

“HAPPY END”

Michael Haneke

HAPPY END - Characters

Georges Laurent (85)

The Patriarch, the last of a dying breed of provincial industrialists. Sensing the inevitability of the decline and the imminent end of the world as he knew it, he is under no illusions: Georges knows he serves no useful purpose any longer. He would like to end life on his own terms, but life refuses. He is constantly returned to where he belongs, the existence he attempts to flee once and for all.

Anne Laurent (58)

Georges' daughter, perspicacious and dynamic still in her late 50s. For the survival of the family business that she now heads, Anne battles--and schemes--with customers and bankers. She has no known weakness. Everything depends on her.

Pierre Laurent (35)

Anne's son and the Patriarch's grandson. Pierre is a disappointment to his family, and his mother especially. Destined by family tradition to run the firm, he proves incapable of doing so. Anyway, he is not interested. He lets things run away from him. He is slack, negligent and unloved.

Thomas Laurent (50)

The Patriarch's son and Anne's younger brother. Thomas is also Pierre's uncle but he never sees his nephew anymore. Thomas veered off his designated career path long ago. He wasn't cut out for business. He has made his name, however, in medicine. Thomas is a womanizer. Divorced from his first wife, Nathalie, with whom he has a 13-year-old daughter, Eve, he remarried and is, at the age of 50, the father of a baby boy.

Nathalie Laurent (50)

First wife of prominent doctor, Thomas, and mother of Eve. Nathalie drifts through life, trying in vain to be useful, if only to her daughter. Abandoned and ineffectual, Nathalie, like many others, is unable to overcome her depressive tendencies.

Anaïs (35)

Thomas' second wife, after Nathalie. Anaïs is still deeply in love (despite Thomas' infidelities). Aged 35, she is also a kind and caring mother. The others have little to hold against her.

The Gambist (35)

Thomas' mistress. Although invisible, merely evoked or alluded to, the Gambist is, in this story, a bolt of eroticism. Thomas is crazy about her body.

Eve (13)

Thomas and Nathalie's daughter was raised by her mother far from the Laurent family. She is 13 now. Some aspects of her personality are still hazy, but she appears anxious, unstable, strangely cruel on occasion, and perhaps even suicidal, just like her grandfather. This final trait may provide her unwanted bond to the family.

Laurence Bratshow (60)

An English bank executive and Anne's lover. Although they rarely see each other, Anne relies on Laurence, who plays only a fleeting part in proceedings.

TITLES (Part 1)Scene 1

Bathroom

Interior/Night

Computer screen, filling the frame.

The camera is positioned statically and shows the bathroom in a medium shot, in which a **woman** (in her mid forties) is getting ready for bed.

The following text is typed in beneath the shot. The woman follows the instructions given in the text.

*spit out water spit out again wipe mouth towel hairbrush repeat put
hairbrush back put on night cream screw on lid put back visual check
toilet*

The woman walks off camera; we hear the toilet seat being RAISED, URINATION and FLUSHING.

pee flush and off it goes light out

We hear the OPENING and CLOSING of the DOOR. Everything turns black for a few seconds.

TITLES (Part 2)Scene 2

Girl's room

Interior/Day

Computer screen, filling the frame.

A small animal cage, in which is a hamster. Beneath the shot, the following text is typed in:

*hello everyone this is pips my hamster I've had him a year and a half now I just
put the same tablets in his food my mum takes for her depression... let's see what
happens the old cow's getting worse and worse I really can't stand her any more
with her non-stop moaning she drives everyone round the bend she's always soooo
sweet and soooo kind and it's everyone else's fault only she's just fab my dad ran
away from her years ago 'cos he couldn't stand her constant moaning all the time
now she's letting it all out on me... that's her bloody trick she's the only one who's
poor and alone... you've got no chance of defending yourself you're the scumbag
because she's suffering and all the time she's whinging away at me and always
knows best*

The hamster suddenly teeters and falls over. It continues moving slightly but finally lies motionless.

*there it seems to be working there's always trouble with him too she says he stinks
which isn't true at all because I always clean the cage she says I don't clean it but
that's not true she just wants to slag me off and deny me any pleasure*

A ruler is pushed into the cage and prods the hamster. It remains lying there motionless.

Now she'll say I wasn't paying attention and it's my fault pips died

Cut to BLACK, which lasts several seconds.

TITLES (Part 3)

Scene 3

Kitchen

Interior/Day

Computer screen, filling the frame.

Fixed medium shot of room. The woman from the previous scene is cooking. She appears tired and exhausted. Every now and then she has to sit down.

Once more, the following text is typed beneath the shot.

yesterday lise was here she says your mum doesn't actually talk to you at all she asks you something and when you reply she does something else or walks away in fact she only ever talks about herself, what she thinks is right and nothing else interests her how can you stand it?? when lise was gone I tried to talk to her about it she said I have no idea what you want I only want the best for you but you don't want to hear and you're making life difficult for us and then it kicked off again, what a hard life she has and no-one understands her and supports her I just walked out there's no point any more pips didn't die for nothing

Blackout, lasting several seconds.

TITLES (Part 4)

Scene 4

Living room

Interior/Day

Computer screen, filling the frame.

Hand camera.

The woman from the previous scenes is lying on the sofa. She is hardly moving and is breathing heavily. After a while, the following text is typed beneath the shot.

how easy it is to make somebody quiet I'll call the ambulance now she's not stupid any more now and knows better

Blackout, lasting several seconds.

TITLES (Part 5 - final part)Scene 5Construction trench

Exterior/Day

Wide shot.

A vast construction trench, deep and wide. Bustling construction activity is going on in the trench, as well as above, at the edge of the trench. Diggers go about their work. At ground level stand construction huts. Trucks come and go. After a while, one of the workers breaks off, comes forward to the edge of the trench and, almost unnoticed by the others, enters one of the portable toilets placed there, closing the door behind him. The work continues for a while. Then, unnoticed by those present, the soil near the toilets breaks loose, and as a result one of the toilets slips to the edge of the trench, wobbles and crashes into the trench with a loud BANG rising above the construction noise. The men working at the base of the trench stop short; at first they are unable to believe their ears, but then they approach the cabin. A cluster of people forms around the wrecked toilet cabin. Finally, at the top of the trench too, evidently having been called over, people approach the edge of the pit and attempt cautiously to peer down into it.

Scene 6Access road to tunnel in Calais

Exterior/Day

To the left and right, the road is bordered by high fence barriers.

Anne (in her late fifties) is driving and speaking via a hands-free device:

ANNE: ...so what do you think I should do now? Should I turn round? I'm nearly at the tunnel ... (to herself, in annoyance): Bloody hell!

MAN'S VOICE: No, it's OK. I just wanted to tell you.

ANNE: So which hospital is he in?

MAN'S VOICE: He's here. I called Georges in Lille, but he was in theatre.

ANNE: So what? Are you there?

MAN'S VOICE: Where?

ANNE: In the hospital, I mean!

MAN'S VOICE: Yeah.

ANNE: And??!

MAN'S VOICE: Nothing. They can't say anything. (Brief PAUSE) Things aren't looking too good.

Anne reflects. Then:

ANNE: OK. I'll see what I can do.

She pushes a button to end the conversation. She reflects for a moment. Outside, behind the fence as she passes by it, are isolated figures of black African refugees. Anne pays them no attention. Finally, she makes a call using speed dial. The phone rings a few times, and then

MALE VOICE (in English): Surprise, surprise! Are you there already?

ANNE (in English): No. Sorry. I can't come. We've had an accident here.

MALE VOICE (in English, somewhat perplexed): What kind of "accident"?

ANNE (in English): I'll tell you later, darling. I'm so sorry.

MALE VOICE (in English): Can I help you?

ANNE (in English): No, no. Everything's OK. Don't worry. I'm only sad that I can't see you now.

Scene 7

Villa. Dining room.

Interior/Night

Three generations are present: **Georges** (85), Anne, **Anaïs** (Thomas' wife, 35), **Pierre** (Anne's son, rather chubby, mid to late thirties). **Jamila** (the Algerian domestic, 28) serves the food. Pierre pours wine for Georges, the women and himself.

ANNE: Thank you, Jamila. I won't need you any more. We'll clear the dishes away ourselves. Goodnight.

JAMILA: Bonsoir Madame. Bonsoir Messieurs.

They nod to her and wait until she has left the room. Then they eat for a while. Georges drinks. Pierre follows his example.

ANNE (to Pierre): It would be nice, my dear, if you could control yourself.

PIERRE: What do you mean?

She makes a slight gesture with her head towards the wine glass. Pierre subtly rolls his eyes.

ANNE: Hmm?

PIERRE: Mum, please!

Brief pause.

ANNE: Don't you think I have good reason to say that?

PIERRE: No I don't.

ANNE: I beg your pardon?

PIERRE: No, I don't think you have good reason to say that. What's this all about?

GEORGES (to Anne): I'd be grateful if you could leave all your bickering until after the meal. Would that be possible?

ANNE: OK.

PAUSE. They eat.

ANNE: It's not bickering. I'm worried. I'm sorry if I'm on edge.

She reaches over the table to Pierre's hand.

ANNE (apologetically): Sorry. You know what I'm trying to say.

PIERRE (with slight irony): I know, mum.

PAUSE.

ANAÏS: ... this morning I went into Alain's room. He was already awake. He gave me a big smile and said: "Daddy!" ... Isn't that delightful?! That's the second word he's said now ... Thomas will be thrilled.

Scene 8

Villa. Georges' room

Interior/Night

Georges stand at the window and looks out into the night. Outside, a dog BARKS aggressively and persistently.

Scene 9

Intensive Care Unit

Interior/Day

Thirteen-year-old **Eve** stands silently in front of the glass wall through which one can see into the treatment room. A woman is lying there, her identity not possible to establish due to all the tubes and instruments which are attached to her. A **nurse** is working beside the bed.

THOMAS (o.s.): ... it was ages ago. We flew to Kenya once, I don't know, five or six years ago. Hold on... Yes, it was six years ago. Why?

DOCTOR (o.s.): Did you take any preventive treatment against malaria at the time?

THOMAS (o.s.): I can't remember. Why do you ask?

DOCTOR (o.s.): As well as the anti-depressant overdose, the lab tests also indicated poisoning by this type of medication. These tablets are prescription-only. Do you know whether she had any left over at home?

THOMAS (o.s., to Eve): Did mum keep anything like that?

EVE (looks at him, o.s.): I don't know.

Scene 10

Family house. Eve's room. Hall. Living room

Interior/Day

Eve packs her things into a suitcase, a large bag and a school rucksack. Then she places her things in the hall and enters the living room, where Thomas is sitting.

EVE: I'm ready.

Scene 11

Apartment in London

Interior/Night

Lawrence Bratshow, a well-groomed gentleman aged about 60, is sitting in front of a television with the sound muted, on which an international news programme is running. He is speaking on the telephone in English. First we see just the silent TV images and hear only

LAWRENCE'S VOICE (in English):...they won't approve it without restrictions...

yes, sure ... you'll have to make sure he emerges unscathed, unfortunately it's not the first time ...

...yes...I know... we'll talk about that when you're here ...

Cut to

LAWRENCE (in English):...when?...(smiling): do you think I'll be able to stand it that long?

... me too my darling ...

...a committee is a committee, you know, and a loan committee is a loan committee... yes ... If it's up to me, tomorrow... (he laughs): yes! ... I love you too ... Sleep well, my dear. I'll call you ...

... and keep me posted about the story, will you?!... Good night ... Night.

He hangs up. He leans back pensively in his armchair. After a while, he remembers the TV programme that is running.

He leans forward and turns the VOLUME OF THE TV NEWS back up. We listen with him for a while.

Scene 12

Villa. Thomas' apartment

Interior/Night

Bathroom

Anaïs pushes her own toiletry utensils to one side.

ANAÏS: ... the best thing is if you put your things here first. We'll work something out. Then we'll sort everything out tomorrow at our leisure, OK?

Eve nods and empties her teenager's toiletry bag, placing the items in the cleared space. When both have finished, Anaïs looks at Eve, who avoids her gaze. Brief PAUSE.

ANAÏS: You'll see, everything'll be OK again. Your mum will soon be better again.

EVE: Yeah..

ANAÏS: And we'll get on well here, I know. Your dad loves you very much and I love your dad. (She smiles encouragingly): We have to get on, right?

Eve nods.

ANAÏS: So. I'm going to leave you alone now. Did you bring a nightshirt?

Eve nods.

ANAÏS: If not, you can have one of mine. (Another smile): After all, we're almost the same size, right?!

EVE: Thanks. I've got everything.

ANAÏS: Good. Then I'll leave you alone now. It's late already and you'll be tired.

Eve nods. Anaïs leaves the bathroom. Eve makes herself ready, cleans her teeth, gets undressed and puts on her nightshirt. In between, outside

THOMAS' VOICE: Everything OK, darling?

EVE: Sure.

THOMAS' VOICE: I'll wait for you in the kitchen.

EVE: OK, that's fine.

Eve finishes getting changed. Then she takes her clothes and laundry and goes along the corridor into the

kitchen.

Thomas is sitting at the kitchen table, and Anaïs is clearing away the dishes. Eve stops in the doorway.

EVE: I'm ready.

Thomas stands up. He is not quite sure what to do. He gives Anaïs a brief, helpless glance. She turns from him to Eve and smiles at her.

ANAÏS: Do you want to join us?

EVE (embarrassed): No thanks.

Thomas pulls himself together and goes towards Eve.

THOMAS: I'll come with you.

They both turn to leave.

ANAÏS: Hold on.

She goes over to Eve and embraces her awkwardly:

Good night. Sleep well. You'll see, everything'll be OK. Don't worry.

EVE: Night.

Eve goes with Thomas along the corridor, into the

living room.

Thomas leads the way. Before he turns on the light, he gently closes the door to the adjacent bedroom. A bed is set up on the couch. Eve's bag lies opened beside it.

THOMAS: Just put your things over the armchair.

Eve does so. She stands still for a moment, embarrassed, then sits down on the bed. PAUSE.

Sorry. I've had to improvise a bit. Tomorrow you'll get your own room.

PAUSE.

EVE: It's OK, dad.

PAUSE.

THOMAS: Is there anything else I can do for you? Do you want a glass of water...?

EVE: No, no, everything's fine.

THOMAS: OK. Then I'll leave you alone. Try and sleep. If you need anything, we're in the next room, OK?

EVE: Sure.

THOMAS: Good night.

EVE: Good night.

THOMAS: Shall I turn the light out?

EVE: OK.

Thomas turns out the light and leaves the room, closing the door behind him. Eve sits for a while. Pale light penetrates from outside through the curtains. Eve lies down and pulls the covers over her. From the kitchen come the distant, indistinct VOICES of Thomas and Anaïs.

Scene 13

Servants' quarters at the villa

Interior/Day

Rachid (aged about 50), his young wife **Jamila** and **Selin**, their four-year-old daughter. Rachid is in the process of feeding the dog, a large German shepherd, in the doorway to the courtyard. Jamila is preparing breakfast for one on a tray. Rachid takes the tray.

RACHID (in Arabic): Where's the marmalade?

Jamila has forgotten it, and rushes to fetch it. Rachid takes the tray and leaves the servants' quarters.

Scene 14

Villa. Garden.

Exterior/Day

Continuous action.

Rachid crosses the garden carrying the tray, and enters the

Scene 15

Villa. Entrance and Anne's office.

Interior/Day

Continuous action.

Rachid walks from the entrance door to the staircase. The door to Anne's office opens.

ANNE: Good morning, Rachid.

Rachid has stopped still, the tray in his hand.

RACHID: Good morning, Madame.

ANNE: Just in case you haven't noticed yet, we had a visitor last evening. My brother's daughter from his first marriage will be living with us for the time being. Her mother is sick. It'd be good if Jamila could come over and help Anaïs to set up the blue room on the first floor for her.

RACHID: Of course, Madame. I'll tell her.

He holds up the tray by way of explanation

as soon as I get back.

Anne nods. Then she turns away in order to go back into her office. Rachid too continues on his way. Then Anne turns around once more.

ANNE: And you can introduce the girl to the dog. He hasn't met her yet.

RACHID: I will, Madame.

While Rachid climbs the stairs with the tray, we follow Anne into the

office.

She puts her mobile phone, which she has been holding in her hand the whole time, back to her ear.

ANNE (in English): Sorry. I had to tell Rachid about the girl ... no idea ... I'll let it be a surprise ... it's dreadful, what else is there to say about it? ... I hope she recovers quickly ... Thomas reckons it's not looking good; he looked into the medication she took ... yeah, let's talk about something else ... I talked to Maître Barin, and he thinks we should try to ...

Scene 16

Georges' bedroom and bathroom

Interior/Day

We see from the bedroom into the bathroom, where Georges is cleaning his teeth. There is a KNOCK at the bedroom door. Georges does not react. Another KNOCK, this time louder. Georges spits out.

GEORGES (calls out): Come in!!

As Rachid enters:

RACHID (o.s.): Good morning, Monsieur.

and arranges the breakfast on the table, Georges wipes his mouth and comes out of the bathroom, walking with a stick.

GEORGES: Good morning, Rachid.

RACHID: Are you well, Monsieur?

GEORGES: I guess so.

He goes to the breakfast table. Rachid pushes the chair under him and pours him tea.

RACHID: Have you heard, Monsieur?

GEORGES: Heard what?

Scene 17

Construction site

Interior/Day

Anne, Pierre and **three reps from the building regulation authority**. They are inspecting the site of the accident in Scene 10. The toilets placed on the edge of the construction pit are no longer there. All around is noisy construction activity.

PIERRE (irritated):... they just put them here ...

OFFICIAL (with irony): ...on the edge?

PIERRE: They were behind the barrier. Normally no-one would be stupid enough to go to the toilet here.

OFFICIAL: Why not?

PIERRE: Because they're at the back.

OFFICIAL: Who?

PIERRE: I mean the toilets. These ones here were just put there temporarily in the morning so they could be brought down into the pit, because they don't have enough down there.

OFFICIAL: Why weren't they brought down right away?

PIERRE: They were delivered first thing in the morning. No-one was here yet to open up down below. So they left them here.

OFFICIAL: Behind the barrier, on the edge of the pit?

Pierre gestures in exasperation: (Evidently!)

OFFICIAL: And why was nobody here yet?

PIERRE (tetchily): Because the truck came before seven, but the foreman only arrives at seven, because the barrier was checked at the end of the day and I had to stay late at the office yesterday and just for once I showed up here later! Things like that can happen, right?!

The official ironically mimics Pierre's gesture from a moment ago: (Evidently!). Pierre shakes his head in annoyance ("There's no talking to this man!")

ANNE (to the official, striving to calm things down): The previous evening, we sat over the week's planning until long after midnight. (Brief placatory gesture to Pierre, who is about to interrupt, then back to the official): I apologize, Monsieur Van Thamen, my son is very affected by the incident. It was obviously a chain of unfortunate events.

OFFICIAL: Certainly, Madame.

(to Pierre): Can you guarantee that the barrier was there? The people who delivered the toilets claim they didn't see it. There were two of them, sir.

PIERRE: How am I supposed to guarantee that? I don't take photos of what happens here every day ... If that's what they're claiming, then they're lying.

OFFICIAL: If there's a prosecution - and that's pretty likely - it's your word against theirs. Then you'll have to prove it. After all, someone or other must have been on the site before seven

SECOND OFFICIAL: I've spoken to people who claim the barrier was only put back in place after the accident.

PIERRE: Who's saying that?

SECOND OFFICIAL: Some of your employees.

PIERRE: I wonder who that was.

ANNE: Pierre, please!

PIERRE (tries to be calmer): It may be that the toilet ripped the barrier tape away when it fell.

After the accident we really had other things to do apart from checking that kind of thing. I'm sorry.

OFFICIAL: When the accident happened, was the safety officer there?

PIERRE: But I told you - he was always there.

OFFICIAL: I hope so for your sake, Monsieur. And for your foreman's sake too. Where is he then?

PIERRE: We work shifts. It's his day off today.

OFFICIAL: Well then ...

(he turns to his entourage) Gentlemen?!

(to Anne, in a friendly manner): A pleasure, Madame, as always.

(to Pierre): Monsieur?!

PIERRE (barely managing to conceal his irritation): Goodbye Monsieur. (nods to the others): Gentlemen?!

The gentlemen nod in response and go to their car. Pierre turns away furiously and makes to go to his office.

ANNE: Pierre!

He stops. Turns reluctantly towards her.

ANNE: Was that necessary?

Pierre gestures again as before: (Evidently!)

Scene 18

Street outside Eve's new school

Exterior/Day

The end of the school day. Eve leaves the school building with numerous other children and crosses the courtyard towards the street, where several cars are standing, with mothers and fathers waiting. When Thomas sees Eve, he too gets out of his car and makes himself visible. Eve sees him and comes towards him.

On the other side of the street is the immigration authority building. A large number of black-African refugees form a large queue in front of it. Eve notices them, but barely reacts.

As she is approaching the car, Thomas gets back in already and opens her door from inside. She gets in.

THOMAS: It was on the way. I thought, maybe it's good if I pick you up on the first day.

EVE: I thought you were at the hospital

THOMAS: Only till four.

He drives off. PAUSE.

Don't you like it?

EVE: No, it's fine.

Lengthy PAUSE.

THOMAS: So? Was it tough? What are the others like?

EVE: Dunno.

He looks briefly over at her, then back to the road.

I can't say. Quite nice.

THOMAS: Sorry.

He glances at her again, then back. Embarrassing SILENCE. Suddenly Eve begins weeping softly.

Thomas doesn't notice right away, but then is completely overwhelmed.

THOMAS: Hey ... Sweetie...

As he continues driving, he places his right hand soothingly on her shoulder. This only makes Eve sob even more.

In panic, Thomas attempts to drive over to the right and stop the car.

THOMAS: ...Eve...Dear..

It takes him a while. Impatient HOOTING by the car behind. Then the car stops. In the meantime, Eve has calmed down a little; she rummages for a pack of paper tissues from the school rucksack at her feet, and blows her nose.

Thomas does not know what to say. Helplessly, in a gesture of sympathy he strokes her face with the back of his hand. Eve shakes her head, and glances at Thomas with a tense smile ("it's OK"). PAUSE.

THOMAS: I'm so sorry.

Eve nods ("I know") and sniffs loudly again.

EVE: It's over now. It's OK. Sorry.

PAUSE.

THOMAS: I'd so like to help you

EVE: It's OK.

Brief PAUSE.

THOMAS: Really?

She nods.

I'm not used to having a daughter any more, you know. I'm very inept, I know. Forgive me.

She glances at him, then nods. Then a PAUSE.

EVE: Shall we drive on?

Scene 19

Villa. Dining room.

Interior/Night

Georges, Anne, Thomas, Anaïs, Pierre and Eve are eating. Anne is sitting opposite Eve, who is trying to appear unselfconscious. When she briefly looks up from her food, Anne smiles at her encouragingly. Georges is barely eating; he notices the eye contact between the two, and then looks at Thomas and Anaïs. Finally, he turns to Eve.

GEORGES: How old are you?

Eve looks up, surprised by the unexpected question.

EVE: Thirteen.

PAUSE. Then

GEORGES: I thought you were older.

Eve does not know what to say. She smiles awkwardly.

THOMAS (to Georges): She'll be fourteen in two months. (to Eve): Right?

EVE (softly): Yes.

ANNE: Girls these days are much more mature than in your generation, dad.

GEORGES: Clearly.

PAUSE.

Have you been here before?

EVE (not quite understanding the question): Here? In Calais?

THOMAS: We did visit here once, when I was still in Arles. But she was three then. She'll barely remember it. (to Eve) Right?

EVE: No I don't.

PAUSE.

GEORGES: Strange.

THOMAS: What is strange?

GEORGES: That she's here now.

ANNE: Dad!

GEORGES (unfazed, to Eve): Are you staying here now?

THOMAS: Dad, her mother's in hospital. I've already told you twice. She's suffered a serious drug overdose and Eve is staying here till she's well again.

GEORGES: Sorry, I'm senile, I know (to Eve): So you're not staying here. I get it now.

PAUSE.

GEORGES: Still: Bienvenue à la cage aux folles.

Eve smiles awkwardly and nods ("thank you").

Scene 20

Computer screen

Interior/Day

(A few words regarding the translation: in German [and English], words with a sexual/obscene connotation are either neutralized or literarized or simply denunciatory and vulgar. In order to do justice to the realism of modern-day language, but also in order to avoid vulgarity, in the three relevant scenes of this screenplay (20/25/41) the French words are also placed in brackets.)

The first lines of the e-mail are already written, i.e. fixed, and the rest appears as it is typed; by way of accompaniment we hear the sound of fingers on the keyboard.

(Beneath the lines of the new text, at the beginning we read the very top lines of the e-mail to which a response is now being written. As each new line is written, they disappear downwards out of the frame:

*You played like a goddess, my love. I wonder what I have done to deserve you. My God, but I am not thinking of this beautiful, sophisticated woman who bewitches everyone; I can think of nothing apart from your body, gleaming so white, on the sweat-drenched sheets.
I lick the sweat from your skin, I lick your face, your cunt (chatte), your arse (cul), it's like a sickness, I don't know how ...)*

The text already written when cutting to the scene:

lying on my back, indolent and half asleep, my hand between my legs, I dream of what you did with me in that ugly room which was so beautiful because I lay in your arms. I wish you would destroy the porcelain doll that I am

From here, upon the beginning of the scene, the text is then typed:

and abase me, that you would put it in my arse (cul) and fuck me (baise) until my whole body is dripping with sweat to the point where one thinks one is dying, you know, but you don't die your hand in mine that you would pee in my face, smiling all the while I love your smile so much your hand in mine or that I would do all that to you or that both of us would do it all at the same time, and all kinds of other things too, something crazy and ...

Scene 21

Works garage and street outside

Exterior/Interior/Night

The outside night-time light, which falls through the small garage windows, dimly illuminates the business vehicles of the company Laurent: trucks, delivery vans, etc. The company logo is on every vehicle.

Georges enters the workshop through a door in the wall opposite the vehicle entrance. Light falls into the garage from the corridor behind him. Georges is in his pyjamas and robe. Supporting himself with his stick, he hesitates.

Finally, he walks slowly to the cars in the front row nearest the garage entrance door and takes a small remote control and several keys out of the pocket of his gown. Having compared the number plate on one of the cars with the numbers on the key labels, he chooses a key, places the remaining keys on the bonnet of the adjacent vehicle, climbs - with some effort - into the car, and starts it.

Using the remote control, Georges opens the entrance door. He turns on the car headlights and drives out of the garage. The door closes automatically behind him.

Scene 22

Villa. Anne's office.

Interior/Day

Anne has a cup of tea standing beside her and is talking on the telephone.

ANNE: ... ask for the house number and just go there. It's important. If they get the feeling we don't care they'll only bother us more. We haven't got a strong set of cards. You've got us into trouble, now please be kind enough to deal with it ... no ... I talked to Maître Barin. They're sticking to their version. You can't rely on that ... yeah ... I did
....

There is a KNOCK at the door.

ANNE (irritated): Yes?!

Rachid enters.

What is it then?!

RACHID: Excuse me, Madame, but Monsieur Georges isn't there.

ANNE: And so what?!

RACHID: I went to his room, with his breakfast, but he wasn't there.

ANNE: What do you mean, he's not there? Maybe he's in the bathroom, or gone downstairs...

RACHID (interrupting): I've already looked everywhere. He's nowhere to be found.

ANNE: But ... (into the telephone): ... Sorry, I'll call you right back. (to Rachid): What's that supposed to mean? He can't just vanish into thin air. Have you checked with Thomas?

RACHID: Monsieur Thomas went to Lille first thing this morning. Madame Anaïs is still asleep, and so is Mademoiselle Eve.

ANNE: Did you look in their rooms?!

RACHID: Of course, Madame.

Anne reflects.

ANNE: Hold on ...

She dials a mobile number. As she waits for her call to be answered, she says:

He can't be over with you, can he?

Rachid shakes his head.

Hi. This is Anne Laurent. Can I speak to my brother? when will he be finished? ... can you ask him to call me right away? It's urgent. ... Yes, thank you.

She ends the call. Reflects. Then she asks:

Have you looked to see if his stick is upstairs?

Computer screen, filling the frame.
A POP CONCERT with thousands of young people in the audience.
Suddenly, the CRYING of a baby.

Scene 24

Villa. Various rooms in Thomas' living quarters_____

Interior/Night

Eve's room

Eve in a nightshirt in front of her computer. She TURNS DOWN THE SOUND. Goes next door into the

children's room.

takes the crying baby out of the cot and rocks him. The CRYING STOPS. Anaïs rushes in.

ANAÏS: Sorry, I was on the toilet.

She makes to take the baby, but Eve first continues rocking him, before finally giving him to his mother.

EVE: I think it was my fault. I woke him up.

ANAÏS: Why are you still up?

EVE: I was waiting.

Anaïs puts the baby, who has quietened down, back to bed.

EVE: Has dad called yet?

ANAÏS: They're in Calais already. They should be here any minute.

EVE: So? How are things?

ANAÏS: Apparently they're looking better than first expected.

EVE: What does that mean?

ANAÏS: I don't know. Thomas kept it short...

We hear FOOTSTEPS on the staircase.

I think that's him.

O.s., we hear

THOMAS' VOICE: Anaïs?!

Anaïs opens the door to the

hall.

Eve follows her.

Thomas and Anaïs exchange a brief hello kiss. Then

THOMAS: Hello Eve.

EVE: Hi dad.

ANAÏS: Well?!

Thomas heads on in the direction

of the

kitchen.

THOMAS: Like I said, it doesn't look too bad. He could have been dead.

He opens the refrigerator and takes out butter and cheese; then fetches bread from the breadbin.

Sorry. I must eat something; I haven't had a bite since first thing this morning.

He sits down and makes himself some open sandwiches, before eating hastily.

He crashed head-on into a tree. The police say it was deliberate. There are no brake marks.

ANAÏS: Do you believe that?

THOMAS (wearily, for he has repeatedly asked himself the same question): I don't know. Anne thinks it was deliberate.

ANAÏS: Why?

THOMAS: Well, you know all about his Swiss escapade last December.

Anaïs understands the allusion, but Eve does not.

ANAÏS: And what are his injuries like? Were you able to speak with him?

THOMAS: No I wasn't. He has multiple fractures in one leg. His shoulder bone is cracked, and so are a few of his ribs. It all gives him a good deal of pain. They've sedated him.

He leans back in the armchair, exhausted.

It's all pretty stressful. Anne is completely distraught.

ANAÏS: Should I go down to see her?

Thomas shakes his head.

THOMAS: She said she'd take two triazolam and go straight to bed.

He makes to get up.

I'm going to do the same. I have to leave the house early.

ANAÏS: Where is he? At your place?

THOMAS (nods): In the emergency ward. The accident happened pretty close to Lille.

He goes to the door and only at this point does he really notice Eve, who has been standing there.

Sorry, it must all be terribly unsettling for you.

EVE: No, no. It's OK. I'm sorry.

He fleetingly strokes her cheeks.

THOMAS: Don't worry. It's all a bit much for you - your mum, and what's going on here ...

Eve shakes her head ("It's OK!").

THOMAS (turning to Anaïs): We should all go to bed. It's late. (to Eve): And you have to leave the house early too.

Anaïs is the first to get up; she puts the food leftovers back in the fridge.

ANAÏS: You go ahead. I'll be with you right away.

The other two leave the room, o.s. Anaïs too takes a bite from Thomas' food, then closes the fridge and leaves the frame. O.s., she turns off the light. We still see the residual light from the hall, and hear

THOMAS' VOICE: Goodnight, sweetheart.

EVE'S VOICE: Night, dad.

We hear the opening and closing of doors. Then SILENCE.

Scene 25

Computer screen

Interior/Night

Chatroom.

The chat consists of text units which each appear on the screen accompanied by a short announcement tone. The text units of both dialogue partners are identified by two different colours. The new text units by "Red" appear in each case following the period needed in which to write them. (The text units of "Blue" can be read as they are being written.)

Above the newly-appearing units, the messages which immediately preceded them can be read on the screen. As new text appears, they disappear upwards out of the frame.

BLUE: *an hour without you my skin is still red from you ... my cunt (chatte) hurts I smell of you no-one in the world is as happy as I am*

BLUE: *don't think, stop thinking ... I read in a stupid magazine there was once you were my king I was your princess I drank my fill from your eyes, your skin, your cock, your cum (foutre) that was YOU I found you finally that's living no, more than living*

In the lower half of the screen, we see as the person typing the blue text inputs it onto the screen. Simultaneously, we hear TYPING on the keyboard.

With each pause, the written text jumps into the blue text field.

BLUE: *whatever happens even if you forget me some day YOURS for ever I can't see properly everything is full of tears my wonderful*

Brief PAUSE. Then the reply

RED: *I'm thirsty for your tears and don't want you to cry But I want to see you pee with pain and be able to console you I want to hurt you because I can't see inside you right inside you*

Brief PAUSE. Then she writes

BLUE: *don't hide anything from me your dark darkest sexual desires use me it's a gift it has to be used completely*

Brief PAUSE. Then

RED: *I will promise promise!! I love you so much*

Brief PAUSE. Then she writes again:

BLUE: *that's good my dearest that's good*

Brief PAUSE: Then, again

BLUE: *THOMAS!!!! those were the most beautiful days ever bestowed on me in my entire life I swear I never thought I would go to heaven before I died ☺ in your hands in your smell in this crazy desire all my fears are as if washed away the only thing left of me is skin, flesh, blood and bones happy to love you happy to burn happy to give you my heart, my arse (cul) and my soul happy to live*

Brief PAUSE. Then, again

BLUE: *yesterday evening I fell asleep at 8.30 shattered by all the intensity I don't think that's ever happened to me before not in my entire life*

Brief PAUSE. Then, again

BLUE: *I miss you so badly but you'll always be there*

Scene 26

Modern city apartment

Interior/Night

Continuous action.

A **woman** (in her mid thirties) is sitting in front of her laptop, chatting online.

Scene 27

Villa. Bedroom in Thomas' apartment

Interior/Day

Computer screen, filling the frame.

A sleeping baby in a cot. The following text is typed in beneath the shot:

*I was five when my brother died
of pneumonia
he was two years older than me
it was terrible
I loved him very much I missed him dreadfully
I couldn't understand at all why he wasn't there any more
maybe this is his replacement now another brother
now I'm the oldest it's nice really*

For a while, after the end of the text, we continue seeing the sleeping child. Then cut to

Scene 28

Street with social housing

Interior/Day

Pierre drives up by car, gets out, crosses the green area in front of the house, reads the name signs at the entrance and rings the bell. He has to wait a while. Finally, the door opens and a tall middle-aged man appears. (We do not understand what both are saying, since the camera has remained on the street beside the car and has merely followed Pierre in a panning shot.) The discussion quickly leads to raised voices. Suddenly, the man strikes Pierre in the face with his fist. Completely taken by surprise, Pierre falls backwards to the ground, and the man continues striking out at him furiously. Pierre attempts to crawl away, and the man kicks into him once more, before abandoning his assault, withdrawing and shouting

MAN: Don't show your face around here again, you damn bastard!

It has all happened very quickly. Pierre tries to stand up and staggers. He then goes forward towards the car, cautiously feeling his face as he goes, attempting to touch his wound. He wipes away the blood which is flowing from his nose.

From the entrance door behind him, a passer-by now emerges and comes over to the street. As she does so, she notices Pierre's condition and looks at him questioningly, but Pierre shakes his head with a contorted smile ("It's nothing").

WOMAN (hesitantly): Are you hurt? Can I help you?

PIERRE: No, no, it's nothing. Everything's fine. Thanks.

Scene 29

Beach by the sea, with snack bar

Exterior/Day

Brilliant sunshine. Wind.

People bathing and surfing. Thomas and Eve are in the process of walking to the refreshment bar. In the background, on blankets spread-out in the sand, are Anaïs and the baby.

EVE: ...he just put on her parka and walked off wearing it.

THOMAS: Didn't she try to stop him?

EVE: She told Monsieur Hougron, and he called in the guy's parents.

THOMAS: Look at that!

He points to a surfer who is performing an audacious manoeuvre. Eve looks in the direction in which he is pointing, somewhat consternated by his lack of interest.

EVE: What is it?

Thomas notices his mistake.

THOMAS: Nothing. That's amazing, isn't it?
And what then?

EVE: Well. I think they were mortified. Of course he brought the parka back. But I reckon it's pretty dreadful.

THOMAS: Yes. You sure have some harsh customs there!

EVE: I guess so.

They walk a few steps further and reach the snack bar where a few people are waiting around.

By the way, they're having a competition against (name of another school). In maths, English, physics, chemistry and sport. I've no ...

THOMAS (interrupting her again): What would you like then?

EVE: I don't know. Ice-cream.

Thomas' phone rings. He looks at the display, and is irritated.

THOMAS (to Eve): Hold on a minute. (into the telephone): Hello?

At the other end, scarcely audible, is a WOMAN'S VOICE. Eve turns towards the snack bar and studies the snacks on offer on the handwritten board. A moment later

THOMAS (to Eve): Can you get ice-cream for Anaïs as well - lemon, if they have it - and a bottle of Evian.

He hands her his wallet, and explains:

The hospital. (with a charming grin): Nothing works without me. I'll be right back.

He steps to one side. Eve waits her turn, then takes ice-cream and water and turns back round. Thomas has disappeared. She is puzzled, then looks behind the snack bar. The strangely intimate tone which she hears Thomas using on the telephone makes her stop short. She feels embarrassed and turns away. Then she waits. She peels the paper off the ice-cream and licks it, lost in thought. She watches the surfers. Finally, Thomas emerges from behind the snack bar, and sees Eve standing there, looking lost.

THOMAS: Hello sweetheart. Sorry.

EVE: No worries.

They head off towards the family.

THOMAS: Did you get everything?

Eve hands him back his wallet.

EVE: Yeah. They didn't have any Evian so I got Badoit.

THOMAS: Fantastic.

They walk towards the family. Suddenly Eve asks

EVE: Do you like Anaïs?

Thomas stops and turns towards Eve:

THOMAS: What kind of question is that? Of course! She's my wife.

Brief PAUSE.

EVE: Mum was your wife too.

For a moment, Thomas does not know what to say; then he laughs.

THOMAS: That's true. My God, you're wise for your age!

He walks on, and she follows; then he stops again:

Hey, princess, of course I love her. What's up then?

EVE: Absolutely nothing. I'm just asking.

THOMAS: Why?

EVE: No reason.

He shakes his head, smiling ("what problems kids have!"). They walk on. The camera stops, and they get further away.
After a few steps

THOMAS: Do you know how I met Anaïs?

EVE (disinterested, as she is thinking about something else): No.

THOMAS (with amused laughter): She laid me out flat! (grinning): With her car.

EVE: Really?

THOMAS: Not exactly. But almost. I crossed the street without looking and didn't see her. She was driving fast, braked, her car skidded and the side of it hit me. I fell over, actually more out of shock. She was completely frazzled: "You need to see a doctor right away!" So I said I was the doctor. She didn't find that funny at all. She ...

The two are now so far from the camera that we can no longer make out what they are saying. Finally, they reach Anaïs and the baby. Anaïs enthusiastically takes up the thread of Thomas' narrative while Eve hands her the bottle of water and ice-cream. Thomas, in good spirits, drops down beside her and the baby onto the spread-out towel beneath the parasol. They gabble on cheerfully to Eve, who is standing still, licking her ice-cream. Beyond, the surfers are splashing about. A few black-African refugees stroll along the water's edge, generally unheeded by the others on the beach.

Scene 30

Pierre's apartment

Interior/Night

A bachelor apartment. Plush, but neglected.

Pierre lies half-dressed on the unmade, crumpled bed. He is sleeping. The blood on his face has been partly wiped away, but some of it remains dried on. He has taken off his shirt. One of his shoulders is covered with a large tattoo. The DOORBELL RINGS. Pierre wakes up but remains lying there.

The DOORBELL RINGS MORE INSISTENTLY AND, AFTER A PAUSE, RINGS AGAIN. Pierre does not move. SILENCE.

Then Pierre's MOBILE PHONE RINGS. After a while, Pierre fishes for his jacket, takes out his mobile phone and looks to see who is calling. He puts it away again. After a brief SILENCE, the MOBILE PHONE RINGS again. Pierre lets it RING. Finally he picks up.

PIERRE (in a hostile tone, but exhausted and softly-spoken): Yes?

We hear an agitated WOMAN'S VOICE, although we cannot discern what is being said. Pierre says nothing at all for a while. Then, with lengthy pauses in between:

PIERRE (same tone):...no.... no ...oh God!... Please!!...

The WOMAN'S VOICE continues talking insistently at him. Finally, Pierre stands up wearily, goes to the apartment door, opens it and comes back, letting himself fall back onto the bed in a resigned attitude. Behind him, Anne enters the room. She remains standing in the doorway, contemplating the disorder. Since Pierre shows no sign of reacting to her, she sits down, exhausted, on a chair. Long SILENCE.

ANNE:...well then... I don't know what to say.

PAUSE.

PIERRE: Just don't say anything.

PAUSE.

ANNE (having another go, making an effort to remain calm): You can't just disappear like that!

PIERRE (calmly): Can't I?

A lengthy PAUSE. Finally, she gets up and sits down beside Pierre on the bed. He turns his head away.

ANNE: Let me take a look at you.

She gently tries to turn his head towards her. Finally, he gives way and looks at her. She shakes her head with a slight smile.

ANNE: It could only happen to you.

PIERRE: How kind of you to say that.

He turns his head away in irritation.

ANNE: Hey, look... I think it's great you went there. After all, no one could have known that crazy guy would be lying in wait.

PIERRE: Mum, please!

ANNE: But then why did you run away?! Instead of going straight to the police?! That could have been in our favour if we want to get them to agree on a settlement.

He has not thought of that. He shrugs his shoulders, acknowledging his mistake. Anne gives him a long gaze.

ANNE: But why did you run away from work? Are you ashamed because you've got a black eye?! You can't just drop everything like that.

PIERRE: Well, as you see, I can.

ANNE (somewhat losing her "pleasant" tone): And how do you think that's going to work, if I may ask?

You have a lot in your favour, Pierrot. You're my son and you're the future boss. But as you know, it's not all set in stone. So kindly make a bit of an effort. Your excesses and this whole accident saga are hardly helping me in my attempts to rescue the firm, you do understand that, don't you?

PIERRE: Can you stop please, mum?! Please!

A long, helpless PAUSE. Then Anne gently places her hand on Pierre's arm and says

ANNE (tenderly): What's the matter with you?

Pierre merely shakes his head in a gesture of resignation ("There's no point in talking to you").

ANNE: Since when have you been drinking? I didn't notice at all.

PIERRE: I don't "drink".

PAUSE. She is already familiar with this line of discussion.

ANNE (softly): What am I to do? Can I help you?

Pierre laughs a bitter, dry LAUGH.

Are you overworked? Are you scared? Do you need medical help?

Renewed scornful puffing from Pierre.

I just don't know! Since you moved out, I have no idea what you're up to. Have you got a girlfriend? Are you unhappy in your love life? Talk to me!

SILENCE.

What do you do in the evening after work?

SILENCE.

Aren't you talking to me any more?

PAUSE. Then

PIERRE: I go and lie down.

ANNE: You go and lie down?

PIERRE: What am I supposed to do? ("In your opinion?!")
What do YOU do?

ANNE: I work.

Pierre turns away his gaze with a scornful smirk. PAUSE. It is only now that Anne notices for the first time the tattoo on Pierre's shoulder.

And where did you get THAT?

PIERRE: What?

ANNE (points to the tattoo): That ...

He looks at her. Then he stands up and leaves the room. We hear him, o.s., OPENING THE BATHROOM DOOR and PEEING. Then the TOILET FLUSHES. When he comes back and makes to go to the window, Anne blocks his way. She embraces him, he breaks away; she

embraces him again and presses him to herself, stroking his head:

Pierrot, my dear, sweetheart. You need to accept help.

PIERRE (helplessly attempting to resist): ...Mum ...!

She presses herself against him and holds him tight. For a while, he gives way. Then he withdraws again and drops down onto the chair beside him. He attempts to resist the intimacy and looks out of the window. She stands behind him and strokes his head with sadness and resignation. He tolerates this for a while, then turns his head away. She lets her hand fall. After a while, she sits down on the chair beside him. Both look straight ahead. After a while

PIERRE (softly): I'm no good.

ANNE: What?

PIERRE: I'm no good.

Shocked PAUSE.

ANNE: What kind of nonsense is that?!

Pierre turns towards her.

PIERRE: But that's exactly what you think yourself. What's all the fuss about?! You know very well I'll never take over this bloody business.

PAUSE.

ANNE: So what are you going to do instead?

PIERRE: Nothing. Why should I do anything?

Anne stands up and goes to the window.

ANNE (irritated): Stop feeling sorry for yourself. And stop behaving like a sulky schoolboy, just because someone punched you on the nose. What's the point of that?!

PIERRE: Aha, now that's more like the mum I know. Don't you want to go home and carry on with your work?

She looks at him. Then

ANNE: You're beyond help.

PIERRE (smirking): You said it, mum.

Villa. Garden.

Exterior/Day

An ambulance drives up. Rachid stands beside the gate, holding the dog by its collar. The dog BARKS like mad. Anne is just coming out of the garden door to the villa and takes a few steps towards the ambulance.

Two paramedics open the rear door of the ambulance, take out a wheelchair, open it up and carry Georges out of the ambulance and into the wheelchair. When he is sitting, Anne bends down to him and kisses him. His face bears traces of the accident. She speaks to him but we cannot understand what she is saying because the dog is BARKING. At the same time, Rachid has attached the dog to a chain. He comes over to the ambulance and takes Georges' luggage. The paramedics wheel Georges into the house and disappear behind the door, which Rachid closes behind him. The dog does not stop BARKING furiously. Finally, the paramedics return, get into the ambulance and drive off. After a while, the door to one of the garden rooms is opened and Rachid wheels Georges onto the terrace. A few words are said, then Rachid disappears back inside. Georges looks into the garden. The dog BARKS.

Scene 32

Karaoke bar

Interior/Night

Drunk and in good spirits, Pierre is attempting to sing along to a popular song on social issues. Although his singing is lamentable and he knows this to be the case – indeed some people are laughing –, he continues with the song.

Scene 33

Municipal care home in Calais

Exterior/Interior/Day

Car park

Thomas' car arrives and parks. Thomas and Eve get out and disappear into the building.

Reception desk.

Thomas and Eve. A **receptionist**.

THOMAS: Hello. My name is Thomas Laurent. My ex-wife, Nathalie Laurent, arrived here today. This is her daughter. We'd like to see her. I telephoned earlier.

RECEPTIONIST: But we're closed to visitors at the moment.

THOMAS (slightly irritated; he is not used to being contradicted): But you can make an exception. I'm head of surgery in Lille. I telephoned. My daughter hasn't seen her mother in weeks.

RECEPTIONIST: Who did you speak to?

THOMAS: A lady doctor ... I don't remember her name. I'm sure we can find her.

The receptionist picks up the telephone.

RECEPTIONIST: This is Copé in reception. Doctor, I've got a Mr ...

THOMAS: Dr. Laurent

RECEPTIONIST: ... a Dr Laurent. He wants to visit the new arrival. The lady who arrived today. He says he spoke to a lady doctor on the phone about getting permission to visit, but he can't remember the name..

EVE (to Georges): Let's go, dad.

RECEPTIONIST (looks at Eve): He's here with the patient's daughter.

THOMAS (to Eve): Wait a minute.

RECEPTIONIST: Yes. Yes. OK. Bye. (She hangs up): You can go and see her. Room 12. First floor. End of the corridor on the left.

THOMAS: Thank you.

He looks at Eve ("Are you coming?"), then both go up the

stairs

and on the first floor along the

corridor.

On the way, in the company of care staff and through a number of open doors, we see care-dependent residents. Finally, Thomas opens the door to

Room 12.

Wide shot of the relatively large room. Six women lie in six beds, more or less motionless. Some of them occasionally utter noises. Thomas and Eve enter and have to look around before they are able to locate Eve's mother. She is lying right on the left next to the door.

Eve approaches the bed hesitantly. Thomas follows, then stops, standing back a little. Eve's mother is motionless. Time passes. Eve looks at Thomas, who is unable to react.

Finally, Eve leaves the room. Thomas follows her, and closes the door.

Scene 34

Street in Calais

Exterior/Day

Wide shot. Georges rolls up along the road. A number of people look somewhat astonished at the old man in a wheelchair. Georges passes a small group of black-African refugees, who also look at him. He stops and calls them over to him. They approach him hesitantly. He tries to speak with them, but appears not to succeed, since the strangers are somewhat irritated and speak with one another rather than with him. Several passers-by observe the group, partly disconcerted, partly amused. Georges takes his watch off his wrist and holds it out to the man nearest to him, who is baffled and takes a step back. The other men also find his action strange. They discuss together. An elderly gentleman has seen events as he passes by, and now approaches Georges and the men. He speaks to Georges. The black men retreat and stroll off, some of them looking around at Georges in irritation and puzzlement. Georges too watches them go; he is annoyed at having been interrupted. there is a heated discussion between him and the elderly man.

Scene 35The house belonging to Eve and her mother

Interior/Day

Thomas is showing the house, which is for sale, to a **middle-aged couple** of strangers with **two children**. We already saw some of the rooms at the beginning of the film. (Precise dialogue once motif has been decided upon: explanations by Thomas, comments by the prospective purchasers and children. The reason for the sale is alluded to: death of the owner.)

Eve sits in one of the rooms, waiting. When the purchasers enter, she stands up and is introduced by Thomas as his daughter. The tour of the rest of the house is then continued without her.

Scene 36Villa. Georges' bedroom.

Interior/Day

Barber's tools are spread out on the table.

GEORGES' VOICE: You can go now, Rachid. I don't need you any more.

RACHID: As you wish, Monsieur. If you need me, just ring.

GEORGES' VOICE: Sure.

Rachid leaves the room. Georges, whose face still bears slight traces of the traffic accident, turns towards the **barber** who is standing beside him.

GEORGES (smiling): Now I've offended him.

The barber smiles "understandingly".

GEORGES: He shaves me every day. He doesn't like it when someone else lays a hand on me.

The barber begins cutting Georges' hair. He is in good spirits and has a very gay manner.

BARBER (with ironic flirtatiousness): But I'm hardly touching you, Monsieur.

Georges grins.

GEORGES: How are you?

BARBER: Ah well, my profession keeps me busy.

Georges glances up at him and gives an ironic smile.

GEORGES: Your "profession"? And what does that consist of?

BARBER: But you know that, Monsieur. I cut your hair.

He cuts. Then:

I cut the hair of many gentlemen. I cut the hair of Monsieur Delamare, I cut the hair of Monsieur Franck, I cut the hair ...

GEORGES: You're getting on my nerves, Thomas.

BARBER: Yes, Monsieur.

He slaps his hand against his mouth.

Forgive me.

He carries on cutting. After a while

GEORGES: How much do you earn each month?

The barber is gobsmacked. Then

BARBER (grinning): That's not the kind of question one asks, Monsieur!

GEORGES (seriously): Don't you need any money?

BARBER: Everyone needs money.

GEORGES: Precisely.

PAUSE.

So?

BARBER: I don't understand what you mean, Monsieur...?

Georges shakes his head in resignation at so much stupidity.

GEORGES: How long have you been coming here now?

The barber ponders, continuing to cut Georges' hair.

BARBER: Over ten years, Monsieur.

GEORGES: Almost twenty. You should learn how to count. My arteries may be furred up, but I know exactly how many.

BARBER (pretending, in a coquettish manner, to be shocked): But I'm not that old!

PAUSE.

GEORGES (in a tone of seriousness, putting an end to the banter): You could do me a favour.

The barber stops cutting.

BARBER: Really?

GEORGES: I'll pay you a decent amount..

BARBER: Well ...?

Georges ponders. The barber resumes cutting.

GEORGES (irritated): Stop all that fiddling!

The barber lowers his hands. He appears somewhat aggrieved by Georges' manner of speaking.

GEORGES: ...I'm sorry.

The barber shakes his head ("no worries"). PAUSE.

GEORGES: I'm stuck here.

The barber gives a questioning look.

GEORGES: I drove into a tree, but I wasn't clever enough to do it properly.

BARBER: ...but Monsieur...? They told me it was an accident.

GEORGES (with a slight sarcastic smile): Yes. That kind of thing doesn't look too good.

Perplexed PAUSE on the part of the barber.

GEORGES: My son is a fool. I asked him. He's a doctor - it would have been a piece of cake for him. But he's pig-headed.

The barber looks at Georges in disbelief.

GEORGES: Last year, I was in Zurich. They refused me. Apparently I'm too healthy.

He smirks bitterly.

Anyway. I'm a prisoner in this bloody chair. You understand. (Sarcastic laugh): Now I can't even run away.

PAUSE. The barber stares at Georges.

If you get me a pistol and some bullets, it won't hurt you.

BARBER: But Monsieur...

GEORGES: A shotgun or a big enough quantity of tablets would work too. I've got money here. I can make you rich. At least rich enough so you don't have to carry on cutting the hair of elderly fools.

PAUSE. Then

So??

BARBER: Monsieur, I don't know what to say. How am I supposed to get you that kind of thing? I don't know anyone.

GEORGES (irritated): My God ...

BARBER (interrupting): And they'd suspect me right away, if you ... Anyway, why do you want to do it?? You've completely taken me by surprise!

GEORGES: What would you do in my position?

BARBER: I don't know. But you feel well, don't you ...?

Georges utters a dry LAUGH.

GEORGES: Are you as naïve as all that? Or are you just afraid?

The barber is initially not sure what to say. Then

BARBER: Of course I'm afraid. How could I do something like that?! I can't do it.

PAUSE. Then

No, really.

PAUSE.

GEORGES: Don't scare yourself shitless. Forget it. I was a fool to ask you.

BARBER (uncomfortably): No ... I ...

GEORGES (referring to his hair): Feel free to carry on.

The barber hesitates a moment longer, undecided, then resumes cutting. Both are silent.

Scene 37

Villa. Large salon with adjacent dining room

Interior/Night

The room is full of guests. Individual heads: the whole family is present (including Pierre, slight traces of the fight still visible in his face). Georges, impeccably groomed with his freshly cut short hair, elegantly dressed and bearing almost no external signs of his "accident", is sitting in his wheelchair at the centre of the audience as they listen to a young musician. It is the woman from Scene 26. She looks pretty and fragile and it is not clear whether we have seen her before. She plays the end of an old French VIOL SONATA. APPLAUSE. She bows; Georges wheels himself over to her and thanks her, warmly shaking her hand and gallantly kissing the hand which has "played so beautifully". The

guests begin getting up from their chairs, but Anne has walked over beside Georges and in doing so interrupts the guests as they are about to make for the buffet.

ANNE: Dear friends, I'd like to thank you warmly on behalf of our family for all coming here at such short notice and (she gestures) in such numbers to celebrate dad's 85th birthday. As some of you have no doubt heard, the last few weeks have been pretty turbulent, but we are all glad our birthday boy has recovered so well and so quickly and we are full of hope that he will soon be back to full health. (to Georges, jokingly): After all, what is it you always say – "Only the good die young!"

Chuckling and isolated LAUGHTER. Georges grins.

And: on top of that, we have some good and positive news: What most of you don't know is that following the wonderful addition to the family last year when little Alain came into the world, we have yet another new and quite unexpected addition: Thomas' daughter from his first marriage, (she gestures) Eve, has come to join us and share our lives.

Thomas pushes Eve, who is standing beside him and the baby, a little towards the front, so that everyone can see her.

Eve, we're very happy to have you with us.

Anne initiates APPLAUSE, and the guests follow suit. Eve finds it all rather embarrassing. She is not quite sure how to conduct herself; with little success, she attempts awkwardly to hide herself.

So. And now I don't want to take up any more of your time.

She turns to the musician:

Mademoiselle, I'd like to thank you with all my heart for your beautiful playing. I know you have given dad great joy.

The young woman bows, smiling. Anne turns back towards the guests. The young musician's gaze has wandered over to Thomas, who has just turned to Eve, but in the process looks in her direction. Their eyes meet and their gaze lingers briefly before – as if caught in the act – they look elsewhere. At the same time, Anne says:

After such spiritual pleasures, I don't want to keep you any longer from worldly indulgence; the champagne and buffet are waiting. I wish you all a wonderful evening.

APPLAUSE. Chatting, the guests either go over to the buffet table, behind which Jamila is standing with another Arab woman, who is serving, or they remain standing, or sit down in the various seating areas. Small groups; couples. A few young women come over to Anaïs to talk about the baby she is carrying on her arm. Several older people come forward to join Georges, who is talking to the musician as she bends over him.

Anne goes over to her English friend Lawrence Bratshow (whom we know from Scene 11), links arms with him and pulls him slightly away from the crowd towards the niche of the garden door:

ANNE (in English): I'm so glad you came. As soon as dad's freed himself from his young admirer, I'll take you over to see him. He enjoys your company, you know, although he can hardly hear what you say any more. He was always a great admirer of the female sex.

LAWRENCE (in English, looking at Georges with a smile on his face): But he's obviously well. It's amazing - after all it wasn't that long ago ...

ANNE (in English): Yeah. He's awesome. (She presses his arm to her): (She looks over at Georges and the musician, whom Thomas is just approaching, interrupting their conversation): He'll be pleased to see you again (smiling conspiratorially): but don't say anything about us ...

Pierre watches his mother and her lover, standing a few steps away from Eve, then turns away in irritation and goes over to Eve, who is standing there beside Anaïs looking a bit lost:

PIERRE: Shall we go and plunder the buffet, cuz?

Eve looks up at him, snatched away from her thoughts. Brief PAUSE.

EVE: If you like ...

PIERRE (smiles): After all, I can't let you waste away. Do me a favour and follow my example!
Aren't you hungry?

At the same time, we hear Anaïs' discussion with her friends of the same age. She has little Alain on her arm.

ANAÏS: ... and then he kept us awake the whole night. Which means I end up going into the other room with him - after all, Thomas has to leave early.

FIRST WOMAN: You need to give him ox blood tablets. Just crush them and rub them into his gums, its ...

ANAÏS (interrupting her): I know, I know ... We're already trying everything ... massage, ox blood, chamomile extract, but once he gets going, almost nothing virtually nothing works ... the day before yesterday ...

Pierre places his hand lightly on Eve's shoulder - she has a rather pained smile - and leads her towards the buffet through the people standing around, without Anaïs really noticing their departure as she continues chatting. He appears slightly drunk.

FIRST MAN'S VOICE: ... they just keep going down. Over there, you won't get more than three to three and a half per square metre. Max.

FIRST MAN'S VOICE: Well. It does depend on the condition. And the location too, of course. Over in XXX (name of a residential area) it can be up to five euros ...

FIRST MAN'S VOICE: Yeah, luxury class, but don't you find ...

FIRST WOMAN'S VOICE: ... I couldn't care less about the south any more. I can't stand the heat. You lie around, sweating, and you can't even think straight ...

SECOND WOMAN'S VOICE: Valerie, you know Valerie, don't you, the one with the loud voice ...

FIRST WOMAN'S VOICE: ... the one who can't hear very well ...

SECOND WOMAN'S VOICE: Exactly. She was in Spain last summer. True, it was the north coast, near Orviedo. It ...

Eve and Pierre arrive at the buffet. He puts a plate in her hand.

PIERRE: What would you like then?

EVE: I'll take a look for myself.

PIERRE (grinning): **How** old are you?

Eve feels uncomfortable about the question in front of all the people. And in any case, he should already know.

EVE: Fourteen.

PIERRE: Exactly. Yeah. Sorry.

I've going to have some of Jamila's rice dish. That's her speciality, most highly recommended.

Eve nods and takes a little of the hors d'oeuvres, while Pierre walks away in the direction of the rice dish.

In parallel to all this, we hear snatches of conversation between those standing around:

SECOND WOMAN'S VOICE: ...but of course it's a man. There'd have to be a miracle, and we all know miracles don't happen very often.

THIRD MAN'S VOICE: I ask you. Surely you don't mean to seriously claim ...

THIRD WOMAN'S VOICE: I'm not claiming anything. I'm stating a fact. Surely you don't want to deny that women occupy a marginal share of managerial positions ...

THIRD MAN'S VOICE: Aren't you having any salmon?

That won't change as a result of compulsory quotas. On the contrary, it seems to me much more a case of discrimination. Would you like to be in your job thanks to a quota system? You are where you are because you're competent, not because you're a woman.

THIRD WOMAN'S VOICE: Are you really so naïve, or are you just acting that way

Suddenly we hear, rather too loud to remain unnoticed, from near the rice dish, the "amused"

VOICE OF PIERRE: You must try Jamila's rice dish, my dear. It's out of this world. You should all try it, my dears. Jamila (he embraces the young lady who, smiling in embarrassment, attempts to pull away), Jamila is our Tunisian slave. She is our gift from God, she cooks like Jean-Paul Lacombe and we all know only too well how much we owe her.
(He applauds) Bravo Jamila!

JAMILA (giggles, embarrassed and flattered): But Monsieur!

Some of the people have looked up in irritation. Those standing nearest laugh in a somewhat pained fashion. With a gesture of apology, Anne has left Lawrence standing on his own and goes over to Pierre. Before she has reached him, Thomas appears beside Eve.

THOMAS (ignoring Pierre's provocation): Want to come with me, sweetheart?

She turns from Pierre to Thomas, puzzled.

It'd be nice if you'd congratulate grandpa.

Eve looks at her half-filled plate ("And what am I supposed to do with that?"). For a moment, Thomas does not know what to do, but then he takes the plate out of Eve's hand

... hold on, I'll put it down here for a moment ...

and leans across the buffet, placing it on the other side of the table. At the same time, a new COUPLE pushes past the buffet (they are talking about a film that is just starting - topical text to be added). Eve looks at Pierre again, with whom Anne is now speaking in a quiet, but agitated tone. The people around gloss over the embarrassing situation with varying degrees of skill.

THOMAS: Come on.

In a similar manner to Pierre previously, he takes her by the shoulder and pushes her through the people in the direction of Georges.
Snatches of conversation as they pass by:

THIRD WOMAN'S VOICE: ... I think the opening is planned for 2018. Summer or autumn. I don't know. I just read it somewhere in the paper. You'll have to ask them ...

THIRD WOMAN'S VOICE: ... what kind of campaign was that? Do you know him?

FOURTH MAN'S VOICE: ... I was wondering if I should get an animal like that too. There are more and more ...

FOURTH MAN'S VOICE: To be honest, to me it's over the top. There's never been a break-in ...

FOURTH MAN'S VOICE: ... but would you like those black folks hanging around outside your door?
Opposite the Verbecqs they've got canvas shelters at the entrance to the grounds ...

SIXTH MAN'S VOICE: ...and anyway, you never know whether there are any Islamic State people among them, they're basically

SIXTH WOMAN'S VOICE: ... sold the beach house and gave the money to the kids. She said she can't go in the water any more 'cos of her rheumatism, and she doesn't want to sit outside and watch the others ...

Thomas has worked his way with Eve through the people to reach Georges. He is still engaged in conversation with the young female musician.

THOMAS: Hello dad, may I interrupt you for a moment? Eve would like to say something to you.

The musician and Georges turn towards Thomas and Eve. Eve stands there not knowing what to do or say.

GEORGES: Yes?

EVE: Happy birthday.

GEORGES: Thank you.

An embarrassed PAUSE. The musician and Thomas briefly look into each other's eyes, then to Eve, who has noticed the exchange of glances.

GEORGES: Well?... Aren't I getting a birthday kiss?

After a brief hesitation, Eve bends down over the wheelchair towards Georges and shyly kisses him.

GEORGES (smiling): Who are you then, sweetie?

Scene 38
Law office

Interior/Day

Anne, Pierre and their lawyer (Maître Barin) with his assistant, the ruffian from Scene 33 and an older woman, evidently the wife of the man who had the accident.

LAWYER: Let me welcome you here today and thank you all for coming. First of all, may I just once again express my clients' regret over the unfortunate accident. As you know, the official investigations that began immediately after the accident did not yield any indications as to any culpable conduct or fault on the part of the firm of Laurent. So we may assume that the public prosecutor's office will shortly abandon the criminal proceedings which were automatically commenced. I would also add that, in my view, neither is it possible for my clients to be accused of any civil wrong.

However, naturally Mr and Mrs Laurent are aware of the difficult financial situation arising for your family as a result - quite apart from the tragic nature of the incident. This is particularly in view of the fact that your young children will be dependent on you for some years to come. In theory, you could now try to claim any civil damages through the courts. However, as I said, I do not consider that this would have any legal basis.

Nevertheless, our clients are willing to support you in this difficult situation and pay you a substantial sum totalling EUR 15,000 in order at least to lessen your financial distress. Though I would stress that they are under no obligation to make such a payment.

Naturally you don't have to make a firm decision now on whether or not you wish to accept this offer and so avoid court proceedings. You can simply discuss the matter with a lawyer of your choice and then get back in touch with me.

He looks at Pierre, whose face still bears slight traces of the attack, and then back to the other side:

Incidentally, the prosecution authorities do not yet know anything of the incident outside your house, in respect of which we have since identified a witness also resident at the same address, Ms Monique Delorme.

And - if you wish - the public prosecutor need not hear of the matter. Just as there need not be any claim proceedings. Do you understand what I am saying?

Scene 39

Hospital

Interior/Day

Eve, looking pale and fragile in bed. She is on a drip. Thomas is on the visitor's chair. Long SILENCE. Then

EVE (softly): ... dunno.

SILENCE. Outside, far away, someone shouts, but we cannot understand what they are saying. Renewed PAUSE. Then

THOMAS (meekly): Why didn't you say anything?

EVE: What?

THOMAS: What?! ... that you're unhappy, that you miss your mother, that you're alone, what do I know ... we can't just see inside you.

EVE: So?

THOMAS: So what?

PAUSE. Then

EVE (softly): You're so far away.

Thomas is perturbed and does not know whether she means this in the physical or metaphorical sense. He spontaneously slides his chair a little closer, but ends up having to smile himself at his stupidity. He leans over and takes her hand.

THOMAS: I love you.

Eve nods, but does not look at him.

THOMAS (leaning over closer): Please believe me. I'm inept, but ... I love you.

EVE (looks at him): Will you take me with you, when you leave Anaïs?

THOMAS (completely taken aback): What?!

EVE: Will you take me with you?

THOMAS: Why should I leave Anaïs? What kind of nonsense is that?

EVE: I've got another four years till I'm 18. I'm not going into care.

THOMAS: What kind of stuff is this you're cobbling together?! Why should you go into care?

EVE (looks away, softly): OK.

THOMAS: What does OK mean? Are you out of your mind? What's the meaning of all this? I love you. No-one wants to put you in care. How can you even think of such an idea?!

EVE (lifts her gaze, looks at him): Will you take me with you when you leave Anaïs?

Pause. Thomas tries to control himself.

THOMAS: OK. I'm telling you: I'm not taking you anywhere with me, because I'm not leaving Anaïs. OK? Can we get back to talking sensibly?

Brief PAUSE.

EVE: On the beach I heard what you said on the phone. And I read your e-mails.

Thomas is aghast.

THOMAS: What did you say?!

EVE (looks at him): Dad! Please!! Stop putting on an act. I know you don't love anyone. You didn't love mum, you don't love Anaïs, you don't love this Claire and you don't love me. No problem about that. I just don't want to go into care.

Long SILENCE. Then

THOMAS (softly): Why did you take mum's tablets?

EVE: There were still enough left over.

THOMAS: And you put them in your pocket and took them with you. Just in case.

EVE: Yeah.

A helpless PAUSE. Then, awkwardly, Thomas tries again to take Eve's hand. She pulls it away.

EVE: Ow. That hurts.

Scene 40

Conference room and corridor at a London bank

Interior/Day

Conference room.

We see London through the tall glass panes.

Anne and Maître Barin sit opposite the bank director and Lawrence Bratshow.

LAWRENCE (in English): ... granting of the loan is however subject to the following suspensive conditions:

3.1. That Mrs Anne Laurent pledges to (exact corporate name of bank) all shares owned by her in (corporate name of Anne's construction company) for the purposes of collateralization of the loan until full repayment thereof.

3.2. That Mr Pierre Laurent is removed from office as managing director of (corporate name of Anne's construction company) and, in his place, a new managing director shall be appointed, to be nominated by (corporate name of bank) in agreement with Mrs Anne Laurent.

BANK DIRECTOR (to Anne, in English): That is the agreement we've negotiated with (brief glance at Maître Barin) your lawyer.

I assume you're still in agreement with it?

A brief exchange of glances between Anne and Maître Barin. Anne nods. The director indicates to Lawrence to pass Anne the page for signature.

Then I would ask you kindly to sign once on behalf the company, and since you're also affected as a shareholder, to sign once more also in person.

While Anne is signing:

Our legal department will prepare along with Maître Barin the additional documents required for further implementation of this agreement.

Once Anne has signed, first Lawrence signs, then the director.

Anne and Lawrence exchange glances. Then Anne turns to the director with a little smile.

ANNE: So. I guess that would be all?

DIRECTOR (in English, amicably): Yes.

They all get up.

I'm glad we're able to help you. Will you give my best regards to your father? He was always such a trustworthy and pleasant person to do business with.

ANNE (in English): I'd be glad to.

LAWRENCE (in English): I'll see you out, Madame.

He places the signed document in a briefcase and picks it up. Anne and Maître Barin shake the director's hand. Lawrence holds the door open for Anne and Maître Barin and follows them into the

corridor.

Continuous action. The three walk along the corridor. After a while, Anne surreptitiously takes Lawrence's hand and squeezes it. They smile briefly at one another, like two children who have succeeded in playing a prank. Maître Barin notices nothing.

Scene 41

Computer screen

Interior/Night

As in Scene 20.

(Below is the text of the e-mail to which a response is now being written and which is thereby disappearing line by line from the screen:

*I can't help smelling my wrist when I find myself crying a few drops of your after shave they console me crazy, isn't it?
My God Thomas!!! I'm not myself any more you mustn't leave me without you for so long come come quickly and fill my mouth,
my cunt (chatte) and my arse (cul) with your cum (foutre)
I wanted to beg you to call so I could bathe in your voice but what can we say to each other on the phone probably I'd be as
speechless as the day before yesterday it'll take hours and hours one inside the body and inside the breath of the other so as
to repair the damage caused by this separation)*

The first lines of the new e-mail are already written:

My poor darling, you can't imagine what this separation means for me too. I'm counting

From here, from the beginning of the scene, the text appears as it is being written. We hear the SOUND OF TYPING.

*the days till we see each other again. Ten times a day I look at your photo on my mobile, your wonderful body, that makes me crazy with desire.
Something stupid has happened. My daughter looked around on my computer and discovered our e-mails. She tried to take her own life. Thank God without success. I had to delete all our e-mails and from now on I can't keep anything any more. I don't know what else she might think of doing. We need to agree times when we can ...*

Scene 42Villa. Georges' bedroom

Interior/Day

Eve enters hesitantly.

EVE: Dad says you want to speak to me?

Georges is sitting in his wheelchair in front of the emptied plates from lunch, and looks at her silently for a moment.

GEORGES: No, I don't actually.

PAUSE. Eve does not know how to react.

GEORGES: Would you like some cheese?

Brief PAUSE.

EVE: No. Thank you.

GEORGES: It's not bad.

Brief PAUSE.

EVE: I don't like cheese.

GEORGES: Well then ...

PAUSE.

GEORGES: You need to decide. In or out?

Eve looks at him questioningly.

GEORGES: Or do you want to keep standing in the doorway?

Eve looks at him and shrugs her shoulders ("I don't know, it depends on you").

GEORGES: Now close the door, princess, and sit down by me.

Eve hesitantly closes the door; she remains standing.

GEORGES: Are you scared?

EVE: No.

GEORGES: Then come here.

She remains standing where she is.

Now come on.

She does not move. PAUSE.

Right.

He moves the wheelchair a little so that he is sitting directly facing her.

Your father was fibbing. I don't want to talk to you. He asked me to do it. He thinks you don't trust him and he's worried.

A hint of a contemptuous smile appears on Eve's lips.

Why did you try to kill yourself?

In irritation, Eve looks away. She regrets not having left immediately.

I'll tell you something. You can stay on your feet, or you can sit down. It's entirely up to you.

She does not move. PAUSE.

You didn't know your grandmother. You were here once, when you were small. You won't remember it.
Or do you?

Eve grudgingly shakes her head. He looks at her.

Wait.

He wheels himself over to a shelf behind him and takes down a photo album, then wheels himself back to the table and puts the album on it.

Come here.

Grudgingly and hesitantly, Eve approaches. He opens the album and turns it towards her.

Look at this.

Still standing, she looks at the album. He turns the page.

She was a beautiful lady, don't you think?

Eve says nothing.

When you were here, she was already ill. You didn't see her at all. She was lying crippled in her bed and couldn't speak any more. I took care of her. I gave the business to your aunt so I'd have the time for her. In the end, after three years of horrible and pointless suffering, I suffocated her.

Eve looks at him, half shocked, half incredulous.

It was the right thing to do. I've never regretted it for one moment.

He snaps the photo album shut.

That's the whole story I wanted to tell you.
Will you tell me **your** story?

EVE: What story?

GEORGES: Why did you take the tablets?

Eve says nothing.

Do you think I'm too dumb to understand?

PAUSE.

Huh?!

Eve shakes her head obstinately. Long PAUSE.

Sit down, won't you.

Hesitantly, Eve sits down. Long SILENCE. Then

EVE (softly): I tried to poison one of my schoolmates once.

PAUSE.

GEORGES: Did you?

EVE: Well, not exactly poison her. Mum put me in a holiday camp when dad disappeared. They gave me bromazepam to keep me quiet. I was supposed to take two tablets a day. I didn't want any tablets. There was a girl there I didn't like. Every day I mixed my tablets into her food. It was funny to see how she got quieter and quieter. In the end, she collapsed. They examined her and that's how they found out.

GEORGES: And? What happened?

EVE: Nothing. I had to leave the camp.

GEORGES: And go home?

EVE: Yeah.

PAUSE.

GEORGES: And? Were you sorry?

EVE: Not very.

PAUSE.

Well yes, I was.

Yes, I was sorry. Later. The girl wasn't nice but it wasn't her fault.

He gives her a lingering look. Then

GEORGES: Not long ago, I was looking into the garden here and by chance I saw how a bird of prey ripped a little bird to pieces. It caught it in flight, shook it to and fro then tore it to shreds on the ground with its beak. It really tore it to shreds. The feathers were flying about and landed all scattered over the ground. It looked as if snow had fallen. Then a car drove past and the bird of prey flew off. Apart from the feathers, there was hardly anything left of the victim. At least that's how it looked from here.

It's funny. If you see something like that on TV, you feel it's normal - that's what nature is like. But in reality, it makes your hands tremble when you see it.

He smiles a little. His eyes linger on her. First of all, she avoids his gaze, then looks up at him.

Why did you do it?

EVE: What?

GEORGES: The tablets.

EVE: I don't know.

Brief PAUSE. She lowers her eyes.

(very softly): I don't know.

Renewed PAUSE. She raises her eyes to Georges again. They look at one another. He smiles a little.

Scene 43

Servants' quarters at the villa

Interior/Night

Thomas is in the process of gingerly examining Selin, the four-year-old daughter of Rachid. She has small, slightly-inflamed bite wounds on her calves, is tearful and a little afraid that Thomas may hurt her while examining her. Tense SILENCE. Thomas presses in various places on her leg.

THOMAS: Does that hurt?

The girl nods.

RACHID: He only nipped her.

JAMILA (in Arabic): How can you say something like that?!

(in French, to Thomas, agitated): He bit her! She ran away and cried!

RACHID (correcting Jamila, half to her, and half to Thomas): They were playing. She ran round the pool and called him and he followed her and nipped her. It's not as bad as all that.

(in Arabic): You should have watched out better.

Jamila is about to contradict him, but leaves it and turns to Thomas.

JAMILA: Is it bad?

THOMAS (reassuring her): No.

(to the child): You're a brave girl. Don't worry. I'll give your mummy a prescription, and tomorrow she'll put some cream on it for you, it's a fantastic cream and in a few days you won't feel anything any more. OK?

The girl nods. She is not quite convinced. Thomas covers her up, gets up, and turns to Rachid:

Still, you need to keep a closer eye on the dog. (with a little ironic smile): After all, we don't have him so he can bite **us**, do we?

Rachid is embarrassed to be told off like this in front of his wife, and is about to say something, but just at the same moment, Anne enters through the door.

ANNE: Well, how is she?

THOMAS (reassuringly): It's not serious. It was more the shock.

Anne goes over to the girl and crouches down beside her. She has a box of chocolates in her hand.

ANNE: Here, sweetheart.

SELIN (shyly, and slightly overwhelmed): Thank you.

ANNE: Let's take a look.

She uncovers Selin's legs and looks at them.

Well, that doesn't look so bad after all, does it?

On seeing the wounds, she gives Thomas an anxious glance, and he gives her a placatory nod. She then turns quickly back to Selin:

Every time it hurts a bit, you can have a chocolate, then all the pain will go away. OK?

Selin nods again timidly. Anne strokes her cheek affectionately:

Now, you have a good sleep. It's late already. And tomorrow's another lovely day.

She gets up and turns to Rachid and Jamila:

Thank God nothing terrible happened. I was beside myself when Anaïs called me.

JAMILA: Yes, it was terrible; she cried dreadfully.

ANNE: You need to keep the animal better under control, Rachid. Otherwise we'll get ...

THOMAS (interrupting her): I've already told him.

He turns to Jamila:

I'll write you a prescription for the cream. You need to apply it gently first thing tomorrow so it doesn't get more inflamed.

While he is writing down the name of the cream for Jamila, Rachid timidly turns to Anne.

RACHID: Congratulations, Madame, if I may say so.

Anne looks at him uncomprehendingly.

ANNE: Why?

Brief PAUSE.

RACHID (with an embarrassed but "knowing" smile): Madame Anaïs told me.

ANNE (as above): What?

Rachid feels awkward. He makes a little gesture as if to say "you know". Suddenly Anne realizes:

Oh! You mean the engagement! Yes, thank you. That's kind of you.

In fact she is vexed at having to talk about it with Rachid. She turns to Thomas:

Was it you?

Thomas is just handing Jamila the prescription.

THOMAS: Yes. (to Jamila): Twice, morning and evening. I'll drop by again tomorrow. (to both) Right. Then ...

ANNE: Have a nice evening.

RACHID and JAMILA: Good night, Madame; good night, Monsieur.

Just as Anne is in the process of leaving the room

RACHID: Madame?!

Anne and Thomas turn around.

ANNE: Yes?

Brief PAUSE. Then

RACHID: Will you be moving away from here now?

Anne is nonplussed.

ANNE: Whatever makes you think THAT?!

Scene 44

Villa. Thomas' work room.

Interior/Day

Initially close-up, the screen of Thomas' laptop.

Eve is attempting to search through the computer, but is unable to continue because a new code has been set.

From outside, FOOTSTEPS, and then the

VOICE OF ANAÏS: Eve?...Eve?!

Eve quickly folds the laptop shut and scurries to the door. She listens. When she hears nothing, she opens the door. Anaïs is just coming back from Eve's room and sees her coming out of Thomas' room.

ANAÏS: There you are. I need to get something from town and I wanted to ask you to keep an eye on Alain.

So what were you doing in Thomas' room?

EVE: Nothing. I just ...

My computer crashed. Nothing works any more. And I wanted to look on dad's laptop to see how I could fix it. But it didn't work. He's got a new code.

ANAÏS: What?

EVE: Oh nothing. It's too hard to explain.

ANAÏS (slightly puzzled): Really?

Well, you can ask him when he gets back.

EVE: OK.

ANAÏS: Are you going to stay here for now? I won't be long. He's asleep anyway.

EVE: Sure. I'll go and sit with him in his room. No worries.

ANAÏS: Thanks.

She goes in the direction of the kitchen in order to fetch her shopping bag. Calls out:

Shall I get you anything? I'm going to the supermarket as well.

Eve has stood still, relieved at having got away with her pretence.

EVE: No. Thanks. I don't need anything.

Scene 45

Beach restaurant

Exterior/Day

Outside the restaurant, a large terrace overlooking the sea, with festively-decorated, round tables around which an equally festively-dressed assembly of guests have taken their seats; they are the friends and business partners of our family. We know many of them from Georges' birthday celebration (Scene 37).

Beside the terrace is a tarmac road which leads uphill to a residential street, and downhill to the sea.

The restaurant staff, supported by party caterers, are in the process of collecting up the hors d'oeuvres plates. Over this we hear generally the lively CHATTERING of the guests.

Anne and Lawrence sit next to each other, and at the same table are Georges (in his wheelchair), Thomas, Anaïs and Eve. A sixth chair remains empty.

Here too, the hors d'oeuvres plates are just being cleared away.

THOMAS (in English, to Lawrence): ... I'd love it if you dropped by. Four months ago, we reorganized the ward and got a few new people in too. They're efficient, committed and most of all they're really nice. And that's pretty important too.

LAWRENCE: (in English): Sure. Let's fix a time. It really does interest me (smirking): And you never know. Maybe I'll be a patient there myself one day. It can't hurt to know the people.

THOMAS (in English, grinning, because he means himself): Well, you know the boss already. So nothing can go wrong.

LAWRENCE (laughing, in English): Precisely!

At the same time, the head waiter has approached Anne and asks:

HEAD WAITER: Excuse me, Madame, should we serve the main course right away, or would you prefer to take a break?

ANNE: Good question.

She reflects. Then she turns to Lawrence, and briefly interrupts his conversation with Thomas:

(in English): What do you think, darling? Should we go right ahead with the main course? Or should we wait a bit?

LAWRENCE (somewhat surprised): Oh! No idea. Whatever you think.

Anne hesitates for a moment, glances at Georges, who is just putting a glass of wine to his lips, and then turns to the head waiter:

ANNE: No, I think we'll go straight ahead. Anyway, people don't want to sit out here for ages in this weather.

HEAD WAITER: Sure, Madame. Just as you wish.

He walks off into the restaurant. Anne turns to Georges.

ANNE: Are you all right, dad? Do you feel OK?

Georges empties his glass and places it back on the table.

GEORGES (dryly): Excellent. I feel excellent.

Eve looks at Georges, then lowers her gaze; she is bored among all the adults. A young woman has approached from one of the adjacent tables and crouches down beside Anaïs.

YOUNG WOMAN (to Anaïs): Sorry to trouble you about it right now, but we have to head off straight after the meal, so I might not be able to have a word before we go.

ANAÏS: Yes, what's the matter?

YOUNG WOMAN: Could you lend me your babysitter tomorrow? Mine has gone home and won't be back for another two weeks, and our stand-by has a bad cold. You know how it is.

ANAÏS (reflects for a moment, then): Sure. It should be OK. Tomorrow ... hold on ... yes, it's fine. But only tomorrow, 'cos the day after ...

During her last few words, from some distance away, we hear, loud and infelicitous, the

VOICE OF PIERRE: Sorry mum! I'm truly sorry I'm so late.

Anaïs turns towards the voice, as do the young woman and countless other guests.

But first I had to get changed for the festive occasion!

He is standing on the far side of the tables, and points to his smoking jacket. A few steps away from him stands a small group of black-African refugees in tattered clothing. They clearly feel uncomfortable in this situation, but appear to not fully understand what is actually going on.

I hope I'm presentable enough!

No doubt your official speeches were impressive, and I sorely regret having missed them.

Anne has stood up.

ANNE (alarmed): Pierre!!

Lawrence too has stood up. He places a calming hand on Anne's arm.

LAWRENCE (in English): Stay calm, darling. I'll deal with it.

He goes towards Pierre through the tables and the people, who have in the meantime almost all turned towards the new arrivals.

The young woman gestures with her head towards Pierre:

YOUNG WOMAN (to Anaïs): So who's that?

PIERRE (still loud, with mocking affability): But to make up for my mistakes and to make you happy, I have brought along some extra guests who'd be pleased to join your festive table in your honour.

Lawrence has now arrived at Pierre's side, and gently tries to take him to one side in order to avoid further embarrassment.

LAWRENCE (in English, to Pierre): Come down here, Pierre. Stop all these theatrics. We just want to ...

PIERRE (in English, smirking, but speaking softly, like Lawrence): There's nothing to be stopped, dear chap. And you're the last person to tell me what to do.

Pierre is about to leave Lawrence standing there, but Lawrence is "discreetly" holding onto him so as to avoid the provocation escalating further. Whereupon Pierre hisses softly:

Shut up, motherfucker.

and tears himself away from Lawrence, making him stumble and almost fall over. Anne, who has just joined them, spontaneously helps Lawrence up. There is a general reaction among the crowd. Some of the guests stand up, some disconcerted, others annoyed.

Georges has followed events, as has Eve. Clearly confused, she turns towards him. After a brief pause

GEORGES: Will you get me out of here, chérie?

She is puzzled by the term of affection, but after a brief hesitation, nods her consent. She steps up behind him and begins to push him over the terrace in the direction of the road. They are virtually unnoticed due to the goings-on around Pierre.

Pierre pulls away from Thomas, who has in the meantime gone over to him and attempts to calm him down. Pierre joins the group of refugees who, in their bewilderment, try to resist him as he tries to drag them forwards in the direction of the guests.

PIERRE: May I introduce my new friends? This is Mohammed. He's from Nigeria. His wife and two children were burnt to death in a punishment killing by Boku Haram. He took a year to get here, and now he's been trekking out of the jungle to the tunnel every day for months in the hope of finally getting a ride.
And this is Youssef from ... if I can remember rightly, from ...

Anne has had a brief word with Lawrence, and now she goes up to Pierre.

PIERRE ("Ah, so you're here too?!"): Bonjour, Maman?!

He makes to push her away so he can carry on, but she steps into his path again and takes his hands in hers in an attempt to pacify him; however, he once more pushes her aside with a smile.

(All the previous calming attempts by Lawrence, Thomas and Anne have remained low-key, restrained and deliberately softly spoken, with the absurd intention of covering up Pierre's disgraceful behaviour.)

Having been pushed aside, Anne is still loosely holding Pierre's hand. In panic and fury, with a small, sharp movement, she breaks his finger. He CRIES out in pain, looks at his hand, the protruding finger, and then aghast at Anne. She raises her hand in a half-soothing, half-apologetic gesture, but immediately lets it fall. There is a moment of shocked and perplexed silence between the two. Thomas steps up. Pierre looks at him, then back at Anne, and finally he utters a laugh, soft, scornful and despairing; he turns away, gingerly holding his injured hand against his chest. There is a brief look of understanding between Anne and Thomas, then Thomas takes Pierre by the shoulders and leads him inside the restaurant, gently reasoning with him.

In the meantime, Lawrence has discreetly instructed the staff to set up an additional table. With friendly gestures the refugees are invited to take a seat and to dine with them all.

Anne watches Pierre as he disappears in the direction of the restaurant, and then turns to the baffled assembly of guests, some standing, some having remained seated:

I do apologize for this scene, ladies and gentlemen. I'm dreadfully sorry you had to witness such an embarrassment. My son is a good person. He's just not well. He's having medical treatment. Please don't think badly of him for stirring things up like this. We're all so dreadfully sorry.

Please do take your seats. For the sake of our longstanding friendship. Please do sit down.

She waits a moment to see whether the people comply with her request, but then turns her back half away from them, to the refugees, who are just hesitantly sitting down:

(in English): Naturally we must ask you to forgive us for this terrible imposition. Please give us the pleasure of being our guests. My son only meant well.

She waits with Lawrence until the refugees have sat down and are served by the staff. Despite Anne's efforts, several people have now left the scene in the direction of the car park.

In the meantime, Eve and Georges have arrived at the edge of the terrace, and she is also about to wheel him to the parked cars, but Georges says:

No. Down the hill.

Eve once more hesitates momentarily, slightly puzzled. Then she wheels him down the tarmac road to the sea. We follow them both.

The hubbub on the terrace is coming to an end; the refugees have of necessity sat down and the guests at the party gradually return to their tables, some engaged in discussion, some still dumbstruck. Before the terrace goes out of view, we see Lawrence and Anne beside the refugees' table. Anaïs has left the young woman standing there and has followed Thomas and Pierre inside the restaurant.

Then the SOUNDS ON THE TERRACE almost entirely disappear and are overlaid by the RUSHING OF THE SEA.

Finally, Georges and Eve have arrived at the bottom of the hill. Eve stops the wheelchair one metre from the sea. SILENCE.

GEORGES: Go further.

She understands, but does nothing. He half turns round to her, but she remains standing behind him. He looks ahead again. THE RUSHING OF THE SEA. Then he says:

You can go now.

After a further pause, she leaves. Hesitantly. She stops several times and looks round, then continues on up the road.

He hesitates for a while, then wheels himself into the water. Up to his chest. He stops and looks ahead at the waves lapping up around him. We see what he sees: the vast expanse of the water. The camera lingers long ...

Eve has stopped halfway up. She looks down at him. She takes her mobile phone out of her pocket, lifts it up and films.

Scene 46

The road to the sea

Exterior/Day

Continuous action.

The image of the steep road taken with the mobile phone. Down below, in the sea, is Georges.

Suddenly, agitated VOICES, then, shouting:

THOMAS' VOICE: Dad!!

Then a few people race down the road towards Georges, Thomas among them. Shortly before the video ends, Anne appears in the frame, also running down the hill. As she races by, she glances with irritation in the direction of the camera, at Eve.

BLACKOUT. CLOSING TITLES in white over black background.