolm looks up at Mme Reynard.

115 EXT. JOAN'S APARTMENT, ENTRANCE, DAY 115

Mme Reynard, Joan, Julius, and Malcolm exit the apartment. They converse a moment, then split up, each going in his or her own direction, except for Malcolm, who stands in place.

After the rest have scattered, Malcolm crosses the street and walks into the park.

116 EXT. PARK ACROSS FROM JOAN'S APARTMENT 116

Malcolm walks deeper into the park. He walks with a look of purpose.

CUT TO:

117 INT. PRIVATE SCHOOL, 12 YEARS EARLIER, LATE MORNING 117

A 12 YEAR-OLD MALCOLM walks down the hall of the school. He holds a slip of pink paper in his hand - a summons to the Headmaster's office.

As he enters the

118 INT. HEADMASTER'S OFFICE HALLWAY 118

. . . he/we see a younger Frances, at once chic and harried -- fur coat but hair slightly wild. She is speaking in low tones with the HEADMASTER, 50, fearsome, serious.

Frances is holding a sheaf of papers in her hand. She looks at the pages distastefully and passes them back.

FRANCES

Well, I don't want to fill these out. And I'm not going to, and I'm afraid that concludes the tune. Good morning.

Frances sets the papers down, turns to face Malcolm, and gently steers him from the room. As they leave, Malcolm cannot help but stare at the Headmaster. To see the taciturn man put in his place is an uncommon sight.

FRANCES (CONT'D)

So what do you want me to do?

MALCOLM

I don't know.

FRANCES

Do you want to come away with me?

MALCOLM

What about my clothes?

FRANCES

I'll buy you new clothes.

They exit to-

119

INT. PRIVATE SCHOOL STAIRCASE- MOMENTS LATER

119

FRANCES  
So, how was it?

MALCOLM  
How was what?

FRANCES  
Your educational experience.

MALCOLM  
I don't know.

FRANCES  
Don't say, 'I don't know.' Of course you know. What was it like?

MALCOLM  
Not really very much fun.

FRANCES  
Didn't you have any friends?

MALCOLM  
Some.

FRANCES  
But you found the relationships unfulfilling?

MALCOLM  
I don't--

He catches himself. He looks at Frances and shrugs.

FRANCES  
What was the food like?

MALCOLM  
The food was awful.

They exit.

120 INT. ROLLS ROYCE - DAY

120

She shuts the car door and turns to Malcolm.

FRANCES  
You're father's dead, pal.

MALCOLM  
I know.

FRANCES  
How do you know?

MALCOLM  
The kids told me. They showed it to me in the paper.

FRANCES  
What'd the paper say?

MALCOLM  
That he died a while ago.

FRANCES  
About me, I mean. What'd it say about me.

Malcolm is uneasy.

FRANCES (CONT'D)  
(kindly)  
It's okay. Go ahead.

MALCOLM  
It said you were arrested.

FRANCES  
Why was I arrested?

MALCOLM  
It said you didn't do what you were supposed to do.

Frances lights a cigarette: *CLICK!*

FRANCES  
Look. They didn't know your father and they certainly don't know me, and it's boorish, typically boorish of them to state the terms of what should have been done in an episode they could never guess at. What was and was not done was done or not done for a very good, a very real reason, all right?

MALCOLM

All right.

FRANCES

What you have to understand is that I was not wrong. If this is going to work - you and me, I mean - you're going to have to take my word for that. Okay?

Malcolm thinks, nods.

MALCOLM

Okay.

Frances starts the car.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)

What was jail like?

FRANCES

Not really very much fun.

MALCOLM

What was the food like?

Frances looks at Malcolm. She smiles.

FRANCES

You're getting it.

She holds out her hand.

FRANCES (CONT'D)

Let's have that tie.

MALCOLM

Why?

She says nothing, but pumps her hand - give it. Malcolm begins to untie his.

120-2 EXT. CAR - ROAD

120-2

As car passes camera, Frances tosses Malcolms tie out the window.

121 EXT. PARIS STREET, PRESENT TIME

121

Malcolm is walking, still living in the memory of what we've just seen.

He slows, stops walking. He closes his eyes.

He opens his eyes. A flower stand sits before him. Colorful flowers in colorful bundles.

122 EXT. PARIS, SOON AFTER 122

Malcolm now holds a flower in his hand.

A flash ahead to:

122 A INT. JOAN'S APARTMENT - DAY 122 A

Malcolm and Susan: we see Malcolm and Susan in embrace: He is holding her, and she is holding the flower.

Return to present:

122 B EXT. PARIS, DAY 122 B

Malcolm walks into a crowd, slowly disappearing into it, until all that we see is the flower he holds.

THE END