

**BACKWASH** : a backward current;  
(Slang) the dire consequences  
Collins English Dictionary

*Only one thing matters: learning how to lose*  
E.M. Cioran

to Yvonne Cimon  
to Philippe Léger

## THE TIME

The present i.e. 1991 or 1992 – the time when the film was made

## THE CHARACTERS

JEANNE O'NEIL	Age 55-60	The Mother. Owner of the inn
ALEX O'NEIL	Age 27-28	Jeanne's son. An occasional sailor
ALFA O'NEIL	Age 30	Jeanne's daughter and Alex's sister
JEAN-LOUIS MACKENZIE	Age 45	Former employee of the inn. Friend of the O'Neils
BARBARA KRUGER	Age 20-25	Young German tourist. Very beautiful
MR SIMON	Age 65	Customer of the inn
WILFRED BOURGAULT	Age 30-35	Guy from the village. Alfa's suitor
JOS	Age 50	Owner of the village bar

## LOCATIONS

### THE FOUR WINDS INN

Situated on the seashore (or on the bank of the river where it's as wide as the sea), set back from the village, the O'Neil family's house was converted into an inn for holiday makers some twenty years ago.

A quay, a railway track, the hull of a ship, the village bar, the beaches, fields and roads in the area.

## NOTE

This is a film with no music other than that of the sea, the wind, the surf, the songs hummed by the characters, and the records and musical instruments they play.

**SCENE 1**

**OUTSIDE, DAYTIME - CROSSROADS**

Deep in the countryside. A dirt road crosses the highway. No dwellings in sight. The fields of grass are swaying under the slightest of breezes.

**BEGINNING OF THE OPENING CREDITS**

A bus comes along the main road. It stops at the intersection. A young man gets off. It's ALEX. His only luggage is a cello case. The bus moves off. The silence returns.

Alex remains there, standing by the roadside, as if he doesn't know where he has been let off. Nothing moves except his hair suddenly caught by the breeze. Eventually he lays his luggage on the ground and sits on it, elbows on knees, his head bowed. Now and again he scans the horizon at the end of the dirt track. Nobody comes.

Perhaps we hear the first movement of Bach's *Cello Suite in D minor*

Alex is motionless. He seems to be listening to the music carried by the light wind.

A car comes along the highway, in the same direction as the bus. Its increasing noise eventually drowns the music which fades out.

**END OF THE OPENING CREDITS**

With an indifferent eye Alex watches the car that passes close by him, turning right into the dirt track. But suddenly, a bit further on, the car brakes. Straight away Alex becomes anxious. He rises and turns slightly away, as if wishing to avoid being recognized.

The car moves towards us in reverse gear. The driver gets out. He's alone. It's JEAN-LOUIS. He approaches Alex who makes up his mind to face him. The two men look at each other, one in incredulity, the other in mistrust.

JEAN-LOUIS: Is that you, Alex?

It's only on hearing his voice that Alex recognises Jean-Louis. Then his face lights up with a big smile. Jean-Louis holds out his hand. But instead of shaking it, Alex takes up a boxing position and pretends to punch him in the stomach. Jean-Louis reacts automatically and doubles over. Alex takes advantage of this and seizes his face between his hands; forcibly he kisses Jean-Louis on the mouth, Russian style.... he pushes him back, holds him at arms length and looks him straight in the eye

ALEX: Tell me everything.

JEAN-LOUIS: You coming or going?

ALEX (releasing Jean-Louis): Who knows?

JEAN-LOUIS: I thought you were off around the world.

ALEX: I might have been dead, the whole crew could have been killed, you wouldn't have given a shit. I've just come ashore.

JEAN-LOUIS: So what's this? (*pointing to the cello case*)

ALEX: I don't know if I've done the right thing by coming back. You know when you arrive somewhere, you never know when you'll be leaving again.

JEAN-LOUIS: What about your mother? Your sister?

ALEX: You couldn't leave either. Hurry up and get out of here. (*They continue to stare at one another. Alex suddenly becomes violent*). Get the hell out of here, I'm telling you. You're trouble. You bring bad luck. (*But he calms down quickly*). Too late ....

Too late indeed: along the side road, in a cloud of dust, comes a dilapidated car, a garish-coloured Duster with a broken exhaust. Alex and Jean-Louis watch this car speed past them, only to brake at the last minute, skidding on the gravel. The driver is a woman - ALFA. She is accompanied by JEANNE, her mother. They are as different from one another as they can possibly be. Alfa leaves the engine running. She runs out of the car. Jeanne takes her time approaching Alex. We get the impression that the presence of a stranger upsets her.

ALEX: (*to Jean-Louis*) Welcome aboard.

ALFA: (*to Alex*) Sorry, I didn't notice the time. Have you been here for a while?

JEAN-LOUIS: Hello, Alfa.

ALEX: (*to Alfa*) Hello, little sister. Don't you recognise your lover?

Alfa stops, dumbfounded. Completely ill at ease, she blushes as she recognises the stranger who's smiling at her.

ALFA: (*to Alex, under her breath*) Idiot!

JEANNE: Jean-Louis? Did you bring him here? What's going on?

ALEX: It's fate, Mom. Destiny. Aren't you going to give me a kiss?

Rather coldly, Jeanne condescends to offer her cheek to her son. Mimicking a loving son, he plants a kiss on it.

JEANNE: (*to Jean-Louis*) Did you go off travelling? I never thought we'd see you again.

JEAN-LOUIS : (*looking at the 3 of them*) I can't believe it ....

The two cars are blocking the road. A horn sounds; a small van wants to get past.

ALFA (*grabbing Alex's luggage*) You can swap your secrets somewhere else. (*She pulls Alex towards her car*). Come on.

Jeanne therefore finds herself forced to go with Jean-Louis. The driver of the van has opened his door - it's JOS, the owner of the village bar.

JOS: *(to Alex)* Back onshore already?

ALEX: I sank the boat.

JOS: You weren't considerate enough to go down with it yourself?

ALFA: *(to Alex, as she manoeuvres the steering wheel)* That's it! The whole village will know you've come back.

ALEX: That'll keep them happy. Bad news always goes down well.

ALFA: Oh, shut up.

The cars drive off at speed, Jean-Louis following Alfa. The van moves on. The crossroads is deserted, abandoned to the antics of the wind.

**SCENE 2**

**DAYTIME – INSIDE THE MOVING CARS**

**2.1 IN JEAN-LOUIS' CAR**

We travel in silence. Jean-Louis drives slowly, watching the passing countryside. Beside him, Jeanne looks straight ahead.

JEAN-LOUIS: Would he have taken the train?

JEANNE: (*amazed*) The train? There are no trains any more. Not for a long time. (*She looks at him with some affection*) Things have changed Jean-Louis. I hope you know that.

JEAN-LOUIS: You've not changed. You're just the same.

JEANNE: The station was demolished. The platform is in ruins.

JEAN-LOUIS: And the inn?

JEANNE: I look after it on my own. Visitors are getting scarcer. (*a beat*). But what about you? What have you been doing all these years?

JEAN-LOUIS: Lots of things. Not anything that I'd dreamed about doing. I thought of you a lot.

JEANNE: (*turning away from him*) You shouldn't have. You can't hang on to bad memories. Far less to good ones.

She goes quiet. He doesn't know what to say. Silence descends.

**2.2 IN ALFA'S CAR**

She drives fast, hands riveted to the steering wheel, an unpleasant, uninterested expression on her face. Sprawled on his seat, Alex doesn't take his eyes off her, a slight smile to his lips, a smile more sad than provocative.

ALFA: (*suddenly exploding*) When are you going to learn to keep your big mouth shut?

ALEX: (*feigning surprise*) I haven't said a word for at least five minutes.

ALFA: You said one too many a moment ago. What wouldn't you do to get attention?

ALEX: What? Weren't you in love with Jean-Louis at the time?

ALFA: I was sixteen, Alex! Can't you understand that?

ALEX: You were sixteen when Jean-Louis arrived. But you were twenty when he left.

ALFA: What about you? When are you leaving?

ALEX: You're going to be proud of me, little sister. Because I've learned one thing - boats are not for me. I'm not going away any more.

ALFA: What would surprise me is if you'd managed to put some money away.

ALEX: Not enough to pay you back, no.

ALFA: (*looking at him for the first time since they got in the car*) I'd like to make this clear, Alex. Don't expect to live off me.

IN JEAN-LOUIS' CAR

Jeanne has relaxed. She's speaking more readily.

JEANNE: What do you want to do? I was hoping that he'd spend a bit of time at the inn. He chose the boats.

JEAN-LOUIS: Like his father.

JEANNE: Not like his father. His father loved his job. For Alex, boats were a means of escape. The South Seas, you understand, adventure. Because inland navigation is also washed up now. So much the better. If you knew how much I hated the boats.

JEAN-LOUIS: Has he been gone long?

JEANNE: Five, maybe six months, I don't know. Did you have time to have a little talk with him?

JEAN-LOUIS: No.

JEANNE: I don't know if he'll ever make anything of his life. (*a beat*) How many days are you here for?

JEAN-LOUIS: My time's my own. But don't worry ....

JEANNE: (*breaking in*) Who knows? Maybe you've come back for a reason.

JEAN-LOUIS: There's always a reason.

JEANNE: You should stay a while. I'm ... I'm glad you're here.

JEAN-LOUIS: I was thinking of buying a boat.

Jean-Louis accelerates. The car speeds away from us. We continue watching the empty countryside for a bit.

**SCENE 3**

INSIDE, DAYTIME – THE INN / LOUNGE/DINING ROOM

A silent interior which seems to have been abandoned, as if everything had been carefully tidied away because it's not to be used any more. The camera pans over the austere furniture; the chairs lined up against the wall, four square tables covered with starched white tablecloths, a dying green plant in a pot, a closed piano, a non-matching armchair and couch, dull floral curtains, a record player from the sixties, a blackened hearth piled with newspapers. On the staircase leading to the next floor, a threadbare red carpet. Nothing, not a painting, not a picture on the faded walls.

At the end of the tracking shot, the camera stops at the glass front door just as Alfa arrives. But the door sticks. Alex manages to open it by pushing it far too forcefully with his shoulder. So he hurtles into the middle of the room where he drops his luggage (the cello case) without the slightest bit of care.

ALEX: (*turning around*) Home, sweet home!

ALFA: (*trying in vain to close the swollen door*) It sure does pay to economise on the heating! There's not a bloody door that shuts in this house. (*turning towards Alex*). If only you knew the difference between a screwdriver and a plane!

ALEX: Why?

ALFA: You'd have something to keep you busy.

She goes towards the door of the cellar under the staircase.

ALEX: (*catching her by the arm*) Where are you going?

ALFA: (*trying to get away*) To look for the plane.

ALEX: (*hugging her*) Hey! I've just arrived!

ALFA: (*resisting him, but without struggling*) All the more reason to have something to do.

ALEX: What about leaving this to Jean-Louis? Your gorgeous Jean-Louis is good with his hands.

ALFA: There's always somebody else to do your work, eh?

She tries to get away again but doesn't succeed.

ALFA: Tell me honestly. How long were you at sea this time? Were you only on one boat?

ALEX: I lasted three weeks. Blind drunk half the time.

ALFA: So where were you the rest of the time?

ALEX: I missed you. You haven't even kissed me.

He tries to kiss her on the mouth. She turns her head violently.

ALFA: (*struggling*) Don't start, Alex!

ALEX: Don't pretend you don't feel anything. I know you better than that.

A silent struggle ensues. Taking advantage of his strength, he kisses her on the neck, the throat, on the lips, as though he was playing at devouring her. But this is no game; it's all about sexual aggression. Even though Alfa grabs him by the hair to pull his head back, she can't make him let go. She finally manages to free herself by kneeing him in the groin. Alex lets out a barely audible moan and doubles up. She retreats to the staircase. He slides to the floor in the foetal position.

Already she's sorry for the violence of her action, torn between the desire to run away and to go to help him. She starts to move towards him but stops herself. She sits on a stair looking away, and lets the tears flow. Recovering, he turns onto his back. He sees her crying. He crawls towards her and manages to stand up, hanging on to the banister.

ALEX: *(in a whisper)* Forgive me ... forgive me.

She moves up just a little to make room for him. He falls onto the step beside her. There the two of them remain, seated side by side, elbows on knees, without touching or looking at each other, she trying to hold back the tears by tilting her head back, he using the same motion to catch his breath. Like two children sharing a disappointment that is too big for them.

A strange appeasement ....

The spell is broken by the arrival of a car on the gravel of the yard.

ALFA: *(leaping to her feet)* They're here!

Instinctively she rubs her face, fluffs up her hair. She adjusts her clothes. She sits down on an armchair at the moment when Jeanne pushes open the door to let Jean-Louis in.

JEANNE: Ah, you're here.

ALEX: *(rising slowly)* We were wondering where you were.

Jeanne quickly notices that something's wrong.

JEANNE: *(to Alfa)* What's happened? *(to Alex)* Don't you feel well?

ALEX: I was in a hurry to get here. I haven't slept much these past few days.

He kneels down to open the cello case which turns out to be only a suitcase, crammed with clothes that he begins to rummage through.

JEANNE: *(to Jean-Louis)* Don't just stand there. Go and sit down. Can I make you a coffee?

ALFA: *(to Jean-Louis)* Is that all the luggage you've got?

His hands are indeed empty.

JEAN-LOUIS: Ah, but I've got everything I need. (*He takes a toothbrush out of his pocket*). Travelling light.

In the jumble of his belongings, Alex lays his hands on a bottle of rum. He holds it out to Jean-Louis.

ALEX: Let's have a drink, Jean-Louis. Did you see that? I've come home, and nothing's laid on.

JEANNE: I've got some wine in the cellar if you want. You must be hungry, Jean-Louis. Do you want something to eat?

ALEX: (*to Jeanne*): Don't touch a thing, I'll look after it all. (*to Jean-Louis*) It's a celebration, Jean-Louis. It's been such a long time since you and I've been back.

**SCENE 4**

INSIDE, EARLY EVENING – THE INN / KITCHEN

A real hotel kitchen, a little old-fashioned but clinically spotless. A propane gas oven, zinc counters shiny with wear, steamers, a large work table. Nothing decorating the enamelled walls. No colour, apart from those of a 1991 or '92 calendar. Brash lighting from bare light bulbs on the end of their wires.

For the moment this kitchen has been turned upside down, practically ransacked. Vegetables, bottles of oil, spices, saucepans, flour, have been taken out of cupboards and fridges. A pile of dirty dishes and utensils clutters the old sink. The mixer is running, frying pans are sizzling on the heat. And the wine is flowing, into the sauce, into glasses.

The scene opens on the stems of glasses that are being filled with red wine  
...

Alex is doing the pouring. We discover that he has set everyone to work and is blithely directing the whole operation. Standing at the table that occupies the middle of the room, Jean-Louis is cutting vegetables, while Jeanne is breaking eggs which she is blending into a cake mixture. Seated rather nonchalantly on the counter beside the stove, Alfa is stirring a simmering sauce.

Alex sets a leg of lamb on a board; he carves it with quick, neat movements.

ALEX: (*while carving, concentrating completely on his task*) Do you see, Jean-Louis, what a crew we make, just us four? We could do great things. A lovely little boat just to ourselves. No owner, no boss, no captain. As you can see, I can manage pretty well in the kitchen. With you and Alfa waiting table, Mom would only have the books to do. We would share the housework and the maintenance. Just the four of us, no other staff. Equal share of the profits. A sort of co-operative. I thought about it when I was away. I've been thinking about it for a while. With three, it wasn't possible  
....

Suddenly Alex stops what he's doing. There's despair in his eyes. Alfa and Jeanne exchange a look; they're on the alert. He downs his glass of wine in one go.

ALEX: You can't carry on running the dump all on your own, Mom. You're killing yourself ...

So saying, he plunges the knife into the piece of meat, as though he were stabbing someone in the throat ... then he falls silent in front of the knife embedded in the board.

JEANNE: (*quietly, as you would address a sleepwalker*) Alex? ...

He looks around as though he doesn't know where he is. His frenzied vitality suddenly returns.

ALEX: Alfa, the vegetables!

They're well and truly burning. Startled by the shout, Alfa jumps. Coming down from the counter where she is still sitting, she knocks her glass of wine which shatters on the tiles, lying like a bloodstain at her feet.

ALEX: (suddenly worried, and approaching his sister cautiously) Are you hurt? You're hurt, there's blood ...

Indeed, from his point of view, instead of wine spreading on the floor by Alfa's feet, it's blood that he sees. He takes her hands, feeling her arms as if looking for a wound.

ALFA: It's wine, Alex.

And it's wine that he sees.

**SCENE 5**

INSIDE, NIGHT TIME – THE INN / DINING ROOM AND LOUNGE

An almost total change of pitch. Night has set in. Through the open door, an occasional current of air that stirs the curtains and the flames of the candles on the table where the meal is drawing to a close. For the moment, all four are silent, Alfa facing Jeanne, Alex facing Jean-Louis.

Dessert has been served. Alex hasn't touched his portion of cake. He sits upright, his hands flat on the table, his eyes half-closed, a strange smile playing on his lips. Alfa has lit a cigarette and watches the smoke rise to the ceiling. Jean-Louis is playing with a piece of bread on the tablecloth. He yawns. Jeanne is the only one still eating, perhaps the only one who is enjoying the peace of the moment without reservation.

JEANNE: *(swallowing the last mouthful of cake and laying down her fork)* Give me a cigarette, Alfa.

JEAN-LOUIS: *(passing the packet to her)* That's right, I'd forgotten; you smoke.

JEANNE: Not any more, no. The rarer they are, the better they are. *(She takes her time lighting it)* You're asleep on your feet, Jean-Louis.

JEAN-LOUIS: I'm tired, yes.

ALEX: Don't go to sleep, Jean-Louis. Don't go to sleep.

JEANNE: We all have to go to sleep.

ALEX: *(in an even voice, without raising the tone)* We all have to go and dance. We have to go round all the hotels. *(getting excited)* Better than that! I've had an idea. We climb the cape and wait for the sunrise. *(He looks at each of them in turn)* No? *(The sparkle in his eyes fades).* No .... *(a beat)* ... Mom? *(He takes her cigarette and draws a mouthful of smoke).* Have I embarrassed you, Mom?

The question takes her aback. She contents herself with gently taking her cigarette back, taking the opportunity to touch the tips of his fingers.

ALEX: I haven't told you anything yet. You haven't asked me anything either.

JEANNE: You'll tell me everything tomorrow.

ALEX: I don't know if I can stay long.

JEANNE: You've hardly even arrived.

ALEX: Play the piano for us.

JEANNE: Let's not waste the evening if you don't want to.

Rising from his seat, Jean-Louis starts to clear the plates. But Alex grabs his arm.

ALEX: *(with authority)* Don't move. *(with his other hand he takes Alfa's arm)* Let's not move ...

They stay like this for several moments. Then he lets go and Jean-Louis sits down again.

Suddenly it's Alex who gets up and leaves the table as if a voice had called him.

JEANNE: (*when she's sure he's too far away to hear*) Perhaps he's right, really. The last time I saw the daylight rise over the sea, I was pregnant with Alfa.

ALFA: You were still in love. You have to be in love to do that.

JEANNE: Maybe you just have to love life.

Suddenly the first bars of a song with a tango rhythm is heard. The music comes from the far end of the lounge but it is loud.

ALFA: I hope you didn't really intend going to sleep.

JEAN-LOUIS: (*recognising the record*) "The Crows"....

ALFA: His hit parade doesn't change often, as you can see. Except that, in the past, you're the one who played the records, Jean-Louis.

We hear the words of Rimbaud set to music by Ferré :

*Lord, when a chill is in the meadows,  
When in exhausted hamlets  
Perpetual prayer-times are silent...  
Down on defoliated tracks of wildness  
Let them fall from vast fuming skies—  
The beloved, delicious crows.*

*Bizarre shock-troops that rasp and shriek,  
Biting winds attack your rookeries!  
Along jaundiced rivers,  
Over roads of decrepit calvaries,  
Over ditches and pits—  
Scatter and surge for victory!  
Scatter and surge for victory!...*

<<< Note: This song translation is by John Kinsella, fellow of Churchill College, Cambridge University  
Disk is Les Poetes, Vol. 3: Verlaine et Rimbaud by Léo Ferré >>>

Alex comes back to the table. He stops behind Jeanne's chair, places his hands on his mother's shoulders and massages them lightly. He has closed his eyes. As if reading her with the tips of his fingers, Alex's hands travel along her neck, brush her face, her closed eyelids, clasp her forehead. He leans over her and breathes her hair.

ALEX: (*in Jeanne's ear, but loud enough for the others to hear*) Mom, you're beautiful. I don't understand how my father didn't love you more than he did.

Under the caresses, Jeanne hasn't moved. She has only blushed. When he speaks, it's more than she can bear. She shakes her head to stem the tears. Alex's hands fall.

JEANNE: (*in a trembling voice*) Let the dead rest in peace!

Alfa is the first to react. In the most natural way in the world, she has gone and taken her brother by the waist.

ALFA: Come on, dance with me.

Alex obeys. But as they pass Jean-Louis, Alex grabs him round the neck.

ALEX: Come and dance, Jean-Louis.

Alfa is strong. She's already dragging him through the steps of the tango. Jean-Louis doesn't look at them. He's watching Jeanne.

Taking advantage of the fact that Alex's back is turned while he is dancing, Jeanne makes her escape towards the staircase and runs upstairs.

But Alex isn't dancing. Alfa is only gliding round him as if he were a statue. He knows very well that she only wants to distract him. He has turned towards the exit. He goes out into the night, leaving the door wide open behind him.

Alfa continues her disjointed tango on her own, until Ferré has finished with Rimbaud's poem, singing along with the last verse:

*Imprisoning grass in dark forest greenery,  
Those chained by defeat without destiny.  
Those chained by defeat without destiny*

**SCENE 6**

**INSIDE, NIGHT TIME – THE INN / A BEDROOM**

The room is not very big. One bed, one or two windows, a bedside table, a chest of drawers, a washbasin. A room (as we shall see) roughly similar to all the others in the house. Cleanliness, bareness, primary colours; the faded white of the walls, the red of the curtains, the blue of the bedspread, the yellow of the lampshade.

The scene begins with Jeanne unfolding a sheet which she shakes out over a bare mattress. The sheet doesn't spread out well and she begins again brusquely. Alfa has entered without making a sound. She catches the other end of the sheet and helps Jeanne to stretch it out.

JEANNE: *(without breaking her stride)* I'm still capable of making a bed on my own.

Despite the rebuff, Alfa continues to help.

ALFA: *(without acrimony)* I know, Mom, you never need anybody. Don't worry, I've seen nothing, I can't see that your eyes are red.

JEANNE: Go and tell Jean-Louis that his room's ready.

ALFA: Jean-Louis must be proud of us. Are you proud of your son, Mom? *(a beat)* What's keeping you from chucking him out?

JEANNE: I didn't teach you to talk like that!

ALFA: You taught me to keep quiet. The only things I know how to say are bitchy remarks. The rest of the time, I copy you, Mom, I shut my mouth. There'll come a time when you learn to open yours.

JEANNE: *(sitting down on the made bed)* He's trying to sink the boat ... well, let the boat sink! What do you want me to do? I would never throw him out.

ALFA: Speak to him as though he were a man. You speak to me as though I were a man.

JEANNE: You have both feet on the ground.

ALFA: I didn't have any choice.

JEANNE: What would you do in my place? *(vehemently all of a sudden)* What about when you give him half your wages, when you let him go off for three days in your car, when ... when you let him sleep in your bed?

ALFA: *(sitting down on the bed too, some distance from Jeanne)* I'm his sister. Not his mother.

JEANNE: Have I been such a bad mother?

Alfa looks at her mother's hand. This hand that has held her own.... this hand that she dares to touch and which Jeanne immediately withdraws.

Alfa gets up and goes to the door. But she stops on the threshold.

ALFA: Do you really think he's been sailing for five months?

JEANNE: I'm not a fool. I know what a man coming ashore looks like. (*a beat*) He's his father's son. Except that his father never drank at sea.

ALFA: (*a little ironically*) So you think that alcohol's the problem?

JEANNE: (*to herself, as though she is alone*) At least his father knew what he wanted out of life. He just never took the trouble to find out what other people wanted.

She walks past Alfa and leaves. But she stops again. The two women have their backs to each other.

JEANNE: At least he's succeeded in one thing; in making us talk. Good night.

She goes off at a brisk pace. The camera remains on Alfa who is motionless. We hear a door slamming at the far end of the corridor.

**SCENE 7**

**OUTSIDE, NIGHT TIME – THE INN / ON THE FLIGHT OF STEPS**

The set is lit only by the light that comes from inside the house via the open door. This light describes a neat rectangle on the bare grass of the lawn. Beyond, in the darkness, we hear the dying breath of the waves as they expire on the shore.

Jean-Louis is seated at the top of the steps, leaning on the railings, his head raised towards the sky. He takes one last puff of his cigarette (*scarcely touched*) and throws it onto the grass in front of him. It's then that he jumps: emerging from the shadows, a figure comes forward into the rectangle of light. It's Alex, of course.

He leans down to pick up the still smoking butt and puts it between his lips. He stays there, standing in the light, looking at the front of the house.

ALEX: There's a light in your old room. Your bed must be ready.

He puts out the cigarette and comes to sit on the staircase too, opposite Jean-Louis, using the other railing as a back rest.

ALEX: I was watching you watching the stars. Which one are you looking for? Aldebaran?

JEAN-LOUIS: No one in particular. I don't know anything about them.

ALEX: Aldebaran's easy. You were right to choose the most beautiful. The two most beautiful. Aldebaran, in the constellation of Taurus ... not as bright as Betelgeuse in the constellation of Orion. Or maybe it's the opposite. If you can tell which is which, you're never lost. (*a beat*) You don't say much, Jean-Louis. You're right, those who don't speak don't speak nonsense. You can't speak, I'm not letting you get a word in. You can't rely on me to let you have your say. Tomorrow, I won't remember what I've been talking about. I'm going to repeat the same damned stuff. You're going to listen to me as though it were the first time. And I'm going to want to punch you in the face. Go to bed, Jean-Louis. I'm going to talk to the stars. It's not a problem if I don't know which is which any more. Don't have nightmares. I'll have them all for you.

Jean-Louis doesn't move. Alex keeps quiet. On each side of the flight of steps, each leaning on his railing, they are in exactly the same position, as though reflecting each other, fifteen years apart.

**SCENE 8**

**INSIDE, NIGHT TIME – THE INN / JEANNE’S BEDROOM AND THE CORRIDOR**

It’s the biggest bedroom in the house, the marital bedroom. There too the same bareness, the same preference for primary colours. The furniture dates back to the ‘40s: two chests of drawers, two bedside tables, a dressing table, all matching, cheap and ugly. Only the bed is new, a box-spring model chosen for comfort.

Jeanne is sitting in front of the dressing table, in the half-light. She has slipped on a nightdress, a dressing gown. She’s holding a hairbrush but not using it. She seems to be looking at her reflection in the round mirror; in fact she’s looking beyond herself, into the sea of memories which has shaped her present face of aging womanhood.

Suddenly she hears a noise – a scarcely perceptible footstep on the stair. She’s surprised to find herself sitting in front of the mirror with a hairbrush in her hands, so she lays it on the chest of drawers and goes quietly to the door.

Jean-Louis is creeping stealthily along the corridor, as though he might waken the dozens of guests who are not staying at the inn. A door opens behind him. He sees Jeanne in the doorway.

JEANNE: (*in a very low voice*) I’ve made up your room. Do you remember it? The last one at the end, on the right. Sleep well.

He starts to go to her, but she has already disappeared behind the closed door.

The camera returns to her, leaning back against the door with all her weight, as if a lifetime of weariness has, at this moment, been laid on her shoulders.

**SCENE 9**

INSIDE, NIGHT TIME – THE INN / JEAN-LOUIS' BEDROOM

A few moments later. Jean-Louis is standing in the doorway of his bedroom which is lit by a single night light. He looks as though he's about to turn around.

ALFA: No, no, you haven't made a mistake. Shut the door, will you?

We see her standing by the window, arms crossed over her chest, one shoulder leaning against the wall. She must have been there since Jeanne left. Jean-Louis closes the door and goes to switch on the bedside lamp. He falls on the bed, lying on his back, hands behind his head.

ALFA: *(without changing position, without even looking at him)* Anyway, you won't be able to sleep any more than I will. *(a beat)*. I can keep quiet if you like. I just don't fancy being on my own.

JEAN-LOUIS: Sit down.

She sits in a small armchair and puts her feet up on the bed.

ALFA: You really don't look like I remember. I imagined you would be much more ... much more, I don't know what.

JEAN-LOUIS: Like I was ten years ago?

ALFA: Like you probably never were. *(a beat)* When I think of the boyfriends I've had. *(She laughs)* Most of them were a lot better looking than you could ever be.

JEAN-LOUIS: *(amused)* And that makes you laugh?

ALFA: I'm laughing at myself. I really convinced myself that I was in love with you. You didn't even notice.

JEAN-LOUIS: Alex guessed everything.

ALFA: *(changing her tone completely)* Don't judge by appearances. I would have liked to have been like him sometimes. *(Changing her tone again)* I'm looking at you now. In fact I've maybe never really looked at you.

JEAN-LOUIS: It doesn't seem all that fantastic, what you're looking at.

ALFA: Can I lie down beside you? I won't touch you.

He slides over to make room for her. He puts the lamp on the floor so that it doesn't dazzle them. She stretches out like him, on her back.

JEAN-LOUIS: I don't think I've been happy for years.

ALFA: What about then ... were you happy or unhappy?

JEAN-LOUIS: It's like I was ... in the right place.

She puts her arm round Jean-Louis' waist and rests her head on his chest.

ALFA: What sort of life would I have had somewhere else, do you think? I never wanted to leave.

JEAN-LOUIS: You're the one who has to take over the inn.

ALFA: (*rolling back onto her back*) So go and tell her that.

Some time elapses like this. Both have their eyes open, looking at the ceiling.

JEAN-LOUIS: What are his love affairs like?

ALFA: Wildly enthusiastic for a fortnight. What burns fast goes out just as quickly. The number of girls I've seen come and go ..... My boyfriends and his girlfriends, there were enough to restock the village.

JEAN-LOUIS: He's the one really ... that you always loved.

ALFA: Don't say that.

JEAN-LOUIS: It happens, you know.

ALFA: Everyone seems to know what love is. I would like to hear it, just once, from people who are actually in love. Not just because they think they ought to be. Not just so they can sleep together. (*She sits up and clasps her knees in her arms*) I hope you have nothing to hide. He has a gift for putting his finger where it hurts. (*a beat*) You know what I think? (*a beat*) I think my brother is sick. I think he's dying. If he isn't already dead. (*She sits on the edge of the bed, feet on the floor, her back turned towards Jean-Louis.*) Sometimes I would like to take him in my arms ... and smother him. (*She goes back to the window to resume her initial position*) Doesn't that make you want to live? (*a beat*) What time is it?

JEAN-LOUIS: No idea.

ALFA: The dawn will never come.

**SCENE 10**

10.1 INSIDE, NIGHT TIME – THE INN / THE KITCHEN

Since the preparation of the meal, the kitchen hasn't been tidied. A solitary light is now burning. It forms a cone over the large work table which stands in the middle of the room.

We advance slowly towards this illuminated area, towards Alex's back; he is seated at the table, chest bent forwards as if he were asleep, his head placed between his outstretched arms. In front of him, a stack of bottles and dishes. He has been amusing himself by building a pyramid of all the objects near at hand.

Suddenly, without raising his head, a sweep with the back of his arm causes the pyramid to collapse in a crash of broken glass. In the same movement he has pushed away the table whose legs scrape the floor. His chair topples over behind him as he leaps to his feet. He remains standing for a moment, on the alert, as if struck by an idea, by an unshakeable resolution. He exits the room with a determined stride, practically running.

10.2 INSIDE, NIGHT TIME – THE INN / JEANNE'S BEDROOM

Lying on her back, Jeanne's eyes are wide open. Perhaps she has heard the crash of the dishes below. Perhaps she was only waiting for this moment which is about to happen and which is approaching with noisy footsteps on the staircase. She doesn't even jump when the door yields under Alex's weight and in two strides he's leaning over her.

ALEX: Wake up, Mom. Wake up, we've got to go.

Calmly she stretches out her arm and switches on the light. She looks into his eyes. He takes her hand, tenderly.

JEANNE: (*as if talking to a child who's had a bad dream*) What are you doing up, Alex? Go back to sleep.

ALEX: There's no more time for sleeping, Mom. I've come to get you. Life here is over. We have to go away.

He takes her in his arms and gently forces her to rise.

JEANNE: (*appearing to be very calm, and trying to catch his eye*) Where do you want us to go, Alex?

ALEX: It's a big world, Mom. It's the start of a new life.

JEANNE: (*trying to play for time*) But how are we to go? We can't go like this in the middle of the night. Let me get ready, I'm not even dressed.

ALEX: (*He's getting more insistent and tries to drag her out of the bedroom*) You needn't be scared, Mom. I'll be there all the time, I'm going to protect you. The world is beautiful, Mom, if you only knew.

JEANNE: (*resisting him*) We can't leave Alfa behind, come on now, Alex. Why are you in such a hurry?

ALEX: (*his tone rising*) You don't see that we're being buried alive. You have to wake up! You have to start living! Come on!

JEANNE: (*rising up and grabbing him by the shoulders, she shouts*) No!! Listen to me, Alex!! Get your wits about you!!

ALEX: (*suddenly hard*) I can't leave you, Mom. Do you understand? The house is on fire.

JEANNE: Stop! You're mad!

In a trice she manages to get free. She runs into the corridor where he catches hold of her.

JEANNE: (*screaming*) Alfa!!

ALEX: (*with a horribly menacing softness*) Why are you shouting, Mom? You don't need anyone. I'm here.

He tries to lift her up.

JEANNE: Let me go, let me go, you're hurting me.

Jean-Louis comes running, followed by Alfa. He grabs Alex from behind, pulls him off Jeanne and pins him against the wall with an astonishing force. Alex's head has hit the wall. He is no longer struggling, but Jean-Louis continues to keep him pressed hard between himself and the wall.

JEAN-LOUIS: Don't stand there, Jeanne. Off you go.

JEANNE: Don't hurt him. It's tiredness. He's too tired.

ALFA: Come on, Mom, come on. I'll make him go to sleep.

Alfa leads Jeanne to her room.

Alex flops on to Jean-Louis' shoulder, totally exhausted as if he's been exorcised.

ALEX: (*in a whisper*) Okay ...okay ... it's okay, Jean-Louis.

Only now does Jean-Louis loosen his grip and back up, still on his guard. Leaning against the wall, Alex recovers his breath for a few moments, looking Jean-Louis in the eye. An inquiring look, wanting an answer but knowing full well that no explanation is possible. Releasing his own tension, Jean-Louis also leans against the wall. Alex moves away. He makes his way along the corridor, taking great care to walk straight, like the survivor of an accident, as far as a door similar to those of the bedrooms. It's the door that conceals the staircase to the attic. He starts up the stair leaving the door open behind him.

Alfa passes Jean-Louis without speaking to him. She goes straight to the attic staircase but doesn't go up. Jean-Louis joins her. She turns abruptly towards him as if to block his way.

ALFA: It'll be all right now. He needs to be left alone. (*Jean-Louis looks at her ... she repeats each word separately*) He - needs - to - be - left - alone.

So he turns round. She lets him go. She sits down on the steps ...

**SCENE 11**

INSIDE, NIGHT TIME – THE INN / THE ATTIC/ALEX’S BEDROOM

It’s a converted loft. In fact it consists of a large attic room bordered by storage cupboards built into the structure of the roof. Several beds line the space, making a sort of dormitory. Alex has made his den there, near one of the windows. What first strikes the eye is the accumulation of model boats; a galleon, a submarine, a triple-masted sailboat and a home-made schooner. There are piles of old magazines such as *Paris-Match*, *Life* and *National Geographic*. Side by side on the walls are religious pictures of first communion and reproductions of paintings (Gauguin, van Gogh), greetings cards and Polaroid photos, all pinned up any old how. On an old chest of drawers, a bust of Beethoven is wearing a sailor’s hat with a red pompom. And standing in the corner the famous cello, whose case we’ve already seen used as a suitcase.

Alex is sitting on an upright chair with missing rungs. The cello is within reach. He takes hold of it and steadies it between his thighs. He has to perform some contortions to pick up the bow that is lying on the ground. He positions himself to play and closes his eyes as if in concentration, to summon the music. With a determined gesture he draws the bow across the strings, succeeding only in producing a derisory and discordant wail. He drops the bow. Lifting the cello he throws it on the nearest bed ... which he then lies down on, turning his back to the instrument. As we approach him we discover that he’s crying, without making the slightest sob. After the tears he turns and puts his arm round the cello, clasping it with his leg. Perhaps he has finally fallen asleep.

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**FLEETING VISION IN BLACK AND WHITE**

At the pitching prow of a boat sailing through a storm, a little boy (seen from the back) hangs on to the ship’s rail and holds his head into the wind. We hear Jeanne’s distant voice: “Alex? ... Alex? ...” The vision flares up. Dissolve to white.

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**SCENE 12**

OUTSIDE, MORNING – MEADOWS, DUNES AND BEACH

The red orb of the sun is rising over the sea.

The sea breeze shakes the few surviving apple trees which grow old in the middle of the overgrown field, insidiously being invaded by firs and cedars.

Above the wave of tall grass comes ... a cello. Carrying the instrument on his back, Alex makes his way to the beach. He takes long strides and we focus on his footsteps in order to scale the dunes which border the seafront. And there, facing into the wind, at the edge of a sandy cliff, seated on a tree stump he gets ready to play.

And he plays, unquestionably, Bach's *Suite in D minor*. Music floods the whole field, completely drowning out the wind and the waves. We are listening to what he would like to hear himself playing. The illusion is perfect. But little by little the true sounds that the bow is producing destroys the pure music, leaving only the squeaking of badly tuned strings.

Alex throws the cello to the foot of the cliff. The instrument bounces against the wall of sand and comes to rest on the beach with a final, dull reverberation.

Hurling at full speed down the steep slope, Alex pulls off his clothes to arrive half naked on the shore. He quickly strips off his jeans and underpants and runs to throw himself into the sea, disappearing beneath the water, coming leaping back up like a mad dog, and diving back in, head first.

His clothes are lying in a heap on the sand. Alex collapses on his stomach to offer his nudity to the timid morning sun. But suddenly a shadow falls on him, the shadow of a human presence which puts his whole body on full alert, as if facing a terrible danger. He slowly raises his head, expecting the worst ... it's only Jean-Louis who sits down on the sand a few feet away.

ALEX: Don't tell me this is another coincidence.

JEAN-LOUIS: It's another coincidence. (*a beat*) Not too cold?

ALEX: Freezing. It could wash your whole life away. You should try it.

With no hint of modesty Alex gets up and puts his clothes back on.

Jean-Louis turns to the cello which is lying on the sand.

JEAN-LOUIS: So, you still play.

ALEX: A nice little boat, don't you think? Let's see if it floats.

He grabs the instrument by the neck, holds it at arms length while spinning round ... and throws it into the sea.

ALEX: (*singing at the top of his voice*) “*Sail away, sail away, o my ship, for fortune awaits me over there*” (*turning towards Jean-Louis*) You never know, in three months, on a beach in Newfoundland. A little boy is walking along. His one dream is to play music. Imagine his face when he sees this coming from the sea.

<<< Note: translated extract from *Le Petit Mousse* by Fabienne Thibeault >>>

Close-up of the drifting cello.

**SCENE 13**

**OUTSIDE, MORNING – THE BEACH / BOAT GRAVEYARD**

A little later.

They are probably walking without speaking, Alex ahead and Jean-Louis trailing behind, stooping occasionally to pick up a pebble.

Now they come to the abandoned hulk of a schooner. With time the boat has come to lean a bit to the side, but the lines of the hull still keep their plump elegance. On its motionless journey, the worm-eaten prow continues to aim forwards, as if ready for the call of the sea.

A large knotted rope hangs from the rail to the shore. Alex climbs it and heaves himself on board. And we climb with him. Jean-Louis' ascent is less easy. Alex helps him to find his footing on the bridge which is sloping and mostly broken.

From now on the scene must be filmed in such a way that the elements of the surrounding countryside are eliminated so that only the line of the sea is seen, thus creating the illusion that the wrecked ship is adrift again.

They reach the wheelhouse where vandals have left only the stump of the helm.

ALEX: *(at the wheel, as though he were steering)* Don't go on as if nothing happened, Jean-Louis.

JEAN-LOUIS: What do you want? Should I give you a sermon?

ALEX: Believe it or not, I've never been beaten up. But it could easily happen if I go on asking for it.

JEAN-LOUIS: If that's your aim in life.

ALEX: What about you, what's your aim? What's happening in your life? Do you have a young family, are you divorced, do you like kids, do you look after your old mother? Or are you recovering from a broken relationship?

JEAN-LOUIS: *(sarcastically)* Try making me believe you're interested.

ALEX: *(pretentiously)* You never know. I might not be the only one who clowns around. *(With a little more sincerity)* Didn't you once own a garage?

JEAN-LOUIS: *(losing his temper)* I sold the garage, the tow-truck, the racing car, the windsurfer, the bike, the video, the frying pan, the fridge and the sound system. I needed the cash. And yes, I did have a broken relationship. Because my mother died, if you could call that a relationship. I came here because I woke up one morning, looked around and didn't see many people. Actually I didn't see anyone. Is that clear enough for you?

ALEX: *(puzzled but still condescending)* Is that all you had in your life, your mother?

JEAN-LOUIS: *(threatening)* Don't put on an act for the occasion, and forget the sympathies. Because I'm the one that's going to want to beat you up. *(He signals for a moment's silence, then continues)* My mother wasn't "in my life". There wasn't room for her. Don't ask me who this woman was; I never took the time to get to know her. *(He swallows)* I won't bawl, don't worry. But let me tell you, because maybe you'll be able to understand and maybe it'll make you a bit less of a coward; her death made me face up to my own, I'm not scared of anything any more, and I've no more time to waste.

Tossing off these last words, Jean-Louis starts to climb back up onto the bridge towards the prow, no longer caring about Alex.

We return to the front of the boat. Through a gaping hole in the shattered bridge we can see the darkness of the hold. Jean-Louis steps over the hole. He then goes to lean on the rail, facing the sea. Alex joins him. A different Alex, who is no longer trying to be provoking but is sincerely trying very hard to connect.

ALEX: What do you mean “face up to your death”?

JEAN-LOUIS: Even if I were to live another forty years ... there’s nobody between me and death. I can’t hide any more.

Alex stations himself at the prow (like the little boy seen in the fleeting vision in scene 11). Suddenly a wind gets up and whips Alex’s face. We hear waves beating against the hull ... the backwash.

From Alex’s point of view, for several moments we are suddenly in the high seas, surrendering to the rhythm of a pitching vessel.

As though he has been having a giddy spell, Alex rouses himself from his vision and turns towards Jean-Louis who is watching him. The wind dies down.

ALEX: On a boat like this, I could have been a sailor too. My father didn’t know anything else. When he was young ...

JEAN-LOUIS: (*finishing Alex’s sentence*) ... he sailed on this very boat. He even helped to build it.

ALEX: (*a bit annoyed*) You know everything.

JEAN-LOUIS: (*by way of excusing himself*) I spent four years with you. I saw the photos.

ALEX: But you didn’t know my father. So you know nothing.

Now it’s Alex who moves to another part of the bridge. Jean-Louis follows him.

JEAN-LOUIS: What’s happened, Alex? You seem scared.

ALEX: I need money.

JEAN-LOUIS: How much?

ALEX: I lot more than you could give me.

JEAN-LOUIS: I told you I’ve got money.

ALEX: That needn’t go beyond the two of us. (*a beat*) Maybe you didn’t know, but I did a course at the Naval College four years ago. I got my diploma. When I signed up the last time I was in a bad way. I shouldn’t have gone. It was just a banana boat, but I was second officer with a good wage. And I was heading for the sun. (*a beat*) Something happened one night, between the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Sea, off Belize. I was on watch, I’d had a skinful, and I was asleep. I’ll spare you the details. The

boat almost ran aground on a reef. It could have been really serious. Two days later the captain put me off in Costa Rica. There were no hard feelings, believe me, because he could have made a lot of trouble for me. I didn't have a lot of money. I made some buddies, some girlfriends, found myself a little job in a hotel, and I got bored. I managed to hang on for four months. I didn't want to come back right away ... because I'd left with my nose a bit up in the air, let's say. And I didn't want to come back with my hands empty either. Can you guess what happened next?

JEAN-LOUIS: You got into drug dealing.

ALEX: Not down there. But I did take a little "delivery" for Montreal when I came back. I got jumpy during the trip. I was sure I'd be nabbed by Canadian customs. I got rid of the goods in the aeroplane toilets.

JEAN-LOUIS: Do you think you were followed?

ALEX: I had to meet someone at the airport, certainly. I did everything I could to shake him off. Coming back into town I changed taxis twice. I spent a week in a tourist hotel. Then I left Montreal, hitching at night. I took the bus just for the last leg of the journey. It's odd to think that we could have travelled together.

JEAN-LOUIS: Do they know your name, your address?

ALEX: I always gave a false name. (*touching his forehead*) But they know the face. It's easy for them to find out what company I sailed for. Because of the stopover in Costa Rica.

JEAN-LOUIS: You must have an address to go to in case you missed your contact at the airport?

ALEX: Yes.

JEAN-LOUIS: How much do you owe them?

ALEX: I won't take your money.

JEAN-LOUIS: Two thousand? It's usually about that, yes?

Alex turns towards Jean-Louis and takes him in his arms. He rests his head on his chest for a long time. Jean-Louis doesn't know what to do. He's lost.

ALEX: (*letting go his embrace*) We'll talk about this another time, okay? I have to sleep a bit more.

JEAN-LOUIS: Are you going to the inn?

ALEX: (*pointing his chin towards the rear of the boat*) I'm going to sleep there, in the cabin. There's an old bed there. I've hidden a mattress.

He moves off backwards. He hasn't seen the hole lying open on the bridge behind him. For a moment we believe he's going to fall. But it's an act. He pretends to lose his balance and to take a nosedive into the hole ... only to recover in a sort of athletic pirouette which he revels in. It's his way of keeping his head high and of sending his troubles packing.

**SCENE 14**

**14.1 INSIDE, DAYTIME – THE INN / ALFA’S ROOM AND CORRIDOR**

Hurriedly exiting her room and tripping on the hall carpet, Alfa only just prevents herself falling over. She assuages her bad mood by taking a kick at one of the closed doors. But her shoes are too flimsy; she succeeds only in hurting herself. She goes off down the corridor limping slightly.

Note that she is now all “dolled up”, her hairdo and make-up rather overdone.

**14.2 OUTSIDE, DAYTIME – THE COURTYARD OF THE INN**

Alfa runs out of the house. She goes to her car. Obviously she’s late.

This is the first time we see the outside of the inn and can place it in its natural setting, overlooking the bay. We note also a wooden sign with peeling paint on which can be read “THE FOURWINDS INN, Room and Board, Dining”.

At the point of getting into the car, Alfa stops. She has just noticed someone or something. From her point of view we see in fact that Jean-Louis is approaching, carrying on his back ... a cello.

ALFA: Where did you find that?

JEAN-LOUIS: It came from Newfoundland. I fished it out of the sea.

ALFA: You’re talking like Alex now? Disappeared, like a bird, in the morning.

JEAN-LOUIS: Went for a trip round the schooner.

ALFA: So I see.

JEAN-LOUIS: You’re going out?

ALFA: Would you believe I’ve got a job. Waitress by day, barmaid by night. What a lucky girl, eh? I’ve even danced topless in my time, in the days when it was in fashion. Didn’t you know? Richard Desjardins wrote a song about me. *(she sings)* “*The inevitable go-go dancer even when the room is empty*”. That was me. *(She bellows the chorus at the top of her voice)* “*I’ve been forgotten !!!*” *(Feigning nostalgia)* Those were the days.

<<< Note: translated extract from *On m’a oublié* by Richard Desjardins >>>

JEAN-LOUIS: Your mother on the piano, your brother on the cello, and you at the microphone – that would make quite a band. It would be good publicity for the inn.

ALFA: Especially if you did a tap dance. I’ve got to run, I’m late.

She gets into the car, slams the door, starts the engine and shoots off at top speed. Jean-Louis disappears from view in a cloud of dust.



**SCENE 15**

15.1 INSIDE, DAYTIME – THE INN / LOUNGE/DINING ROOM

The following day or the day after. Anyway, in the same week.

The front door has been taken off its hinges. It's lying on its side and Jean-Louis is planing it.

Alfa appears at the foot of the stairs, dishevelled and in a bad mood.

ALFA: You say it's going to take an hour to do our bit of planing.

JEAN-LOUIS: (*without stopping*) If you ever have the urge to rip a door off, it'll be because it doesn't open.

ALFA: And you're all on your own? Where's your mate gone?

JEAN-LOUIS: A foreman is just what we need.

She bites her tongue and disappears, just as Alex arrives with a stepladder.

15.2 INSIDE, DAYTIME – THE INN / KITCHEN

Jeanne is up to her ears in flour. Or at least up to her elbows. She's making tarts. The counter is covered with baking tins of pastries fresh from the oven. She doesn't raise her head when Alfa passes her to pour herself a coffee.

ALFA: What's up this morning? Did everyone decide to play at restaurants?

JEANNE: Fasten back my hair, could you please, it's annoying me!

Stray locks are indeed falling into her eyes. Alfa gathers them back and fixes them with the comb which holds them proficiently.

ALFA: Do you believe this?

JEANNE: What exactly? It's been a long time since I believed in anything much.

ALFA: Like that! All of a sudden! Your son takes an interest in the inn. It won't last, you must know that.

JEANNE: It'll last as long as it lasts. Look at it as an investment. The house will get done up. If I decide to sell, I'll get a better price.

ALFA: It's only by God's good grace that Jean-Louis is here!

JEANNE: I didn't ask him for anything. It's his idea.

ALFA: All the same you asked him to stay.

JEANNE: Did he tell you that?

ALFA: I'd swear to it.

INSIDE, DAYTIME – THE INN / LOUNGE/DINING ROOM

Jean-Louis is busy putting the door back in place.

In the lounge, the furniture has been pushed back into a corner and covered with a tarpaulin. Perched on a stepladder, Alex has begun to paint the ceiling,

JEAN-LOUIS: Could you come and help me for a moment, Alex?

Alex climbs down the stepladder. But instead of putting his foot on the ground, he puts it right into a paint-roller tray filled with white paint. Noticing it too late, he jumps to the side, loses his balance, grabs hold of the stepladder which tips over, spilling all over himself the gallon of paint that was sitting on top ... and crashing into the window, shattering the glass.

Alex remains there, motionless, in the middle of the room, looking at the paint which covers him from his shoulders to his thighs, not to mention his dripping shoe.

Open mouthed, it doesn't even occur to Jean-Louis to put down the heavy door he's holding at arm's length.

Jeanne comes running. Faced with the magnitude of the disaster she bursts out laughing, she laughs till the tears flow, she's unstoppable.

Alfa would like to show her disapproval, but it's too much for her - the laughter wins. And it spreads to Jean-Louis too.

JEANNE: (*a little calmer*) My God, the floor ....

But Alex's crestfallen look catches her eye again .. and she laughs more than ever.

SUPERIMPOSED SOUND: mixed with the laughter, nostalgic piano music.

**SCENE 16**

16.1 INDOORS, NIGHT TIME – THE INN / LOUNGE

Later that evening.

Jeanne's at the piano. She plays Schubert's *Serenade*.

Alfa is seated on the piano seat alongside her, her back to the keyboard.

Alex is sitting on the steps of the staircase.

Listening to the music, brother and sister both have the same posture, the same expression of sorrowful pleasure.

Jean-Louis is nowhere to be seen. It's as if he's no longer part of the little family. But we certainly notice that the walls have definitely been repainted, the window mended, and the furniture (including the piano) put back in place in a slightly different arrangement. The famous stepladder still has pride of place in the corner. And, on the coffee table, the remains of a light snack.

Jeanne finishes playing. She has played some wrong notes and she no longer knows the concluding part.

Before she has time to get up, Alex comes to join her on the seat where the three of them now sit, close together.

ALEX: Do you remember this?

He taps out the beginning of a corny old tune from the forties or fifties : *Stormy Weather*.

JEANNE: Oh no, not that one, please.

ALFA: Why not? It brings back good memories. (*She begins singing first*)

“Don't know why, there's no sun up in the sky, stormy weather ...”

ALEX: (*continuing*) “... since my man and I ain't together ...”

JEANNE: “... keeps raining all the time.” (*Then she continues accompanying herself*) “Life is bare, gloom and misery everywhere, stormy weather ...”

ALL THREE: “... since my man and I ain't together, keeps raining all the time ...”

JEANNE: “Since you went away, ta-la, la-la-la-la-la, la ...”

While they are singing, a cloud of smoke suddenly pours into the room and Jeanne begins to cough. All three turn round at the same time as if an intrusive and harmful presence has brutally interrupted their time-travelling.

We discover Jean-Louis trying to light a fire in the fireplace. He has succeeded only in smoking out the whole room, not to say the whole house.

JEANNE: No, Jean-Louis! This chimney doesn't draw, it's blocked!

Alfa comes running in and throws a jug of water on the inferno. Again she's the one with her head screwed on. But the smoke is still thick.

ALFA: Okay, now what? Is this an endurance test? To see who can last longest without breathing?

## 16.2 OUTDOORS, NIGHT TIME – THE STAIRCASE OF THE INN

They come outside and the smoke is escaping in huge billows through the open door.

Jeanne sits on the steps. There's a youthfulness about her that a setback like this can't destroy. Not today anyway, not this evening.

Jean-Louis has remembered the cognac and glasses. He gives Jeanne a glass and sits down beside her. He even has to lean against her to make a place for Alfa. Alex sits lower down, in front of them. He leans against his mother's knees.

JEAN-LOUIS: (*to Jeanne*) I thought I was helping ....

ALFA: The painting will need to be redone.

JEANNE: I've always been afraid that the house would go on fire. It's funny but it would be less painful to see it burn than to .... give it up. (*a beat*) So, tonight, I can picture it. I'm sitting on a chair in the middle of the yard ... with a glass of brandy. I'm watching it burn down ....

ALEX: (*very gently*): Shush... shush. Haven't you heard? There once was a horse ....

They listen

ALEX: ... a stray horse ... on the sea. A horse of storms ...

He takes up the pose of a coachman and pulls the imaginary reins.

ALEX: Steady ... steady ... my beauty.... Have you any luggage?

JEANNE: (*playing the game*) No luggage, no.

ALEX: (*in a hypnotic voice*) There's been a war ... time has stopped... we're alone in the world ... the last humans ... No-one on the whole planet except us. Steady ... steady ... Are you ready?

Sitting like this altogether on the steps of the staircase, they seem to be in a carriage that's carrying them off into the night.

And we hear the trotting of a horse ....

**SCENE 17**

OUTDOORS, DAYTIME –THE INN / ON THE ROOF AND IN THE COURTYARD

On the road in front of the inn a horse trots by, but this is no stray. It is harnessed to a sulky, which is driven by Jos (the owner of the bar in the village)

The carriage passes close to Jeanne. Perched up a ladder, she is touching up the paint on the inn sign. She watches the horse disappear, turns and waves in the direction of the roof of the house ... where we see Jean-Louis and Alex.

We move to the roof. The two lads have erected some rough and ready scaffolding ... to sweep the chimney. They are covered in soot .... Jean-Louis is manipulating a circular brush attached to the end of a rope and is lowering it down the inside of the flue.

From the height of the roof we have a view of the yard. We see Jeanne on her ladder. We also see a black car, American, a Lincoln, driving slowly along the road and slowing down even more to turn into the driveway of the inn.

As soon as he notices this car, Alex crouches down to hide behind the ridge of the roof.

ALEX: How many are there?

JEAN-LOUIS: (*who hasn't seen anything yet*) What?

ALEX: The car down there. How many are there inside?

JEAN-LOUIS: There's someone coming out ... One man.

ALEX: On his own?

JEAN-LOUIS: Seems to be

ALEX: Are you sure?

JEAN-LOUIS: The windows are tinted, I can't see inside the car.

ALEX: (*climbing down the ladder which follows the slope of the roof*) I'm going for a walk ...

In the yard, Jeanne also climbs down her ladder. Paintbrush in hand, she goes to meet the new arrival who is walking towards her with outstretched hand.

JEANNE: (*taking his hand*) Mr Simon! You're the first guest of the season.

Mr. SIMON: Let me kiss you.

JEANNE: (*offering her cheek*) I didn't hear from you last year.

Mr. SIMON: My wife died. She was ill for a long time, you know.

JEANNE: (*taking him by the arm*) I know, I know .....

Sitting on the ridge of the roof, elbows on knees, Jean-Louis watches them go towards the house and disappear inside. Jeanne has the appearance of a young woman.

Jean-Louis loses himself in contemplation of the distant landscape.

**SCENE 18**

18.1 INDOORS, EARLY EVENING –THE INN / DINING ROOM

Mr Simon is seated at the table, all alone in the big dining room. In a professional manner, Jean-Louis has just removed his empty plate and given him his dessert.

Mr. SIMON: Are you one of the family too?

JEAN-LOUIS: Sort of. Not really.

Mr. SIMON: Everybody is slightly related in the village. I've spent whole summers here. We came by train in those days. My family occupied the whole attic.

JEAN-LOUIS: You've maybe forgotten, I spilt sauce on your wife's dress.

Mr. SIMON: (*examining him more closely and not recognising him*) Oh yes, that was you.

JEAN-LOUIS: It was at least fifteen years ago.

Mr. SIMON: (*categorically*) Fourteen. (*suddenly with an air of sadness*) I walked in the fields earlier. The apple trees have been cut down.

He looks at his dessert in front of him, without seeing it, without saying any more. And Jean-Louis doesn't dare go away.

Mr. SIMON: I travel alone now. (*with a slight smile*). It's simpler.

And he attacks his dessert with a forced enjoyment. He has forgotten that Jean-Louis is there.

18.2 INDOORS/OUTDOORS, EARLY EVENING – THE INN / KITCHEN AND STAIRCASE

Alfa is eating alone at the big table in the centre of the room. Jean-Louis returns from the dining room, carrying the empty plate on a tray which he holds above his head. Jeanne is putting away everything she had to take out for the meal of her one and only guest.

ALFA (*eating*) You seem to be enjoying yourself. Just as well. Because by my calculation, the value for money is excellent. Two people to look after a single customer. Does this mean that if we have twenty diners we'll need forty staff?

JEANNE: "One" guest is better than none at all. Especially in the closed season. Apart from that, Mr Simon has always been loyal to us, for years and years.

ALFA: I see. He's pretty stingy, the old goat.

JEAN-LOUIS: I think he's quite nice.

ALFA: (*to Jean-Louis*) Who do you not think is nice? I'm remembering the tips he's left me in the past. Zilch. (*to Jeanne*) Maybe he's come to ask you to marry him, now that he's a widower.

JEANNE: (*ignoring Alfa's mocking and addressing Jean-Louis*) Is someone getting him something to drink? Tea or coffee?

ALFA: Come on now, a herbal tea. And a coffee for me please, Jean-Louis.

JEAN-LOUIS: You know how good you are with figures, Alfa. Mr Simon and you, that makes two customers.

ALFA: It's just to give you encouragement. (*She gets up and goes to fetch her own coffee*) Basically, Mom, you've never taken the hotel business seriously. It's always been just a way of not being on your own, of having people in the house. The problem is that it's always cost more than it's taken in. Without the inn, basically, you'd be able to live quite comfortably.

JEANNE: (*coming to sit at the table*) For once, my girl, I agree with you. Does that surprise you? I've thought about it over the past few days. I'd like to take a gamble.

ALFA: What do you mean?

JEANNE: That idea of Alex's the other night, maybe it wasn't so stupid.

ALFA: The co-operative! Count me out.

JEANNE: (*patiently*) The idea of finding a more profitable arrangement, and of sharing the profits ... between four ... providing you're interested, of course ... providing you're interested Jean-Louis ...

ALFA: ... providing your son is interested for at least two more days.

That's all well and good, Mom. But it needs investment, do you understand? It needs a bit of renovation, modernising, for this to be fitted out like a real restaurant, a real hotel, not just run like a big household. Tell her, Jean-Louis. I've been singing this same song for years. We're not talking about five hundred bucks here. You don't have a cent in the bank, Mom. Neither does Alex. I have some. But the day I invest, it'll be in a sure thing. In any case, it'll be in my own business.

JEANNE: Nothing's stopping me borrowing.

ALFA: (*sighing*) The house is mortgaged to the hilt.

JEAN-LOUIS: (*out of the blue*) I could put in about two thousand.

Silence for a few moments

ALFA: If you like throwing your money out of the window. Unless it's a charitable donation. I don't think somehow that my mother will be paying it back, Jean-Louis. (*Rising from the table*) I've said what I had to say. (*Looking at her watch*) I'm working at eight o'clock. Good night.

Shot of the hallway at the rear, just as Alfa pushes the screen door to go out. Alex is sitting in the shadow near the door. He has heard the whole conversation. Alfa sees him and stops for a moment as though she's ready to give him an earful. But she shrugs her shoulders, turns on her heel and runs off. We focus on Alex. In the background, in the kitchen, Jeanne and Jean-Louis haven't moved.

**SCENE 19**

OUTDOORS, DAYTIME – IN FRONT OF THE BANK

An ordinary house, where only the sign in the window indicates that it's actually a branch of a bank. In any case, a very small bank in a very small village.

Jean-Louis gets out of his car ...and Jeanne follows him up the driveway leading to the entrance to the premises. She seems to be showing less enthusiasm than he is. She drags her feet a little. Before they've reached the steps she takes his arm and holds him back.

JEANNE: Listen Jean-Louis. I've changed my mind. (*He starts to protest*) No, no, let me speak. Alfa's right. I've never really considered my house as a hotel. (*She looks around fearing they're being overheard*). Let's not stay here.

They go back and sit in the car. Jean-Louis doesn't start the engine.

JEANNE: How can I explain? ... When people come to the house, they're at home with me, I'm the one who welcomes them. Do you understand? If the inn were better organised, properly organised, like an inn should be, it wouldn't be the same ... and I wouldn't be able to stand it. And also, I don't want to see the house like a building site for weeks. I prefer things to be left where they are. And also ... I don't want the whole village to know all about ... about my 'transactions'. If you were ever to lend me money, it couldn't be through this bank....

JEAN-LOUIS: You should have said.

JEANNE: Tha ... thank you very much, Jean-Louis, for having had confidence in me. If I ever have trouble paying the next instalment of the mortgage ... if you're still prepared to help me ... I'll accept, I promise.

JEAN-LOUIS: (*after a moment*) Why have you changed your mind, Jeanne? You're not telling me the real reason.

JEANNE: (*diving straight in*) I had a bad premonition. When I saw you arrive ... at the same time as Alex ... I thought you'd come back to change things. I still don't know why you've come back, Jean-Louis, but it certainly wasn't to revive the inn. It's better not to change things now, I think.

JEAN-LOUIS: A bad premonition?

JEANNE: A premonition. Let's spend the summer together if you like. After that we'll see. There'll always be time to go into big business. (*a beat*) Do you know what we could do? When my husband died I'd passed my driving test. But I sold the car because I needed the money. You could give me a driving lesson.

Jean-Louis gives her a wink and starts the engine. Off they go ....

**SCENE 20**

OUTDOORS, DAYTIME – JEAN-LOUIS' CAR/ COUNTRY ROAD

We're driving along. Jeanne's at the wheel. She appears a little nervous, she looks straight ahead, her mouth tense, but she's managing quite well.

JEAN-LOUIS: Good ... now declutch ... go into third ... clutch ... yes ... declutch again ....

JEANNE: I'm going into second ....

JEAN-LOUIS: That's it ... brake gently ... declutch. Stop at the side of the road ... not too near the edge ... there!

The car stops without the engine stalling. Jeanne takes a deep breath. And Jean-Louis remains perfectly calm.

JEANNE: Phew!

JEAN-LOUIS: Much better than before. You see, it's coming back.

JEANNE: I think that's enough for today. We can do this another day if you like.

JEAN-LOUIS: It's now or never.

She has left her hand on the gear stick. He covers it with his own. It's the first affectionate gesture he's dared to make since his arrival. We get the feeling that for her it's not insignificant, but she does nothing to betray her feelings.

JEAN-LOUIS: Tomorrow you can go out on your own. There's a spare key here. (*He opens the glove compartment and shows her*) In case you want to ... get away sometime. Let's go.

She goes through the business with the clutch. The car gets back on the road, with some little jolts admittedly, but we're picking up speed ....

And we arrive at the crossroads from the start of the film, where Alex got off the bus. Jeanne stops at the junction, looks to the left and the right, and moves off as if to cross the highway and continue down the road. But no. In the middle of the carriageway she suddenly does a U-turn, cowboy-fashion, only just avoiding the ditches.

JEANNE: (*proud of her manoeuvre*) I'm not going any further. It's been years since I've been this far.

JEAN-LOUIS: You should get your licence renewed.

JEANNE: How long are you going to address me as 'vous', Jean-Louis?

There's no more difference in age between you and me as between you and Alex. Would you like it if Alex called you 'vous'?

<<< Note: In French, "you" is either the formal 'vous', used for superiors and elders, or the informal 'tu' for children and close friends. Jean-Louis has been calling Jeanne 'vous' up till now >>>

She accelerates. The car carries them away. We stay on the fields being swept by the wind. Over the waves of grass can be heard the whispering of the sea.

**SCENE 21**

**21.1 OUTDOORS, EVENING – THE VILLAGE BAR / CAR PARK**

In the sky, the red rays of dusk, bloody.

The yard is covered with gravel. Some cars, some motorcycles. Jean-Louis has just parked. He remains at the wheel for a few moments before deciding to get out, as though something is weighing heavily on him.

**21.2 INDOORS, EVENING – THE VILLAGE BAR**

A bar like any other throughout Quebec, with a vaguely western décor.

As evidenced by the cars in the car park, there are not many customers. The regulars who come every evening, more for the gossip than to have a good time or to get smashed. Some men, mostly on their own. A few women too, gathered round a table.

There's no music. The television is on full blast.

The scene starts with Alfa, behind the bar, preparing drinks which she puts on a tray. We follow her ... to discover Alex, leaning on the counter. When she passes in front of him, he grabs her by the arm.

ALEX: Give me a beer. "A BEER". I've had nothing to drink all night - what language do I have to say it in?

ALFA: (*with gritted teeth*) Do you still not know yourself, Alex? Can't you sense when you're like a stick of dynamite? Right now one beer is too much, you know that very well. I'm not going to be the one who gives you that beer. Go and scrounge off somebody else. All your old girlfriends are here tonight - you're really spoiled for choice.

ALEX: (*still holding on to her*) It's you I came to see.

ALFA: Let me go before Jos gets involved.

A tall fellow approaches, carrying a glass of beer in each hand, It's WILFRED, one of Alfa's rejected suitors. He leans over the counter, puts a glass in front of Alex and slaps him on the back in a rather too jovial manner.

WILFRED: There you go, pal. My treat.

ALEX: Did somebody just ask what the time was?

WILFRED: (*putting his arm round Alex's shoulder*) Let your sister get on with it. She's always very, very busy.

ALFA: (*by way of a warning*) Wilfred ....

Wilfred beats a retreat, but he settles down on the neighbouring stool. Letting go of his sister's arm, Alex takes hold of the glass of beer and downs it in one. Alfa goes off carrying her drinks.

Shot of the room as the drinks are being served. Alfa goes up to Jean-Louis who has just entered.

ALFA: Get out of here as fast as you can, that's all I ask.

Jean-Louis crosses the room to the bar and sits on the stool on Alex's left (Wilfred is on the stool to his right).

ALEX: Hey, my guardian angel. I don't need a guardian angel any more, I'm in heaven already. (*harder*) I don't suppose you're here by chance? No, no, you were looking for me. Better than that : you've come to fetch me. Somebody phoned you, I wonder who that could be. (*softly*) Don't worry, Jean-Louis, I won't be naughty, I like you too much for that. But you don't know Wilfred. (*indicating one to the other*) Jean-Louis ... Wilfred. Wilfred ... Jean-Louis. (*deliberately turning his back on Wilfred*) Wilfred would like to be my brother-in-law. Isn't that amazing? He's in love with my sister. But my sister, she's in love with you. And me, I don't have a problem, I'm in love with everybody. But not Wilfred. (*turning towards Wilfred and slapping him on the back*) Hey, Wilfred, I hope you're not in love with me, 'cos that doesn't go down well around here. You'll be very unhappy, Wilfred. Have you seen my guardian angel? I don't know what's the matter with him, he's very unhappy.

WILFRED: The problem with you is that you talk too much for what you have to say. You're like your sister, you think you're someone else. But you're even more of an asshole than the rest of us. Have you told your guardian angel what an asshole you are? I bet you can't even get it up. That's why you think you have to show off.

With a swift lunge of his whole body, Alex pushes Wilfred, whose stool topples over sending him sprawling on the floor. He doesn't have time to get up when Alex has a hold of him by his shirt collar. The whole room is on its feet in silence. But instead of hitting Wilfred as one would have expected, Alex helps him to get his balance and is holding him firmly by the wrists.

ALEX: Okay, okay ... it's okay. You're right, I'm an asshole. Calm down. I'm sure my sister doesn't hate you.

A moment's suspense. Jean-Louis and Alfa look at each other. Then in comes an imposing man : Jos, owner of the bar whom we are seeing for the third time. He shoves Alex violently.

JOS: You, out! Every time you come here, it's to spread shit. Don't wait for me to kick your arse out of here.

Jean-Louis tries to hold Alex back, but he gets away and pounces on Jos who lands a direct punch on his chin. Blood flows and Alex slumps on the

counter. Completely sobered up, Wilfred tries to hold Jos back but only succeeds in getting an elbow in the stomach.

JOS (*bearing down on Alex*) I've been itching to do that for a long time. Have you had enough?

ALFA: Whoah!

She shouts so loud that everybody freezes. Grabbing a beer bottle, she smashes it on the edge of a table and moves forward pointing the broken end at Jos.

ALFA: You, you filthy bastard, get back!

Jos raises his hands and steps back.

JOS: That's right, you mustn't touch her darling boy.

ALFA: (*to Jean-Louis*) Get him out of here, Jean-Louis! (*to Jos*) And you, don't move. Everybody here knows how I've been able to keep my job so long, by letting you feel me up with your big sweaty hands.

JOS: You didn't seem to mind it too much.

ALFA: If only you knew how much it made me want to throw up. But I don't need you any more. I could buy this pathetic dump of yours if I wanted.

JOS: There's good money in whoring, that's no secret.

ALFA: (*brandishing the broken bottle about her*) Anyone else fancy having their face rearranged by a whore?

In the meantime Jean-Louis has dragged Alex towards the exit. Alfa moves backwards to join them, still brandishing her broken bottle which she ends up throwing contemptuously into the middle of the room before exiting.

### 21.3 OUTDOORS, EVENING – THE BAR CARPARK

Nothing but a deep indigo glow in the sky, and the frogs croaking their hearts out.

Alfa helps Jean-Louis to carry Alex to her car which is the nearest. Wilfred has followed them. He remains a few steps behind them, terribly upset, terribly ill at ease in his large clumsy body.

WILFRED: I didn't want this, Alfa. I didn't want this. D'you think it's all over?

ALFA: We'll see, Wilfred. We'll see.

WILFRED: Say something to me.

ALFA: It wasn't your fault, I know that.

Wilfred remains rooted in the middle of the parking lot; she has been nice to him.

Reaching the car, Alex shakes himself and leans with both hands on the wing, his head bent forward.

ALEX: (*shouting*) Go away, Jean-Louis, go away. Don't look at me!

The bar door opens with a rush of air.

JOS: (*throwing Alfa's handbag down on the gravel of the yard*) See to it that you keep out of my way.

ALEX: Go away, Jean-Louis, go away.

Indicating the door of the bar, Jean-Louis looks questioningly at Alfa.

ALFA: It's OK, I can look after myself. I'm not scared of cowards.

Wilfred comes and places Alfa's bag on the bonnet of the car. He moves off and Jean-Louis follows him. Other customers come quietly out of the bar. Engines start up, vehicles drive off ...

Alex's nose is pouring with blood.

ALFA: (*tipping his head backwards*) Keep your head like this. Don't move.

ALEX: Take me dancing. I won't look at other girls, I promise.

Alfa tries to wipe the blood with her bare hands.

ALEX: Take me dancing. Maybe Richard Desjardins's on somewhere, not too far away. I'm going to take you to Rouyn. We'll find out where he is.

He straightens up and begins yelling in the middle of the parking lot, turning round and round, his head bent backwards.

ALEX: (*singing at the top of his voice*) "Don't go .... Outside I've seen a sky so hard that the birds were fa-a-a-lling!!!"

<<< Note: translated extract from *Va-t-en pas* by Richard Desjardins >>>

She tries to lead him to the car by taking his hand. But he draws it back.

ALEX: You mustn't ever take anyone's hand.

She opens the passenger door for him. Quietly, he climbs into the car.

**SCENE 22**

**22.1 OUTDOORS, NIGHT-TIME – THE COURTYARD OF THE INN**

Everything is calm. The only sound comes from the hushed motion of the sea. Jean-Louis' car is there, empty. Alfa's car is parking next to it. The headlights go off, but no-one comes out.

Jean-Louis is waiting for this arrival. He goes out into the garden and hides in the deepest shadow of a tree. From there he can watch what is happening inside the car we are approaching .... to get a better view of Alex resting his head on Alfa's breast. She has her arm around him. Her cheek lies against her brother's forehead. She is gently stroking his hair. Two children in love. Two children taking refuge aboard a spaceship, desperately refusing to grow up.

Jean-Louis contemplates them for a long time, on the verge of tears as he feels excluded by the very intensity of this happiness. Then it no doubt gets too much for him, and he goes.

**22.2 INDOORS, NIGHT-TIME – THE INN / LOUNGE**

A fire burns in the fireplace.

Jeanne is with Mr Simon. They are both in their armchairs, almost asleep, absorbed in contemplation of the dying flames.

JEANNE: Looks as though this fire won't last forever.

Mr. SIMON: What did you say?

JEANNE: Nothing, nothing

Mr SIMON: (*stifling a yawn*) I'd better go to bed ....

Coming through the kitchen, Jean-Louis passes behind them on his way to the staircase.

JEAN-LOUIS: Goodnight, Jeanne. Goodnight, Mr. Simon.

JEANNE: Oh, is that you? I thought you were with Alex.

JEAN-LOUIS: I've left him with Alfa. I was sleepy.

JEANNE: At the bar? All right.

JEAN-LOUIS: Goodnight.

He climbs the stair without waiting for the replies of 'goodnight'. Jeanne looks perplexed. The spell of the evening has been broken.

Mr SIMON: It's much too comfortable here, Jeanne. (*a beat*) Are you offended?

JEANNE: What?

Mr SIMON: That I called you Jeanne. It's the first time. I've always said, "Mrs O'Neil" .... I don't think I've ever known your maiden name.

JEANNE: Arsenault.

Mr SIMON: Were you born here, Jeanne?

JEANNE: Yes, in this house. To be precise in the dining room. Before I opened the inn, it was a bedroom. Alfa and Alex were born in that room too.

Mr SIMON: Really, this is the first time we've had the opportunity for a little chat.

JEANNE: (*absent-mindedly*) Yes.

Mr SIMON: Have you ever wanted to remarry?

JEANNE: I've never thought it was possible to go through it twice.

Mr. SIMON: You mean ... you weren't ... ah ..?

JEANNE: (*a bit irritated*) Oh no, I was very happy with my husband. Would you like a liqueur? It's on the house.

But he hasn't time to answer. The front door opens onto Alex and Alfa.

JEANNE: Back already? (*she moves towards them*)

ALFA: It closed early – it was deserted.

ALEX: (*Positioning himself so that his mother can't see his face*) I don't know what's wrong with me, I'm worn out. (*He goes and stations himself in front of the fire*)

JEANNE: I was just offering Mr Simon a liqueur. Can I tempt you?

ALFA: I wouldn't say no to a small cognac.

ALEX: One for me thanks.

ALFA: Have you seen Jean-Louis?

JEANNE: Just gone up. He looked worn out too.

She moves away. Alfa falls into the armchair her mother was sitting in. And Alex stretches out flat on his stomach in front of the fire.

**SCENE 23**

INDOORS, NIGHT-TIME – THE INN / ALFA’S BEDROOM

It’s the room that we caught a brief glimpse of in scene 14. It’s no different from any of the other bedrooms in the house. Nothing decorative or “feminine” in it. But the bed isn’t made. It’s even rather ruffled. And there are clothes piled all over the furniture.

Alfa closes the door. It’s only in the secrecy of her room that she, like Jeanne, allows herself to let her guard down. Tonight, suddenly, in the refuge of her privacy, she seems beaten, fragile, vulnerable. She sits down for a moment on the bed, kicking off her shoes and beginning to take her clothes off. Then she gets up to examine her face, like Jeanne and with the same gestures, in the dressing-table mirror. And that’s when she jumps; she’s not alone – Jean-Louis has opened the door and is watching her. She turns and faces him. He closes the door again and leans against it.

ALFA: You scared me.

JEAN-LOUIS: You would really have got a fright if I’d been waiting here for you like I thought about doing. Like you did to me.

He goes to the window, striking the same pose that she had done at his window. As she is only in her underwear she instinctively grabs a t-shirt ... but she drops it again.

JEAN-LOUIS: I saw you both in your car. You looked good together.

ALFA: Whose place would you rather have be in? His or mine?

JEAN-LOUIS: (*ignoring the insinuation*) You’re both lucky ...

She has gone up to him, practically nude, defenceless, no longer trying to show off.

ALFA: I’m worn out, Jean-Louis.

He turns towards her and takes her in his arms.

JEAN-LOUIS: Worn out, or are you going to wear someone out? Me, I’m going to wear you out...

He lets his mouth wander to Alfa’s shoulder, to the hollow of her neck. He inhales her. She lets herself go, but she makes no attempt to caress him.

ALFA: What do you want, Jean-Louis?

JEAN-LOUIS: To sleep with you.

ALFA: I’m not going to sleep.

JEAN-LOUIS: To lie with you. To make love to you.

ALFA: Because it’s easy with me?

JEAN-LOUIS: Because you can’t be in love with me – you’ve already been there.

ALFA: (She hums softly in his ear) "*Making love without love, you end your life, you lose your heart...*" (a beat) Take me in your arms.

JEAN-LOUIS: You are in my arms

ALFA: Take me in your arms ....

<<< Note: translated extract from *À faire l'amour sans amour* by Charles Dumont >>>

Then he lifts her like a bride. She clings on to him. They both fall onto the bed, in a tangle of caresses and sheets. And their kisses are like cries that they can only stifle with each other's mouths.

**SCENE 24**

**24.1 INDOORS, NIGHT-TIME – THE INN / LOUNGE**

The fire in the fireplace has gone out. The lounge lights have also been switched off. Jeanne is asleep in her rocking chair, a shawl round her shoulders.

She has just opened her eyes and looks at the ceiling, up to the heavens, as if she's had a premonition of harm. Then she becomes aware of where she is and climbs out of the chair. She goes to bend over Alex who is asleep in front of the ashes in the hearth. That's when she notices his swollen face and the dried blood in his nostrils. She covers him with her shawl and brushes his face with her hand as if to stroke the soul without touching the flesh.

**24.2 INDOORS, NIGHT-TIME – THE INN / UPSTAIRS HALLWAY**

Jeanne has gone upstairs but is not headed for her bedroom. Standing in the middle of the hallway, she listens to the silence of the house. She reaches Jean-Louis' door which is half open. She gently pushes the door. The bed is empty. Her heart skips a beat and she has to steady herself on the doorframe to recover her breath.

After a moment she goes back along the corridor to Alfa's door, which she opens without hesitation. And she sees the object of her pain; the naked body of her daughter beached on the naked body of Jean-Louis, in the motionless tempest of bed sheets.

**SCENE 25**

**25.1 OUTDOORS, DAWN – IN JEAN-LOUIS' CAR**

The steely light of a grey morning.

Jeanne is at the wheel. Her behaviour is positive. She's on her way, she has left everything behind her.

**25.2 OUTDOORS, EARLY MORNING – BY THE SEA**

A little bay. A railway line runs parallel with the beach. Jeanne is parking. She gets out of the car and goes and sits on a rock at the edge of the track. In front of her, on the horizon, where the sky meets the ocean, there's a faint pink glow. The sun is rising over the sea but the weather is overcast. She can't resist a smile; she has come to see the sunrise for nothing.

Then she walks along the railway track, first in one direction then in the other. She tries to walk balancing on one of the rails, but can't. So she stands in the middle of the track with her eyes closed. We hear a train whistle and an approaching engine that is making the ground vibrate ... and which is coming at full steam ... closer ... closer still ....

Jeanne turns her head sharply, as if to confront this train from hell ... which falls silent. There is only the track, disused as far as the eye can see.

**25.3 OUTDOORS, MORNING – JEAN-LOUIS' CAR / COURTYARD OF THE INN**

Jeanne is at the wheel again. She has come back to the house. But when she tries to park in the yard her self-confidence abandons her, she makes a mistake ... and bumps into Mr Simon's car, crumpling the wing.

As she jumps out to assess the damage, Mr Simon is just coming out of the inn, suitcase in hand. She acts like a little girl who has been caught out, but he doesn't notice anything as he is so pleased to see her.

JEANNE: I'm sorry, I don't know what I was thinking.

Mr SIMON: (*thinking she is talking about her absence that morning*) No, no, I thought you were still asleep. I helped myself to coffee in the kitchen. I left you a note on the table with my cheque.

JEANNE: (*talking about the accident*) You must send me the bill.

Mr SIMON: What bill?

JEANNE: Haven't you seen it?

Mr SIMON: (He sees it but he doesn't give a damn) Oh that ....

JEANNE: It was me. I've just damaged you.

Mr SIMON: (*The expression makes him smile*) My old bodywork is more solid than that, believe me.

She looks at him suddenly as if seeing him for the first time in her life. His 'bodywork' is indeed not too bad. And she also sees that he's carrying his suitcase, when he throws it onto the car seat.

JEANNE: You're leaving? You didn't tell me.

Mr SIMON: (*handing her his business card*) Take this, Jeanne. If the mood ever takes you to come to the city. I know, I know – you've not been away for years.

JEANNE: (*taking the card without looking at it*) Thank you ...

Mr SIMON: (*getting into his car*) I'm not going to kiss you, I'm afraid I could get used to it.

JEANNE: I .... I don't know your first name.

Mr SIMON: You've forgotten. It's written there, on the card - Jean-Louis.

She can't resist a very tiny laugh.

Mr SIMON: I should have been a waiter, no? Goodbye, Jeanne.

JEANNE: Goodbye .... Mr Simon.

She watches him go. She remains in the middle of the yard, as though intimidated by the magnitude of this sleeping house.

**SCENE 26**

**26.1 INDOORS, DAYTIME – THE INN / ATTIC**

Later, the afternoon of the same day.  
It's pouring with rain outside.

Sitting on a chair right in the middle of the room, Alex is holding his cello. With his finger he vibrates the strings one by one, performing a sort of pizzicato to accompany the drumming of the rain on the metal sheet on the roof.

**26.2 INDOORS, DAYTIME – THE INN / KITCHEN**

Alfa is sitting on the counter. Through the window, she watches the falling rain.

Jeanne is seated at the table, doing nothing, looking at nothing.

ALFA: I think Canada's the world's reservoir; any more water and it would absolutely be the sea. (*a beat*) Where are you off to? I've never seen you like this.

JEANNE: I'm thinking about us twenty years from now, you an old maid, me a crazy old woman ... the two of us all alone in the same doomed house.

ALFA: That sounds like Alex.

JEANNE: Maybe he is his mother's son after all. Except that his mother has always kept her mouth shut.

ALFA: You may have kept your mouth shut, but we always knew what you wanted all the same.

JEANNE: Did I know what I wanted?

ALFA: Don't worry anyway, one thing will never happen – the two of us alone in the same house.

JEANNE: I'd like to turn everything inside out.

ALFA: (*jumping down from the counter*) Maybe we could do it together. Where shall we start?

JEANNE: By the way, aren't you working today?

ALFA: I'm really into squelching about outside as you can imagine. That's not true – I've packed it in.

JEANNE: I'm beginning to know what you mean – packing it in.

ALFA: Yes, but it doesn't sound right coming from you.

JEANNE: What are you going to do if you don't have a job any more?

ALFA: I'm going to work with you lot for a bit. As long as we can stand each other. Eh? Don't look like that, you'll frighten me.

JEANNE: I'm not going to ask what happened to your brother – you wouldn't tell me anyway.

ALFA: Once again he's been colliding with all the idiots in the world. Come on, if the good weather comes, customers will maybe drop by. We'd better be ready.

Sticking out her chest, Jeanne adopts the bearing of a strong woman. She is suddenly on her feet, up for it.

### 26.3 INDOORS, DAYTIME – THE INN / JEAN-LOUIS' BEDROOM

Jean-Louis is flaked out on his bed, drowsing.

The two women descend on his room on the warpath.

ALFA: Not disturbing you I hope? You can stay in bed, the rest of us will do the moving. I'm the new management. You understand, in a six bedroom hotel, it's not possible to allow the employees to stay in the private rooms. All the 'staff' – sorry, all the 'personnel' have to go into the attic. Except the boss, of course.

JEAN-LOUIS: (*getting up*) But I've nothing to move.

ALFA: (*to Jeanne*) It's true that he arrived with no luggage.

JEAN-LOUIS: (*singing Barbara's song*) "*The day you arrive, don't bring any luggage, after all it doesn't matter what's inside ...*"

JEANNE: (*continuing*) "*I will recognise you by your face ...*" (*to Alfa*) All the same we've got to empty the wardrobe. Your father's old things. I never liked it that the guests could get to these things. We should give them away ... or throw them out.

<<< Note: translated extract from *Sans bagages* by Barbara/Sophie Makhno >>>

She opens the cupboard door. Alfa begins to take out the cardboard boxes piled up inside.

ALFA: Out you go, father. You're off to the attic too. It's been a while since you've had to go there.

She pulls out a picture frame which has slipped between the boxes: a photographic portrait.

ALFA: (*looking at the photo*) Fancy that! I haven't seen this for a while. I'd forgotten that Alex used to have a moustache.

She hands the picture to Jean-Louis. We see a close-up of the photo; the father in his captain's uniform. Except for the moustache and the length of the hair, it could actually be a photo of Alex.

ALFA: Your 'son' is the spitting image of 'your husband'. Has that never struck you, Mom?

JEANNE (*angry all of a sudden*) I've told you already, he's his father's son! Put it away in a box.

She goes off.

**SCENE 27**

**27.1 INDOORS, EVENING – THE INN / ATTIC**

Now in the attic there's Alex's area, Alfa's area, and Jean-Louis' area. Alfa's area is recognisable by the amount of clothes piled on her bed. Scattered on top of the dressing table are her beauty products, her nail polishes, her creams, her makeup, her combs.

Alfa is with Jean-Louis. The moving is finished but not the tidying up. She is opening a box from which she takes a weird object: a painted plaster moose fitted with a little bulb which acts as a night light.

ALFA: (*waving the moose and really proud of having found it*) Father won this in a raffle. It stood on the TV for ages. Mom always hated it. I've always loved it. It's going to make us the most beautiful little bedside lamp.

She places the moose at the head of the bed and switches it on; the bulb lights up.

ALFA: And what's more, it still works! (*turning to Jean-Louis*) You think it's ugly, eh? You could say it's a totem, my totem; you'll end up finding it ... absolutely beautiful ... or absolutely ugly.

**27.2 INDOORS, EVENING – THE INN / UPSTAIRS HALLWAY**

Alfa's bedroom has been emptied. There's nothing left except the bed, the dressing table, the armchair, the curtains and the washbasin. Alex comes out with the last two boxes. He is making his way down the hallway when he meets his mother.

JEANNE: Is that everything?

ALEX: It's everything.

She continues on her way, but she stops.

JEANNE: (*without turning round towards him*) Alex? .... No, don't look at me.

He remains standing there, in the middle of the hallway, holding his boxes straight out, back turned to his mother, who also has her back to him a few steps away.

JEANNE: You know, son .... if I'd followed my instincts there would have been plenty of times when I would have come home with a bloody nose too. But I almost never went out ... this didn't stop me from seeing that life is no good. It's no good for anyone. Some more than others. I watch TV and I don't want to go anywhere. There's nobody I'd want to change places with.

*(a beat)*

ALEX: *(clearing his throat)* Why are you telling me this, Mom?

JEANNE: You don't owe me anything, son. I haven't been unhappy you know.

ALEX: Me neither, I'm not unhappy, Mom.

JEANNE: Hurry up and find your own life. I'm big enough to lead my own. *(changing her tone and carrying on as though it was nothing)* After all this, we've still not eaten. I've got some soup that I could heat up. Go and tell the others to come down.

She goes off at a brisk pace. He continues to stay standing in the middle of the hallway.

**SCENE 28**

28.1 INDOORS, DAYTIME – THE INN / KITCHEN

Some days later, perhaps even a whole week.

The good weather has returned, it's glorious.

The kitchen counters are covered with containers of strawberries, enormous pans dominate the stove; Jeanne is making jam.

And Jean-Louis is on the telephone:

JEAN-LOUIS: ... of course, yes, it'll depend on the temperature. What's the name? *(He writes it down)* Perfect, Mrs Martel, we'll see you on Friday evening. *(He hangs up and speaks to Jeanne)* Another two reservations. They don't know if they'll stay over Saturday night till Sunday, it'll depend on the temperature. He pins a card on the wall. That brings the total to ....

Alfa appears suddenly at the front door with two big bags of shopping which she puts on the table and from which she brings out a newspaper – *La Presse* perhaps.

ALFA: *(opening the newspaper)* Have you seen it, have you seen it?

Jeanne wipes her hands on her apron and goes to look at the display advert announcing the new season at the inn. Jean-Louis also leans over to read it.

JEANNE: *(reading in a loud voice)* "Four Winds Inn. Family business. Like being on board a ship. Comfortable crossing. Reservations only."

ALFA: *(triumphantly)* It's going to work, I feel it's going to work! *(getting herself under control)* I shouldn't get worked up over plans that never work out.

JEAN-LOUIS: We've already got six people for the rooms, eight for dinner on Saturday night ....

ALFA: Eight? With or without the residents?

JEAN-LOUIS: With.

ALFA: Oh.

JEAN-LOUIS: Still nothing for Sunday night but ...

ALFA: *(cutting in)* It's the Saturday that counts. Apart from that, I may have found what you're looking for.

JEAN-LOUIS: I'm looking for something?

ALFA: Don't get me wrong; I haven't found your heart, far less your soul.

*(to Jeanne)* I'm going to take him away from you for a quarter of an hour.

*(dragging Jean-Louis by the hand)* Come on, baby!

Left alone, Jeanne takes hold of the scissors and begins to cut the advert out of the newspaper.

28.2 OUTDOORS, DAYTIME – AT THE VILLAGE QUAY

First of all it's Alex that we see. Sitting astride a prow, he leans over the water.

We are on a small motorised pleasure boat, with a cabin that's liveable in. Also on board, Jean-Louis is busy looking around it. He climbs back onto the quay where Alfa and Wilfred are waiting.

ALFA: (*disappointed that Jean-Louis isn't showing more enthusiasm*) Is that all you've got to say?

JEAN-LOUIS: (*to Wilfred*) You really want to sell her?

WILFRED: Why? Is she not what you're looking for?

JEAN-LOUIS: She's exactly right.

ALFA: (*getting worked up*) So what's the problem? You won't get a better price.

JEAN-LOUIS: (*to Wilfred*) How long will you be gone?

WILFRED: I don't know yet.

JEAN-LOUIS: What if I rent her while you're away?

WILFRED: You don't have to rent her. You could take her whenever you wanted.

ALFA: (*impatient*) I'll leave you guys to sort it out. (*She goes off towards her car*)

JEAN-LOUIS: (*to Alfa*) Wait a minute, I'm coming. (*to Wilfred*) You understand, I don't want ... at the moment ... to feel tied to ... to things.

WILFRED: I understand. (*he hesitates*) Take good care of her.

JEAN-LOUIS: I will.

WILFRED: I wasn't talking about the boat. Girls are the same, you won't find another one like her.

JEAN-LOUIS: That's true. (*he shouts*) Are you coming, Alex!

WILFRED: We're off fishing. A little bit of fresh fish for the inn wouldn't be bad, eh?

We pick up Alex again, still seated astride the prow of the little boat which draws away, spluttering, from the quay.

**SCENE 29**

**29.1 INDOORS, NIGHT-TIME AND EARLY MORNING – THE INN /  
ATTIC/ ALFA'S AREA**

A faint light from the moose-lamp at the bed head where Alfa sleeps in the arms of Jean-Louis.

Then the bed moves a little .... a hand lifts the blanket ... a naked body joins the sleepers. And Alfa finds herself wrapped in the arms of Alex and Jean-Louis.

Through the window the sun rises, also faint, like the moose-lamp.

Alfa opens one eye. She can't move, trapped as she is between the two men. In his sleep Alex has put his arm over her and is clinging on to Jean-Louis' arm.

Raising her brother's arm and gently pushing it back, Alfa manages to sit up on the bed and to slip out of the sheets without waking either of them. Alex cuddles up next to Jean-Louis' welcoming body.

Once she has got up, Alfa dresses quickly and leans over Jean-Louis' ear.

ALFA: (*very softly*) Jean-Louis, Jean-Louis, wake up.

He opens his eyes, sees the position he's in, and sits bolt upright up immediately. Jostled, Alex turns over to the other side of the bed, grumbling.

JEAN-LOUIS: Do you want to tell me what happened here this morning?

ALFA: (*making fun of him*) I was watching you sleeping there for a while. You looked good. You made a beautiful couple.

JEAN-LOUIS: (*in a bad mood*) Yes, yes, yes. It's your fault. You're the one who got him used to that.

ALFA: Come on, get a move on. We've a big day ahead of us.

JEAN-LOUIS: (*shaking the sleeper*) Wake up, Alex!

But Alex pulls the blankets over his head and curls up into a ball.

**SCENE 30**

**30.1 OUTDOORS, DAYTIME – ON THE LAWN IN FRONT OF THE INN**

The tables have been laid outside. A dozen guests are seated. Alfa is waiting on the tables. She arrives with two steaming plates which she puts down at the table where Jean-Louis is busy uncorking a bottle of wine. She leaves carrying the empty plates from another table.

Then we see Alex; perched on top of a ladder, he is trying to hook up a 'sound system' in a tree.

**30.2 INDOORS, DAYTIME – THE INN / KITCHEN**

Alfa puts a pile of dirty dishes in an already full sink. She lights a cigarette from which she takes two swift puffs, and quickly stubs it out.

ALFA: Two maple cream tartlets! How can people eat that when it's so hot?  
(*to Jeanne*) You're going to have to take these off the menu – we'll find ourselves getting blamed for heart attacks.

JEAN-LOUIS: (*coming in behind her*) How many teas did you ask me for?

ALFA: Four teas, two coffees and a camomile if there is any.

JEANNE: There is some. Your chicken pies are ready, Alfa, they're getting cold.

ALFA: I'm going, I'm going.

JEANNE: Don't forget the salads.

ALFA: Will you make them for me, Jean-Louis?

JEANNE: They're there, in front of you!

ALFA: You know, twelve customers at once, it's the absolute maximum we can deal with.

She takes the two plates of chicken pie, the two plates of salad, and rushes off.

JEAN-LOUIS: Not too tired, Jeanne?

JEANNE: What do you think? If it was like this all year, I wouldn't live to see my old age.

JEAN-LOUIS: Anyway, you ... anyway you're not getting old.

<<< Note: he starts off with the 'vous' form, then remembers and changes it to 'tu' >>>

JEANNE: Stop telling me I'm not getting old, you've said it twice already. I'm not so old that you should have so much difficulty talking to me like a woman of your own generation.

JEAN-LOUIS: (*surprised at the tone she has just used*) You seem to have it in for me for something.

JEANNE: I'm not getting old, I feel younger. I have the mood swings of an adolescent. Go and help Alfa, otherwise she's going to think that she's doing everything herself.

30.3 OUTDOORS, DAYTIME – IN FRONT OF THE INN

Alex is still up his tree, busy wiring the loudspeaker.

Alfa comes to the foot of the ladder.

ALFA: Could you go and look for a bottle of Amandières in the cellar? We need to put Sylvaner on the strawberries.

ALEX: In a minute. Have you switched on the radio?

ALFA: Half an hour ago.

ALEX: It's coming, it's coming.

ALFA: Why didn't you think about this before?

Alfa's attention is attracted by something at the side of the road. Emanating suddenly from the loudspeaker, music begins to float through the air; something by Mozart probably.

ALFA: If I were you, I'd hurry down if you don't want to miss the new arrival.

A very beautiful young girl comes into the yard pushing an old bicycle. On her shoulders is a heavy rucksack. She is wearing military shorts which show off her legs. She doesn't dare to come any closer. She seems to be listening to the Mozart filling the garden. Alfa goes up to her.

ALFA: Can I help you?

THE STRANGER: (*in English*) Sorry, I don't speak French. Is it possible to have a room? I am in trouble ... with my bike.

She has spoken in awkward English, with a German accent, and Alfa hasn't understood a thing. But Alex wastes no time in joining them.

ALEX: She's asking if there's a room for her. Her bike is broken. (*in English*) What's wrong with your bike?

THE STRANGER: The brakes. I think they are fucked up.

ALEX: (*for Alfa*) The brakes are gone.

ALFA: "Brake" and "fuck" are words I understand. I'll leave you to sort it out. It's lucky, eh, there's one room left. (*she leaves*)

ALEX: Let me see.

He kneels down to look more closely at the bicycle's brakes. He looks as though he is kneeling on the ground in front of her to pay her homage.

Alfa meets Jean-Louis who is serving the hot drinks. He is also distracted by the new arrival.

ALFA: Is there love in the air, do you suppose? That should be refreshing ... But in the meantime, I'm pretty sure that my customers have been looking for me.

**SCENE 31**

**31.1 OUTDOORS, DUSK – STAIRCASE AT THE REAR OF THE INN**

Using the staircase as a workbench, Alex has turned the bike upside down on its handlebars. He desperately wants to fix the brakes. From the open kitchen window we hear the sound of dishes being washed.

**31.2 INDOORS, DUSK – THE INN / DINING ROOM**

Only two tables are occupied, by a couple of residents who are onto their coffee, and by the beautiful stranger who is writing in a notebook. Alfa brings her meal.

ALFA: (*in English*) You come from where?

THE STRANGER: Germany. Al-le-ma-gne. I love it here very much, the house.

ALFA: (*in French*) You like it here, I understand, you want to stay. (*she turns on her heel and walks away*) Enjoy your meal.

THE STRANGER: Mer-ci beau-coup ....

**31.3 INDOORS, NIGHT-TIME – THE INN / KITCHEN**

Someone quietly opens the door that connects the kitchen to the dining room. It's the stranger. She stops in the doorway.

THE STRANGER: I beg your pardon

All four of them are round the table; Jeanne, Alex, Alfa and Jean-Louis. They are eating in silence. As soon as he notices the stranger Alex gets up, but Jeanne beats him to it.

<<<Note: in this scene, the stranger speaks in English, as does Alex when speaking to her. The rest is in French.  
>>>

JEANNE: (*very gently*) Yes?

THE STRANGER: Are you the boss?

ALEX: She is.

THE STRANGER: I offer you to wash the dishes ... to pay my meal. I do not have money enough for both the meal and the room.

ALEX: Don't worry about that. It's OK.

JEANNE: What did she say?

JEAN-LOUIS: (*to the people around the table*) She wants to do the dishes to pay for her meal.

ALFA: (*to the people around the table*) I want to know what she's going to offer to pay for her room.

Alex looks daggers at her.

THE STRANGER: What?

ALEX: Your bike is repaired.

THE STRANGER: Great!

JEANNE: *(to Alex)* Tell her not to worry. We won't make her wash the dishes.

ALEX: *(to Jeanne)* I told her. *(to the stranger)* It's alright for the meal, she says. You're a guest of her.

THE STRANGER: *(to Jeanne)* Oh ... thank you very much. Have a good night.

She beats a retreat, suddenly very intimidated.

ALEX: See you tomorrow ...

But the door has already closed.

**SCENE 32**

**32.1 OUTDOORS, MORNING – THE BEACH**

The wheels of a bicycle move forwards across the sand ... accompanied by the bare legs of the beautiful stranger. Wheels and feet leave their marks on the beach.

**32.2 OUTDOORS/INDOORS, MORNING – THE INN / KITCHEN**

Alex arrives at the rear staircase and sees that the repaired bike is no longer there. He rushes into the kitchen where Jeanne is bustling about preparing the guests' breakfasts.

ALEX: Hey, has the bike been stolen?

JEANNE: The young lady left early this morning.

ALEX: Left? ... to go for a ride?

JEANNE: She said 'goodbye' to me in French.

ALEX: (*he can't believe her and becomes scathing*) I suppose you let her pay for her room.

JEANNE: Is that what you think? You don't know me very well. Run after her if you're so disappointed.

**32.3 OUTDOORS, DAYTIME – THE BEACH NEAR THE BOAT GRAVEYARD**

The bicycle is lying on the sand. So is the beautiful stranger, her face turned to the sun. A shadow suddenly passes over her body. She opens her eyes and sits up on her elbows.

Alex sits beside her, adopting the same position.

ALEX: (*in English*) So you're leaving?

THE STRANGER: I'm on my way.

ALEX: On your way ... It's good to know where your way is. It's my kingdom here. You don't like the place?

THE STRANGER: (*in broken French*) And you? You want to sleep with me?

ALEX: Me? I want to sing you a song. But I don't even know your name.

THE STRANGER: You can sing. My name is Barbara.

ALEX: Barbara?! That's an idea! (*he begins to sing, in French, very loudly*)

*"All the passers-by have gone*

*But you, more stubborn than a rock*

*You haven't left the river and the blossom-covered hillside*

*You guard the fire and the table*

*The rose and the maple syrup*

*Like so many deep dark secrets."*

<<< Note: Translated from "*Tous les passants*" by French singer Barbara >>>

BARBARA: Is it a French Canadian song? What does it say?

ALEX: You don't know "Barbara", Barbara?

BARBARA: (*singing in her turn, mispronouncing the lyrics*)

*"It's raining in Nantes*

*Give me your hand ..."*

Is it the same Barbara?

<<< Note: Translated from "*Nantes*" by French singer Barbara >>>

ALEX: You win.

BARBARA: You sing "Barbara" well.

She leans over him and places a kiss on his lips, which she continues while he doesn't move.

BARBARA: A kiss from Barbara for a song of "Barbara". Is that all right?

He doesn't answer. He doesn't move. He is happy. She is too.

**SCENE 33**

INDOORS, NIGHT-TIME – THE INN / KITCHEN

The long day of serving customers has finally ended. In the kitchen, everything is just about cleared up, except for the pile of dishes to be washed. Alfa comes in with a final tray loaded with glasses, cups, plates, empty bottles and bread baskets. She puts it down on the counter and goes to join the others round the table; Jean-Louis, Jeanne, Alex and ... Barbara. The “family” now consists of five people, an odd number.

ALFA: (*dropping into her chair*) If the takings are good at the end of the summer we’ll buy a dishwasher. Or maybe we can hire someone to do nothing but that. (*attacking the meal that the others have almost finished*) Wilfred’s fish! While I remember there’s always some idiot who wants to be in charge. That Mrs Martel’s one – she’s on the black list. She’d like to have the lot and pay for nothing. We should be able to choose the guests. When this sort of thing raises its head, you give them a big smile and show them the door. If I have a restaurant of my own one day, that’s the way it’s going to work.

She pushes her plate back and relaxes a little, sinking deep in her chair. Then she notices that the others are looking at her, smiling. Barbara’s head is resting on Alex’s shoulder.

ALFA: (*taking a drink*) There’s love in the air, is there? Let’s drink to it then. For once we’re not in danger of killing each other.

BARBARA: It’s funny here. It’s like to be on a ship.

JEANNE: What’s she saying? It annoys me not being able to understand!

ALFA: That’s the trouble with being called O’Neil and speaking terrible English.

JEAN-LOUIS: (*to Jeanne*) She feels like she’s on a ship. (*to Barbara, in English*) It’s our trade-mark; a house like a ship. (*to Jeanne*) She doesn’t know that that’s how we’ve advertised it.

JEANNE: If she keeps on comparing the house to a ship, she’s going to end up sailing off. There mustn’t be a big storm.

Alfa suddenly becomes pensive.

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FLEETING VISION IN BLACK AND WHITE

At the prow of a ship sailing on the sea, a little girl (seen from the back) hangs on to the ship’s rail and holds her head into the wind.

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BARBARA: You people seem to be ... in love ... with each other.

JEANNE: (*in English*) In love?

JEAN-LOUIS: (*to Jeanne*) We seem to like each other a lot.

ALEX: (*to Jean-Louis*) That's not what she said. (*to Jeanne*) She thinks that we seem to be "in love" with each other. (*putting his arm around Jean-Louis' neck*) Don't you think that's right, Jean-Louis? Or don't you understand English any more?

BARBARA: You look sad, Alfa.

ALFA: (*in English*) No, not sad. I ... I was listen ... listening to you. Maybe we could ... we should be friends, you and me ... If ... we have ... the time.

They look at one another.

ALFA: Actually ... there's never anything to do ... and I never have any time.

**SCENE 34**

**OUTDOORS, NIGHT-TIME – WILFRED’S BOAT / AT SEA**

On board the little pleasure boat, hired or borrowed by Jean-Louis. Alfa and he have taken refuge there. The sea is dead calm. The engine has been switched off so they can drift. They are lit by a small lamp. He is slumped on the seat at the helm, his eyes looking at the heavens. She is seated at his side, leaning forward, her elbows on her knees. They are at one in the same time very close to each other and completely separate. Alfa is recalling a memory.

ALFA: ... I have the feeling that this happened every summer, but actually it happened only twice, when I was eight or nine. Alex was six or seven. The first time, when Dad told us he was taking us away ... for a week ... with Mom too ... I remember ... Mom said, “Go and pack your case, Alex.” He couldn’t climb the stair he was so excited. That time we went to Newfoundland. A whole week travelling there and back. We ate with the crew. Mom did the washing in a tank on the bridge. Alex never wanted to sleep or eat. He just had to be watching the sea all the time, even when it was raining, especially when the wind was blowing. Dad had said, “Look, kids. If you watch closely enough, you’ll see it. There’s a horse on the sea, a storm horse.” I can still see him now at the front of the ship, all alone like a little captain. It makes me want to cry. (*a beat*) It was the same when he started his cello lessons. He wasn’t able to stop. Mom wasn’t able to stop playing the piano. And me, I just had to be a singer.

She stands up, facing the sea, facing the darkness. She starts to bellow out the tango that that she had danced to the first evening.

ALFA (*singing*)

*“Yet, saints of the firmament,  
Haunt the heights of the oak tree,  
Lost mast absorbed by twilight’s mystery,  
Abandon the warblers of May to those who inhabit  
Imprisoning grass in dark forest greenery,  
Those chained by defeat without destiny,  
Those chained by defeat without destiny.”*

(*a beat*)

I’m jealous, Jean-Louis. I want to be in love. I want you to be in love with me.

<<< Note: This song translation is by John Kinsella, fellow of Churchill College, Cambridge University  
Disk is Les Poetes, Vol. 3: Verlaine et Rimbaud by Léo Ferré >>>

JEAN-LOUIS: I am ... in a way.

ALFA: In a way ... (*perking up suddenly*) Have you got a pencil in your pocket? A bit of paper?

JEAN-LOUIS: (he finds a pen ... and a crumpled piece of paper) Will a receipt do?

ALFA: Give it here.

She scrawls a sentence on the receipt, rolls it up ... and puts it into the bottle of wine that they have finished. Recorking the bottle, she throws it overboard.

ALFA: That's the only love letter I've ever written. But I don't know who I've written it to.

Grabbing the glasses they've been using, she throws them overboard too.

ALFA: And the glasses! That's for luck.

JEAN-LOUIS: (*throwing the pen into the sea*) And the pen! That's for nothing.

To make him stand up, she takes him by the hand ... and kisses him quickly on the fingers.

ALFA: Let's go. There are still the dishes to wash. Our lovebirds won't be doing them.

She begins to climb the iron bars fixed to the cement wall. And suddenly we discover that the boat wasn't at sea but well and truly moored alongside the quay.

ALFA: (*climbing up and turning towards Jean-Louis at the foot of the ladder*) Don't you think that this is like us? A boat that never leaves the quay?

**SCENE 35**

**35.1 OUTDOORS, EARLY MORNING – ON THE BEACH**

A pitched tent, no doubt containing sleeping people. We are focusing very closely on the canvas which sways slightly in the light wind. We hear the sound of the backwash ... from which the wail of a cello seems quietly to materialise – the music of Bach.

Someone moves inside the narrow tent. Alex's head appears at the zipped opening. We now discover that we are on the abandoned schooner, where the lovers have chosen to set up their nomadic abode. Firmly ensconced at the prow of the old ship, Barbara is playing the music to celebrate the new day.

**35.2 INDOORS, EARLY MORNING – THE INN/ ATTIC**

Jean-Louis sleeps curled up, his back towards Alfa ... who is not asleep as her eyes are wide open, like a corpse, an effigy, stretched straight out with her arms by her sides.

The cello music continues, as if to lull the insomniac Alfa to sleep.

**35.3 INDOORS, EARLY MORNING – THE INN / JEANNE'S  
BEDROOM**

Alfa enters her mother's bedroom without knocking. She closes the door behind her and leans on it for a moment. Jeanne, surprised, just raises her head from the bed. Alfa goes to station herself by the window, her back to her mother, who sits on the edge of the bed with her back towards her daughter.

ALFA: Mom ... I've come to tell you that I love you, Mom. I love Jean-Louis too. You love him too. You can't even admit it to yourself. I've had Jean-Louis. I've slept with him. But he's not the one for me. No more than he's the one for you. He's the only thing I've had that you haven't. I've always wanted what you've had, Mom, you're no loser. Do you love me, Mom? Did you ever?

Suddenly she throws herself into her mother's arms, kneeling in front of her, clutching her with all her might, her head buried in her lap. She cries, heaving great sobs. Jeanne closes her arms around her, to cover her, to rock her, to return her to the womb.

ALFA: Why do you never cry, Mom? (She *almost shouts through her sobbing*)

JEANNE: My little girl, my little girl ...

ALFA: (*as if she no longer knows what else to say*) Why do you never cry, Mom?

JEANNE: Because I've no more tears left. I shed them all for your father.

ALFA: You loved him as much as that?

JEANNE: Maybe I would have come to hate him, but he pulled a fast one by dying.

**SCENE 36**

**OUTDOORS, DAYTIME – THE RAILWAY TRACK**

Close-up of Alex.

He is walking along the track, balancing on a rail. He is coming towards us and we draw back at the same pace. He talks looking straight into the lens. He is reciting rather than talking.

ALEX: *(at the top of his voice)* “The souls call in the Heavens, ‘We want to experience mortal life, O God, Lucifer claims it’s fantastic!’ And bingo! we have the Fall, we fall and here’s the result; concentration camps, gas ovens, barbed wire, atomic bombs, murders on TV, famines in Bolivia, thieves dressed in silk, thieves wearing ties, licensed crime, pen pushers, bureaucrats, insults, rage, terror, horror, terrifying nightmares, the secret death of hangovers, cancer, ulcers, strangulation, pus, senility, old people’s homes, crutches, swellings, receding gums, stench, tears and farewells. (...) So how can we live in joy and peace? By upping sticks and wandering from one state of affairs to the next, each time plunging further into the depths of fearfulness?” .... *(resuming a normal tone)* Bet you didn’t understand any of that.

<<< Note: the text notes that this is by Jack Kerouac but that the exact source is not identified>>>

We discover that Alex is of course with Barbara. He has been reciting this text for her. While he is coming forward balancing on the rail, she is walking backwards on the track, always keeping the same distance between them.

ALEX: *(catching up with her and grabbing her by the waist)* *(in English)*  
You understood nothing!

BARBARA: *(offended)* Everything! I understood everything!

ALEX: *(in English)* You’re a liar! Men-teu-se. <<<*the feminine form of ‘liar’*>>>.

BARBARA: Is it a poem of yours?

ALEX: *(in French)* A Kerouac poem. You won’t know it.

BARBARA: Kerouac-on-the-road? He was French Canadian.

ALEX: *(in English)* You know nothing. *(back to French)* He was ‘almost’ French Canadian. But not a French speaker at all. Do you know how the great Jack died? Not on the road, but watching telly in his sick old mother’s house.

BARBARA: What?

ALEX: *(in English)* I said, “He died as he wrote – on the road”

BARBARA: That’s not what you said! You’re a liar. Men-teu-se. <<<*note, still the feminine form*>>>

All the time they’re pretending to squabble, they are moving away from us, following the rails.

A car arrives, driving very slowly. It’s Jean-Louis, looking deeply sad. He cuts the engine before getting out, not slamming the door to avoid being

heard. He goes up to the track and watches them depart, laughing all the way.

The rumble of a thunderstorm. Suddenly the rain beats down on Jean-Louis, who doesn't move.

**SCENE 37**

INDOORS, DAYTIME – THE INN / UPSTAIRS HALLWAY AND ALFA'S BEDROOM

Wind and rain at the windows. Jean-Louis is soaked from head to toe. Just as he is about to climb the staircase leading to the attic, he comes face to face with Alfa on her way down, arms full of clothes.

JEAN-LOUIS: What are you doing?

ALFA: Next time I move, I swear, it'll be to get out of here.

She doesn't stop. She goes directly to her old room, Jean-Louis following.

ALFA: (*throwing the clothes on the bed*) Let's stop putting on an act, Jean-Louis.

JEAN-LOUIS: I've never done anything of the sort.

ALFA: You look like a poor little duck.

JEAN-LOUIS: It's raining outside in case you didn't notice.

ALFA: While we've been 'sleeping' together you've been pining away. To me, you seem to be in love, Jean-Louis. Not with me, I know that. Nor my mother either. So who with? Ah yes – with the whole household, if it suits you to think that. My God, don't start sulking. We both have to pay for this little jaunt, we knew that from the start.

JEAN-LOUIS: I don't know where I am any more.

ALFA: (*taking him in her arms*) You came here to lose yourself. You'll find yourself again, you'll find yourself again. It's ... great that you came here ... that you're here. Are you going to help me, or do I have to finish it on my own?

JEAN-LOUIS: (*looking at the boxes and the clothes already in the room*) Yes, yes.

ALFA: I'm not talking about the move.

**SCENE 38**

**38.1 OUTDOORS, DAYTIME – THE GARDEN OF THE INN**

The good weather has brought some guests who are lingering at the tables, taking in the sun with their food. Alfa is waiting tables.

A woman has just arrived with her little boy. Jean-Louis helps to carry her bag from the car to the inn.

**38.2 INDOORS, DAYTIME – THE INN / KITCHEN**

Jeanne is preparing desserts. She raises her head suddenly – two men in suits have just appeared at the mosquito screen of the door. She goes towards them anxiously. One of the men, the elder of the two, comes in without waiting to be invited. The other one remains on the porch.

THE MAN: Mrs O’Neil?

JEANNE: That’s me.

THE MAN: (*handing her an envelope*) Clément Perrion, bailiff. A notice from the bank for your mortgage repayments.

JEANNE: (*taking the document*) Oh ...

Cut to Jean-Louis who comes into the kitchen just as the visitors are taking their leave. He only just notices them. Jeanne quickly conceals the envelope.

JEAN-LOUIS: Who was that?

JEANNE: Oh ... commercial travellers.

JEAN-LOUIS: Oh yeah? What for?

JEANNE: I don’t really know ... hotel equipment, probably. They come every year.

Baffled, Jean-Louis watches them depart.

JEAN-LOUIS: They don’t look very reassuring. Did they ask you any questions?

JEANNE: (*more and more ill at ease*) Questions?

JEAN-LOUIS: About me or ... Alex, I don’t know. (*suddenly turning towards her*) They didn’t threaten you, did they? You can tell me.

JEANNE: What is it you’re after?

JEAN-LOUIS: They’ve certainly shaken you up, anyway.

JEANNE: (*going back to her work*) I think they were Jehovah’s Witnesses.

**SCENE 39**

OUTDOORS, DAYTIME – THE BEACH AND THE ABANDONED  
SCHOONER

On the gutted bridge of the ship, Barbara has become a teacher. Under her vigilant eye, like a good hardworking student, Alex has started practising the cello again. Here he is busy playing scales that are carried off in the wind.

Suddenly catching Barbara by the waist, he holds them both intertwined – the girl and the instrument, doing nothing but gripping them very tightly, his face buried in Barbara’s stomach.

<<< Note: In the next dialogue, Barbara speaks in English, Alex only in French >>>

BARBARA: (*suddenly worried*) What’s wrong?

ALEX: We’re going nowhere, nowhere at all.

BARBARA: Talk to me.

ALEX: You can’t love me as much as I want you to.

BARBARA: Say it in English, Alex. You cry?

He raises his head. It’s not tears she sees in his eyes but a strange hardness.

ALEX: Where can you go with a bike and a cello, on a boat that doesn’t float?

BARBARA: Why don’t you talk to me?

ALEX: I’m talking to your heart, can’t you hear?

BARBARA: (*breaking free*) Don’t be that way! You frighten me!

She moves away from him. He resumes his scales in a kind of rage.

Now we hear Jean-Louis shouting, “Alex! Alex!” which falls like a cleaver on the music.

Cut to the beach. Jean-Louis approaches the bottom of the wreck. Alex and Barbara appear at the ship’s rail.

JEAN-LOUIS: (*cupping his hands round his mouth*) Can I see you for a moment, Alex?

Alex climbs down a ladder improvised from bits of plank. Jean-Louis moves a little way along the beach, and Alex joins him.

JEAN-LOUIS: (*without preamble*) Your mother’s had a visit. I don’t like it. She didn’t want to say anything to me but I saw the guys. If you’re in the shit, too bad for you. But not her. You told me you had an address in Montreal, remember?

ALEX: I have it written down somewhere ...

JEAN-LOUIS: You're going to contact these people pdq and settle with them. (*pushing an envelope into his hand*) Here's what you need. That should be enough.

ALEX: (*feeling the thickness of the envelope*) There's enough here for me to get pretty far away.

JEAN-LOUIS: Don't be an idiot.

ALEX: You're a fool, Jean-Louis. That's not the way it works. Are you sure you're not getting worked up over nothing?

JEAN-LOUIS: Do as I say, Alex.

ALEX: Are you going to need me to be grateful till the end of my days?

You've changed, Jean-Louis. You're not the same.

JEAN-LOUIS: I hate this as much as you.

ALEX: It looks as if you'd like to kill me.

JEAN-LOUIS: Maybe because you can be killed.

**SCENE 40**

INDOORS, EVENING – THE INN / KITCHEN

The same evening ...

Jean-Louis is washing the dishes and Jeanne is drying. Her mind is elsewhere, rubbing the same plate over and over again.

JEAN-LOUIS: (*watching her out of the corner of his eye*) Jeanne?

JEANNE: (*she jumps, lays down the plate and picks up another*) It's as if ... it's as if I was waiting for something. Not you? What might it be? I think that inn-keeping is about to throw me out on my ear.

It's Jean-Louis' turn to jump when the door opens ... and a guy enters. A very embarrassed Wilfred.

JEANNE: Wilfred!

WILFRED: Good evening, Mrs O'Neil. Hi, Jean-Louis. Is ... Alfa ...?

ALFA: (*coming in with a tray of dirty dishes*) I'm ready, I'm ready.

JEANNE: (*to Wilfred*) How's your father?

WILFRED: He's fine.

ALFA: (*grabbing her bag*) The tables are set. Everything's tidy through there. Good night, you two. I won't be late.

She drags Wilfred off. The screen door slams and rebounds as it closes.

**SCENE 41**

INDOORS / OUTDOORS, NIGHT-TIME – THE INN / LOUNGE AND GARDEN

The same night ...

The wind blows through the open windows. Alex and Barbara are dozing on the old couch. He is lying on his back, his feet on a pouffe, his head tilted backwards, arms stretched out on either side of his body. She is curled up in a ball, resting against his chest. She seems to be asleep, but she raises her head when she hears footsteps on the stairs ...

Jean-Louis is coming down. He is about to go out without making a sound. But Barbara calls him by name and he comes towards the couch. They talk very quietly <<<in English >>>

BARBARA: I like this wind.

JEAN-LOUIS: I cannot sleep.

BARBARA: You go walking?

JEAN-LOUIS: I feel like running.

BARBARA: We never talked to each other.

JEAN-LOUIS: That doesn't matter. I know what you feel.

BARBARA: I'm sure you do.

JEAN-LOUIS: Don't be afraid. Good night, Barbara.

He leans over and kisses her on the cheek, but just as he straightens up, Alex puts his arm round his neck.

ALEX: Aren't you going to kiss me?

JEAN-LOUIS: (*warding him off*) Have you done what you had to do?

ALEX: Tomorrow, Jean-Louis, tomorrow. Good night.

He tries to kiss him but Jean-Louis disengages himself rather violently. Alex grabs his swinging arm and his fist is like iron. They eye each other up and down.

ALEX: Say good night to me, Jean-Louis.

JEAN-LOUIS: (*making him release his hold with a curt reply*) Good night, Alex.

When Jean-Louis opens the door to leave, the current of air blows the curtains.

BARBARA: I don't like you when you're like this.

ALEX: (*getting up*) You don't like me anyway.

He goes to the record-player, looks for a record, finds it and puts it on the turntable.

BARBARA: Don't play music. It's too late.

---

Outside the wind shakes the trees. And suddenly from amongst the trees "The Crows" blares out at full blast, coming from the loudspeaker fixed to the branch, transforming the wind into a tango dancer:

*"Lord, when a chill is in the meadows,  
When in exhausted hamlets  
Perpetual prayer-times are silent..."*

---

Starting in the garden, the song sweeps through the whole house. Barbara tries to get to the machine to switch it off, but Alex blocks her way.

BARBARA: *(striking him with her fists)* You stupid bastard! You destroy everything! I hate you! I hate you!

Suddenly with a scraping of the stylus, the record is snatched from the turntable. Jeanne has come downstairs. She is beside herself and launches herself on her son, pushing him outside.

JEANNE: *(shouting)* Get out! Get out! Don't come back till you learn to behave!

He allows himself to be pushed outside without offering any resistance. Jeanne is left facing Barbara.

JEANNE: My God ... my God ...

BARBARA: *(still dazed)* I'm sorry ... I'm sorry ... *(she suddenly dashes off in pursuit of Alex)* I'll catch him, don't worry.

A guest *(the one we saw arriving with her young son in scene 38)* ventures to the foot of the stairs.

THE GUEST: What's happening?

JEANNE: It's nothing, it's nothing. I left the radio alarm on. I hope you can get back to sleep. I'll deduct the price of the room for tonight.

Jeanne goes to close the windows.

**SCENE 42**

**42.1 OUTDOORS, EARLY MORNING – ON THE ABANDONED SCHOONER**

The tent is open. Alex's bare feet are sticking out. He is asleep on his stomach. Barbara is ready to leave. Her rucksack is already fastened and she puts it on. Then she takes the cello ... and lays it on the prow of the ship. We watch her climb down the ladder.

**42.2 INDOORS, EARLY MORNING – THE INN / KITCHEN**

Already dressed, Jeanne is seated at the table without even a coffee in front of her, worn out.

Alfa enters by the back door, obviously having been out all night. She's surprised to find her mother already up.

ALFA: Oh, there you are.

JEANNE: The last guest has just left.

ALFA: (*sitting down facing her mother*) I'm going to get married, Mom. To Wilfred. I'm going to live with him.

JEANNE: Where?

ALFA: I don't know. Wherever there's work. I'm pregnant.

JEANNE: It's not Wilfred's, surely?

ALFA: No. But this time, no secret trip to town. (*rising*) I've got to get some sleep. I want a life, Mom.

She disappears into the house. Jeanne doesn't move.

**42.3 INDOORS, EARLY MORNING – THE INN / LOUNGE**

Barbara comes in with her rucksack. She goes towards the staircase.

JEANNE: (*coming in behind her*) Barbara?

BARBARA: (*facing her*) I'm going, Jeanne.

JEANNE: You're going? Where?

BARBARA: Back home.

JEANNE: Home? To Germany? Where's Alex?

BARBARA: May I kiss you goodbye? (*She steps forward and kisses her shyly on the cheek*)

JEANNE: (*in English*) How you go?

BARBARA: (*'walking' her fingers*) Walking (*raising her thumb*) Hitch-hiking (*miming an aeroplane*) Flying (*she moves back towards the door waving her hand*) Bye bye ...

She goes out but Jeanne doesn't give her time to close the door.

JEANNE: (*almost shouting*) Wait!

42.4 OUTDOORS, MORNING – ON THE ROAD / JEAN-LOUIS' CAR

Jeanne is driving, Barbara at her side. They come to the crossroads from the start of the film and Jeanne stops the car at the roadside.

They remain silent, both looking straight ahead. In the following dialogue, they don't look at each other. <<< they both speak in English >>>

JEANNE: What to say?

BARBARA: You're a beautiful woman.

JEANNE: Alex ... he is not bad.

BARBARA: I'll miss you.

JEANNE: Someday ... maybe.

BARBARA: Maybe someday ...

Barbara lightly touches Jeanne's hand on the steering wheel, opens the door and gets out. She runs across the road, raising her thumb. A lorry approaches and stops.

Jeanne gets out of the car.

JEANNE: (*shouting*) Wait, Barbara, wait!

But the lorry has already moved off.

JEANNE: (*very softly*) ... your bicycle? ...

**SCENE 43**

**OUTDOORS, MORNING – THE BEACH AND THE ABANDONED  
SCHOONER**

Jeanne climbs the makeshift ladder and ventures onto the bridge as far as the little tent.

JEANNE: (*harshly*) Alex! Wake up, Alex!

But he's not in the tent and she discovers him at the prow of the ship where he is standing, back towards us, with the cello at his feet. She goes towards him.

JEANNE: (*stopping at some distance from him*) Barbara has left. I didn't want you to be the last to know. My poor little boy ... What are you trying to destroy? ... Who do you want to hurt? ... Why don't you ever give yourself a chance? My poor little boy, my poor little boy ...

Without looking at her he bends over and picks up the cello. She turns on her heel and goes off.

Jeanne has climbed back down the ladder. Suddenly we hear Alex playing the opening bars of the Bach suite. She stops for a moment, surprised ... and runs off along the sand.

We return to him playing on the prow of his wreck.

**SCENE 44**

**44.1 OUTDOORS, DAYTIME – THE INN / BACKYARD**

Close-up of Barbara's bicycle lying on its side on the grass. Alex's foot appears pushing the front wheel making it spin ... Suddenly the cello crashes down on the cycle with exceptional violence. And this time, considering the cracking sound that the wood makes, there's every chance that the instrument has just produced its last note.

**44.2 INDOORS, DAYTIME – THE INN / KITCHEN**

Jean-Louis is seated at the table, lost. Jeanne is sitting facing him, desolate.

Alex rushes in. He scatters bundles of dollars on the table. Jeanne leaps to her feet but Jean-Louis doesn't react.

ALEX: Well, Mom, I'm buying out the inn. You'll be happy – I've found what I want to do for a living. Like you always wanted.

JEANNE: Where did you get that money?

ALEX: A present from Jean-Louis. Didn't you know, Mom? You didn't know that Jean-Louis was in love with me? Even he didn't know it, but that's why he came back. For me.

JEANNE: Shut up, Alex!

ALEX: (*shoving Jean-Louis several times*) Eh, Jean-Louis, now tell us why you sleep with my sister. Because you know I love her. Don't you think that's sick, Mom? If I buy out the inn, Jean-Louis, will you come and work for me?

Jean-Louis jumps up like a spring and leaps at Alex's throat, pinning him with all his weight against the fridge.

JEAN-LOUIS: What about you, who are you in love with? You don't even know what it means. You piss us off with your soul searching. You haven't got the guts, you haven't got the balls, you're not able to stand on your own two feet. Who do you love? Have you ever told anybody you love her? You're going to tell me that you love me! I'll make you spit it out. It'll be just another lie.

Alex hits Jean-Louis in the stomach and he doubles up. He punches him on the face and Jean-Louis falls backwards over the table.

Jeanne tries to intervene, shouting to them to stop, but Alex pushes her back against the counter which she hits quite hard. Jean-Louis gets back up ...

JEAN-LOUIS: Go on, kill me. Is that what you want? Kill me, if you can. But don't miss, because I won't.

He receives another punch to the face which this time knocks him rolling on the ground at Jeanne's feet. Alex steps forward to hit him again, but Jeanne grabs a kitchen knife and points it at him.

JEANNE: (*howling*) No-o-o-o!!!

She has just shouted the "no" of a lifetime, in order to transfix Alex in his anger. Mother and son face each other, each one as fierce as the other in this final moment. Jeanne slashes the air around her with the knife, like a madwoman. She throws it at arms length ... and breaks the window.

JEANNE: (*shouting*) Get out of here! (*howling*) Get out!

She closes her eyes and trembles.

Alex knocks over a chair ... and backs out of the room, stupefied.

Then Jeanne kneels beside Jean-Louis who is trying to stand up. She feels his face. She has blood on her hands.

He picks himself up and wipes the blood that is dripping from his nose.

JEANNE: Don't move. It's over.

He doesn't hear her. He manages to stand up straight. He leaves without looking at her. He has to finish it.

She remains, insane with loneliness. There are all these dollars on the table. She begins picking them up by the handful.

#### 44.3 OUTDOORS, DAYTIME – THE FRONT OF THE INN AND THE COURTYARD

Alfa runs out of the house. She hasn't even had time to tie the belt of her dressing gown. She catches up with Alex who is on his way towards the road. She hangs on to him to hold him back.

ALFA: Where are you going?! Where are you going?!

They freeze at a shout behind them.

THE VOICE OF JEAN-LOUIS: Alex!!!

Alex turns round.

Jean-Louis comes down the porch steps ... but Jeanne catches up with him to cut him off.

JEANNE: (*taking Jean-Louis by the shoulders*) Leave him alone. Leave him! It's too late.

JEAN-LOUIS: (*looking only at Alex*) It's over, Jeanne. It's nearly over.

JEANNE: You want to leave too. (*a beat*) Take him, then. Take him with you.

So saying, she stuffs the handful of dollars she has picked up into his pocket. He looks at her without seeing her. Suddenly he takes her face in his hands. He slowly brings his lips to hers. He kisses her on the mouth, hard enough to bruise her lips. A long kiss. Suddenly he breaks it off, detaching himself from her, leaving her, abandoning her ...

Head up, he goes straight to Alex who is transfixed.  
Alfa is scared. She in turn tries to intervene.

ALFA: (*to Jean-Louis*) Have you gone mad or what? Have you gone mad?

He takes her in his arms, until she stops resisting him. Then he abandons her too. He begins to walk around Alex who doesn't utter a sound. He runs his hand over his face, through his hair, as if trying to read him, decipher him, learn him and memorise him before losing him.

JEAN-LOUIS: Poor loser ... If you only knew ... if you only knew how much I love you ... if you only knew how I don't give a shit about your arse ...

Alfa throws herself at Jean-Louis and give him a push that unbalances him. She shouts.

ALFA: What about me, my arse, do you give a shit about that? Go on! Tell me you love me too. That would be so nice! What a lovely ending that would make! Everybody loves each other, everybody clears off!

But Jean-Louis isn't listening. He is speaking only to Alex.

JEAN-LOUIS: (*to Alex, as if in secret*) You're beautiful, so strong. Everyone loves you. Is that what you want? Is it all you want? You've never looked at yourself through other people's eyes. You know that's the worst thing?

ALEX: (*in a whisper*) Take me with you ...

He grabs Jean-Louis' arm but is shaken off.

Alfa pushes the two of them with contempt.

ALFA: Oh yes! Off you go together. That's even more cute! Clear off!

JEAN-LOUIS: (*to Alex, despite being pushed by Alfa*) I wanted to be like you.

Alfa dashes towards Jeanne, takes her by the hand and pulls, pulls ... like a harpy at the end of her tether.

ALFA: Come on, Mom, come on! The four of us are going to leave together. A foursome, have you ever seen that? The brother, the son, the sister, the mother all in the same bed! Flat on their backs! Jean-Louis would like that. Come on!

Jeanne allows herself to be pulled along. It's all too much. She's not herself anymore. Then all of a sudden Alfa rushes back into the house.

There are only the three of them to suffer the terrible silence that falls.

Alex eyes meet Jeanne's. Jean-Louis retreats towards his car, he backs off, he breaks away, he climbs into the driving seat, he starts the engine...

The other two are only interested in crossing swords with their eyes.

Jean-Louis' car turns in the yard ... Alex throws himself in front of it, leaning both hands on the bonnet. Jean-Louis is forced to brake.

After a moment Jean-Louis opens the passenger door. Alex dives inside.

Jeanne has already turned her back on them.

**SCENE 45**

OUTDOORS, DAYTIME – IN JEAN-LOUIS' CAR, THE ROAD AND THE CROSSROADS

The both drive in silence. We reach the crossroads from the start of the film. There, Jean-Louis stops the car. The silence both unites and separates them. They don't look at each other, they look only at the forked road in front of them. Until the end, they don't exchange a single look.

Taking from his pocket the notes that Jeanne has put there, Jean-Louis gives them to Alex.

ALEX: I don't understand...

JEAN-LOUIS: Here's where you get out.

He leans over Alex and opens his door. But Alex doesn't move.

JEAN-LOUIS: Hurry up. You've got to get on the road.

But Alex doesn't move.

JEAN-LOUIS: Get this – I'm not going to forgive you. In five years, ten years, maybe you'll be happy, maybe you'll be dead. I won't have forgiven you. Get out.

But Alex doesn't move.

ALEX: I didn't want ... I didn't want to hurt you ...

JEAN-LOUIS: (*vehemently*) Are you hurt? Me neither.

But Alex doesn't move.

JEAN-LOUIS: We'll never see each other again. Act as though I was dead. (*Suddenly he shouts*) I told you that I love you! What more do you want?! What do you want done about it? Get out.

He grabs the steering wheel and bangs his forehead on it.

Alex now strokes Jean-Louis, as he had done to him a little while ago, with this yearning to learn, to decipher, to commit him to memory ...

And Jean-Louis doesn't move.

ALEX: I love you ... perhaps ... more than you think ...

JEAN-LOUIS: (*mercilessly*) Too bad for you. Live with it. Get out.

After a moment Alex slowly gets out of the car and slams the door behind him.

Jean-Louis drives off like a madman. He disappears towards the horizon on the road on which he was seen arriving at the beginning of the film.

We remain with Alex who walks in the opposite direction. Cars pass, he raises his thumb, no-one stops ...

SUPERIMPOSED SOUND : notes on a piano

**SCENE 46**

**46.1 INDOORS, DAYTIME – THE INN / LOUNGE**

Time has passed. Ideally there would be a change in the season.

Standing in front of the piano, Jeanne touches the keys with one finger, vaguely playing Schubert's *Serenade*.

Someone appears at the door. We recognise the bailiff from scene 38.

JEANNE: (*opening the door for him*) Oh yes, that's right, the note from the bank. Wait there a moment.

**46.2 INDOORS, DAYTIME – THE INN / ALFA'S BEDROOM**

Here yet another move is underway. This time, Alfa has packed everything carefully into two identical suitcases, and Wilfred is there to help her.

JEANNE: (*entering the bedroom*) The bailiffs are downstairs to take the house. If you still want it, it's yours for the balance of the mortgage.

Alfa is astounded.

JEANNE: You haven't a lot of time to think about it.

ALFA: (*to Wilfred*) Are you interested in becoming an inn-keeper?

WILFRED: It's what I've always dreamed of.

ALFA: (*to Jeanne*) For the balance of the mortgage?

JEANNE: And your car.

Hesitation ...

ALFA: (*clapping her mother's hand*) Go and ask them to wait. I'm going to put on my makeup and go and negotiate.

**SCENE 47**

OUTDOORS, DAYTIME – IN FRONT OF THE INN

The old sign has been painted over. On top of a ladder, Alfa is finishing off repainting the new name of 'her' establishment – MAISON ALFA, Restaurant.

In the background we see Wilfred repainting the front of the house.

**SCENE 48**

48.1 OUTDOORS, DAWN – ON THE SEA

Two shots – the sun rising over the ocean ...

... and then, rocked by the swell, a bottle carrying Alfa's love letter.

48.2 OUTDOORS, DAWN – THE CROSSROADS

In fact, Jeanne isn't watching the sun rise at sea, but on the road.

Sitting on the bonnet of Alfa's car (exchanged for the house), she turns her face to the first rays of dawn. The car's engine is running and the headlights are on.

In a sort of semi-circular movement we move in on Jeanne until her face is framed very, very close. She is looking to infinity and displays no emotion; she's thinking about nothing and is feeling nothing; she is as young as a child, as old as the world.

The last shot is identical to the final shot in *Queen Christina* with Garbo.

We hear sails flapping in the wind, and as always, the backwash.

Slowly dissolve to black on Jeanne's face.

Over the FINAL CREDITS – Bach's *Suite for cello*