

THE GREATER GOOD

or

THE PASSION OF BOULE DE SUIF

Opera in Two Acts

Music by Stephen Hartke

Text by the composer from Philip Littell's
dramatic adaptation of Guy de
Maupassant's short story, *Boule de Suif*

CD 1

ACT ONE

1 Scene 1: Rouen, the courtyard of the Hôtel de Normandie, 4 AM on a Tuesday in late February 1871.

Snow falls in the darkness. The two nuns have already taken their positions, standing motionless a bit to the left, their small carpetbags at their sides. There is a mound of luggage (trunks, suitcases, hatboxes, hampers) closer to center. The only light comes from a dim gas-lamp flickering by the stable door.

TITLE CARD (projected on the cyclorama)

At three o'clock Monday afternoon it started snowing.

TITLE CARD

It kept on snowing through the night.

Heavily cloaked and muffled, M. and Mme. Carré-Lamadon quickly and quietly enter and go stand near the mound of luggage. They shiver visibly from the cold.

TITLE CARD

At four in the morning a group of travelers gathered.

The Count and Countess enter, affecting a more courtly pace, but clearly chilled to the bone. The stable door opens a crack and dim light spills out. A stable-boy holding a lantern pokes his head out and checks on the gathering travelers. Cornudet lopes in, carrying his belongings in a small

parcel tied up with twine. He pauses a moment by the stable door and takes a swig from his rum gourd. He then moves closer to the mound of luggage but keeps his distance from the others.
The Count and Carré-Lamadon suddenly recognize each other.

2 CARRE-LAMADON: Count?

COUNT: Old boy!

C-L: Well!

Loiseau bustles in, pushing his wife along ahead of him. He leaves her on her own with the other ladies. Loiseau spots the other gentlemen and goes to join them.

COUNT: Here we are!

C-L: I thought it best... the wife...

COUNT: I thought so too...

LOISEAU: *(horning in on the conversation)*

And you were right, too!

Good morning, Count...

COUNT: *(trying to place him)* Ah?...

LOISEAU: Loiseau.

In the circumstances ...

Madame Loiseau's nerves...

C-L: *(trying to place him)* Loiseau.

COUNT: Ah, yes. Loiseau... Well... circumstances being what they are ...

LOISEAU: It's worth the money, eh?

MME CARRÉ-LAMADON: *(truly miserable, oblivious of the others.)*

S-s-so c-c-cold!

COUNTESS: *(equally miserable and equally oblivious)*

S-s-so c-c-cold!

Loiseau has grabbed his wife's arm and drags her over to meet the gentlemen.)

LOISEAU: May I present my wife?

MME CARRÉ-LAMADON: *(suddenly recognizing the Countess)*

My God!

COUNTESS *(startled)* You here?

The need to observe polite formalities trumps the discomfort of the cold for a brief moment.

COUNT: Madame.

C-L: Madame.

LOISEAU: Madame... Madame...

COUNTESS: *(trying very hard)* En-ch-ch-ch-chanted.

MME C-L: *(chilly)* Monsieur... ?

LOISEAU: *Loiseau!* My wife.

Cornudet raises his flask to the company, making an exaggerated bow to the ladies.

CORNUDET: Ladies!

MME C-L: *(whispering to her husband)*

Who is that man?

C-L: Nobody.

The stable door opens. The coachman, accompanied by a small stable-boy with a lantern, comes out leading a "horse."

3 MME LOISEAU: *(grimly)* Finally.

COACHMAN: *(crooning to the 'horse', and rough with the boy)*

I know, I know.... you never want to, girl...

Look sharp! Come on!

Come on, come on, you're still asleep?

Ho ho! Naughty girl...

Get a move on! There, there, that's my love

Come on ... you still asleep?

The men have given up on the ladies, who are too cold to make conversations. Loiseau gestures for the two gents to follow him a little way to one side. Loiseau offers them cigars.

4 LOISEAU: Cigar? Cigar?

C-L: Thank you.

COUNT: Thank you

COACHMAN: *(calling to men in the stable)* Hey!

Jean! Antoine!

Bring out the next ones!

The new bay and the General.

LOISEAU: That's it for here....

C-L: That's it.

COUNT: That's it for here!

ALL THREE: That's it!

COACHMAN: *(harassing the boy)* On the left! On the left!

(to the stable hands) Don't just stand there!

Helpers have come out of the stable with a few lanterns, which they place, on the ground near where they will be working. They rearrange the pile of luggage to form the "diligence" (a type of large coach

*that is entered from the rear): two facing bench seats
and a smaller, higher one in front for the Coachman.*

LOISEAU: Le Havre?

C-L: Le Havre.

COUNT: Le Havre.

COACHMAN: *(to the boy)* You call that tightening a
harness?

It's twisted!

(to no one in particular) Idiots!

*The Coachman spots something needing his attention
and ignores his helpers for the moment.*

ALL THREE GENTS: Rouen is finished!

Absolutely finished!

Finished!

Absolutely!

Rouen is finished!

France is finished!

Finished!

THE LADIES: So cold! Cold! Cold!

COACHMAN: *(to a stable hand bringing out another
"horse")*

Come on!

(crooning to the "horse" as he puts it in its "traces")

Are we happy now?

Yes, we're going! We're going!

(suddenly shouting at one of his helpers)

No. The other side!

Like this! See?

THE GENTS: *(one after the other)* There's talk!

*Loiseau gestures for the gents to keep their voices
down.*

⑤ LOISEAU: A lonely street

or an alley ...

or a bridge ...

COUNT: It's true!

C-L: It's true!

COUNT: But where?

LOISEAU: Down river at ...

Croisset, Dieppedalle, Biessart

C-L & COUNT: How many bodies?

LOISEAU: Two ...

Two or three a day ...

COUNT: Oh that's not good!

C-L: In uniform?

LOISEAU: Unlucky, eh?

C-L: For us?

COUNT: For them!

LOISEAU: (*miming someone teetering on the brink*)
Unsteady! Unsteady!
COUNT: (*giving him a shove*) Plouf!
LOISEAU: You gotta watch your step
at night when crossing bridges.
COUNT: If you're German!
LOISEAU: Watch your step!
Watch your step!

Loiseau's joke falls flat.

LADIES: So cold! Cold!
Let's go! Let's go!

*Each wife turns to her husband for reassurance and
comfort (not necessarily getting any). Meanwhile, the
Coachman has re-emerged from the stable leading the
last "horse."*

COACHMAN: Come on Ice Cream, now behave,
I've paired you with the General.

(to the boy as they put the "horse" in its "traces")

⑥ Say!
Know why they call her Ice Cream?
It's not because she's white ...
She's no good in the summer: melts!
But in the summer she can go!
She loves the cold!
Don't you girl?
*He gives the boy a gentle shove back towards the
stable.*
Get back inside now!
You'll catch your death.
Thank you. Jean. Antoine.

*Suddenly, the Coachman looks at the travelers as if
they are nuts.*

⑦ COACHMAN: You can get in if you want.

But no one moves just yet.

Unless ...

*The travelers make a sudden dash for the coach and
start crowding in. Meanwhile, the Coachman stalks
back to the stable, muttering to himself*

You'd rather just stand around in this *fresh* air on this
lovely morning...
I'm perfectly happy to leave without you ... no skin
off my back ...
None at all ...

Boarding from the rear of the coach, the Loiseaus pile in first, followed by the Carré-Lamadons, and the Count and Countess. The husbands sit stage right, and the wives sit facing them, stage left. Cornudet pushes in next to the Count, and the two nuns seat themselves on the ladies' side, the Old Nun next to the Countess. A final passenger, Boule de Suif, has emerged from the hotel, a little slowed by a large food hamper and some extra hatboxes. Perhaps assisted by a stable-boy, Boule quickly takes her place next to Cornudet. She arranges her skirts to hide the hamper. Having returned from the stable, the Coachman takes his seat in front.

COACHMAN: Are we all here?

LOISEAU: Yes!

COACHMAN: *(softly)* Hyah!

8 Scene 2: Aboard the coach, striking out for the coast.

We are aware of great difficulty in going, of skids and slides and halts, of ruts and icy puddles, of hooves slipping and regaining traction, of the whip cracking.

Satisfied that he is out of the city and on his way, the coachman starts to sing this song to himself:

9 COACHMAN: There was a boat
That couldn't sail
There was a boat
That wouldn't steer
A little boat that made no headway
In the wind

A little boat
For you and me
A little boat
To set to sea
A little boat to sink us both
Get in

It had no captain
And no crew
No passengers
But me and you
So little that a sneeze could blow it
To and fro

Broken rudder.
Patched up sail.
To bail it out,
A leaky pail.
Our voyage was a sorry tale:
Yo ho!

Struck by lightning
So we burned
Bumped a whale
Were overturned
Might very well have not returned
But for one thing:

We never learned
To navigate
We never learned
To navigate
We never learned to navigate
We never learned

Our focus shift to the interior of the “coach.” Having settled in as comfortably as they are able, the three wives have taken out small metal handwarmers, and, perhaps with their husbands’ help, have lit the charcoal fuel rods. The red glow coming from the handwarmers’ air-holes is just about the only light we see.

10 MME C-L: These really are wonderful.

COUNTESS: What?

MME C-L: These little hand-warmers.

COUNTESS: Wonderful.

MME. C-L.: They are!

Still warm, yours?

COUNTESS: Yes.

(to Mme. Loiseau) And yours, madame?

MME. LOISEAU: Yes. Yes.

COUNTESS: Ah!

MME. C-L.: Ah!

ALL THREE: From Natanson’s.

They are quite wonderful.

COUNTESS: Wonderful.

MME C-L: Most ingenious.

COUNTESS: British.

MME C-L: Of course! Who else?

ALL THREE: Wonderful! Ah

Talk dies. The travelers begin to doze off. The nuns start to tell the rosary.

NUNS: Credo in unum deum patrem omnipotentem
etc.

11 **Scene 3: Dawn aboard the coach (a little before 8 AM)**

The sky has been showing some signs of a dawn. A ray of sunlight enters the coach, lighting just Boule de Suif’s face at first, but she doesn’t stir.

Mme. C-L is the first to notice Boule de suif’s presence. She leans over to shake her husband awake.

MME C-L: Darling ... Darling, look!
C-L: *(sleepily)* What?
MME C-L: Darling! Over there ...
C-L: *(leaning forward and peering around for a good look)*
Oh ho!

He nudges the Count, who leans over. The Countess is alarmed now. She leans forward toward her husband.

COUNTESS: Who is it?
MME C-L: *(to Countess)* Boule de suif.
COUNTESS: *(panicked)* Who? Boule de what?
C-L: De suif ... she's known as Boule de Suif.
They call her that because she's fat.
LOISEAU: *(whistles)* So *that's* Boule de Suif!
COUNT: She *is* fat!
MME LOISEAU: *(giving her husband a kick)*
You! Stop looking at that woman!
COUNTESS: *(to Mme C-L)* This is absolutely shocking!
MME C-L: *(seething)* I cannot believe
I have to share a carriage with a common prostitute!
C-L: *(mildly)* She's quite expensive, darling.
MME LOISEAU: *(annoyed at Loiseau's frank ogling)*
Tart! The hussy!
LOISEAU: Hush!
MME LOISEAU: No, *you* shut up.
LOISEAU: I *am* shutting up.

Boule throws them such a look. And does not back down. They flinch. It shuts them right up. One of the men catches another's eye, starting a round of suppressed sniggers. Their wives glare them into silence. Loiseau opens his mouth as if to speak. The men snort and nigger. The women give up, rolling their eyes in solidarity. Calm is restored. The ladies settle down to a good natter....

12 MME C-L: Do you know Madame de Vidoudet?
MME LOISEAU: Born de Jong?
MME C-L: No, Roessinger.
MME LOISEAU: The sister.
MME C-L: No, the daughter...
COUNTESS: Of Madame Mainfroy.
MME LOISEAU: Of course, I know her.
MME C-L: Then you must know the Streits...
MME LOISEAU: My husband went to school with him!
MME C-L: Not Old Man Streit?
MME LOISEAU: Oh no! The son.
COUNTESS: I do believe I've met his wife.
MME C-L: It's her second marriage.
MME LOISEAU: And the first?
COUNTESS: That cousin of the Princess de Mornay.

MME C-L: Ah! Gustave!
COUNTESS: How I miss him.

NUNS: (*telling their rosary again*) Pater noster etc.

a sadness descends...

MME C-L: When we heard...
COUNTESS: Ah, terrible.

MME C-L: So young. So handsome.
COUNTESS: Ah! He was *really* handsome ...
MME C-L: So brave.

she may be overdoing it...

COUNTESS: The only son...
MME C-L: His mother!

COUNTESS: (*out of the blue*) Went mad.
MME C-L: *Really?*
MME LOISEAU: (*matter-of-factly*) What do you expect?
MME C-L: It runs in the family...
COUNTESS: (*oblivious*) And poor General Vaucher...
MME C-L: He was a darling... but his daughter!
MME LOISEAU: She's fast!
COUNTESS: Oh tell! Oh tell!
MME C-L: Well, you know ...

The ladies huddle for a more private chat..

As the dawn light brightens, we see that the three gents have also been huddled together having a private chat. With a muttering of "Quite right"s and "Just so"s, and a shaking of heads, the gents reach an important conclusion.

13 THE GENTS: Very bad for business, war.
Terrible for trade.
Inflation – Deflation.
There's money to be made.

Black market. Profiteering.
Bribery and fraud.
Outright speculation. Make sure
You bank abroad.

No use tut-tutting,
Wringing hands that you've kept clean:
Get 'em dirty ... left hand ... right hand ...
You know what I mean.

This is war: claim all losses,
Never post you gains.

Mouths shut, eyes open
Will reward you pains.

This is war. And wishing will not
Make it go away,
however
If you make your mind up to it,
You can make it pay.

NUNS: (*coming to the end of their rosary*) Gloria patri
et filio etc.

Cornudet takes in the scene and sings this 'lullaby' to himself:

CORNUDET: Someday ...
Someday, my friends ...

Someday,
My brothers, fellow citizens ...

Someday,
the time will come:

The wheel
will turn – the revolution!

14 Scene 4: Aboard the coach, 10 AM

A bump up of the light. The Count wakes from a doze and suddenly consults his pocket watch.

COUNT: What time do you have?

C.L.: Ten oh five ... and you?

COUNT: Ten ten.

LOISEAU: Me too.

CORNUDET: (*elaborately re-setting his time-piece*)

Ten past ten ...

Thank you, gentlemen!

C-L: (*automatically*) Think nothing of it ... er ...
(*furious with himself for having answered ... his wife glaring at him*)

CORNUDET: How far do you think we've gone?

LOISEAU: Twelve miles.

(*His wife shakes her head at him.*)

COUNT: (*Exploding with irritation*) My God!

COUNTESS: Hubert!

The men snap their watches shut in unison.

A stomach grumbles. Everyone pretends not to notice.

COUNTESS: (*yawning*) Oh! Excuse me.

LOISEAU: (*Reproachfully to his wife*)

We should've brought something to eat.
(His wife shoots him a dirty look)
We should've ...
We should've brought something to eat.

I'd give a thousand francs right now for one ham!
I'd sell my soul to the devil for one round of bread!
I'd sell my wife here ...
No, I'd never sell my wife ...
I'd cook her!
Tough old bird, but tasty, mighty tasty.

I'm afraid, my dear, it's not a buyer's market.

MME. LOISEAU: *(affectionately bored)* Oh Loiseau ...

LOISEAU: *(still trolling for fun)* Tum dee dum dee
dum dee dum

Cornudet has fished out his rum gourd and offers it around. All pointedly ignore him, except for Loiseau.

CORNUDET: Rum?
Want some? ...
Rum? ... Rum? ...

LOISEAU: That's the ticket ...
Warms the cockles,
Tricks the stomach ...
Rum. Ah!

Man, I'm starving!
[15] If I was a big bad wolf I tell you who
I'd eat right up ... the fat one, yup,
The butterball!
Yum yum!

I'd follow that
Little Red Riding Hood ...
She looks so good, she looks so good!
Ahoooooo!
Rrrrrruff!

Mme. Loiseau pinches him really hard. He stifles the "ow!" The joke does not go over with anyone, except Cornudet, who smiles, enjoying both the joke and Loiseau's discomfiture.

Everyone has closed their eyes except for Loiseau and Cornudet, who grins at him. Loiseau, furious now, covers his face with a handkerchief.

[16] Inter-scene: Aboard the coach, Noon.

The snow-fall has stopped. The mid-day sun on the surrounding snowscape is almost unbearably bright.

Most of the travelers are trying to nap. The Count and M. Carré-Lamadon are chatting cozily, while Mme. Carré-Lamadon plucks dejectedly at the lace of her sleeve.

MME C-L: See anything?

C-L: No, nothing.

MME C-L: (*distraught*) Nothing?

C-L: (*mildly*) No. Flat all round.

Nothing. No houses.

Scene 5: Aboard the coach, 3 PM.

Light bump: mid-to-late afternoon. Everyone is awake now.

Loiseau takes out his watch.

LOISEAU: (*dejected*) What time d'you have?

The other men take out their watches.

C-L: Three.

COUNT: Three oh two.

CORNUDET: Five of.

They snap their watches closed in unison.

Boule makes her move, and slides out her food hamper. She opens the lid, removes the cloth covering the contents and starts to take out all sorts of tasty things.

17 ALL: Oh my God!

GENTS: A dish!

LADIES: (*faience!*)

ALL: Oh good God!

LADIES: A perfect little silver tumbler ...

MME C-L: (*darling!*)

GENTS: And a large terrine ...

ALL: Oh God!

GENTS: A large terrine ...

LADIES: in which

two chickens ...

GENTS: (*Two chickens!*)

LADIES: two cold chickens

ALL: two whole chickens glisten under jelly.

Oh God! Oh God! Oh God! Oh God!

MEN: those are the necks of four bottles.

LADIES: (*four bottles of wine!*)

ALL: Four bottles ...

Four bottles ...
Four bottles of ...

In this basket there remain
many other good things wrapped in paper,
many things ...
More than enough for a three days' journey!
MME. C-L.: Without ever having to order anything at
an inn!

*Boule is nibbling delicately on a chicken wing. The
ladies are aghast, but the men are still curious about
what else is in the basket.*

LADIES: How I'd like to slap that woman,
Grab her and shake her till her teeth fall out,
Take her food and throw it out the window!
Look at that cow! I could kill her! Oh!
I'd like to open that door and push ...
Push the hussy right into the snow!

GENTS: Looky, looky!
What have we here?
(Four bottles ...
Four bottles of ...)

NUNS: Panis angelicis;
fit panis hominum
dat panis caelicum,
figu ... (*cutting off abruptly*)

*Loiseau decides to break the ice, and leans around to
address Boule.*

18 LOISEAU: I gotta hand it to you, girlie, for usin'
your noggin.
BOULE: (*mouth full*) Mmph?

LOISEAU: (*gesturing at basket*)
Looks good.
BOULE: Mm ... (*swallowing*) Yes. Would you like
some?
LOISEAU: No. I couldn't.
BOULE: Please!
LOISEAU: Well ... maybe
Just a taste.
BOULE: Please, help yourself.
(*Boule takes a small plate and starts filling it with
food.*)
Perhaps your wife might ...
MME LOISEAU: I'm not hungry.
BOULE: (*unperturbed, Boule starts filling another
little plate*)
Sisters?

LOISEAU: (*whispering sharply to his wife*) Have some. Don't be stupid.

Mme. Loiseau relents almost instantly.

BOULE: (*seeing Cornudet staring hungrily and both her and the basket, Boule, her hands full, gestures at the bottles:*)

Would you do the honors?

CORNUDET: Glad to.

Cornudet takes out one of the bottles and uncorks it. Boule rummages for a glass.

NUNS: (*The nuns accept the plate with demure nods and quickly mutter a grace*)

Benedic, Domine, nos et haec tua dona
quae de tua largitate sumus sumpturi
per Christum Dominum nostrum. Amen.

While Boule, the nuns and Cornudet, at one end of the coach, start to form a companionable group as they eat, and the Loiseaus, at the opposite end, dig hungrily into their shared plate of food, the other two couples sit uncomfortably stiff, studiously ignoring the contented eating going on about them.

The following exchange between Boule, Cornudet and Loiseau is spoken lightly in a soft conversational tone, not projected. At best, the audience should perceive it as something barely overheard.

BOULE: Oh ... I only have one glass. (*thinks*)

Tell you what ... we'll use this napkin.

LOISEAU: Drink and wipe!

CORNUDET: I never will.

LOISEAU: Oho, that's good ... you have a suitor.

Miss ...

BOULE: Rousset.

LOISEAU: Rousset? Loiseau.

Conversation peters out as Boule continues to offer morsels to the nuns, the Loiseaus and Cornudet. The growing discomfiture of the Count, the Countess and the Carré-Lamadon becomes almost palpable.

BOULE: Here ... and this ...

And this is good ... yes ...

Lord, what was I thinking of?

Bringing all this food!

MME C-L: (*a gasp*) Oh!

Mme. C-L. slumps forward in a faint.

C-L: Somebody help her! Please!
The old nun reaches over with the cup of wine.

OLD NUN: Give her this!
MME C-L: *(reviving)* Oh!
(weakly) I'm fine now.
OLD NUN: *(drily)* Hunger. That's all.
Nothing wrong with her.

A great silence falls. Social impasse.

[19] BOULE: Gentlemen ... Pardon me for taking
The liberty of addressing
You. I mean ... I have so much ...
That is to say ...
What I want to say is that it would
Give me great pleasure if you would ...

LOISEAU: *(rescuing her)* Hell! We're all in this
together!
All men brothers ...
Come on, ladies, please,
for goodness sake,
Say yes. Just take it.
Do we even know
Where we'll find a
Place to spend the night?
At the rate we're going,
We won't get to Tôtes
Before tomorrow noon.

The Count turns to the Boule and in his best lord-of-the-manor manner:

COUNT: Miss Rousset?
Miss Rousset,
It is most kind of you,
And we accept,
With gratitude.
MME. C-L.: We do!

Boule starts piling food on a plate for the other two couples.

BOULE: Here ... and this ...
And this is good ... yes ...
Lord, what was I thinking of?
Bringing all this food!

[20] ALL: these are the tastes of ...
this is the taste of ...
goose liver pâté
and a pâté of fat swallows ...
a most beautiful piece of smoked tongue ...

local pears (from Crassane!)
and a great big slab of cheese
(a Pont-l'Évêque!)
and petit-fours!

[21] WOMEN: tiny gherkins!
pickled onions!

MEN: women do
like their pickles!
you can tell

a woman packed
this basket

WOMEN: women have to have
their pickles!

VARIOUS: Pass the ...

May I?

Would you?

Is there?

Just a ...

Yes, please.

One more ...

Good ...

*As the others carrying on eating, the Countess and
Mme Carré-Lamadon vie with each other in fawning
over Boule.*

COUNTESS: My dear ...

MME C-L: You *are* a darling ...

COUNTESS: My dear girl ...

MME C-L: You *are* a pet ...

COUNTESS: I can never forget your kindness.

MME C-L: I can't tell you ...

COUNTESS: I'm so glad we met.

MME C-L: I'm so glad we met.

A great glow of fellowship fills the coach now.

[22] MME C-L: (*addressing Boule and the other ladies
as if the men were not present*)

Men don't understand what war is like for *us* ...

... Ladies.

MME LOISEAU: Women bear the brunt.

COUNTESS: Too true ... too true.

MME C-L: And you! ...

COUNTESS: I'm sure you've suffered ...

MME C-L: terribly, poor dear!

MME LOISEAU: I'm sure she has.

COUNTESS: Perhaps

You might feel better if you told us your
Experiences.

BOULE: No. That is to say, I'd rather not.

LADIES: Please tell us. Please.

Do tell us, do.

You must. You really must. Please. Do.
BOULE: I can't.
LADIES: Oh, please, oh, please,
It will do you good.
Tell us! You must!
We wish you would!
BOULE: (*doubtfully*) Well ... it's not nice.
MME LOISEAU: So what? Tell us anyway

Boule has gone inside herself. Hardly heeding the others, she begins to speak.

23 BOULE: You know how it was ..
After the battle ...
We didn't know ...

Seeing our brave boys
Coming back
On the run ...

I was so scared.

Remember how quiet the city got?
As if it was empty.

And then there they suddenly were ...
The Germans ...
In Rouen.

It was so ...

Normal!
But it was strange ...
Because it was so ...

Everyday ... because it was so damn everyday!
(*abashed*)
Sorry. It just felt wrong!

MME C-L: Go on.
COUNTESS: Please go on.
BOULE: All right.

24 At first I'd thought I'd stay ...
I had enough to feed
Whatever soldiers they
Might billet out on me. Oh,

But when I saw those Krauts
I couldn't help myself ...
It made my blood boil ...

(In her agitation, Boule springs to her feet in the moving coach, and loses her balance. The two nuns reach out to help her regain her seat.)

I cried and cried all day.
If I had been a man! ...
From my window I
Could see those big fat pigs ..

And if it hadn't been
For my maid, I would
Have dumped my chest of drawers
Down on their pointy heads!

So when the first one came
Into my house I threw
Myself at him and tried
To get him by the throat.

It's no harder to
Kill a German than
Any other man.
And I'd have done it too!

They had to pull my hair
To get me off of him ...
And then they found me
Somewhere to lie low.

25 Someone helped me out ...
And pulled a string or two ...
And that's how and that's why
I'm in this coach with you.

Her fellow passengers burst out with spontaneous expressions of approval, approbation and admiration.

COUNTESS: But you were very brave! So brave!
MME LOISEAU: I never would have dared! Oh no!
MME. C-L.: We should all be proud! So proud!
LOISEAU: Now that's a patriot!
COUNT: Well done!
C-L: Well done!
LOISEAU: Her head is screwed on right!
COUNT: The girl has spunk!
C-L.: Well done! Well done!

26 CORNUDET: *(with the conviction of a Biblical prophet)*
It's like that Badinguet ..
Those proclamations ... Pah!
He knuckled under just
Like that *(snaps his fingers)* the minute they ...

Boule suddenly rounds on Cornudet:

BOULE: Your kind really makes me sick!
You sit in cafés all day long
And flap your mouth.
You goddamn Communards are all
A bunch of yellow dogs.
Where were you, huh? when he
Asked for volunteers?
You dug your ditch and ran!
I'd rather get clear out of France
Than be ruled by the likes of you!

CORNUDET: Is that so?

BOULE: *(out of breath)*
Yes.
That's so!
(drawing herself up to glare ferociously at Cornudet)
Long live
The Emperor Napoleon!

CORNUDET: *(dripping with contempt)*
The Third ...

Loiseau rolls his eyes. An embarrassed sigh escapes from one of the ladies. The Count opens his mouth to speak but thinks better of it. A hush falls.

The misery of the long journey has reasserted itself. The ladies give themselves over to it.

27 LADIES: God it's cold
My God it's cold
My God it's getting cold
It's cold

28 COACHMAN: Nothing but snow
And a low sky ...
A slow going ...
Nothing but ...

Nothing but snow ...
Nothing at all.
Whoa!

Hardly a road ahead
Hardly a road ...
Slow goin' ...

Boule has been rummaging in her basket, looking for one last morsel, but finds nothing. She sighs.

BOULE: Nothing is left of
the two chickens under jelly ...

LADIES: Nothing is left of
the jelly candies,
fresh baking ...

MEN: Nothing is left of
the four bottles,
four bottles of wine ...

ALL: Nothing is left of ...
Not a crumb
And not a drop
All gone ...
BOULE: Gobbled up.

*The sun has been setting all this while. The
Coachman's dirge has faded away.*

MME LOISEAU: There it goes ...
COUNTESS: There goes the day.
MME C-L: Look at the sun going,
Going down.

Boule sadly closes her basket.

BOULE, COUNTESS, MME LOISEAU: Gone away!

*The light fades completely, leaving only the glow of
the Coachman's lantern. In the gloom there is the
sound of a slap and a sense of Boule and Cornudet
springing apart. A quiet, amused "Oh ho!" from
Loiseau. The Coachman whistles a scrap of a tune and
urges his horses on.*

*We take a longish break from the human voice ... then
...*

29 BOULE: I think I see ...
COUNTESS: I think I see ...
MME. C-L.: Lights!
BOULE, COUNTESS: ... lights! Lights!
BOULE, COUNTESS, MME. C-L.:
It's the village!
MME. LOISEAU.: I think it must be Tôtes!
LADIES: It is!
We're there!

COUNT: Here we are. Tôtes.
LOISEAU: How long d'you reckon?
COUNT: Well ... Eleven hours on the road ...
LOISEAU: With four stops to feed the horses ...
C-L.: And that took two more hours ...
LOISEAU: So that makes thirteen hours!
COUNT: My God!
C-L: My God!
GENTS: Thirteen hours!

Scene 6: Arrival at Tôtes, shortly after 6 PM

The coach has come to a halt in the courtyard of the Hôtel du Commerce in the village of Tôtes. All is still. After a while, the door to the inn opens. In a light spill from the open doorway stands a very young Prussian officer, very blond, very thin, tall, seemingly corseted into an hourglass shape by his uniform, his shiny spiked helmet held against his side, his elongated moustache ending in points as fine as a single hair. The travelers cower in the coach, afraid to come out.

Impatient that the travelers are not coming out, the officer strides forward, shouting at them:

30 PRUSSIAN: *Raus! Raus! Raus! Raus!*

He marches right up to the coach and pounds on its sides.

PRUSSIAN: *Out-coming, out-coming!*
(not born to command, rather nervous himself, and uncomfortable speaking in a foreign language)
Please ... from the ... coach ... out-coming you must, now.
(They look very puzzled)
Out-coming!
Please, out now, please, you must!

The first to come out are the nuns in the spirit of Christian martyrdom. The Count and Countess follow, then the Carre-Lamadons. Next the Loiseaus, M. Loiseau ungallantly pushing his wife along. Although closest to the door, Boule and Cornudet are the last to get out.

The group form a line next to each other, unconsciously arranging themselves in descending social order: The nuns, the Count and Countess, the Carré-Lamadons, the Loiseaus, Cornudet and finally Boule.

PRUSSIAN: *My Ladies and Lords, your papers, please.*
(He passes slowly down the line collecting their papers)
Gut. Gut. Gut. Gut. Gut.
(Boule alone hesitates before handing hers over. This attracts the officer's attention)
Papers.
(She hands them over)
Gut.
To my Kommandant these will I now take.
Into the inn to wait must you go now.

Nonchalantly brandishing the papers, he turns on his heel and walks briskly back inside, his last comment trailing away.

Not knowing what to do, the travelers stand shivering in the courtyard. Presently they hear a voice calling from inside the inn.

[31] MME. FOLLENVIE: *(distant at first, but quickly coming closer)*
Come in!

Mme. Follenvie appears in the doorway. She beckons to the travelers. The light starts to come up, revealing the warm interior of the inn's kitchen.

MME. FOLLENVIE: Come in, come in! You'll catch your deaths!
Just leave your bags there.

Follenvie, a huge, lumbering fellow, who suffers from asthma, comes up behind her in the doorway.

FOLLENVIE: Come in, come in! Come in quickly!
MME. FOLLENVIE: Now mind the step!
Just come right in.

As the light comes up, we become aware of servants of all ages, shapes and sizes going about their chores: fetching linen, setting up a dining table for the travelers, preparing food, going out to fetch the luggage.

FOLLENVIE: *(wheezing asthmatically)* I hope you'll find ... *(wheeze)*
our ac- *(wheeze)* accommodations *(wheeze)* will be ...
(wheeze)

MME. FOLLENVIE: "Satisfactory" he was going to say ...

(absently patting her husband's shoulder)

Poor thing ... it's his chest ...

he's delicate ... and with this weather ...

FOLLENVIE: *(determined to keep up his end of the conversation)*

(wheeze) I'm afraid *(wheeze)* conditions ...*(wheeze)*
being as they are ...

MME. FOLLENVIE: ... being as they are, with all the world turned upside-down,

As you might say ...

I admit we haven't seen too many guests ...

Poor France, poor France ...

But ... you won't have caught us out.

Not in this house, not in this house ...

(runs a practiced eye over the assembly, and under her breath)

One, two, three, four, five ... and six
*(this last one crisply as she notices Boule stepping
away from Cornudet who has been sidling up to her.)*

Rooms ...

All linens fresh ... You'll see ...

We have our standards,

(her voice rising for the staff's benefit)

we have our standards ...

(looking around for her husband)

32 Monsieur Follenvie!

FOLLENVIE: Yes, dear?

MME. FOLLENVIE: See that the luggage is taken up

...

FOLLENVIE: Yes, dear.

MME. FOLLENVIE: ... the rose room and the cream
room, and the little blue,

And numbers seven and ten and fifteen.

And off she goes to attend to the dinner preparations.

FOLLENVIE: Yes, dear.

*Follenvie hasn't been paying attention at all, but
rather has been rummaging for a bottle of eau de vie
and some aperitif glasses, which he now proudly
carries over to the gentlemen.*

FOLLENVIE: Might I offer you something ... perhaps

...

A little glass of something?

(handing each man a glass)

Something of the region?

Something ... fortifying?

Something ... that keeps very well ...

Until it's needed ...

He uncorks the bottle and quickly fills the glasses.

33 GENTS: Things are looking up.

Looking up! Looking up!

FOLLENVIE: Your health!

GENTS & CORNUDET: Your health!

*As the men knock back their glasses, the Prussian
Officer returns, pushing his way brusquely into the
middle of the company. He fixes his eye on Boule.*

34 PRUSSIAN: Mademoiselle Elisabeth Rousset?

BOULE: *(starting)* Yes?

That's me.

PRUSSIAN: My Kommandant is you needing to see
directly.

BOULE: See me?

PRUSSIAN: Yes, you.

If you are indeed named ...

(reading from her papers) Mademoiselle ... Elisabeth
... Rousset.

BOULE: *(calmly defiant)* Well, maybe I am,
And maybe I'm not ...
(angrily) But I'll be damned if I'll go!

COUNT, C-L.: *(dumbfounded)* What on earth?
MME. C-L.: I can't believe she said that!
COUNTESS, MME. LOISEAU: Is she mad?
LOISEAU: Doesn't she realize?
MME. C-L: She can't be serious!
COUNTESS, MME. LOISEAU: She's mad!

*Brusquely, the Prussian gestures for Boule to come
with him.*

PRUSSIAN: Miss ...

She doesn't move.

PRUSSIAN: Miss?

The Count steps in to take charge of the situation.

COUNT: Young lady,
That would be a mistake.
Your refusal is bound to make your life more difficult,
my dear.
And not just for you, but for the rest of us, I assure
you.
Open resistance to superior force is never a good idea.
Doubtless this is to do with some formality:
Some minor and meaningless omission in your papers.
You should go.
Go.

BOULE: *(exasperated)* Fine!
I'll go, but only for your sakes.

The Prussian Officer leads Boule out of the room.

35 MME. FOLLENVIE: Well, you see how it is ...
But life goes on, in spite of "orders".
They can yell all they want!
(catching herself)
Oh! ... but you must be famished!
*(shepherding them to the table that has been laid for
them)*
Come through. Come right on through.
It's just a simple supper,
but it's sure to put you right.

Set your minds at rest ...
As they say around here,
There's always something...
There's always something at the Follenvies' ...

Please, everybody, eat ... while it's hot.

*A brief silence that is soon broken by the sound of
soupspoons hitting and scraping the sides of the soup
plates, providing an accompaniment to Mme.
Follenvie:*

[36] It's a funny thing waking up under occupation.
Now what? What indeed?
I said to Monsieur Follenvie, I said:

We're really in for it, I said.
I said, you mark my words.
You wait, I said.

So in they marched and here they've stayed
And made themselves at home.
And all they want is ...

Pork ... potatoes ...
Pork ... potatoes ...
Pork ... potatoes ...

Every single meal:
Morning, noon and night.
What do you do with people like that?

We have our boys in the army ...
Two sons ... prisoners of
War, now, don't you know.

Who knows when they'll be back?
What if they'd been killed?
Where would we be then?

Our boys gone ... their boys here ...
And nothing getting done but
Being eaten out of house and home!

Pork ... potatoes ...
Pork ... potatoes ...
Pork ... potatoes ...
Every single meal.

(lowering her voice)
And there's something else they want ...

FOLLENVIE: Yeah! Money!
(the men all grunt their agreement)

MME. FOLLENVIE: No!
I don't have to spell it out. Do I?
FOLLENVIE: Now, Madame Follenvie ...
I'd really rather ... (*wheeze*) you didn't.

MME. FOLLENVIE: I know I know ... I'm just
An old ignorant woman,
but I have to ask myself
as I look at 'em march and march and march:

*At this point, Boule enters in a fury and sits back down
at the table. Madame Follenvie continues her
monologue without pause, and without looking at
Boule or seeming to notice her return while the
exchanges with Boule are carried on sotto voce in
counterpoint.*

37 BOULE (*muttering*) They're pigs!
They're pigs!

MME. FOLLENVIE: Why don't they put 'em to
work?

BOULE: They're all pigs!

MME. FOLLENVIE: They could be working the
fields
Instead of flattening 'em with their boots!

MME. C-L: (*picking up Boule's plate and passing it*)
What happened?
MME. LOISEAU: What happened?
COUNTESS: What happened?

MME. FOLLENVIE: Why should poor hardworking
people
Have to feed a bunch of louts
Who only know how to kill?

LADIES: Tell us! Tell us!
BOULE: I can't. It's no concern of yours.
(*Boule sets to eating with a vengeance*)

MME. FOLLENVIE: Killing other people is an awful
business,
Whether they're Prussian or English,
Or Polish, French, whatever ...

You can't just go around revenging yourself
On people you're mad at:
You go to jail for that.

So how come when you decide to slaughter
Thousands of young men just like animals
You get given a medal?

I don't get it.

38 CORNUDET: An unprovoked attack is barbaric ...
But when you're forced to defend yourself
That is the most sacred of duties!

MME. FOLLENVIE: Oh, yes ... fine ... defending
yourself ...
(head down, almost to herself)
But if anybody's going to die ...
Shouldn't it be all these kings
Who amuse themselves starting these things?

Silence as she comes to a full stop.

*To cover his embarrassment, the Count feigns a
suppressed yawn while taking out his pocket watch.*

COUNT: Oh ... will you look at the time?

*The other gents follow his lead and, yawning, check
their own watches*

MME. C-L: *(playing along)* This country air makes
me feel so sleepy!

COUNTESS: *(dead serious)* Me, too.

*One by one the travelers push away from the table and
stand up. Only Boule remains seated, silently (and
furiously) eating. Candles are brought for the guests.*

VARIOUS: Bed?

ALL: Bed!

Ah, bed!

*As the lights come down on the dining area, the whole
company, except for Boule, head off to their respective
rooms, led by the Follenvies.*

39 **Scene 7: In the Inn, around 10 PM: the
mysteries of the corridor**

*One pile of luggage has been left on stage, to the side.
This serves to delineate the room the Loiseaus now
occupy. Loiseau helps his wife undress, with a
minimum of fuss and matter-of-fact modesty.*

LOISEAU: What a collection! What a menagerie!

MME. LOISEAU: Awful.

Didn't I see you talking to our host, Follenvie?

LOISEAU: Uh huh. Did a nice piece of business there.

Six barrels of Bordeaux I sold him.

MME. LOISEAU: Really?

LOISEAU: Our best Bordeaux!

MME. LOISEAU: What he'll charge!

LOISEAU: (*nuzzling her, arms around her waist*)
He'll have to, with what *I* charged!
MME. LOISEAU: Ah! Good boy.

She gives him a kiss, and he tucks her into bed. Once she has settled in, he gleefully gets into his nightshirt, and throwing a shawl over his shoulders, goes to crouch down at the keyhole of the door to the corridor.

At first, nothing happens, but we become aware of the sounds of the house, the wind in the chimneys.

Then the sound of silk brushing against the walls. Holding a candle, Boule is seen going towards the WC down the hall. She is dressed in a blue cashmere dressing-gown, edged in white lace.

[40] LOISEAU: Our little Miss
Has to siss!

Our little Miss has to siss, has to siss ...
Our little Miss has to siss ...

Loiseau spots Cornudet slipping into the corridor from his room and creeping up behind Boule.

LOISEAU: I'm not the
Only spy:
Not at all!

But I *am* the
Only fly
On the wall!

Cornudet won't let Boule pass in the hallway. He takes her by the arm.

[41] CORNUDET: Come to my room.
BOULE: No.
CORNUDET: Come to my room.
BOULE: (*shaking off his grip*) No!
CORNUDET: Come on ... come on
BOULE: No! I said no!
CORNUDET: (*whining*) I can't sleep.
BOULE: So?
CORNUDET: You know.
BOULE: No! I can't! Not here!
It wouldn't be right!
CORNUDET: What's the difference?
BOULE: What? The house is full of Prussian!
They're everywhere!
Even in the next room!
CORNUDET: Oh, come on, Boule de suif, I know you
...

BOULE: (*pushing him away*) No!
You don't know me. Nobody knows me. No one.
No one knows me. No one knows a thing about me.
CORNUDET: Boule de suif ...
BOULE: No! When I say no I mean no.
I choose! I pick!
CORNUDET: Am I just a trick?
BOULE: I don't have friends.
You don't fool me.
Oh, you can call yourselves by any name:
Husband, lover, pal, or pimp,
Father, brother, your sweet baby ...
But in the end you're all just men.
CORNUDET: At least I'm not a Prussian!

She slaps him, and then slaps him again.

CORNUDET: Boule de suif, I'm sorry.
There's something going on, right?
BOULE: No.
Goodnight!

She brushes past him. Cornudet shrugs and goes back to his room.

Loiseau has really hit the jackpot. He jumps up in the air and gives a little leap of pure joy (Maupassant assigns him an entrechat).

42 LOISEAU: Oh boy oh boy oh boy!
(*puts on his nightcap*)
Oh boy!
OH BOY!

*He gets into bed with his wife. Blows out the candle.
He wakes her with a kiss.*

LOISEAU: Darling?
MME. LOISEAU: (*sleepy*) What?
LOISEAU: Baby?
MME. LOISEAU: Hmmph ...
LOISEAU: Do you love me?

The couple embrace and make their contribution to the Mysteries ...

END OF ACT ONE

CD 2

ACT TWO

1 Scene 1: The Inn at Tôtes, Wednesday, 8 AM

Brilliant sunshine. Blue sky. As at the beginning of the First Act, the nuns are already waiting on stage, outside the inn, with their bags.

TITLE CARD
WEDNESDAY

TITLE CARD

**As had been agreed the night before,
at eight o'clock the travelers assembled.**

The rest of the traveling party all burst excitedly into the courtyard of the inn, eager to be on their way.

A round of cheerful greetings:

LADIES & BOULE: Good morning. Good morning.
Good morning.
Good morning.
GENTS: Good morning. Madame. Countess.
Mademoiselle.

The women chatter to each other (just a jumble of conversation, overlapping lines):

LADIES & BOULE: What a lovely day! Yes, such a lovely day! Just delightful.
Oh, such a pretty costume! Thank you.
It suits your coloring. Very smart! Thanks. Quite stylish.

The gents form a group, pointedly ignoring Cornudet. They, too, chatter at each other:

GENTS: Sleep well? Why, yes, thank you. Good morning to you.
Fine weather. Not a cloud in the sky.
Good to get going again, eh? Quite.

Another burst of chatter from the ladies:

LADIES & BOULE: I can't wait to be on our way.
The food here ... oh! ...
And the rooms ... So draughty ...

The men begin to notice that something is amiss:

GENTS: Hmm ... that's odd. What's odd?
What are all the trunks doing there?

The Count steps into the spot where the Coach ought to be. He looks around.

2 COUNT: What the devil?

The two other gents join him.

LOISEAU: Where are the horses?

COUNT: (*calling*) Coachman! Coachman!

C-L.: Where is that fellow?

COUNT: Coachman!

LOISEAU: Coachman!

C-L.: Coachman!

CORNUDET: (*mocking*) Oh Co – o – o – oachman!

LOISEAU: Not a sign ...

*The coachman strolls nonchalantly into the courtyard.
The gents spot him and rush over to accost him.*

C-L: There's the fellow!

The Coachman fixes them with a cold and bilious eye.

3 COACHMAN: Yes?

COUNT: Well?

COACHMAN: Well ... what?

LOISEAU: Are we leaving?

COACHMAN: Let me see...

(*looks around*)

...do *you* see any horses?

C-L: No. Where are they?

COACHMAN: In the stable ... at a guess.

COUNT: See here...

COACHMAN: (*holding up a hand*) Orders.

LOISEAU: Orders?

COUNT: We gave no such orders!

COACHMAN: Ask the Kommandant.

He gives the orders around here ... seems to me.

(*casually walking away*)

Good day to you, then.

The gents are left dumbfounded by this display of insolence.

Follenvie has been watching this scene from the doorway of the Inn. Seeing that the gents have now spotted him, he makes to slip quietly away, but Loiseau dashes up to him, the Count and Carré-Lamadon hard at his heels.

4 LOISEAU: Monsieur Follenvie! We demand an explanation!

COUNT: Monsieur Follenvie! We demand an explanation!

LOISEAU: We won't stand for this!

C-L.: This is a scandal!

COUNT: This is an outrage!

ALL THREE: This is intolerable!

We have passage booked.
We have business to see to,
Affairs to be settled!

We must be on our way!

FOLLENVIE: *(a bit flustered at being thus beset)*

Yes ... the thing is... we were told ...

Well... not exactly told ... you see ...

(He pauses to think)

You'd better follow me ...

Follenvie goes back into the Inn, the gents crowding in behind him.

5 Scene 2: Inside the Inn, much later Wednesday afternoon.

A dim light comes up to reveal the three ladies each in their respective rooms, watching the winter afternoon fade. They've been busying themselves with trifles as they wait for their husbands to return from seeing the Kommandant. One by one they yield to their reveries.

We see the Countess in a straight-backed chair, absently twisting a handkerchief.

COUNTESS: I miss my cat.
I wonder if she misses me?
She always follows me around ...
I think she loves me ...
I don't know ...

When she comes in
Her tail goes up ...
She makes a sound ...
A tiny sound ... a d-r-r-r-r-t!
And walks on by ...
I miss my cat.
Oh ...

Our attention shifts to Mme. Loiseau, who alternately gazes miserably out the window and paces.

6 MME. LOISEAU: This snow ...
This blasted snow ...
I've always hated snow.

COUNTESS: I miss my cat.
I miss her.
Oh ...

MME. LOISEAU: It falls. It falls.
"How beautiful!" they say ...
It falls. It lies there.
And gets dirty right away.
(*completely dejected*)
This snow ...

The light begins to fade even faster as evening draws on. Mme. Carré-Lamadon is occupying herself by rearranging her jewelry case, pausing every now and then to admire an object.

7 MME. C-L.: Oh, how I wish that I was in my house.
A woman needs her home to feel complete.
A woman in her home surrounded by her things,
Her pretty objects ... at her desk ... a fire going ...
Gazing at her garden through the window
At the snow.

MME. LOISEAU: This snow ...
I've always hated snow ...

MME. C-L.: Oh, how I wish, oh, how I wish I was in my own house.
To know where things are,
To sit in my own chair,
To lie in my own bed,
To know where everybody is:
To be at home.

In the gloom of the corridor, the men are seen coming back from their interview with the Kommandant. A mood of defeat prevails. They knock at the doors to their rooms.

8 ALL THREE LADIES: Who is it?

COUNT It is I.
C-L.: Me.
LOISEAU: Who d'you think?

Mme. Carré-Lamadon flies to the door to open it. The Countess scrambles about, looking for the key. Mme. Loiseau takes her time.

MME. C-L.: Oh my darling! My poor darling!
What did he say? Are we leaving?
C-L.: Uh ... (*shakes head*)
MME. C-L.: You mean we're stuck here?
C-L.: (*nods*)
MME. C-L.: And those what-do-you-call-'ems ...?
C-L.: (*listlessly*) Letters of safe conduct ...
MME. C-L.: Worthless?
C-L.: Apparently.

The Count and Countess in their room. She keeps her distance, sitting again, wringing her handkerchief with renewed anxiety. He is orating, in full spate.

COUNT: It's signed by his commanding officer back
in Rouen!
I showed him where!
I told the man: Look, can't you read? There!
It's a convention! Always honored by belligerent
parties!
Always!
Never have I heard of such a breach
Of international law!
COUNTESS: Oh dear ...

In the Loiseaus' room: Loiseau is merrily acting out the encounter with the Kommandant for his wife.

☐ LOISEAU: "Nein. Dunt vant! Dunt care! Dot's all!"
no matter what we said ... "Dunt vant! Dunt vant!"
"Are our papers not in order?" we said.
"Ja, ja, ja! Dunt vant! Dunt care! Dot's all."
Does he think we're spies?
"Nein. Dunt vant! Dunt care! Dot's all."
MME. LOISEAU: (*chuckling*) Oh, Loiseau, you kill me.
You should have gone on the stage.
LOISEAU: "Nein. Dunt vant! Dunt care! I not tiscuss!"
MME. LOISEAU: But ... oh damn and blast ...
What does he want?
Didn't he ask for money?
LOISEAU: "Nein. Dunt vant. Dunt care!"
MME. LOISEAU: (*tiring of the joke*) Oh, spare me, Loiseau ...

Follenvie comes lumbering down the corridor, ringing a small dinner bell.

FOLLENVIE: Ladies, Gentlemen ... Supper ...
supper ... is being served.

With considerable excitement, the travelers quickly make their way into the corridor and down to the kitchen.

10 Scene 3: The kitchen of the Inn, Wednesday, suppertime

Boule arrives at the table before the others, a look of rapture lights her face.

BOULE: Oh, look! How lovely!
A goose!

LADIES: A goose! Ah!
GENTS: A goose! Ah!

MME. FOLLENVIE: Come through, come through.
Come sit right down.
Come through ...

As Mme. Follenvie ushers the travelers to the table, Follenvie coughs nervously and addresses himself directly to Boule. What he pronounces is not meant for the whole company to hear. But they catch it.

FOLLENVIE: The Kommandant ... begs to enquire ... whether ... the young lady ... has changed ... her mind.

All are still. Boule is pale with anger. For a moment, she can't speak.

11 BOULE: You tell that bastard ...
You tell that filthy bastard ...
You tell that Prussian son-of-a-bitch
That I never want to
And never will. No!
Never ever!
Never! Never! Never!
Never.

Follenvie leaves to deliver the message. The others crowd around Boule.

COUNT: What's all this about?
C-L: What is it?
MME C-L: Tell us.
COUNTESS: You can tell us.
CORNUDET: What the Devil!
MME LOIS.: You must tell us!
LOISEAU: Tell us!

BOULE: No!

12 COUNT: What does he want?
C-L: What does the scoundrel want?

LOISEAU: What's between you and the Kommandant?

ALL: Tell us! Tell us!

BOULE: What's he want?

What's he want?

I'll tell you what he wants.

He wants to sleep with me.

A glass breaks.

Boule moves quickly to the table and takes her seat. The others follow after her and take their own seats, all the while exclaiming. Only the Count remains standing, seething with rage.

CORNUDET: That's too much!

MME C-L: Oh, you poor thing!

COUNTESS: Oh, you poor thing!

MME LOISEAU: They're animals!

LOISEAU: So *that's* why we're stuck here?

BOULE: (*vehemently*) YES! THAT'S WHY!

COUNTESS: How awful for you!

MME C-L: How awful for you!

MME. LOISEAU: Awful! Awful!

C-L.: I never heard of such a thing!

Barbarians!

CORNUDET: Poor Boule!

COUNT: He should be whipped.

The puppy should be

Soundly whipped!

Yes, whipped!

The Count finally sits down at table. All are wrapped in thought.

Occasional secret sidelong looks of appraisal at Boule....

[13] MME. FOLLENVIE: Please ... eat ... while it's hot.

Slow fade.

Scene Four: Out and about in the village of Tôtes, late Thursday morning

A change in the weather: the scene is bathed with a dreary, gray winter light.

TITLE CARD

Thursday

TITLE CARD

After breakfast,
someone suggested a walk.

*The three ladies heavily bundled against the miserable
weather come into view.*

[14] COUNTESS: It's s-s-so cold!
MME LOISEAU: So cold!
MME. C-L: It's so cold!
COUNTESS: C-c-colder than yesterday.
MME C-L: Much colder!
MME. LOSEAU: Y-yes. Colder!
COUNTESS: I'm f-f-freezing!
MME. C-L.: S-so c-c-cold!
MME. LOISEAU: So cold!

*The two nuns cross from the opposite direction,
breviaries in hand, on their way to church. The ladies
acknowledge them.*

LADIES: (*in unison*) S-s-sisters ... g-g-g-good
morning.

The nuns nod politely and continue on their way.

*The gents come into view, straggling behind their
wives. They are huddled together, talking at each other
in undertones about their money worries.*

[15] LOISEAU: I have an enormous shipment (an
enormous shipment!)
Needing my attention at Le Havre!
But that little crook from Bordeaux just ain't the type
To hang around for nothing.

COUNT: I have laid out a huge amount (a huge
amount!)
To guarantee our stateroom on the Mary Anne.
It's an English boat
(my wife insists it be an English boat),
But an English boat won't wait ...

C-L.: There's a towering stack (a towering stack!) of
letters
that wait for me in London!
I must telegraph my bankers and my brokers,
And I'm expecting word from those Brazilians ...

COUNT: It won't wait!
LOISEAU: That little crook won't wait!

ALL THREE GENTS: I can't wait!
I can't stay!

I must be on my way,
Or I'll be ruined! Ruined!

*Suddenly the ladies stop, stock still, looking front.
They have spotted the Kommandant out taking his own
walk. His progress can be guessed by the shifting
direction of their gazes.*

*The men, on the other hand, have no wish to
acknowledge the Prussian in any way, and beat a
retreat in a different direction.*

16 MME C-L: *(excited)* Oh, look! Isn't it *him*?
COUNTESS: Who? Who?
MME. LOISEAU: Yes ... it must be ..
COUNTESS: *(alarmed)* Who is it? Who?
MME. LOISEAU: Our captor ... that Prussian ...
COUNTESS: Oh, dear!

*Mesdames Carré-Lamadon and Loiseau watch the
Kommandant with a look of frank appraisal.*

MME C-L: Well, well! Well, well! Not what I'd
imagined.

MME. LOISEAU: Pretty fine, that mustache...

And he has some shoulders on him.

MME. C-L: Not half bad ...

... and so tall!

And did you see the scar? Oh, my!

COUNTESS: Brr... those eyes...

MME. LOISEAU: Blue?

MME C-L: Of course!

If that man was French,

He'd be a Hussard.

He'd make a really

Beautiful Hussard.

*The ladies find that they have arrived back at the door
of the Inn.*

MME. LOISEAU: *(spoken)* Come on – let's go back
inside.

It's just too d-damn cold.

*Mme. Loiseau and the Countess go inside, but Mme.
Carré-Lamadon lingers to reflect a moment.*

MME C-L: If I had to,
I would do it.
If I had to,
I would do it in a minute.

I would do it,
If I knew I should.

I would do it, knowing
It would do some good.

If I had to,
I could do it.
If I had to ...

Mme. Carré-Lamadon goes inside.

Just then we notice Boule, who has apparently been following behind the others on their walk. She is hanging back to avoid having to go in with them. Seeing Mme. Carré-Lamadon enter the Inn, Boule starts across the courtyard.

The Coachman has been perched for some time on the high seat of the coach, nursing a flask. On a whim, he calls to Boule:

17 COACHMAN: *(a little tips)* Oh Boule de Suif!

BOULE: You know me?

COACHMAN: Ah sweet Boule de suif ... the lovely Boule de suif ...
the lovely, lovely, lovely, lovely Boule de suif ...
the famous Boule de suif!
Everyone in Rouen knows you!

BOULE: Oh, please. Enough!

COACHMAN: Come on up, keep me company.
(waving his flask)

Have some of this.

Come on. I won't bite.

BOULE: Alright, then ...

(He reaches down to give her a hand.)

COACHMAN: *Allez-up!*

(And up she goes.)

COACHMAN: Quite a view...

BOULE: *(absently)* Yes, quite a view...

COACHMAN: *(vehemently)* ... of nothing.

What a nothing little place this is.

BOULE: *(trying hard to be agreeable)*

It's not so bad.

I rather like it.

It's really not so bad, you know.

It's so quiet.

COACHMAN: *(wearily)* Try living here.

18 I hate this place.

I hate all these little places.

I hate all these little nothing places.

I hate 'em ...

All these piddling nothing places.

I hate 'em ...

Hate 'em ...

Seeing the Coachman sunk into his depression, Boule slips quietly down from her perch, crosses the courtyard and quickly enters the Inn.

19 Scene 5: The kitchen of the Inn, Friday morning

TITLE CARD

FRIDAY

CARD

Another endless morning

A really lovely church bell is pealing. Only one.

Nearly the entire party is gathered in the kitchen. The men and Mme. Loiseau are deep in a game of cards, the other ladies watching, Mme Follenvie is happily pottering about. Boule comes in, dressed to go out in a very smart outfit.

MME C-L:(to Boule) Going out?

BOULE: Yes... you see...

There's a
baptism this morning
in the church.

MME C-L: Ah... those bells....

Do you know the family?

BOULE: No, of course not. I know it's silly, but...

MME C-L: What?

You can tell me.

20 BOULE: I have a child.

A little boy...

I never see him. That is,
I go to see him once a year.

Most of the time
I don't think about him much.

I hope he's happy where he is.
I know he's happy where he is...

MME C-L: Where is that?

BOULE: Yvetot.

He lives with a family there
that has a farm.

It might be better not to care ...
Oh, but I do care, of course.

I know he's happy where he is.
I hope he's happy where he is...

MME C-L: (*steering Boule toward the door*)
Of course, you do.

BOULE: He's better off there.
MME. C-L.: (*gives her a dismissing pat*)
He is.

With an impulsive curtsey, Boule goes off. Madame Carré-Lamadon watches her through the window long enough to make sure she's gone. The instant Mme C-L turns around, Madame Loiseau slams her hand of cards on the table and growls:

[21] MME LOISEAU: Let's face it:
We're going to die of old age in this damn place!
Goddamn it! Who the hell does she think she is?

Isn't it her *job* to be a whore?
Any and all comers. Am I wrong?
Am I wrong?
(*She starts to pace*)
But no! When she can help us all,
She becomes A Lady.

Well, Miss Dainty could do worse.

If you ask me,
This young Prussian officer has behaved quite well ...
So far.

After all,
Think how long it has been since he's had a woman!

COUNTESS & MME. C-L.: Oh!

MME. LOISEAU: He's the master here... is he not?
All he has to do
Is give the order,
And then ...

COUNTESS & MME C-L: Oh!

MME LOISEAU: But no, he respects the matrimonial
state!

All he asks is a girl that belongs to nobody
And to anybody.

LOISEAU: Oh hell!

[22] Let's just tie her up and hand her over!

COUNT: (*taking charge*) No. No.
She must be *persuaded*.
Persuaded.

23 Scene 6: In the kitchen of the Inn, Friday evening

Suddenly it is evening. All the travelers are seated around the table. They have just finished their supper, though Boule is still munching on whatever leftovers she can find near at hand. Follenvie is circulating with a bottle of eau de vie. An awkward silence hangs over the group until the Count sets his napkin on the table and turns to Mme. Follenvie.

COUNT: Ah, Madame Follenvie, we thank you.
Once more you have outdone yourself.
I know I never shall eat cabbage soup again ...
(*Loiseau snorts "Hah! Me neither."*)
without thinking of your splendid variations
on this timeless Norman dish.
This food has been such comfort
throughout our prolonged stay.
(*Getting up, he takes out his watch*)
Oh look! It's early yet.
My friends, I have an idea:
Let's forgo our usual round of cards
and instead have some games and songs and stories!

MME. C-L.: Oh yes!

COUNTESS: What fun!

C-L.: Hear, hear.

The Count gestures for the other gents and Madame Carré-Lamadon to join him. And then walks over to pull an unwilling Cornudet into the group.

COUNT: I'll start things off with a guessing game.
Gentlemen ... Madame ... if you'll please assist me.
(*to Cornudet*) And you, too, sir.

The Count maneuvers his assistants to form a tableau vivant: Cornudet is Holofernes, reclining on the floor. The two gents, armed with butter knives, are the guards outside his tent. Mme. Carré-Lamadon is Judith, of course.

24 COUNT: Now see if you remember the names from this famous story.
As he tells his story, he shifts the others around to match the action. He taps his fingers on his sleeve to indicate the number of syllables in the characters' names.

COUNT: ____ ____, a Jewish widow of great beauty,
Insisted on seeing the General ____ ____ ____...
____ ____ definitely
Saw it as her duty to her people
To lay her body down

And so she saved the town.

____ ____, she knew very well that ____ ____ ____'s
heart was hardened.
No words she could say to him would his mind alter!
And now, I have to beg the ladies' pardon
for what happened next:
She let her robe fall down

And so she saved the town.

But the moment the General ____ ____ ____
saw ____ ____ in her splendor
He took her there and then: all night he showed his
ardor.
He plundered her beauty,
Then to sleep surrendered:
So ____ ____ chopped ____ ____ ____'s head
And hid it in her gown:

And brought it back to town.

*A burst of applause from Boule (who is quite delighted
by this little skit), Mme. Loiseau and the Follenvies.
The nuns look rather puzzled.*

25 COUNTESS: I know! I know!
Isn't that the story of Judith and ...
Holofernes from the Bible!

COUNT: Bravo, my dear. Indeed it is.
So now it's your turn.

COUNTESS: *(startled)* Me?

*The Countess remains seated, nervously twisting a
napkin. She gathers her courage to play her role:*
I know a story, I think,
(losing her nerve)
Called "The ... Rape ... of Lucrece" ...
Really!
(trying very hard)
She was a lady of Greece...
COUNT: Rome, dear.
COUNTESS: ... of Rome ...

She was at home...
...and was she alone?

COUNT: (*encouraging*) Yes. Yes.
COUNTESS: This fellow Sanctus ...
COUNT: SEX-tus!
COUNTESS: Sextus ...
COUNT: *Ye-e-es* ...
COUNTESS: (*completely rattled*)
Terrible fellow ... terrible fellow ...
And he ... and he and he ...

She looks around, blinking. She's finished.

Well!
You can imagine!

Awkward silence.

[26] LOISEAU: (*stepping into the breach*)
I've got one ... and it's a real corker!

(The table has been mostly cleared by now. Loiseau yanks the tablecloth off the table and proceeds to drape it around himself like a toga.)

There was Rome:
Civilization!

Minding its own business,
Trading with its neighbors,
Trading peacefully
With its neighbors.

There was Rome:
Civilization!

And then there was Hannibal
The Carthaginian:
Brought his elephants
Across the Alps!

There was Rome
Facing
Annihilation.

It seemed that nothing could stop
The elephants!
No, nothing could stop
The elephants,
And no one could defeat great
Hannibal
The Carthaginian
And his thousands and thousands of men
(They were Africans)!

It was up to the women of Rome
To defend their home.

So it was that, one moonless night,
They approached the enemy camp.
No guard called out “Who’s there?”
When those matrons let down their hair.
When the maidens lay down in the field
Their bodies were their shield;

No one called out “Attack!”
While the women were on their backs
And those thousands and thousands of Africans
Took them again and again and again and again!

The Roman women shed bitter tears ...
But hasn’t Rome stood for a thousand years?
Did their husbands blame them? No!
Or their sweethearts? They said, “Go!
‘Cause we’ll be right behind you.
Oh, we’ll know where to find you!”

On their heels the Romans crept...
It was Hannibal’s turn now,
And how he wept:

Not a man in his army
Was left alive,
Overthrown by the Romans’
Daughters and wives,
Their black throats slit by
The Citizens’ knives.

*(Suddenly a little afraid that Boule hasn’t quite gotten
the point)*

Y’ see ... With their enemies heaped in a mound
What they had lost was found!
C-L: *(ever helpful)* Uh ... Their bodies had been
The battleground?

(Loiseau nods encouragingly)

MME. C-L.: But their hearts ...

COUNTESS: ... and their honors ...

MME. C-L.: Were safe and sound?

LOISEAU: EGG-ZACKLY!

27 COUNT: Well spoken Loiseau.

C-L: Hear hear!

COUNT: You know, throughout history

Women have sacrificed themselves

For the Greater Good.

MME. LOISEAU: Yes! Those Ancient Ladies

Certainly knew *their* duty.

*Suddenly, the Old Nun strikes the table with her fist.
Everyone jumps.*

28 OLD NUN: LISTEN TO ME!

Duty, eh?

Hard choices, eh?

Religious life is full of 'em!

What makes a saint?
SUFFERING.

What is my body?
NOTHING.

What is my enemy?
PRIDE.

GOD SEES YOU INSIDE!

Some saints have been known to heal the sick.
I'm a nurse, but I'm not one of those.

I have sat and watched my soldiers die,
Covered in blood and vomit and flies,
And I have prayed for their souls.

But there were women who followed the camps:
Abandoned wretches, laundresses, tramps.

29 Oh! but *they* were angels to my boys.

Angels
To my boys!

They stuck to the army through thick and thin,
Through dysentery, cholera and heat and cold ...
Their faces were dirty, but their hearts were gold.

I did what I could ...
But those women did *real* good.

They were angels to my boys!

Angels
To my boys!
(*slamming fist on table*)
Angels!

A stunned silence.

30 COUNT: Uh, yes, good Sister ... quite ... quite

Follenvie enters, very nervous and miserable...

FOLLENVIE: Miss ... the Kommandant ...
Asks me to enquire ... if ...

BOULE: *(jumping to her feet and marching out of the room and into the night)*

Oh ...

The Count immediately gets up and goes after her, quickly grabbing an overcoat from a peg on his way out. He calls out to her:

31 COUNT: Child ... Child ...
You don't know what to do, do you?

She moves away from the Count. Quickly catching up with her, the Count drapes the coat around her.

BOULE: No. No. Please, let me be.
It's so peaceful now.
So quiet.

Boule moves away into the shadows. The Count loses track of her for a moment, then spots her and tries once again to talk to her.

COUNT: Child ... please listen.

You have done what all our armies couldn't:
You have defeated the Prussian. You have won.

Boule takes off again in a different direction, the Count at her heels.

But even so, you've put us all in danger ...

BOULE: Oh! Let me be!
It's no concern of yours.

She moves quickly away again, and once more is lost in the shadows

COUNT: *(calling to her in the darkness)*

Boule de suif ... just think:
When that German boy gets home
He'll be able to say:
"I had the prettiest woman in France!"

Boule moves quickly offstage.

(wistfully) And he won't be lying.

32 *Scene 7: The Kitchen of the Inn, Saturday evening*

The light suddenly comes up on the kitchen as another meal is being set out for the travelers. Everyone except Boule is present. They mill about, agog with suspense.

TITLE CARD
SATURDAY EVENING

MME. C-L.: (sotto voce) Have you seen her?

MME. LOISEAU: No.

COUNTESS: Who?

MME. C-L. & MME. LOISEAU: Boule de suif.

COUNTESS: Oh. (the penny drops:) Oh!

C-L.: Did you talk to her?

COUNT: I tried ... I tried my best.

MME. FOLLENVIE: Please, come ...

Come sit right down.

As they head to the table, Follenvie enters to make an announcement.

FOLLENVIE: Ladies ... Gentlemen ...

Miss Rousset ...

Asks that ... she might remain upstairs ...

As she is ...

Indisposed.

The Count goes up to Follenvie as the others take their seats.

33 *COUNT: (confidentially) Is it a go?*

FOLLENVIE: Yes.

He joins the other at the table. Whispering breaks out.

COUNT: (to the gents) It's a go!

C-L.: It's a go!

LOISEAU: (to the wives) It's a go!

MME. LOISEAU: It's a go!

MME. C-L.: It's a go!

COUNTESS: What's a go?

LOISEAU, MME. LOISEAU & MME. C-L.:

It! It!

C-L.: It's a go!

Loiseau suddenly leaps to his feet.

LOISEAU: Champagne! Champagne on me,

Follenvie!

Champagne!

(suddenly Loiseau gets a quizzical look on his face)

WAIT!

(Loiseau puts a finger to his lips and with the other hand points to the ceiling.)

*All raise their eyes to the ceiling, and they listen to
THE MUSIC OF THE BEDSPRINGS.*

Quietly Loiseau retakes his seat at the table and smiles broadly at everyone.

34 LOISEAU: I think everything's gonna be just fine.

As the music of the bedsprings unfolds, each person responds in his own way. Loiseau is the ring-leader and most obvious in his glee, but no-one is without a very personal reaction. Cornudet sits silently, his head bowed. The Nuns are clearly very uncomfortable. Mme. Follenvie moves around the table ladling out the soup.

COUNTESS: *(trying hard not to pay attention to the noise above)*

What delicious soup today.

MME. FOLLENVIE: Thank you.

MME. C-L.: And such a pretty color.

MME. FOLLENVIE: Thank you.

LOISEAU: Oh, that poor girl ...

NUNS: *Pater noster, qui es in caelis,
sanctificetur nomen tuum.
Adveniat regnum tuum.
Fiat voluntas tua, sicut in caelo et in terra.
Panem nostrum quotidianum da nobis hodie,
et dimitte nobis debita nostra ...*

A time bump. The nuns are now reciting the Ave Maria

35 NUNS: *Ave Maria, gratia plena, Dominus tecum.
Benedicta tu in mulieribus,
et benedictus fructus ventris tui ...*

COUNT: *(checking his watch)* Good God! Forty minutes!

C-L.: I'll be damned.

LOISEAU: The poor girl. Leave her alone! Good God!

(jumping to his feet again)

Oh! More champagne!

Loiseau grabs a bottle of champagne and starts dancing merrily around the table.

LOISEAU: La la la, la la la, la la la ...

He grabs his wife and waltzes her around the room. Soon he notices that Cornudet is not joining in the fun, Loiseau goes over to him.

LOISEAU: Hey, citizen! You're no fun tonight! Nothing to say for yourself?

No pearls of wisdom?
(*getting in Cornudet's face*)
Eh? Eh?

Cornudet surveys them all. There is a terrible look in his eyes. He gets up.

36 CORNUDET: This is infamous!
Your behavior is disgusting!
Appalling! Shameful!
Infamous!
(*He storms out*)

This casts a bit of a pall on the proceedings, but the gents shrug it off. Their eyes look again to the ceiling. Carré-Lamadon takes out his pocket watch.

37 C-L.: Good Lord!
An hour twenty!

COUNT: (*mimicking Cornudet's solemnity*)
Infamous!
C-L.: Disgusting!
LOISEAU: Impressive!

They burst out laughing, quickly control themselves, and then turn to usher their wives out of the kitchen, leaving the nuns behind, telling their rosary.

38 **Scene 8: The Courtyard of the Inn, Sunday morning**

A brilliant sunny day. The nuns in their place, waiting, their carpetbags at their sides.

TITLE CARD
SUNDAY

The coach is assembled, luggage is being stowed. The Coachman fusses with various details to prepare for departure.

The travelers all come out in couples, cheerily greeting each other, the husbands in concert with their wives.

39 M. & MME. C-L.: Good morning!
COUNT & COUNTESS: Good morning!
M. & MME. LOISEAU: Good morning!
M. & MME. C-L.: Lovely day!
M. & MME. LOISEAU: Ah, yes, oh, yes, quite lovely!
COUNT & COUNTESS: Not a cloud in the sky!
M. & MME. LOISEAU: Good to be going, eh?
COUNT & COUNTESS: We can't wait to get away.

M. & MME. C-L.: Nor we!
M. & MME. LOISEAU: Nor we!
ALL: Getting away! Ah!

The Coachman is brusquely supervising the staff loading the coach, bristling with impatience over everything and everybody.

[40] COACHMAN: Let's go! Let's go!
All aboard! All aboard, please!

Madame Follenvie has come out of the Inn carrying a basket filled with various items of food wrapped in paper packets. The travelers, including Cornudet and the Nuns, gather around her.

MME. FOLLENVIE: Here, please, don't forget these.
A little something to tide you on your way.
It's a long way yet to Dieppe, you know ...
Here, please:
Our best pâté,
Some rabbit pie,
Boiled eggs and sausage,
Good country bread,
And wine.

Seeing that her basket is now empty, Madame Follenvie goes back inside just as Boule de suif comes out.

COACHMAN: All aboard! All aboard! Let's go!

Boule is pale, disheveled even, as if she has had to throw her clothes on in a hurry. She looks very unhappy, seeming even ashamed. She takes a few timid steps towards her traveling companions.

[41] BOULE: *(timidly to Mme. Carré-Lamadon)*
Good morning, Madame.

In one simultaneous move, they turn away as if they hadn't seen her. Boule is stopped dead in her tracks.

Shepherded by the Coachman, everyone piles in, sitting exactly where they did on the first leg of the journey. Cornudet and Boule enter last.

MME. LOISEAU: *(to her husband)*
I'm so glad I'm not sitting next to her!

[42] *The great coach sets off. For a while no one speaks. Boule de suif keeps her eyes on her lap. The nuns are at their Sunday prayers. For a while it's the only sound we hear.*

43 NUNS: *Deus in adiutorium meum intende.
Domine ad adiuvandam me festina. Gloria patri et
filio et spiritui sancto,
sicut erat ...*

*Time bump: the Count and Carre-Lamadon now have
their heads together talking about money. One catches
only key words.*

NUNS: *sicut erat in principio et nunc et semper
et in saecula saeculorum. Amen.*

C-L. & COUNT: Mmm-hmm, mmm-hmmm ... Prime
... bonds ...

oh yes ... reserves ... liquidity ... Suez ...
sound investment ... Mmm-hmm ... quite, quite ...
Mmm-hmm ... good thinking ...

*Time bump: the Nuns are singing a hymn while the
Loiseaus play cards. The Countess and Mme. Carré-
Lamadon are dozing.*

44 NUNS: *Ubi caritas et amor, Deus ibi est.
Congregavit nos in unum Christi amor.
Exultemus, et in ipso iucundemur.
Timeamus, et amemus Deum vivum.
Et ex corde diligamus nos sincero.*

THE LOISEAUS: Ace of hearts ... pass ... two spades

...
pass again ... jack of hearts ... two clubs ...
trump! ... no! ... yes! thirty-one! ... deal again ...

Time bump: it is now early afternoon.

45 COUNT: *(consulting his watch)*
Good heavens! One o'clock!
LOISEAU: Let's eat!

*Madame Loiseau takes out a paper packet and starts
to undo the string.*

COUNTESS: *(to her friends)* Yes, I think we might.
MME. C-L.: Oh good!

*All follow suit (including the nuns and Cornudet), and
start to undo their parcels.*

LOISEAU: *(to his wife)* Cut me a slice, will ya?
MME. LOISEAU: Here you go.
COUNTESS: Oh look! Rabbit! I love rabbit!
MME. C-L.: Me too!
C-L.: This is good.
COUNT: Mmm hmm. Mmm hmm.

As the eating merrily goes on, Boule starts to weep. Great tears form and roll down her cheeks. No one looks at her.

After a while, Mme. Carré-Lamadon taps her husband on the knee and casts an eye in Boule's direction.

[46] MME. C-L.: Darling. Darling, look!
C-L.: (*shrugging*) What can I do? It isn't my fault.

Madame Loiseau casts a much fiercer look at Boule, and gives her husband a poke.

MME. LOISEAU: Psst. See that?
She's crying 'cause she's ashamed of herself.

Cornudet stretches his legs out under the facing bench, elaborately peeling his hard-boiled egg while whistling a snippet of the Marseillaise.

All this while, the coach darkens, until only a light is left on Boule's face.

Then it goes out.

THE END