THE CHARACTERS

DE MONTCHEL
IRENE DE MONTCHEL
GISELE DE MONTCHEL
JACQUES VIRIEU
D'AIGUINES
FRANÇOISE MEILLANT
Mlle. MARCHANT
JOSEPHINE
GEORGES

Act I: Irene de Montcel's room in her father's apartment; Paris.
Act II: Jacques Virieu's study. One month later.
Act III: The same. A year later.

THE CAPTIVE

ACT ONE

SCENE: IRENE's room in her father's apartment, Paris. A door at the left leads to a dressing room; another in back gives onto the hall, a third at the right connects with GISELE's room.

The room is furnished simply but with period pieces of uncommon taste; the bed lies in a recess, there is a small divan, some comfortable chairs and a table. On the latter stands a telephone.

On the walls hang several photographic copies of paintings of the Italian school. In the far corner stands an artist's easel, faced toward the wall.

When the curtain rises the room is empty; then the door at the right half opens and GISELE, an attractive girl of seventeen, looks in.

GISELE

[Calls]: Irene? [She enters and proceeds to the door at left] Irene? [Looking off] She's not there. [Mlle. Marchand, Gisele's governess, enters at right.]
THE CAPTIVE

Mlle. Marchand

I told you she hadn’t come in yet. It’s only six o’clock... that’s much too early for her.

GISELE

But she told me she’d be back early to-night because of the dinner. She’s supposed to help me fix the flowers for the table.

Mlle. Marchand

I wouldn’t count on her too much if I were you. Would you like me to help you?

GISELE

Oh, I’d rather she did. If I do them without her they won’t look like anything.

Mlle. Marchand

Very well.

GISELE

Isn’t she tiresome always being late like this! What am I to do about my dress?

Mlle. Marchand

What about it?

GISELE

I’ve got to know what dress to put on!

Mlle. Marchand

Surely you don’t need your sister to decide that?

THE CAPTIVE

GISELE

Well, you see we’re the only two women at dinner to-night, and we must arrange that our dresses don’t clash.

Mlle. Marchand

Ah, yes, that’s so.

[Josephine, a maid, enters at the back, carrying a gown to be put away in the dressing room.]

GISELE

Josephine, has Irene told you what dress she’s wearing to-night?

Josephine

No, mademoiselle, she hasn’t.

GISELE

Oh, Lord! Now I’ve no idea what to wear myself!

[Josephine goes out.]

Mlle. Marchand

Wear your yellow dress. It’s charming—and it’s very becoming.

GISELE

My yellow dress! Don’t be silly!

Mlle. Marchand

Gisele! A little more respect for your governess, if you please!
THE CAPTIVE

GISELE
I'm sorry, mademoiselle. I respect you, dear,—but when it comes to clothes I must say you don't know what you're talking about!

Mlle. Marchand
But what have you got against the yellow dress?

GISELE
Much too formal! It's just a little political dinner. . . . papa said the men won't dress. We'll be only eight in all. . . . a few antiques from the Foreign Office. . . . and a couple of senators. It'll be a regular wilderness of whiskers!

Mlle. Marchand
Gisele! If you please!

GISELE
What's the matter?

Mlle. Marchand
If you're not a bit more careful in your language, you'll never get along in Rome, my dear. Please remember that you're to be very nearly an official personage there. The daughter of an ambassador is somebody. Every word of yours will be noticed and criticized, you may be sure.

THE CAPTIVE

GISELE
[Smiling]: Nonsense!
[M. de Montcel appears at the back. He is a tall, distinguished looking man of fifty.]

Montcel
Is Irene here?

Gisele
No, papa, she's not in yet.

Montcel
[Half to himself]: Naturally! [Aloud.] Good evening, mademoiselle. Don't get up. [To Gisele.] Please see that I'm told the moment she gets in.

Gisele
Very well, papa.

Montcel
[Montcel starts to go.]

Gisele
Papa?

Montcel
Yes?

Gisele
If it's about the dinner that you want to see Irene, you might tell me...
THE CAPTIVE

MONTCEL
No, it's not about the dinner.

GISELE
Oh.

MONTCEL
Have her inform me as soon as she comes in, won't you. . . . Even if I have some one with me in the study.

GISELE
Yes, papa.
[MONTCEL goes out.]
So! The storm's ready to break! Well, I felt it coming.

MLLE. MARCHAND
Is there something the matter between Irene and your father?

GISELE
Why, they haven't said a word to each other for over a week. "Good morning" "Good evening." That's all. Oh, it'll be jolly in Rome if things go on like this! At least here, papa is away three days out of four. But in Rome . . .

MLLE. MARCHAND
What's the quarrel about?

THE CAPTIVE

GISELE
Ah! That's a mystery! [Pause.] Do you remember a few days ago after luncheon . . . when Irene asked papa if she might speak to him alone . . . in his study?

MLLE. MARCHAND
Yes, I remember.

GISELE
It all began then. I've no idea what they said to each other. I tried to get it out of Irene but couldn't. She told me not to worry about it and that it would all come out all right. Then she changed the subject. . . . I saw it was no use insisting.

MLLE. MARCHAND
Do you think it's because your father was vexed with Irene for having refused that young man?

GISELE
What young man?

MLLE. MARCHAND
The young man your aunt introduced here. You know perfectly well.
THE CAPTIVE

GISELE
Oh, good heavens, no! That's ancient history... why, it was over a month ago. No, no—that's been forgotten. Anyhow, that makes the third suitor that Irene's refused this year so I suppose papa's beginning to get used to it. No, it's something else.

Mlle. Marchand
Perhaps your father's beginning to notice that Irene leads a rather—rather odd life for a young unmarried girl.

GISELE
Oh, hullo! Back to the old subject! It's a long time since you've complained about Irene's behavior.

Mlle. Marchand
I'm not—complaining, my dear. In the first place it's not my concern... no longer my concern, at any rate, thank heaven. If I were still responsible for her bringing up I might complain—and for good reason. But fortunately I'm not.

GISELE
Oh, come on,—surely you don't expect that at twenty-five Irene should lead the same existence I do at seventeen?

THE CAPTIVE

Mlle. Marchand
Why not? The elder Robien girl is twenty-four and her sister eighteen. Yet they lead precisely the same lives; they go about only with their mother or their companion.

GISELE
I hope you're not trying to compare that pill Valentine Robien with Irene!

Mlle. Marchand
They're girls of the same age and same class as you.

GISELE
You know perfectly well that Irene isn't anything like them!

Mlle. Marchand
And why not, pray?

GISELE
Do you know many girls as brilliant—as cultured—as attractive as Irene?

Mlle. Marchand
What of it?
GISELE

Well, certainly you can’t expect a girl like that to spend her life in a nursery—with a kid sister and a wet nurse! She’d be bored to death!

Mlle. Marchand

I don’t know whether she’d be bored to death as you so tactfully put it . . . but I do know it would be far better for her reputation than spending every minute away from home and alone . . . without ever telling any one where she goes.

GISELE

What do you mean, “where she goes”? She goes to the studio, to her teacher. She works at her painting.

Mlle. Marchand

Very well.

GISELE

You don’t believe that?

Mlle. Marchand

Yes, I believe it, my dear. I’m sure of it, but nevertheless it’s no life for a girl of good family. You can’t change my mind as to that. It’s not the way to find a good husband.

THE CAPTIVE

GISELE

When it comes to that you needn’t worry about Irene. The day she wants to—

Mlle. Marchand

The day she wants to may be too late. However, it’s not my affair. It’s your father’s.

GISELE

Oh, as for papa’s bothering! . . . [Pause.] Naturally, he’d prefer to see us both married so as to be rid of us,—and then he could take all his meals at Madame de Vallon’s. He’d love that!

Mlle. Marchand

Gisele! You will kindly not speak in that way of your father!

GISELE

What have I said? It’s entirely within papa’s rights to prefer Madame de Vallon’s cook to ours. It seems that she has a superb cook! I really can’t conceive how papa will do without that cook in Rome! . . . Perhaps he’ll take her there—as he did to Brussels. Do you think he will?

Mlle. Marchand

Gisele!
THE CAPTIVE

GISELE

The cook, I mean!

Mlle. Marchand

Gisele, will you be still! The subject is not a proper one!

GISELE

All right! Don't be cross. I'll be still. [She kisses Mlle. Marchand, laughingly.] Poor mademoiselle! [The door at the back opens and Irene enters. She is smartly dressed and wears a bunch of violets. Gisele goes toward her gayly]: Ah, there you are!

IRENE

[Somewhat seriously; with the air of one who has something on her mind]: What are you doing in here, you two?

GISELE

Waiting for you. Know what time it is?

IRENE

Yes, I'm late. I couldn't find a taxi.

GISELE

Tell me,—what dress are you going to wear tonight?

THE CAPTIVE

IRENE

What dress?

Mlle. Marchand

Gisele, don't forget your father's message to Irene.

GISELE

Oh, yes; papa said that you were to notify him the minute you got in.

IRENE

Oh.

GISELE

He said to let him know even if there were people in with him.

IRENE

[As though to herself]: Very well.

GISELE

Shall I tell him?

IRENE

Yes—if you don't mind.

Mlle. Marchand

[To Gisele]: Well, I'll say good night, my dear. It's after six. I must go home.
GISELE
Do wait a moment. I’ll be right back. [She runs out at back.]
[Irene in a thoughtful mood removes her hat and cloak and puts them on a chair.]

Mlle. Marchand
Well, Irene, how are you getting on with your painting? Are you satisfied?

IRENE
[Inattentive]: What? . . . Oh, yes, thank you, mademoiselle.

Mlle. Marchand
Are you making headway?

IRENE
Slowly, yes.

Mlle. Marchand
It still interests you very much, does it?

IRENE
Oh, yes, it still does. [She puts her violets on the table. There is an awkward moment of silence. Gisele returns.]

GISELE
Papa says he’ll come in here.

IRENE
Very well.

Mlle. Marchand
Good night, Irene.

IRENE
Good night, mademoiselle. [They shake hands.]

Mlle. Marchand
[To Gisele, kissing her]: Till to-morrow, dear.

GISELE
[Seeing her to the door]: I’ve an Italian lesson at two. So will you come at about three?

Mlle. Marchand
At about three. . . .

GISELE
We can take a walk through the park if it’s fine. . . .
[They go out. Gisele returns almost at once. To Irene]: You haven’t told me what dress you’re going to wear?

IRENE
I don’t know, dear. Whichever you prefer; it doesn’t matter to me.
THE CAPTIVE

GISELE
Then wear your white, do you mind? I'll wear
my blue,—you know, the new one, to try it out.

IRENE
All right. Tell me, dear, do you know why father
wants to see me?

GISELE
No. I asked him if it were something about the
dinner, but he said no. That's all I can tell you.

IRENE
What mood is he in?

GISELE
A little stern. But that means nothing... he's
so often that way.
[MONTCEL appears at the back.]

MONTCEL
Gisele, would you mind leaving us, child. I wish
to speak with Irene.

GISELE
Yes, papa.
[She goes into her room and closes the door.]

THE CAPTIVE

MONTCEL
[After a pause]: I might begin, my dear, by say-
ing that what we have to discuss is extremely serious.
My attitude toward you from now on must depend
upon it. Before making any decision I wanted to
give you ample time to think things over. Have you
done so?

IRENE
Yes, father.

MONTCEL
Well? Then tell me what conclusion you've
reached.

IRENE
I have not changed my mind, father.

MONTCEL
Which means?

IRENE
That I still ask you to let me stay here when you
leave for Rome.

MONTCEL
So! This past week has gone for nothing. You
persist in asking me something which you know per-
fecely well is impossible.
Irene
I persist in asking it. But I cannot see that it's impossible.

Montcel
Very well. You also persist in withholding the reason for your extraordinary request.

Irene
I've already given it to you, father.

Montcel
You've told me you wished to remain in Paris because of your work, your painting. That's it, isn't it?

Irene
Exactly.

Montcel
Irene,—consider well, my child, what I'm asking you. Will you or will you not give me the true reason?

Irene
There is no other.

Montcel
[Irritated]: Come, come, this is childish! If it were a question of your going to live on a desert island your excuse might take on the semblance of truth. But it's a question of your living in Rome, in the heart of Italy, the very cradle of art. Why, only last year you didn't stop begging me to let you go there,—and once you'd gone I had the devil's own time getting you to come back! [Pause.] Of course, it's true that it was there that you made the acquaintance of those people—those d'Aiguines—who since then seem to have become the very center of your existence.

Irene
What have Monsieur and Madame d'Aiguines to do with this?

Montcel
Perhaps it's I who might ask you that. But I'll limit myself to saying that I deplore your constant association with them.

Irene
Why?

Montcel
It is not a fit one for you.

Irene
But what have you against them?
Montcel

Many things. To begin with, it's not to his credit that he had to leave the diplomatic service at the time of his marriage.

Irene

Because he married a foreigner.

Montcel

An Austrian, I know.

Irene

Well, then. . . .

Montcel

If you don't mind, let's put aside the subject of the d'Aiguines. Let's get back to Rome, where as I was saying, you'll be in an excellent position to keep on with your painting.

Irene

When one starts with a certain teacher it's not wise to change. Mine is not in Rome, he is here.

Montcel

Do you work a great deal with your teacher?

Irene

Of course.
THE CAPTIVE

IRENE

[Faltering]: I've been making a copy at the Louvre.

MONTCEL

Really! Well, in that case, my child, you have cause to be very pleased, for in Rome you'll find galleries where you'll be able to copy some of the most beautiful pictures in the world.

IRENE

Why are you so insistent that I come with you?

MONTCEL

Because the place of a young unmarried woman is with her family and because until you are married your family is your father . . . even if at times you appear to forget it.

IRENE

If I forget it, father, perhaps it's because you don't always remember it yourself.

MONTCEL

What do you mean by that?

IRENE

Oh, nothing. . . .

THE CAPTIVE

MONTCEL

Excuse me. . . . I insist that you explain your remark.

IRENE

If a daughter's place is with her father why did you never think of having us join you while you were in Brussels?

MONTCEL

I've already told you it was because of my quarters there.

IRENE

Only because of that, I suppose?

MONTCEL

[With growing temper]: Which of us two owes explanations to the other? You or I? Let that be enough. You are free to think of me what you wish; it makes no difference. But I am your father and I intend to exact obedience from you. [Forcibly.] I had thought until now that you were a serious-minded girl, well able to conduct herself properly . . . I have treated you accordingly. I was mistaken. I shall treat you in the future as you deserve. I shall leave for Rome as soon as my successor arrives here, which will be early next month. You and your sister will leave with me.
THE CAPTIVE

Irene

[Softly] No, father.

Montcel

What do you say?

Irene

I shall not leave. I have already told you so.

Montcel

[Thoroughly angered] You shall leave! You'll go or be forced to go!

Irene

[Willfully] As to that! . . .

Montcel

Take care, Irene. You should know me well enough to realize that when I've made up my mind to something it's dangerous to oppose me. I've broken stronger wills than yours in my career.

Irene

And you should know me, father. I'm your daughter, and in that respect we are alike.

Montcel

Enough! I'll not tolerate your threats!

Irene

[Controls herself] They are not threats. But I'm twenty-five. I'm no longer a child and you must realize that I wouldn't have come to you the other day as I did if I had not also made up my mind.

Montcel

Made up your mind to what—remain in Paris?

Irene

Yes.

Montcel

Where do you intend to live?

Irene

Why—here.

Montcel

Oh, no, not here. I'm very sorry, but I've decided to sublet the apartment. It costs a great deal, and I'll have no reason for holding on to it after leaving Paris.

Irene

Oh.

Montcel

That being the case, may I ask where you expect to go?
THE CAPTIVE

Irene
Well . . . to an hotel, I suppose.

Montcel
And how will you support yourself? With what money? Not with mine. You'll not have a penny from me.

Irene
But, father. . . .

Montcel
Not a penny, let that be clear! As long as I live! . . . and I might inform you—at the risk of disappointing you—that the present state of my health gives no cause for alarm. [Pause.] That offers a new side to the question, eh?

Irene
If you think you can force your will on me in any such way as that—

Montcel
If that way fails, there are others.

Irene
What others?

Montcel
I'll tell you. Not only you'll never have a penny of mine but so far as I'm concerned you'll no longer exist. I shall never see you again. I realize that's probably the least of your worries. Your affection for me will readily bear that separation. But what may cause you more concern is to learn that I shall never again let you see your sister.

Irene
[Dismayed]: Oh!

Montcel
Never!

Irene
You'd do that?

Montcel
Most assuredly.

Irene
It's wicked of you!

Montcel
Wicked or not, my plain duty is to guard her against you. I shall do so, believe me.

Irene
Guard her against me! Do you know what you're
saying, father? What would become of the poor child without me. Who'd take care of her? I'm all she has in the world.

MONTCEL
Really! I don't count, I suppose!

IRENE
You—oh, but father . . .

MONTCEL
I what? Come, come, finish your thought. She doesn't love me, is that it? She doesn't love me any more than you do!

IRENE
[Quietly]: And you, father . . . do you love us? Have you ever given us a moment's concern, a moment's bother? I may as well say it, since we're on the subject. What has our childhood been? Not a happy one, father. Always alone with servants. If Gisele hadn't had me and I her, there'd have been little enough affection in our lives since mother's death.

MONTCEL
You're beginning that over again, eh?
THE CAPTIVE

IRENE

Oh! Father! . . .

MONTCEL

I'm sorry, but I must say what I think,—what your behavior compels me to think. If I'm wrong you have only to justify yourself.

IRENE

There is no need for me to justify myself.

MONTCEL

God in heaven! If the reason you had for wishing to remain here were the kind that a daughter might tell her father, you'd have let me hear it long ago.

IRENE

I have told you it was my painting.

MONTCEL

[Gazing steadily at her] I had thought you more intelligent than this. As things stand now I'd tell the truth if I were you. It would be better.

[IRENE is silent.]

You don't want to? Don't you see that your silence is the most damning evidence against you? Do you think that with what I already take for granted and what I may guess it will still be difficult for me to find out the rest?

THE CAPTIVE

IRENE

What do you take for granted?

MONTCEL

You'd like to know?

IRENE

Yes.

MONTCEL

I take for granted that since you don't wish to come to Rome there is some one who holds you here. That's what I think! Am I not right? . . . Answer me!

[She is silent.]

Listen, Irene. . . . I'm determined to throw full light on this matter, do you understand? By keeping up this silence you will simply force me to take unpleasant steps which you can still prevent.

IRENE

What steps?

MONTCEL

Never mind! But I promise you I'll get at the truth. I'll insist upon it in a place where I know I can find it and where there'll be no evading it.

IRENE

Where?
THE CAPTIVE

MONTCEL
From those whom I must suppose are acquainted with the intimate facts of your life. Your devoted friends the d'Aiguines.

IRENE
[Thunderstruck]: That's mad, father!

MONTCEL
I think not.

IRENE
But—whatever gave you the idea—of asking the d'Aiguines about such a thing?

MONTCEL
The idea occurred to me after certain things I've observed.

IRENE
What have you observed?

MONTCEL
I must be allowed to keep that to myself for the present.

IRENE
But at least I have the right to know?

MONTCEL
No, you have not! [Pause.] You seem curiously disturbed that I should take this step.

THE CAPTIVE

IRENE
I,—not at all! It's a matter of complete indifference to me.

MONTCEL
Really? Why, then, were you so agitated by my mention of the name d'Aiguines?

IRENE
[Disturbed]: I wasn't agitated

MONTCEL
You were! Besides, it's very simple. [Looks at his watch.] We'll settle this right away.

IRENE
What are you going to do?

MONTCEL
Ask Monsieur d'Aiguines to come here and have a talk with me immediately.

IRENE
You won't do that, father!

MONTCEL
You'll see.

IRENE
Even if I tell you that it would be quite useless, that you will learn nothing?
Ah! So you're already beginning to admit things! Listen,—listen to me—if within two minutes you have not spoken the name I wish to hear, I shall ask d’Aiguines for it whether you wish me to or not!

Father, I beg you not to do this!

Then tell me. On whose account do you wish to remain in Paris? Will you tell me,—yes or no?

But, father—

[In despair]: All right, I'm through! [He reaches the door, back.]

Father! No, father!

[Imploringly]: Well?

It's on account—of—Jacques.

Montcel: Listen,—Listen to me—if within two minutes you have not spoken the name I wish to hear, I shall ask d’Aiguines for it—whether you wish me to or not!

(HELEN MENKEN AND NORMAN TREVOR)
THE CAPTIVE

[Montcel]


[Irene]

Yes.

[Montcel]

[Still surprised]: It's on account of Jacques that you want to remain in Paris?

[Irene]

[Nervously]: Well,—yes.

[Montcel]

Upon my soul! [Pause.] What's going on between you two?

[Irene]

Nothing.

[Montcel]

What do you mean, nothing?

[Irene]

Nothing serious, I assure you.

[Montcel]

Would you mind not juggling words with me. I warn you that all you say will be verified.
Irene

Of course, father.

Montcel

So I advise you not to try to hide anything from me. Now, answer my question. What is going on between you?

Irene

[With difficulty]: We’ve been fond of each other for some time and we had thought,—at least, I had thought that I might marry him,—that’s all.

Montcel

You’re telling me everything?

Irene

Yes.

Montcel

So you and Jacques want to get married?

Irene

I said that I wanted to,—that is, I’d like to.

Montcel

And he?

Irene

I don’t know.

Montcel

Do you mean to say he hasn’t spoken of his intentions?

Irene

No.

Montcel

Then how do things stand?

Irene

He hasn’t spoken yet.

Montcel

And you imagine that he’s getting ready to? Eh? Speak! Explain yourself . . . don’t make me force every word out of you!

Irene

I’m not certain of anything.

Montcel

Then, as I understand it, you love him . . . if he were to propose you’d be inclined to say yes. Is that it?

Irene

[After a pause]: Yes.
THE CAPTIVE

Montcel
And it's with this hope in mind that you'd prefer remaining in Paris?

Irene
Yes.

Montcel
Well, for heaven's sake, my dear, why haven't you simply said so instead of keeping up this air of mystery?

Irene
It wasn't my secret alone.

Montcel
Why, it isn't betraying a secret of that kind to tell it to one's father. Besides you must have known perfectly well that there's nothing about your idea that displeases me. Jacques's a distant relative of ours on his mother's side. . . . You've known each other since you were children . . . he goes with the same sort of people we do. He's a fine boy, and I'm very fond of him. To make things complete his electrical concession in Morocco assures him a good income. There's no possible reason for my opposing your wish.

Irene
I didn't want to tell you about something which may exist only in my imagination.
THE CAPTIVE

IRENE

But, father. . .

MONTCEL

[Going on]: . . . I'll merely tell him that for some time past a number of things have led me to believe that you were developing a deep affection for some one. That I have watched you closely and come to understand, without your saying a word, that your feelings concerned him. I'll then say that, as I'm about to leave Paris to be gone for some time, I'd like to know if he has anything to say to me. Just that.

IRENE

Father, I beg you to do nothing of the sort. . . !

MONTCEL

I'm sorry to oppose your wishes, my dear, but under the circumstances I'm a better judge of what should be done than you. Some day you'll thank me for it.

IRENE

I don't want you to do it!

MONTCEL

Do you prefer going to Rome without knowing what he—?
THE CAPTIVE

IRENE
Father, please!

MONTCEL
Don't be afraid. I'll talk with him as man to man in the friendliest possible way. Whatever his sentiments may be he won't be able to take any exception to what is said.

IRENE
For the last time, father, I beg you not to do this!

MONTCEL
That's enough, my child. My mind is made up and I shan't change it. Let's leave it at that for this evening if you don't mind. It's already half past six and I must run around to the Foreign Office before dinner. [He goes toward the door, back.] By the bye, will you put Dardennes at your right and Couvreur at your left. Dinner's at eight-fifteen. [He goes out.]

[IRENE seems tremendously disturbed as soon as she is alone. She drops into a chair, musing; then suddenly rising, goes to her table and lifts the telephone receiver.]

IRENE


[She replaces the receiver, and for a moment remains pensively where she is. GISELE enters at right.]

GISELE
May I come in?

IRENE
Certainly, dear. Dressed so soon?

GISELE
But it's fairly late. And we haven't fixed the flowers yet.

IRENE
Oh! please do it without me. I simply won't have the time. [IRENE goes to dressing room.]

GISELE
All right. They'll be too awful, but what's the difference?
THE CAPTIVE

IRENE

[From dressing room]: Of course they won't. Don't be silly! . . . Ring for Josephine, dear, do you mind? I must dress.

GISELE

[Rings bell.] Irene?

IRENE

What, darling?

JOSEPHINE

[Entering at the back, to GISELE]: Did you ring, mademoiselle?

GISELE

No,—Irene.

IRENE

[Still off.] My crépe de chine gown, Josephine. . . . I'm going to dress right away.

GISELE

But you said you'd wear the white dress!

IRENE

So I did. My white dress, Josephine.

JOSEPHINE

Very good, mademoiselle. [JOSEPHINE goes to dressing room.]
GISELE

What? ... You're not coming to Rome! ...
Oh, Irene, you can't mean that!

IRENE

I'm not sure yet, dear. Don't bother your head about it.

GISELE

[Leaving the door, almost in tears]: You're not going to let me go there alone with papa?

IRENE

[Enters in negligée]: I may have to... [Takes Gisele's hand.]

GISELE

[Heartbroken]: Oh!

IRENE

But you'll have a marvelous time in Rome. ... You've no idea how beautiful it is. You'll meet some delightful people ... they'll give you any number of parties. Just think, dear, you'll be the only woman in the embassy. ... You'll have the time of your life!

GISELE

Without you?

IRENE

[Tenderly]: Yes, dearest, even without me.

GISELE

How can I—if you're not there?

IRENE

[Holding her close]: My dear!

GISELE

Oh, well, if you're going to desert me, then what will—

IRENE

Would you rather stay here with me?

GISELE

Oh, yes—much!

IRENE

But wouldn't you be sorry not to go to Rome?

GISELE

I'd like to have gone if you had gone. But without you—no—I'd much prefer to remain here.

IRENE

Are you sure?
THE CAPTIVE

GISELE

Sure.

IRENE

Well, would you like me to persuade father to leave you here too? It won't be easy, but if it's worked well he might consent.

GISELE

Yes, please do.

IRENE

All right, let me try! But you won't say a word to any one, not even to Mademoiselle Marchand, will you?

GISELE

Not a word!

JOSEPHINE

[Entering left.] Mademoiselle?

IRENE

Yes, yes.—I'm coming. [She goes again into the dressing room. JOSEPHINE follows her off.]

GISELE

Oh, Irene! You didn't say a thing about my new frock!

THE CAPTIVE

IRENE

[Off]: Oh! I'm so sorry! [GISELE approaches the half-open door.] I think it's a dream, dear.

GISELE

Don't you think the skirt rather long?

IRENE

[Still off]: No... I think it's all right that way.

GISELE

[Raising her skirt a bit]: Now—isn't that much better? Look?

IRENE

M-m-m—perhaps. But it was really all right before.

GISELE

Oh! You make me sick! Can't you give a poor woman a little friendly advice?

IRENE

Well... no, it is a little too short for you. It doesn't look quite modest.

GISELE

Really? But I raised it barely two inches...
THE CAPTIVE

IRENE
You've got plenty of time ahead in which to show your legs—

GISELE
Oh, you think so? And what if they begin wearing long skirts again next season, then where am I?

IRENE
There's something in that!

GISELE
Well, suppose I raise it one inch. . . . Are you still horrified?

IRENE
No, go ahead. . . . Shorten it one inch!

GISELE
[To JOSEPHINE who crosses from the dressing room toward the right.] You heard, Josephine. One inch.

JOSEPHINE
Yes, mademoiselle.

GISELE
I'll pin it up for you in the morning. It can stay like this for to-night. [JOSEPHINE takes IRENE'S coat and hat from chair.] Who cares about to-night, anyhow?—Whiskers!

THE CAPTIVE

IRENE
[Coming in now fully gowned]: Josephine!

JOSEPHINE
Yes, mademoiselle?

IRENE
Monsieur Jacques Virieu will be calling to see me. As soon as he arrives, show him in here . . . do you understand?

JOSEPHINE
Yes, mademoiselle. [Exits at back with coat and hat. GISELE has taken from the table the bunch of violets which IRENE brought in with her and is absent-mindedly inhaling their odor.]

GISELE
[Pleased; turns to IRENE]: Jacques coming? [IRENE sees the violets in GISELE's hand, a faint movement reveals some indefinable emotion as she takes them from her. She exits into the dressing room returning with the flowers in a vase which she places on the table. GISELE watches her, a bit surprised.] I say, Irene—?

IRENE
What?
THE CAPTIVE

GISELE

Is Jacques coming?

IRENE

Yes... I'm expecting him.

GISELE

What fun!... Dear old thing! I will be glad to see him! But he isn't coming for dinner, is he?

IRENE

No. I asked him to come to see me for a minute because... I've something to tell him... Incidentally, Gisele, be an angel and leave me alone with him after you've said hullo.

GISELE

Righto!

IRENE

Thank you, darling... You're really a dear! You never ask questions... and you never ask me to explain a thing!

GISELE

Oh, I just try not to meddle in what isn't my business, that's all.

THE CAPTIVE

IRENE

Yes, but they're scarce, people who can do that! [Josephine opens the door at back and admits Jacques. He is about thirty-four and good looking.] Hullo, Jacques! [Gives him her hand.]

JACQUES

How are you, Irene? [To Gisele:] Well, baby sister!

GISELE

Hullo, Jacques!

JACQUES

Lord, what a beauty! I'm bowled over... and to think that I once bounced this on my knee! I wouldn't dare try it now!

GISELE

Well, I should hope not! [The girls laugh.]

JACQUES

[Noticing their costumes, to Irene:] But, see here, you didn't tell me this was a state occasion!

IRENE

State occasion?

JACQUES

Your gowns...!
Irene
Don't be startled! Father's having some guests to dinner this evening.

Jacques
Oh, I see. [Pause.] Well, what's going on?

Gisèle
Before you start in, say good-by to me.

Jacques
Are you leaving us?

Gisèle
I must.

Jacques
Farewell, beauteous one!

Gisèle
When are you having that tea party for Irene and me?

Jacques
You've only to name your day!

Gisèle
The last time I saw you you promised us a sumpt'ous tea with caviar sandwiches. But that's as far as it ever got.

Jacques
We'll arrange it, I promise!

Gisèle
I'm counting on you, don't forget! I just love caviar! [She goes out at back.]

Jacques
Well?

Irene
Thanks for having come, Jacques.

Jacques
Please... [He sits.] I'm very curious. What's happened?

Irene
First I want you to swear that you'll never repeat a word of what we're going to say to a living soul... . . .

Jacques
Is it as serious as that?

Irene
Yes... You'll swear it, won't you, Jacques?

Jacques
Why, certainly.
Irene

You've heard that father has just been appointed to the post in Rome?

Jacques

Yes.

Irene

He's decided that Giselle and I are to go there with him.

Jacques

Naturally.

Irene

It's not so natural. Until now whenever he occupied a foreign post he's left us here. Why does he want to take us to Rome this time? . . . I can't help thinking he's been advised to do it.

Jacques

By whom?

Irene

The Foreign Office probably. It seems they're rather strict in Rome. Perhaps they felt at the Foreign Office that it would look well for him to have his daughters with him . . . and that it would prevent his taking Madame de Vallon as he always has before. I don't think that was liked any too well in Brussels.

Jacques

Really?

Irene

I can't be certain that's the reason, but it seems likely. Besides, it doesn't matter. The main point now is that he's decided we're to go with him. [Pause.] Only I have decided to remain in Paris.

Jacques

Why?

Irene

[After a moment.]: . . . I told him it was because of my painting,—so that I might continue to work here with my teacher. . . .

Jacques

Wasn't that true?

Irene

No. Besides, to-day, father saw my teacher, who told him I hadn't been at the studio for a month.

Jacques

I see.
IRENE

He realized I had another reason for staying. We had a very trying scene just now; he wound up by saying that he was sure my desire not to go was due to some one who held me in Paris. He insisted on knowing who it was.

JACQUES

And then?

IRENE

He tormented me with questions which I couldn’t answer, threatened to take steps which I couldn’t let him take. I was nearly crazy, and then a name came to my lips almost despite myself... the name of the only friend I knew I could count on, the only being I could confide in... yours.

JACQUES

Mine?

IRENE

Yes.

JACQUES

You gave him my name?

IRENE

Yes.

JACQUES

[After a moment]: Do you realize, Irene, what you’ve done?

IRENE

Yes.

JACQUES

What can your father think?

IRENE

[Not looking at him]: Nothing. I told him that by leaving me in Paris—that is, by not taking me away from where you were—a plan which so far I was alone in forming might become a reality...

JACQUES

What plan?

IRENE

That of... our getting married.

JACQUES

You led him to believe that?
IRENE

Yes.

JACQUES

No!

IRENE

Yes, I know... I know everything you're thinking.

JACQUES

Wouldn't it have been better to tell him—the truth?

IRENE

[Sharply, looking at him]: What truth?

JACQUES

I don't know. But whatever it may be it's certainly better than this—this lie.

IRENE

[Hopeless. Staring ahead]: If I had told the truth, no one would have understood it.

JACQUES

Why? [She is silent.] Tell me!

IRENE

It doesn't matter...
IRENE
What choice had I? Do you think I have a single friend besides yourself of whom I could ask such a thing?

JACQUES
Didn’t it occur to you that perhaps I was the last one of whom you could ask such a thing?

IRENE
I thought you were fond of me.

JACQUES
You didn’t remember that I had also loved you?

IRENE
Oh, Jacques... that’s all in the past.

JACQUES
Are you so sure? [Pause.] Certainly it’s not so far in the past that you’ve already forgotten it? Is it?

IRENE
I didn’t think about it.

JACQUES
You should have understood that a girl doesn’t ask a man to take part in a pretended engagement when he had hoped for the real thing... a man, who hardly a year ago had every reason to believe that his hope would be realized!

IRENE
Please, Jacques! Don’t remind me of that! I’ve regretted it so much, believe me! I don’t know what could have let you suppose that I’d ever had the idea of—

JACQUES
Of becoming my wife? Then why didn’t you stop me right away the first time I told you that I loved you and that I wanted to marry you?...

IRENE
But... I didn’t think you were really serious about it... 

JACQUES
[With ill-humor]: Come now! Who jokes about such a thing? Besides if you had thought I was joking you would have replied in the same vein. Instead of that you asked for time to think things over... with real sincerity in your voice. [His manner softens.] You had to leave for Florence a month later. We saw each other every day before you went. I took you to the station the night...
you left, and on the platform during the last few minutes before the train pulled out, you said with a smile that I can still see that you were going to send me your answer. [More coldly.] Well, I'll never believe that the answer you were planning to send was the one that I finally received three weeks later.

IRENE

You're wrong.

JACQUES

I don't believe it.

IRENE

What—according to you—could have happened to make me change my mind?

JACQUES

I don't know. Something occurred in your life there that I know nothing about, that I haven't tried to find out, but that has changed you in many ways. Of course, it's none of my business . . . but surely I have the right to find it—shall we say unexpected—that you come to me after that, asking me to pose as your fiancé! You must admit it's a bit humorous!

IRENE

I thought you'd have a little more sympathy.

THE CAPTIVE

JACQUES

Oh, don't think I'm reproaching you. I just find it humorous, that's all. [Pause.] So you told your father that I wanted to marry you and that—

IRENE

I didn't tell him you wanted to marry me. I said merely that I wanted to marry . . . but that I was unaware of your intentions.

JACQUES

And your father believed that this desire came to you—like that—with nothing on my part to encourage it? Come, Irene, your father's fully aware of your pride . . . he can't help but think I'm on the verge of telling him I want to marry you.

IRENE

I swear that I've said nothing which might let him suppose so. . . . Anyhow, you'll see that for yourself,—he wants to speak to you.

JACQUES

[Surprised]: He wants to speak to me?

IRENE

I did my best to prevent it, but he wouldn't listen. He said he'd see you to-morrow.
Jacques

Really?

Irene

You'll see by what he says that I haven't "disposed" of you, as you say. . . . In a moment of distress I turned to you as the one human being who could possibly help me. If you don't want to, there's nothing to compel it. When father questions you, you've only to act as though all this were news to you and surprises you. Say that there's some mistake—that it's a misunderstanding for which you're terribly sorry but which you did nothing to cause and that will be all. You may rest assured that's the last you'll hear of it.

Jacques

And then,—what will you do?

Irene

That, Jacques—[She turns away.]

Jacques

Yes. That's none of my business, is that it?

Irene

What can it matter to you?

Jacques

[After a moment]: But tell me,—before calling

THE CAPTIVE

on me to help you, didn't it occur to you that I might not be free, that there might be some one else in my life.

Irene

I know that there is some one else in your life.

Jacques

You know it?

Irene

Yes, of course.

Jacques

Well, then, since you know it, how could you ask me to do this for you?

Irene

Am I asking you to change your mode of existence in any way?

Jacques

Well, what are you asking me? To pose as your fiancé, isn't that it?

Irene

Not at all! It's simply—

Jacques

Yes, yes, only so far as your father is concerned.
THE CAPTIVE

IRENE

But not even so far as he is concerned. All I ask is that you suggest to him that by taking me away from Paris he might lessen the—the possibility of a marriage between us some day . . . that's all.

JACQUES

In other words, you want to take advantage of the confidence your father has in me to hide something behind it.—I don't know exactly what, but something—that you can't confess to any one. It amounts to that, doesn't it?

IRENE

I simply need a few days until father leaves. Afterwards—[A gesture.]

JACQUES

What afterwards?

IRENE

Afterwards, I'll manage somehow. [Determinedly.] I'll find some way of remaining here. I'll give you back your liberty, I promise you.

JACQUES

But why must you remain here at any cost? Mayn't I know?

IRENE

I don't wish to leave Paris; that's all I can say.

JACQUES

Irene! Let's have the truth. You don't want to leave some one who's in Paris. It's that, isn't it? Eh? [IRENE IS SILENT. A PAUSE.] So that's what you've come to. You! . . . You that I admired so much! You whom I've always thought incapable of anything low or cheap. And here you are mixed up in the cheapest of all things—a lie!

IRENE

If I lie, it's because I'm driven to it.

JACQUES

By whom?

IRENE

By every one. There's no other course open to me.

JACQUES

That course isn't worth much, believe me. . . . It won't lead you far. And, above all, it's unworthy of you, Irene. You're too fine for that!

IRENE

No, I'm not too fine for that! You've always cherished illusions about me, Jacques. How often
I've asked you not to place me on a pedestal—don't you remember? Why have you always persisted in thinking me different?

**Jacques**

Probably because I loved you.

**Irene**

Ah! That's not my fault.

**Jacques**

And then, no, it's not true! ... You were different! Only you've changed... or rather they've changed you—

**Irene**

*Aggressively.* They? Who?

**Jacques**

No doubt the people you've been with such a lot this past year. In deserting your old friends for them it doesn't seem to me that you have profited by the change.

**Irene**

These "people" as you call them... do you know them?

**Jacques**

Not at all.

**Irene**

Well, then— *[Pause.]* Think what you wish of them but don't tell me about it, do you mind?

**Jacques**

*Angrily:* Very well! But since they mean so much to you why didn't you turn to one of them for the help you need? It seems to me that would be far more natural. Especially, as I'm not exactly the man for this sort of game.

**Irene**

*Beeching:* Jacques!

**Jacques**

You must have some real friends among them—one surely—well, ask him.

**Irene**

I have only one real friend—you... At least I thought you were my friend.

**Jacques**

It's just because I am your friend that I haven't the right to do what you ask.

**Irene**

Why?
THE CAPTIVE

JACQUES

Because it's unpleasant, dangerous—and, above all, useless. No good can come of a lie like that. It's doomed in advance.

IRENE

If you were really my friend, you'd let yourself be guided by your heart . . . instead of by the rules of middle class morality.

JACQUES

Middle class morality has its good points.

IRENE

[Ironically]: Yes . . . especially to those who profit by it!

JACQUES

What does that mean?

IRENE

Were you being prompted by the rules of that morality last year when you asked me to be your mistress? You remember that . . . ?

JACQUES

Yes, I do.

IRENE

Highly moral, that?

JACQUES

Yes.

IRENE

Ah!

JACQUES

Yes, because if you had belonged to me, you'd have ended by loving me and marrying me. I'd have overcome your unwillingness to give up your liberty. . . . It would have been a step toward the only solution of any girl's life—marriage.

IRENE

Then it was to convert me to marriage that you wanted me to give myself to you?

JACQUES

Yes.

IRENE

Really? [Pause.] I had thought it was merely because you wanted me.

JACQUES

Naturally I wanted you. I wanted you with all my heart. The thought of your body against mine stirred my blood—as it does at this minute, if you must know!
THE CAPTIVE

Irene

Jacques!

Jacques

I'm beginning to think I'll never get over my love for you. However, that's neither here nor there, and doesn't interest you... What I want to tell you is that it's always you of whom I think... even before myself, do you hear? Even now. So that you won't doubt it, I'll say this:—swear to me that this affair of yours—about which I don't ask to know anything—will eventually lead to a marriage worthy of you... just swear that and I'll do anything you want me to do. Can you swear it?

Irene

[Turning away]:... I won't swear to anything.

Jacques

Very well. Then, I refuse. Think what you like... that I'm heartless, that I don't love you—I don't care. I refuse. And if my refusal makes you give up this affair a bit sooner than you expected, it will be better all around, you may be sure.

Irene

[With intense feeling]: You ought to know me well enough, Jacques, to realize that I'll do what

Irene

I've decided to do... even if doing so shatters everything.

Jacques

Have you gone crazy?

Irene

[Wildly]: No! But I will if I'm forced to leave... .

Jacques

Irene! [Irene lowers her head, repressing her emotion. Gisele enters, at back.]

Gisele

Jacques, papa says not to go,—he wants to speak to you.

Irene

[Alarmed]: How did he know Jacques was here?

Gisele

Why, I told him. He just got back. He took one look at the table and said it looked like nothing at all! So he told me to fetch you and I said you were with Jacques. [Pause. Penitently to Irene.] Shouldn't I have said that?

Irene

[Embarrassed]: That's all right, dear.
GISELE
So he sent me to ask Jacques to wait because he wanted to see him, that's all. . . . [To Jacques.]
Did I put my foot in it . . . ?

JACQUES
No, Gisele, it doesn't matter.

GISELE
Well, I couldn't know! You should have warned me. [She goes out. Jacques closes door.]
[Irene stands rigid for a moment, then suddenly making up her mind, hurries into the dressing room emerging with a cloak which she throws about her as she heads for the door, back.]

JACQUES
[Barring the way]: What are you doing? . . .
You're going out?

IRENE
I'm leaving here.

JACQUES
Where are you going?

IRENE
[Hotly]: That's my business. . . . I'm going, that's all.

JACQUES
But, Irene—

IRENE
Let me go!

JACQUES
Why do you want to leave?

IRENE
It'll put an end to all this!

JACQUES
You're not in your right senses now!

IRENE
Let me pass!

JACQUES
What shall I say to your father?

IRENE
Whatever you like, I don't care. . . . Let me pass!

JACQUES
No!

IRENE
You've no right to stop me from doing what I want.
JACQUES
I've a right to stop your doing something rash!

IRENE
[In a torment of terror and despair]: I've had enough! Enough! I'm twenty-five, free to do as I like without accounting to any one. Let me pass! Jacques!

JACQUES
Irene, come, calm yourself, I beg of you!

IRENE
Do you realize what my life here will be after father has spoken to you? No! No! I'll not be questioned any more! I can't stand this being baited by the world! I want to go away!

JACQUES
Irene!

IRENE
After all, what difference does it make to you if I go?

JACQUES
What difference does it make to me?

IRENE
[In cold fury]: Yes,—is it any business of yours?
THE CAPTIVE

off your wrap. If your father sees it, he's the one who won't understand.

IRENE
But explain what you—

JACQUES
Do as I say. [MONTCEL enters at back. IRENE, hidden by the door, lets her cloak slip off. MONTCEL crosses to JACQUES.]

MONTCEL
Good evening, Jacques.

JACQUES
Good evening, uncle.

MONTCEL
I hope you didn't mind waiting.

JACQUES
Not at all.

MONTCEL
I was going to drop you a line asking you to come in to see me to-morrow, but when I heard you were here with Irene I thought I'd save you the trouble. . . . I wanted to have a chat with you. Shall we go along to my study? [JACQUES assents.] I won't keep you long. [Takes JACQUES to door—sees IRENE—stops.] Go ahead, I'll join you. [JACQUES goes out. MONTCEL quickly to IRENE.] You've already spoken to him, haven't you?

IRENE
What do you mean?

MONTCEL
Well, if he knows—tell me. It will save a lot of useless talk.

IRENE
[After a moment.] Yes.

MONTCEL
Well? . . . What's his answer?

IRENE
He'll tell you himself.

MONTCEL
Good. [He goes out. IRENE remains there, thoughtful, brooding, her face woeful. After a moment, her eyes light on the vase which contains the
violets; she is drawn over to them, looks at them, touches them delicately. Then, as if an idea had taken her, she regards her watch, half hesitates and reaches for the telephone. She lifts the receiver with intense anticipation as

THE CURTAIN FALLS

THE CAPTIVE

ACT TWO

SCENE: A study in Jacques’ apartment. It has a bookish, comfortable appearance. There are doors at back to the hall, at right to a bedroom and at left to a small salon or reception room. A large desk stands center. A few good-sized chairs and a massive leather divan are placed about.

It is a month later.

At the rise Jacques is discovered seated, musing deeply, his eyes staring ahead. On his lap he has an open snapshot album neglected for the moment.

A door bell sounds, Jacques scowls, regards his watch and, rising, murmurs, “Oh, well!”

Georges, his man, enters.

Georges

Are you at home, monsieur?

Jacques

I’m expecting Madame Meillant. It’s probably she.
THE CAPTIVE

GEORGES

Yes, monsieur. [He goes out. JACQUES places the album in a drawer of desk. GEORGES returns.] It's not Madame Meillant, monsieur; it's Mademoiselle de Montcel.

JACQUES

[Surprised]: Mademoiselle de Montcel?

GEORGES

Yes, monsieur.

JACQUES

[Nervously]: Have you shown her into the salon?

GEORGES

Yes, monsieur.

JACQUES

Very well. [He goes toward door which leads to the salon.] Oh! When Madame Meillant comes tell her—tell her that I telephoned I'd be a bit late. Say that I hope she'll forgive me and ask if she'd mind coming back at four, if that's convenient. [Looks at his watch.] That's it, at four.

GEORGES

Very good, monsieur. [He goes out. JACQUES opens door to salon.]

THE CAPTIVE

JACQUES

Do come in—[Surprised.] Why, it's—? Well! My man said it was Mademoiselle de Montcel so I thought—

GISELE

[Entering]: That it was Irene?

JACQUES

Yes.

GISELE

Oh, I'm so sorry, Jacques.

JACQUES

But not at all—why?

GISELE

Because you must be terribly disappointed!

JACQUES

Not at all, my dear. [Closes door.] I'm delighted to see you. A bit surprised, but delighted.

GISELE

You're surprised because you think that a girl of my age shouldn't come alone to a man's apartment, is that it? But I didn't come alone. Mademoiselle Marchand is waiting downstairs in the car.
THE CAPTIVE

JACQUES
You've no need to explain. Do sit down!

GISELE
I've just one thing to tell you.

JACQUES
Sit down anyway.

GISELE
[Sits]: At first I thought I'd telephone you this morning to ask when I could come, but the phone's in Irene's room and I didn't want her to hear.

JACQUES
I see.

GISELE
So instead I came early to have a better chance of finding you in... [She hesitates.] Jacques, perhaps you're going to think that what I'm doing is a bit ridiculous and even uncalled for—but I don't care. It's just this—I've come to tell you that Irene is very unhappy.

JACQUES
Irene?

GISELE
Yes... and you can believe me. I'm saying this only because I'm sure of it. For some time now she's been acting in a very strange, nervous way. Several times it seemed to me that her eyes were rather red. Mademoiselle Marchand had also noticed it. And the other day I went into her room to phone, thinking she'd gone out, and, although she turned her face away, I saw she was crying.

JACQUES
Ah?

GISELE
For Irene to cry means that something's really wrong. I can't bear seeing her wretched! Anything rather than that. I thought it over and decided you didn't know about it and that you should. That's why I've come. So, Jacques—that's all. [A pause.] Are you annoyed with me for telling you this?

JACQUES
I'm not annoyed with you at all, my dear,—only I must confess that I don't quite understand why you thought you ought to tell me about it!

GISELE
What?

JACQUES
I'm very fond of Irene but I don't see that I—
THE CAPTIVE

GISELE

[Smiling]: Jacques . . . papa told me before he left.

JACQUES

[Surprised and rather annoyed]: What did he tell you?

GISELE

Oh, don't worry! He swore me to secrecy—and you may be sure I'll never tell a soul. Besides, I realize that you both want to think things over, and that you don't feel free to commit yourself definitely just now because of your business troubles. . . . I know all that. . . . [JACQUES is disturbed and wretched.] . . . Are you cross that papa told me?

JACQUES

No, no, it doesn't matter.

GISELE

You see, it would have been difficult for him not to say something. It had been all arranged that we were to go to Rome with him. Then suddenly plans are changed: we're to remain here—with Mademoiselle Marchand living at the house as chaperon. So papa probably felt obliged to give me some explanation. He didn't realize that I had already guessed everything.

JACQUES

What—what had you guessed?

GISELE

Everything! After all, it wasn't so brilliant of me! I knew that Irene wanted to stay in Paris and that papa wouldn't hear of it. Then on top of that, you come to see Irene, you have a talk with papa, and the same evening he announces to Irene that she may remain and that he'll leave me with her. Well, I didn't have to be so awfully bright to understand what all that meant. [Rises.] And, Jacques, I was so happy when I did understand. I can't begin to tell you how happy!

JACQUES

Really?

GISELE

I'm positive you're just made for one another! Don't you think so too?

JACQUES

Of course, my dear.

GISELE

So now you understand why I came?

JACQUES

I understand.
THE CAPTIVE

GISELE

Was it wrong of me to come?

JACQUES

No.

GISELE

And it's true that you had noticed nothing, isn't it?

JACQUES

Nothing.

GISELE

I was sure of it! I said to Mademoiselle Marchand: "If Jacques asked papa to leave Irene in Paris, it's because he loves her, and if he loves her he can't want her to be miserable... or else he hasn't noticed it. And, naturally, if no one does anything it all might go on forever! And it must not go on." [She takes his hand.] Must it, Jacques?

JACQUES

No, it mustn't, Gisele dear. Only, don't you see—

GISELE

No, don't tell me. I don't want to know anything. It's none of my business. I've told you what I wanted to say. The rest is your affair. I ask just one thing—never let Irene know I came here, because she'd never forgive me for it. Promise?

IRENE: It's like—a prison to which I must return captive, despite myself.

(HELEN MENKEN AND BASIL RATHBONE)
THE CAPTIVE

JACQUES

I promise.

GISELE

Thank you. [She lets go his hand.]

JACQUES

Wait, please don’t go yet, do you mind? [He walks about, thinking, then stops in front of her.] Do you trust me, Gisele?

GISELE

[Surprised and a bit worried]: Why, Jacques, of course!

JACQUES

Enough to believe me without asking for explanations?

GISELE

[Still anxious]: Yes, what is it?

JACQUES

You think—and it’s natural enough you should—that I could prevent Irene’s being unhappy if I wanted to, don’t you?

GISELE

Yes.
THE CAPTIVE

Jacques
Well, you're mistaken.

Gisèle
What?

Jacques
I can do nothing for her ... or so little ...

Gisèle
You?

Jacques
I.

Gisèle
Then it's not because of you that she's unhappy?

Jacques
No.

Gisèle
[Astonished]: No? ...

Jacques
If it were because of me, believe me she'd not be unhappy long. Of course I can try to do something for her. It may accomplish nothing, but I can try. Only for that I'll need you.
Gisele
Well—I don’t know. Don’t you always have tea together?

Jacques
Did she tell you that?

Gisele
[Puzzled]: I had understood that... I might have been mistaken.

Jacques
[After a pause]: And besides myself, whom does she see?

Gisele
Well, you know, she doesn’t tell me a great deal about what she does.

Jacques
When she goes out, doesn’t she ever tell you where she is going?

Gisele
She goes to the studio every day after lunch.

Jacques
Ah, yes... And at night, does she ever go out?

Gisele
At night? Oh, almost never. She’s been once or twice to the theater or a concert, but that’s all.

Jacques
Alone?

Gisele
No, with Monsieur and Madame d’Aiguines.

Jacques
Oh. [After a pause.] She met them in Italy, didn’t she?

Gisele
Yes, in Florence, last year.

Jacques
Do you ever see them?

Gisele
I? Never!

Jacques
Why?

Gisele
I don’t know them.
JACQUES
How is it you've never met them if Irene is so intimate with them?

GISELE
That's no reason. She never suggested my meeting them and I never asked to.

JACQUES
Why? Don't you like them?

GISELE
But I don't know them.

JACQUES
Does she ever speak to you about them?

GISELE
No, never.

JACQUES
And have you never had curiosity enough to ask her questions about them?

GISELE
I never ask Irene questions. When she speaks to me first about some one or something—well and good. But when she doesn't, she doesn't, that's all.

JACQUES
So, you know nothing about the d'Aiguines?

GISELE
Very little. I know that she is Polish or Austrian, I don't remember which.

JACQUES
But you know nothing about him?

GISELE
Nothing.

JACQUES
You don't know what he does, whether he has any business?

GISELE
I've no idea.

JACQUES
You don't know either—what he's like?

GISELE
Oh, his looks?

JACQUES
Yes.
GISELE
He's tall, clean shaven—rather smart.

JACQUES
Then you've seen him?

GISELE
Yes.

JACQUES
Where have you seen him?

GISELE
At the front door one evening when he had brought Irene home. I happened to be going in at the same time and saw him. Why?

JACQUES
I went to school with a chap by the name of d'Aiguines. I was wondering if it were the same.

GISELE
Oh, I don't think so. He's quite a bit older than you.

JACQUES
Ah? . . . Perhaps he's a cousin, then. . . . There are several branches of the family. . . . [Pause.] Is that the only time you've ever met him?
JACQUES

Yes, my dear, thank you. You haven't told me much I didn't already know, as a matter of fact. But our talk hasn't been without value. [Pause.] Oh!—it's understood that Irene must never know about it.

GISELE

I promise you that.

JACQUES

I know I can trust you.

GISELE

[hesitatingly]: Jacques, before I go—I should like to—to ask you a question.

JACQUES

Why, certainly.

GISELE

Can't you tell me what you're going to do to help Irene?

JACQUES

No, Gisele. Besides my plan has such slight chance of success... . . .

GISELE

Yes, but you wouldn't attempt it, would you, if you didn't think it might succeed?

JACQUES

Well, let's say the chances are about one in ten.

GISELE

Well, if it does succeed would it—would it mean that you'd get married? Tell me?

JACQUES

No.

GISELE

Ah! [Pause.] And yet you love her?

JACQUES

[smiling wanly]: Do you believe so?

GISELE

Oh, come! I've known it for ever so long. You've been in love with her ever since the summer you spent at Montcel.

JACQUES

But that's not enough, you see.

GISELE

You mean that she doesn't love you?

JACQUES

Yes, just that.
THE CAPTIVE

GISELE

Are you sure?

JACQUES

Absolutely.

GISELE

What a pity! . . . [She hesitates; then realizes there is no more to be said.] Good-by, Jacques.

JACQUES

Good-by, dear child.
[She looks at him sadly, takes his hand, then with a sudden, tender movement, kisses him on both cheeks and exits. He goes with her, enters again a few seconds later, sits at his desk and ponders. Picks up telephone book, looks up a number, then calls.]

Passy 83-42 . . . Hello, is this Monsieur d'Aiguines' house? . . . Is Monsieur d'Aiguines at home? . . . Oh! . . . well, can you give me his office address? Where? . . . [He writes on pad.] Thank you very much. Do you happen to know until what time he'll be there? . . . Thank you.
[Hangs up receiver, takes writing-paper and begins to write. After writing a few lines, re-reads what he's written, appears irritated, crumples it up and takes a fresh sheet. When he has fin-

THE CAPTIVE

ished, he rings, puts letter in envelope, addresses it. GEORGES enters.

GEORGES

Did you ring, monsieur?

JACQUES

Yes. Jump into a taxi and take this letter to this address. It's a bank. If they tell you that the gentleman is in, deliver the letter and wait for an answer. [A door bell is heard.] If he's not in, bring me back the letter and ask if there is a chance of finding him there to-morrow morning. You needn't leave my name—it's not necessary.

GEORGES

Yes, monsieur.

JACQUES

You quite understand?

GEORGES

Yes, monsieur.

JACQUES

See who is at the door.

GEORGES

[Going toward door, back:] If it is Madame Meillant, monsieur, what shall I say? [Bell rings again with insistence.]
THE CAPTIVE

JACQUES

[Smiling]: It is Madame Meillant—show her in. [Georges goes out, enters a moment later with Françoise, an exceedingly handsome young woman, smartly attired. Georges leaves.]

FRANÇOISE

Well, I thought you were going to leave me planted on the doorstep. You must tell Georges to open the door more quickly. One always runs into some one on stairways. [She moves about, very much at home.]

JACQUES

I love your plural! [Lights cigarette at desk.]

FRANÇOISE

What?

JACQUES

Nothing. It's not Georges' fault, it's mine. I was giving him an order.

FRANÇOISE

Huh, that only makes it worse! [After pause, turns to him.] Hullo, dear!

JACQUES

Hullo, Françoise.
try to call for me, that I thought surely you'd make a special effort. Apparently the day is past for me to ask that sort of thing.

Jacques
I'm so sorry, Françoise.

Françoise
What were you doing that was so entertaining—/I I'm not being indiscreet?

Jacques
I was dining at my brother's house and it was very late when I left.

Françoise
Couldn't you have told him you were due at a party?

Jacques
He'd just come back to town. I hadn't seen him for two months.

Françoise
Evidently that was more amusing than coming to fetch me.

Jacques
Well, yes. Frankly, you know I hate those parties—

Françoise
You hate everything I like.

Jacques
No, I don't, my dear.

Françoise
You do. It's always like that—I'm beginning to get used to it. [Pause.] Only it's possible you made a mistake by not coming last night—

Jacques
[His thoughts elsewhere]: Really?

Françoise
Oh, I say that, but really everything's of so little interest to you now—

Jacques
What's of so little interest to me?

Françoise
Well, for instance, that someone should have paid me—very marked attention.

Jacques
Some one paid you very marked attention?
THE CAPTIVE

FRANÇOISE

Yes— [Pause.] Oh, you know well enough that when a woman has been seen frequently with the same man, and then suddenly is noticed arriving and leaving alone, other men begin to take new interest in her. Besides, last night, I had on a very becoming gown—

JACQUES

Which one?

FRANÇOISE

You haven't seen it. I had hesitated before ordering it because of you—imagine that!—I thought you might find it rather décolleté. But I'm glad I took it now. It was a terrific success!

JACQUES

I'm so glad, darling!

FRANÇOISE

I knew it was a sensation as soon as I arrived—from the way the women looked at it!

JACQUES

Not by the way the men looked at it?

FRANÇOISE

Yes, but a bit later. Women notice that sort of thing more quickly.

THE CAPTIVE

JACQUES

Ah?

FRANÇOISE

Then, too, I think that I was in great form last night.

JACQUES

In spite of the headache?

FRANÇOISE

In spite of the headache. At least I was told so any number of times.

JACQUES

By whom, for instance?

FRANÇOISE

What do you care?

JACQUES

I'm very interested. You don't doubt that, I hope?

FRANÇOISE

Well, let me see. . . Several of the men who were there . . . your friend Moreuil, by the way, didn't leave my side all evening.
JACQUES
Oh! I thought he was in America?

FRANÇOISE
He's come back—come back, what's more, an amorous devil. He insisted on seeing me to my door, and he was about to suggest coming up with me.

JACQUES
Not really?

FRANÇOISE
I think in fact—between ourselves—that he did suggest it.

JACQUES
[Smiling indifferently]: Good old Moreuil. [Puts out cigarette. FRANÇOISE is piqued and gives him a glowering look.] And so, you were saying that he—

FRANÇOISE
[Rises impatiently]: Oh! Please! That's enough, isn't it? Let's speak about something else!

JACQUES
As you say.

THE CAPTIVE

FRANÇOISE
Listen, Jacques. When I came I'd no idea of making a scene. But it really begins to look as if you were trying to exasperate me! I've stood for a great deal for some time, but this is too much!

JACQUES
All right, let's have it!

FRANÇOISE
I understand well enough that you don't love me any more; that's quite within your rights. But that being the case, why not say it? We've never sworn eternal fidelity, have we? Be frank about it for once—it would be so much better.

JACQUES
But nothing is changed, Françoise.

FRANÇOISE
Ah, you think not, do you? . . . Well, let me tell you that if you had never shown more ardor than you have to-day I never would have been to you what I have. Ah! . . . No! . . . I realize now that I gave in much too soon. You'd have loved me more if I had made you want me longer. I liked you and let you see that I did; so much the worse for me. At least in the beginning I could entertain some illusions about our love! But now—!
THE CAPTIVE

JACQUES
I give you my word, Françoise, that my feeling for you has not changed in the least.

FRANÇOISE
What does that mean?

JACQUES
Well, that—

FRANÇOISE
That you have never loved me, is that it?

JACQUES
I didn't say that.

FRANÇOISE
But it's what you're thinking. Well, at least you're being frank about it, thank heaven! At last! But if you never loved me why did you ask me to become your—

JACQUES
[Breaking in quietly]: I might reply that I never asked you to.

FRANÇOISE
You never asked me?
THE CAPTIVE

Françoise

No, no, no! You can’t get out of it like that. It would be too easy to insult a person, and then—

Jacques

How have I insulted you?

Françoise

Well, if you don’t think it insulting to tell a woman who has been your mistress for six months that you never asked her to be, then just what is it?

Jacques

In that case I offer all kinds of apologies. I simply yielded for the moment to the desire of relating what happened between us. I was wrong. Do forgive me.

Françoise

Relating what happened between us? You’re going back to that?

Jacques

My dear, try to recall the first talk we had!

Françoise

Our first talk?

Jacques

One of the first, if you prefer. It was at Versailles, by the lake. You had telephoned me in the morning to ask if I cared to motor out into the country. We left your car at the entrance of the grounds—if you remember—

Françoise

I remember, yes.

Jacques

And you said: “The biggest mistake that women make is to select the same man to make love and to talk about it.” I thought that was an amusing idea and I replied, “One can hardly expect to be at the head of one’s class in both rhetoric and gymnastics!” You agreed with me and were charming enough to add that I must be at the foot of my class in rhetoric! Finally, you said you saw no reason why two people who were physically attracted to each other should not establish an intimacy,—it being thoroughly understood that there would be no trespassing on the domain of sentiment. The idea delighted me, and as it was time for tea I suggested that we return to town and have it at my apartment . . . which you were good enough to accept. . . . That is exactly how it all happened.

Françoise

And what has that to do with it?
Jacques

I always thought that that day we settled the exact relation between us.

Franceoise

[Shrugging her shoulders]: As if one meant seriously everything said at such times.

Jacques

I meant what I said. I only undertook a relation I could abide by. If I had undertaken any other it would have been very unfair to you.

Franceoise

You're being that now, my dear. Do you think that falling in love with me was beneath you?

Jacques

It's not a question of that!

Franceoise

Strange as it may seem to you, there are many men who feel differently about it.

Jacques

But I'm aware of that, Franceoise! You're a very attractive woman and I know perfectly that there are many men who would like to be in my place. I'm sorry I can't make myself more clear. I only meant to say that at the time of our meeting, I could make no other promises—than those I made—that's all.

Franceoise

Because you were in love with some one else, no doubt. . . . And you still love her, is that it? Say it! Why don't you say it?

Jacques

That, Franceoise, belongs in the domain of sentiment. I have never trespassed on yours, you must admit. Keep off mine.

Franceoise

Do I know her?

Jacques

Please.

Franceoise

You won't tell me?

Jacques

There's nothing to tell.

Franceoise

Oh! I'll find out . . . it can't be very difficult.

... Who is she?
THE CAPTIVE

Jacques
I assure you, Françoise, that you're wasting your time.

Françoise
[Searching]: Let's see; a woman that you were already in love with six months ago and who does not love you—

Jacques
How do you know that she doesn't love me?

Françoise
That's evident. Else why should you have turned elsewhere for distraction. That's really all I've been to you—a distraction!

Jacques
You're mistaken, Françoise.

Françoise
You're very kind, but don't bother to protest further. . . . I know who she is.

Jacques
Ah?

Françoise
The Barentier girl?

Jacques
Now you have it!

Françoise
It's not she!

Jacques
Yes, yes, let's say it is!

Françoise
Great heavens! You're annoying!

Jacques
Françoise, please, let's change the subject.
[Georges enters]: Pardon me. . . . [To Georges.] Well?

Georges
I delivered the letter.

Jacques
Did you see the gentleman?

Georges
Yes, monsieur. He didn't write an answer but he asked to say that he was coming here to see you.

Jacques
Really? When?
GEORGES

Now, monsieur.

JACQUES

What, you mean right away?

GEORGES

Yes, monsieur. He asked if you were at home. I said I thought you were. Then he said he was coming.

JACQUES

[After a pause]: All right. . . . When he rings, ask him to go into the salon.

GEORGES

Yes, monsieur. [Exits.]

FRANÇOISE

Are you expecting some one?

JACQUES

Yes. I hope you'll forgive me, Françoise. It's a man whom I must see about a business matter—a rather important one—concerning my interests in Morocco.

FRANÇOISE

Why, yes, of course.

THE CAPTIVE

JACQUES

I wasn't expecting him. Not to-day at least, otherwise—

FRANÇOISE

It doesn't matter at all. [Goes to divan, gets hat and things.] As a matter of fact, there was very little left for us to say to each other—wasn't there? [Pulls hat on.]

JACQUES

But—I don't know, Françoise.

FRANÇOISE

You see, Jacques, I've only just realized that for the past six months it's I who have given a bit too much both the questions and the answers. So now, I think there's been enough of it and the best thing we can do is put a period at the end of our page. [He helps her on with her coat.] Don't you think so too?

JACQUES

Just as you please.

FRANÇOISE

Ah! Well—

JACQUES

What?
Françoise
Oh, nothing: I feared you might have made some protest—merely as a matter of form. But I see that you've bravely made up your mind—and don't even regard it worth while to protest. Splendid! Let me congratulate you on your resignation— [Pause.] What are you thinking?

Jacques
[Whose mind is on other things]: Why—of you and what you've just said. . . .

Françoise
No, you weren't.

Jacques
I'm sorry, Françoise. As a matter of fact I was worrying a bit about this coming interview. Do forgive me. Can't we meet again some time soon—perhaps tomorrow?

Françoise
What for?

Jacques
I'd like to explain—to attempt to make my position clear.

Françoise
I assure you, my dear, that I've understood you perfectly![She cries a little but controls herself quickly.]

Jacques
[Going toward her]: Françoise—

Françoise
Pay no attention to me!—There, it's over. And now let's say good-by to each other sweetly like the two good friends that we are. I shall miss you, Jacques, dear!

Jacques
Come, Françoise—

Françoise
Yes, I will. Oh, it's not your fault—you're the sort of man one misses. After all, we have some rather pleasant memories to look back upon, haven't we?

Jacques
Yes, dear . . . delightful memories.

Françoise
You see, Jacques, when a woman promises to love you, you mustn't always believe her. But when a
woman promises not to, well, then you mustn’t believe her either.

Jacques
My dear Françoise! . . .

Françoise
Come, we mustn’t weaken now!

Jacques
But at least, you’ll let me write, won’t you?

Françoise
Do! Write me a letter filled with sweetly melancholy thoughts on the way all things come to an end, and send it by the florist with a few of those lovely carnations that I like. I’ll wait until they’re quite faded before trying to put you out of my thoughts. Good-by.

[She gives him her hand. He kisses it. The bell is heard. He drops her hand and goes up to the door. She follows.]

Jacques
Wait a moment, won’t you?

[Georges enters. To Georges.] Is it the gentleman?

Georges
Yes, monsieur.

Jacques
Very well.

Françoise
[Moved]: Don’t forget the carnations. [He goes out with her. In a moment he re-enters and goes to the door of the salon and opens it.]

Jacques
[Talking off]: Would you mind coming in here, monsieur?

[Jacques moves a little away from door. d’Aiguines enters past him and turns to Jacques with outstretched hand.]

d’Aiguines
How are you, old boy?

Jacques
Why, it’s—

d’Aiguines
Of course it is! Didn’t you know you were writing to me?

Jacques
Why, no, otherwise—

d’Aiguines
Otherwise you wouldn’t have been so formal, I hope. But didn’t my name mean anything to you?
THE CAPTIVE

JACQUES

Of course. But I was led to believe that the d'Aiguines I had to deal with was somewhat older.

D'AIGUINES

Somewhat older? Why?

JACQUES

Well, it doesn't matter. I remember you had some cousins. I thought perhaps it might be one of them.

D'AIGUINES

Ah? . . . But what's the reason for—

JACQUES

I'll tell you. [Pause.] Do sit down!

D'AIGUINES

[Plays hat and gloves on desk]: You're looking at me? . . . You find I've changed, eh? . . . I'm sure you'd hardly have recognized me?

JACQUES

Yes. . . . I would have.

D'AIGUINES

Good Lord, it's something like twenty years since we've seen each other. Not since the days when we wore our trousers out sitting on the same bench at school. Twenty years leave their mark! On some people at least. . . . But you've hardly changed. I'm very glad to see you again, old chap.

JACQUES

Thanks.

D'AIGUINES

It's strange we shouldn't have met. Of course I haven't been in France much. What have you been doing? Weren't you in Morocco for a time?

JACQUES

Yes.

D'AIGUINES

Who was it told me so? [A pause.] . . . Ah, yes, I remember; it was Sicard—you remember him—fat Sicard? I met him one day in Madrid. We were staying at the same hotel. He had just returned from Africa, I think, and had seen you there.

JACQUES

Yes.

D'AIGUINES

And now you're living here altogether?
THE CAPTIVE

Jacques

Yes.

d'Aiguines

Damn funny thing, life. You really didn't know that the d'Aiguines you were writing to for an appointment was I?

Jacques

No.

d'Aiguines

Well, the minute I saw your signature I didn't hesitate. That's why I came here right away. If Jacques Virieu wanted to see me I certainly couldn't keep him waiting!

Jacques

[Pause]: Is that the only reason you came here right away?

d'Aiguines

[Surprised]: Good Lord! Since I haven't the least idea what you have to say to me—

Jacques

You haven't the least idea?

d'Aiguines

Why, of course not—no.

THE CAPTIVE

Jacques

Ah . . . ?

d'Aiguines

Well, look here, you arouse my curiosity! Upon my word, you sit there looking like a judge! Come, what's it all about?

Jacques

Whom is it all about, might me better.

d'Aiguines

Whom? . . . All right, if you prefer it. Well, then, whom is it all about?

Jacques

[Pause]: About Irene de Montcel.

d'Aiguines

[Amazed and annoyed]: Irene de Montcel?

Jacques

Yes. [Pause.] You seem to begin to understand!

d'Aiguines

No. What can you have to say to me about Mademoiselle de Montcel?

Jacques

You can't guess?
THE CAPTIVE

d'Aiguines

No, I can't!

Jacques
I'm a distant cousin of hers. But what's more important is that I've been a friend of hers for a long time. One of her best friends—I might even say her best friend, if you wish.

d'Aiguines
Well?

Jacques
You knew that, didn't you?

d'Aiguines
I didn't even know you were acquainted.

Jacques
Have you never heard her speak of me?

d'Aiguines
Never.

Jacques
She hasn't even spoken of the—role that some one was playing for her at the present time?

THE CAPTIVE

d'Aiguines

What rôle?

Jacques
Don't you know that some one is pretending to Irene's father to be engaged to her, or something of the sort?

d'Aiguines
Engaged to her?

Jacques
To ward off her father's suspicions; and to permit her to remain in Paris, yes.

d'Aiguines
[Pause]: She asked you to do that?

Jacques
Yes.

d'Aiguines
Did you do it?

Jacques
Yes. [Pause.] You knew nothing about all that?

d'Aiguines
I? Why, of course, I didn't!
THE CAPTIVE

Jacques

Really! I had somehow imagined that you would have known about it.

D’Aiguines

What are you driving at?

Jacques

I merely wanted to let you know by what right I say what I shall have to say to you about her.

D’Aiguines

That’s all very well—but I’ve no right to listen to what you may have to say about the young lady. [Rises.]

Jacques

Sit down, please.

D’Aiguines

[Disturbed]: What for? I tell you again that it’s something which doesn’t concern me.

Jacques

Steady! Otherwise, I’ll be forced to think it’s something which concerns you deeply.

D’Aiguines

[Feelingly]: What do you mean?

Jacques

I mean that a suspicion I had before your arrival has become a conviction in the last five minutes.

D’Aiguines

All right—keep your suspicions to yourself, and allow me to leave?

Jacques

[Standing between the door and D’Aiguines]: I swear that you’ll listen to me!

D’Aiguines

Good God! Are you crazy?

Jacques

No.

D’Aiguines

You insist upon my listening to you?

Jacques

[Vehemently]: Yes!

D’Aiguines

You’re wrong, I tell you!

Jacques

We’ll see as to that.
d’AIGUISNES

Very well, I’ve warned you. Do as you like....

JACQUES

I shan’t take long, don’t worry. If—contrary to what I think—what I have to say doesn’t apply to you, at least you’ll know to whom it should be repeated. When a man occupies in a girl’s life the place which the person I’m referring to occupies in Irene’s life—when he makes her do or lets her do what she has done in order not to be separated from him—he has no valid excuse, none, do you hear, for not marrying her. That is to say, if he’s free. If he isn’t, then he must take steps to become so, at no matter what cost and at the earliest possible moment. Now you have it.

d’AIGUISNES

[Pause]: Is that all?

JACQUES

Well, just about. For I shouldn’t like to think that the person in question were a man without honor. If that were the case then the duty of a friend is clear; to warn Montcel to protect his daughter. But I hope it won’t be necessary to go to that extreme.

d’AIGUISNES

Have you quite finished this time?

THE CAPTIVE

THE CAPTIVE

JACQUES

Yes.

d’AIGUISNES

Then, unless I’m crazy I must conclude that you believe me to be Mademoiselle de Montcel’s lover or something of the sort. That’s it, isn’t it?

JACQUES

That is the most likely supposition, yes....

d’AIGUISNES

[Earnestly]: Well, then look at me and despite the high strung condition you seem to be in, try to see things clearly. I give you my word of honor that you’re mistaken. I am not and never have been anything but an acquaintance of hers, do you hear.... not even a friend. You can believe me or not, that’s your affair. That’s all I’ve got to say. And please understand that if I’ve taken the trouble of replying to you at all instead of treating you like a lunatic and leaving here without a word, it’s solely because of our old friendship.

JACQUES

[Impressed by d’AIGUISNES’ truthful attitude, but despairing]: Then.... who is it?

d’AIGUISNES

How should I know...... Has she a lover?
THE CAPTIVE

Jacques

Yes.

d'Aiguines

Did she tell you so?

Jacques

She let me believe it—which amounts to the same thing.

d'Aiguines

Not always. You may be too hasty in drawing conclusions.

Jacques

Well, it's the only possible explanation. If it weren't true, she'd have said so. She couldn't have doubted for a moment that I was convinced of it.

d'Aiguines

[Pause]: Well, in any case, I'm sorry, but I can give you no information. And if you've nothing more to say...

Jacques

You're not going?

d'Aiguines

I must. I came as soon as I got your note but I'm leaving Paris in a few days and I've a great deal to do.

THE CAPTIVE

Jacques

Don't go, I beg you! You're the only one who can help me find this man and I must find him.

d'Aiguines

But since I know nothing—

Jacques

That's not possible! You must have some idea, some suspicion. Seeing her constantly... knowing the sort of life she leads... whom she sees...

d'Aiguines

But you're wrong. I don't see her constantly. Once in a while she goes out with us—but I've much less in common with her than you seem to think—

Jacques

How can that be? You're almost the only people she ever sees—she spends all her time at your house. You can't help knowing something!

d'Aiguines

[Coldly, not looking at Jacques]: I know nothing.

Jacques

I don't believe you!
THE CAPTIVE

d'Aiguines
See here! That's quite enough—

Jacques
I believed you a moment ago, believed you without proof, when you said you were not her lover. You were telling the truth then. Now, you're not, you're lying. You're lying so as not to betray the secret of some one who is probably your friend. That's it, isn't it?

d'Aiguines
I know nothing.

Jacques
Listen: just tell me that he's a decent chap and that he'll marry her—and I'll ask you nothing more.

d'Aiguines
I have nothing to say. I know nothing.

Jacques
But don't you understand that this poor girl must be saved, that she can't be allowed to go more deeply every day into an affair that is ruining her!... And if it was only that! She has already begun to suffer. What's going on?... Has she felt that he wants to be rid of her? I don't know. But what

THE CAPTIVE

d'Aiguines
I do know is that she spends her time locked in her room, sobbing. That's what she has come to!

d'Aiguines
Oh!... [Gesture.]

Jacques
That doesn't worry you, eh? Well it does me! I'd give my life, do you hear, my life, to make her happy.

d'Aiguines
[Looks at him in surprise.]: You mean to say you love her?

Jacques
I am her friend.

d'Aiguines
Answer me. One doesn't do what you have done out of mere friendship—nor go through with a thing like this pretended engagement. You love her?

Jacques
Very well, then, I do love her. I've loved her for ten years, and I'll never love any one else. What of it?
THE CAPTIVE

D'AIQUINES
You love her? Is that true?

JACQUES
Yes!

D'AIQUINES
Then for Christ's sake, get away from here! Get away! It doesn't matter where—as far as you can and stay away as long as you can! Don't come back until you're cured! That's all I can say!

JACQUES
What do you mean?

D'AIQUINES
I'm giving you some advice, good advice, that's all.

JACQUES
You're going to explain to me exactly what you mean! Aren't you?

D'AIQUINES
[With hesitation]: Why—there's nothing to explain—You love this young woman and from what you tell me I gather she loves some one else. That being the case, the best thing to do is clear out. Don't you agree with me?

JACQUES
Clear out and leave her in the hands of some rodder, probably—some rodder who wanted her and so made her believe he'd marry her.

D'AIQUINES
Is she really so simple as that?

JACQUES
A woman is always that the first time she's in love. This is her first experience, I have reasons to know that. If she had loved any one before this, I'd probably have been the man. I adored her and until last year I lived in the hope that some day she'd be my wife. And she would have been, do you hear, if this other man hadn't appeared. I didn't fight against it, there was no use. But since he's been the means of making me unhappy, at least I want him to be the means of making her happy. To do that I must find him.

D'AIQUINES
You can do nothing for her.

JACQUES
How do you know?

D'AIQUINES
No one can do anything for her.
THE CAPTIVE

JACQUES

Why? [D'AIGUINES gestures, but remains silent.] Ah! You made a slip there! You're not going to keep on pretending that you don't know how things are! You can't keep silent any longer!

D'AIGUINES

Leave her alone! Don't meddle in this, believe me! And don't ask me anything more!

JACQUES

Look here, you don't suppose I'm going to be satisfied with vague warnings that can have only one effect: making me more anxious than ever! I'm not asking for advice, I'm demanding a name!

D'AIGUINES

[Abruptly]: The name of her lover? She has no lover! Now, are you satisfied?

JACQUES

What?

D'AIGUINES

It might be better for her if she had one!

JACQUES

I don't understand.

D'AIGUINES: It is not only a man who may be dangerous to a woman... In some cases it can be another woman.

(BASIL RATHBONE and ARTHUR WONTNER)
THE CAPTIVE

D'AIGUINES

A woman can free herself from a lover—even if he's the worst scoundrel living. She can get over it. Whereas in her case—

JACQUES

In her case, what? Finish!

D'AIGUINES

Hers is quite another kind of bondage. . . . And that kind—[Gesture.]

JACQUES

Another kind of bondage?

D'AIGUINES

Yes. It is not only a man who may be dangerous to a woman. . . . In some cases it can be another woman.

JACQUES

Another woman?

D'AIGUINES

Yes.

JACQUES

What are you talking about? You mean to say it's on account of a woman that Irene refused to go with her father to Rome?
THE CAPTIVE

d’Aiguines

Yes.

Jacques

It’s on account of a woman that she spends her time crying?

d’Aiguines

Yes.

Jacques

What kind of story is this?

D’Aiguines

The kind of story that often happens—regardless of what men think. The kind of story that people don’t believe for the most part, or which makes them smile, half amused and half indulgent.

Jacques

But it’s impossible! Irene is much too well balanced.

D’Aiguines

What does that prove?

Jacques

Are you positive of this?

THE CAPTIVE

d’Aiguines

Yes.

Jacques

Do you—know this woman?

D’Aiguines

Yes. [Looks at Jacques quickly, and sees that the latter is not observing him. A great sadness crosses his face.] I know her.

Jacques

[After a moment]: I am dumbfounded—

D’Aiguines

And a little relieved . . . aren’t you?

Jacques

Well, good Lord! After what I had feared! . . .

D’Aiguines

So you’d prefer—? [Pause.] Well, you’re wrong to prefer it!

Jacques

You’d rather she had a lover?

D’Aiguines

In your place? Yes! A hundred, a thousand times rather!
Are you mad?

**d'Aiguines**

It's you who are mad. If she had a lover I'd say to you: Patience, my boy, patience and courage. Your cause isn't lost. No man lasts forever in a woman's life. You love her and she'll come back to you if you know how to wait. . . . But in this case I say: Don't wait! There's no use. She'll never return—and if ever your paths should cross again fly from her, fly from her . . . do you hear? Otherwise you are lost! Otherwise you'll spend your existence pursuing a phantom which you can never overtake. One can never overtake them! They are shadows. They must be left to dwell alone among themselves in the kingdom of shadows! Don't go near them . . . they're a menace! Above all, never try to be anything to them, no matter how little—that's where the danger lies. For, after all, they have some need of us in their lives . . . it isn't always easy for a woman to get along. So if a man offers to help her, to share with her what he has, and to give her his name, naturally she accepts. What difference can it make to her? So long as he doesn't exact love, she's not concerned about the rest. Only, can you imagine the existence of a man if he has the misfortune to love—to adore a *shadow* near whom he lives? Tell me, can you imagine what that's like? Take my word for it, old man, it's a rotten life! One's used up quickly by that game. One gets old in no time—and at thirty-five, look for yourself, one's hair is gray!

**Jacques**

Do you mean—?

**d'Aiguines**

Yes. And I hope you'll profit by my example. Understand this: they are not for us. They must be shunned, left alone. Don't make my mistake. Don't say, as I said in a situation almost like yours, don't say: "Oh, it's nothing but a sort of ardent friendship—an affectionate intimacy . . . nothing very serious . . . we know all about that sort of thing!" No! We don't know *anything* about it! We can't begin to know what it is. It's mysterious—terrible! Friendship, yes—that's the mask. Under cover of friendship a woman can enter any household, whenever and however she pleases—at any hour of the day—she can poison and pillage everything before the man whose home she destroys is even aware of what's happening to him. When finally he realizes things it's too late—he is alone! Alone in the face of a secret alliance of two beings who understand one another because they're alike,
because they're of the same sex, because they're of a different planet than he, the stranger, the enemy! Ah! if a man tries to steal your woman you can defend yourself, you can fight him on even terms, you can smash his face in. But in this case—there's nothing to be done—but get out while you still have strength to do it! And that's what you've got to do!

Jacques

... Why don't you get out yourself?

D'Aiguines

Oh, with me it's different. I can't leave her now. We've been married eight years. Where would she go? ... Besides it's too late. I couldn't live without her any more. What can I do—I love her? ... [Pause.] You've never seen her? [Jacques shakes his head.] You'd understand better if you knew her. She has all the feminine allurements, every one. As soon as one is near her, one feels—how shall I say it—a sort of deep charm. Not only I feel it. Every one feels it. But I more than the rest because I live near her. I really believe she is the most harmonious being that has ever breathed. ... Sometimes when I'm away from her, I have the strength to hate her for all the harm she has done me ... but, with her, I don't struggle. I look at her ... I listen to her ... I worship her. You see?

Jacques

[Pursuing an idea]: Tell me ... why is Irene suffering?

D'Aiguines

I don't know. [Rises.] You don't suppose I'm confided in, do you? She is suffering probably, as the weak always do, struggling with a stronger nature until they give in.

Jacques

You think Irene is weak?

D'Aiguines

Compared to the other? Oh, yes. [Pause.] She is probably still struggling.

Jacques

Ah! [Pause.] So that's why she is unhappy? [Rises.]

D'Aiguines

For that reason—or some other. She has many to choose from.

Jacques

You mean—?

D'Aiguines

Why shouldn't she suffer? I suffer, don't I?
THE CAPTIVE

JACQUES

That's not the same thing.

D'AGUIINES

You think so, do you? Well, on the contrary, I believe it's very much the same thing. There's only one way to love, you see, and one way to suffer. It's the same formula for everybody—and in that respect she and I have been in the same boat for some time. Only she hasn't got used to it yet—and I have.

JACQUES

I don't quite follow you.

D'AGUIINES

Haven't you heard any mention of a cruise?

JACQUES

A cruise?

D'AGUIINES

Yes. In the Mediterranean... on a yacht, an American yacht?

JACQUES

No. [Pause.] Is she to be one of the party?

D'AGUIINES

I don't know. That's why I'm asking if she spoke of it.

JACQUES

She never speaks to me of anything.

D'AGUIINES

In her place—I'd refuse to go.

JACQUES

You would?

D'AGUIINES

I doubt that she'll be able to refuse. However—that's her affair. What matters most is you. What are you going to do? Will you take my advice and go away for a while?

JACQUES

I don't know yet. I'll think it over.

D'AGUIINES

Don't wait, Jacques. Believe me.

JACQUES

It's not as dangerous for me as you think. I almost never see her.
THE CAPTIVE

d’Aigüines

What difference does that make? When she needs you, she knows where to find you—you’ve seen that for yourself. That is how one can get caught, even after one has been warned. Remember what I’m telling you.

Jacques

But where can I go?

d’Aigüines

Anywhere—so long as it’s far away. [Pause.] Have you still got your business interests in Morocco?

Jacques

Yes, but—

d’Aigüines

Then go back there for a while. At that distance she won’t be able to turn to you so easily.

Jacques

If you knew her as well as I do, you’d realize that you’re needlessly alarmed. She turned to me for help in a moment of frenzy. But she’s much too proud to do so again. Besides, I don’t see how I could help her any more.

THE CAPTIVE

d’Aigüines

How can you tell? [Pause.] If you don’t want to go away, then find a woman that is attractive to you, a real woman. See if she can’t make you forget the other one.

Jacques

I’ve already tried that.

d’Aigüines

And it didn’t succeed? [Jacques shakes his head.] You see my fears were not so exaggerated as you thought. There is nothing for you to do but go away—and without a moment’s delay. Now it’s up to you. [Picks up his hat and gloves and offers Jacques his hand. A bell is heard.] Are you expecting some one?

Jacques

No.

d’Aigüines

Well, anyhow, I must be off—good-by, Jacques. [They shake hands.]

Jacques

Thanks. . . .

d’Aigüines

Oh! [Gesture.] If only I could have convinced you! [Georges enters.]
Jacques

What is it?

Georges

Mademoiselle de Montcel would like to know if you can see her.

Jacques

What!

Georges

And I said that I would see if you were in, monsieur.

Jacques

[Glances at d'Aiguines.] Ask her to wait in the salon, then close the door that gives into the hall.

Georges

Very good, monsieur.

Jacques

It's Mademoiselle Irene?

Georges

Yes, monsieur.

Jacques

Oh! Show Monsieur d'Aiguines out when he leaves.

[Georges exits.] Well! This is an unexpected visit!

D'Aiguines

Tell me—you've no intention, I hope, of repeating a word of what we've said to Mademoiselle de Montcel, have you?

Jacques

Do you suppose she'd ever forgive me for knowing?

D'Aiguines

Right! And now—good luck, old man. Remember—she can never belong to you no matter how you try. They're not for us. [He exits and Jacques stands a moment in the doorway, then crosses to salon door and opens it.] Come in!

Irene

[Entering]: You're sure I'm not disturbing you? [Closes door.]

Jacques

Very sure.

Irene

You'd tell me if I were, wouldn't you?

Jacques

I'd tell you.
Irene
Then may I stay? It won't bother you?

Jacques
It won't bother me.

Irene
[She sits on the sofa]: Were you surprised when you heard it was I?

Jacques
[Sitting at his desk and lighting the lamp]: A little, yes.

Irene
You wondered what I had come here for, didn't you?

Jacques
I thought that no doubt there was something you wanted to talk to me about.

Irene
There is.

Jacques
Well, I'm listening.

Irene
[Smiling]: Oh, please not like that. Don't speak to me like a lawyer to his client. Be kind, affectionate! . . . Do change that severe look!

Jacques
Why do you say I have a severe look?

Irene
You always have a severe look, nowadays.

Jacques
You're mistaken—

Irene
Be sweet, Jacques, won't you? Like old times! I'm terribly in need of your sympathy.

Jacques
Really?

Irene
Why do you say really like that?

Jacques
For no reason. Go on, continue.

Irene
Are you surprised I ask you to be kind . . . to be affectionate . . . to me?
Jacques
I've stopped being surprised by you, my dear—

Irene
Don't be cruel! . . . I've given you the right to be, I don't forget that! But just the same I hope you won't be, do you mind? Not to-day, anyway. [She turns her face away to hide tears.]

Jacques
[More gently]: What's the matter?

Irene
Nothing. Pay no attention. [Pause.] Jacques, I want you to tell me something.

Jacques
What?

Irene
Since I asked you to—since you agreed to play this part to my father—have you no longer as much affection for me?

Jacques
Why do you ask me that?

Irene
Because I must know.

Jacques
I have as much affection, only—

Irene
Only?

Jacques
It is no longer the same affection. I used to admire you. Now, I pity you.

Irene
[Pensive, without looking at him]: And you despise me?

Jacques
I pity you.

Irene
You're right . . . I am to be pitied. But I can still count on you as a friend, can't I?

Jacques
Yes.

Irene
I need to believe that, to feel sure of it. You don't know, Jacques, how much you mean to me.

Jacques
As much as that? [Rises.]
Irene
Please, no sarcasm. You say you pity me. Then prove it.

Jacques
How?

Irene
Oh! ... By showing me a little tenderness and being a little lenient, that's all.

Jacques
Aren't you happy?

Irene
Happy?

Jacques
Yes.

Irene
There are times when I wish I were dead.

Jacques
Well, that is a way out, but—

Irene
You don't believe me?

Jacques

Irene

Jacques

Irene

Jacques

The Captive

Jacques
I hope you're exaggerating—if one had to kill oneself every time he was unhappy—

Irene
Oh! I'm not thinking of killing myself. It takes courage to die like that. And I haven't even any courage left.... I have nothing left....

Jacques
Yet, you got what you wanted. You had to stay in Paris at any cost. Well, here you are—Oh, talking of that, I meant to tell you that I must write to your father.

Irene
To father?

Jacques
Yes. It was understood that I was to let him know as soon as possible what my intentions were and I promised to do it. He's already been gone a month and I haven't written yet.... It's time I did.

Irene
Must you?

Jacques
I'll tell him that the business matters that were worrying me at the time of his departure are now
THE CAPTIVE

in such bad shape that I'm in no position to make plans for the future— Does that seem all right to you?

IRENE
Just as you wish.

JACQUES
I'll add that I am going to Morocco to attend directly to my interests there.

IRENE
[With great alarm.] But it isn't true, is it—you're not going away?

JACQUES
Yes, probably.

IRENE
But why? Is it really because of business matters?

JACQUES
No.

IRENE
Well, then? . . . Oh! You're not going alone?

JACQUES
What do you mean, not alone?

IRENE
Is some one going with you?

JACQUES
No, nobody.

IRENE
Then why must you go?

JACQUES
I need a change. This climate's not agreeing with me. I should have gone long ago—a year ago when you came back from Italy. Perhaps I'd have been better by now.

IRENE
It's because of me that you're going.

JACQUES
Good Lord!

IRENE
Is it true?

JACQUES
Don't you think it's about time that I considered my own peace of mind a little? After all I can't spend my life loving you and beginning to suffer all over again each time I see you.
THE CAPTIVE

IRENE
Then you still love me, Jacques? Is it true?

JACQUES
Does that surprise you?

IRENE
After what you must have believed of me lately, I was certain that was over . . . that you didn’t love me any more. I felt it,—but I hoped it wasn’t true.

JACQUES
You hoped it wasn’t true?

IRENE
Yes.

JACQUES
You hoped that I still loved you?

IRENE
Yes.

JACQUES
[Pause]: I can’t understand you.

IRENE
[Looking away from him]: Don’t go away, Jacques.

THE CAPTIVE

JACQUES
What do you say?

IRENE
Don’t go away. [JACQUES looks at her, stupefied.]

JACQUES
Ah, yes! You’re afraid your father’ll send for you when he receives my letter and learns I’m no longer here, eh? Well, I’m sorry, but this time you’ll have to manage without me. You can do what you like and how you like, but I shall write to your father to-night.

IRENE
[Shrugging her shoulders]: Write all you want to. I don’t care!

JACQUES
[Sarcastically]: Really!

IRENE
Absolutely, I swear to you!

JACQUES
[Puzzled]: Then why don’t you want me to go away?
Irene
Oh! ... for no reason at all. [She rises.]

Jacques
Sit down again and answer me.

Irene
It's no use. Go, go away—since you're in such a hurry to forget me! Go!

Jacques
Really, Irene, what is this game you're playing now?

Irene
Please forgive me. I don't know what I'm saying any more. Oh, Jacques, I'm so miserable! [She falls into a chair and cries.]

Jacques
[Touched, going to her]: What's the matter?

Irene
[Clinging to him]: You mustn't leave me. I'm so alone, so wretched! Jacques! Only you can save me!

Jacques
But what do you want me to do?

Irene
Protect me! Shield me!

Jacques
Shield you?

Irene
Yes.

Jacques
I assure you, Irene, I'm doing my best to understand you, but really—

Irene
I know, I must seem crazy. Well, I am crazy! You have got to treat me like a crazy person—a sick person—and take care of me, that's all. If you don't come to my rescue right away—it will be too late!

Jacques
Are you in danger of something?

Irene
Yes.

Jacques
An imminent danger?
Irene
Yes.

Jacques
Can't you tell me what it is?

Irene
[After hesitating]: It's about a cruise, my going away—and I mustn't go. I don't want to go—if I do, it's all over. I'd be lost!

Jacques
What is forcing you to go?

Irene
Ah! I am afraid of myself.

Jacques
Then why don't you take a train to Rome with Gisele to join your father?

Irene
I had thought of that. . . . But at the last minute I wouldn't go—I wouldn't have the strength—

Jacques
Yes, you would! I'll help if you wish.

Irene
[Shaking her head]: Or else I'd come back.

Jacques
No!

Irene
You see, there are times in which I can see clearly, such as now, when I am sane and free to use my own mind. . . . But there are other times when I can't, when I don't know what I'm doing. It's like—a prison to which I must return captive, despite myself. I'm—I'm—

Jacques
Fascinated?

Irene
Yes! I need some one to watch me, to hold me back. Some one who has understood or guessed certain things—that I can't talk about, that I can never tell!

Jacques
Is that what you expect of me? How can I restrain you from doing what you want to do? Have I the least influence over you? Have you ever listened to my advice? Please remember that it was only a month ago you rejected it.
Irene
It's no longer the same.

Jacques
What is no longer the same?

Irene
Many things. I will listen to you now. I want to listen to you.

Jacques
But you won't be able to! You won't be allowed to! What weapons have I to fight with? What can I add to what you yourself have said? You acknowledge that this cruise would be your ruin? What can I add to that? And then do you imagine for one moment that advice from me would hold you back during one of those hours of insensibility you speak of? [Irene shakes head.] You see!... And surely you don't expect me to hold you by force, do you? So, what can I do for you?

Irene
Everything. You can save me.

Jacques
How?

Irene
You are the only one who can save me—

Jacques
Why?

Irene
Because you love me—

Jacques
It's for that very reason that I can do nothing. As soon as I saw you miserable, I'd be useless. You can't take as your trained nurse a man who loves you!

Irene
Not as a trained nurse—

Jacques
Well, what then?

Irene
[Looking at him]: Jacques—would you like me to give myself to you?

Irene
Irene!

Jacques
Would you?

Irene
Don't!
Jacques?

Jacques

So that's it. That's what you've come to offer me?

Irene

[Lowering head]: Yes.

Jacques

My poor Irene.

Irene

You don't want me?

Jacques

[Faces her]: But I love you! Don't you understand what that means?

Irene

Of course—

Jacques

[Forcibly]: You offer me your body, your poor body as a pledge, is that it? You want to soil it with me so that you can tell this woman—

Irene

[With a cry]: Jacques!

Jacques

[Still moved]: Yes, I know! I've guessed it! What of it? I suppose you want to tell her that you've given yourself to a man, so that she'll leave you alone? But as for me, me—it's not your body I want. It's you, all of you, don't you see? Can you give me that—tell me? Can you give that to some one you don't love? For, after all, you don't love me, do you? You don't love me?

Irene

[With despair]: I want so much to love you. [She bends over and sobs, her head on his breast.]

Jacques

[Distraught]: Poor child!

Irene

[Through her tears]: You think that I don't know it would mean my happiness? I know only too well that the place I really belong is here against your shoulder. Why won't you let me stay here?

Jacques

Oh! Irene,—what you are asking is too terrible.
Irene
Why? . . . Perhaps I would learn to love you?

Jacques
Afterwards, you mean? No, my dear. . . .

Irene
But once you told me that I would.

Jacques
Ah! Because at that time I thought that only your pride stood between us. I didn't know then all that separates us!

Irene
But when you will have cured me. . . .

Jacques
Do you really believe that I could?

Irene
Yes, if you're very kind, very indulgent, if you have a little patience.

Jacques
But, you see I love you too much for that.

Irene
Then . . . you refuse me? . . . Is that it, Jacques? . . . What is going to become of me!

Jacques
What would become of me? I've been hurt enough as it is.

Irene
But that's over, I won't hurt you any more. How could I hurt you when it will be you who have saved me?

Jacques
That means nothing. You wouldn't do it on purpose, naturally.

Irene
Jacques, look at me. Look in my eyes. [Pause.] I will give you everything a man can expect from the woman he loves.

Jacques
[Disturbed]: Irene! I have dreamed of that too long.

Irene
Take me in your arms. I am yours, Jacques, all of me. . . .

Jacques
You don't realize what you're promising.
THE CAPTIVE

Irene

Yes, I do.

Jacques

There is still time . . . you can still go.

Irene

I am not afraid.

Jacques

You really wish it? Are you sure that you do?

Irene

Yes.

Jacques

[Taking her in his arms]: Irene? . . . Is it true?
[He starts to kiss her on the mouth. As Irene beholds his face filled with longing, she makes an abrupt movement of aversion. He lets her go.]

You see?

Irene

No, no—forgive me!

[This time it is she who offers her lips to him. Then, her nerves giving way, she lets her head fall on his shoulder, struggles with herself a moment, and breaks into tears.]
THE CAPTIVE

Jacques

[In despair]: Irene!

Irene

No, no!—Pay no attention!—It doesn’t mean anything, . . . It’s all over! You will keep me with you? Always?

Jacques

I’ll try.

THE CURTAIN FALLS

Jacques: You see?
(Basil Rathbone and Helen Menken)
THE CAPTIVE

ACT THREE

Scene: The same as Act Two. A year after.

Jacques is seated alone, smoking and meditating.

Georges, his man, enters at back, bringing a letter which he gives to Jacques. The latter inspects the envelope and seems surprised.

Jacques
Who brought this letter?

Georges
A maid, monsieur. She is waiting for an answer.

[He walks to back and waits near the door. Jacques opens and reads the letter. After a few moments of thought, he rises, crosses to his desk, takes a sheet of paper and starts writing.]

Jacques
For what time did madame order the car?

Georges
Three o'clock, monsieur.

[Jacques looks at watch, finishes letter, slips it into an envelope and hands it to Georges.]
THE CAPTIVE

IRENE
Oh! How annoying of you!

JACQUES
Are you going out?

IRENE
Yes, I must go to the decorator’s, and to the painter’s. Then at three-thirty, I have an appointment at Praxine’s studio to have another look at the little landscape that I saw the other day. Don’t you want to come?

JACQUES
I can’t.

IRENE
You’ll have to see it some time.

JACQUES
What for?

IRENE
I’m certainly not going to buy a picture as expensive as that without your having seen it.

JACQUES
You don’t need my advice. I don’t know anything about painting. If you like the picture, buy it, that’s all.

IRENE
Can’t you really come? I’ll pass by here with the car and pick you up. It won’t take more than twenty minutes altogether.

JACQUES
I can’t, I tell you. I’m waiting for some one.

IRENE
Who?

JACQUES
Oh, just—a caller.

IRENE
At what time?

JACQUES
At half-past three.

IRENE
Will it take long?

JACQUES
That I don’t know. [Telephone rings. He rises, takes up receiver.] Hullo . . . yes . . . who is it please? . . . Oh! Just a minute. [To IRENE.] Praxine wants to speak to you.
[At telephone]: Hullo . . . Oh, hullo, how do you do? . . . Why of course I haven’t forgotten . . . at half-past three, yes . . . All right! . . .

What? . . . No, he is so sorry, but he has an appointment and won’t be able to come. I’ll be there.

[She hangs up receiver.] He asked me to be on time, because he has to leave. [Pause.] Well then?

Jacques

Well then what?

Irene

May I really buy the picture if I still like it as much as I did?

Jacques

Why, of course.

Irene

You’re a darling. But, you know, I really think it’s a good buy. Praxine never gets less than twenty-five thousand francs for his smallest canvases and he’s giving me this for fifteen thousand—just because it’s I.

Jacques

That’s splendid.
Irene
Ah! [Pause.] Can't you tell me who it is?

Jacques
Does it interest you?

Irene
Well, really!—After what you've just told me—

Jacques
It's a very charming woman, towards whom I've behaved very shabbily.

Irene
[Searching in her mind]: A woman towards whom—Madame Meillant?

Jacques
Exactly.

Irene
No? How funny!

Jacques
Isn't it?

Irene
She's coming to see you?

Jacques
I wrote, asking her to call. Whether she'll come or not, I don't know.

Irene
But why is she coming?

Jacques
Here. [He hands her the letter he has just received.]

Irene
[After having read it]: What are the letters she mentions?

Jacques
The letters she wrote me while—that she wrote me last year.

Irene
Hadn't you given them back to her?

Jacques
No. We left Paris in such a hurry a year ago that I didn't have time, and since our return I haven't given it a thought.

Irene
[Smiling]: Poor thing. [Gives him back letter.]
JACQUES

[Putting it on the desk]: You don't mind my receiving her here?

IRENE

Why no, not at all.

JACQUES

That's what I thought.

IRENE

Why should I mind?

JACQUES

For no reason, that's true.

IRENE

I have perfect confidence in you.

JACQUES

Of course.

IRENE

I suppose you wanted to give her the letters yourself, and you're quite right.

JACQUES

Naturally.

IRENE

[Looking at him]: What's the matter?

JACQUES

Nothing.

IRENE

You look annoyed that I should be taking this so amiably.

JACQUES

I? On the contrary, I'm delighted.

IRENE

Would you rather have me jealous?

JACQUES

I repeat that I'm delighted.

IRENE

I have no reason for being jealous, have I?

JACQUES

No! Absolutely—none.

IRENE

Well, then?

JACQUES

Jealousy in your case would certainly be uncalled for.
Irene

Meaning what?

Jacques

Simply, that just as jealousy's the most natural thing in the world when one's in love, it becomes meaningless when one isn't, that's all.

Irene

So—I don't love you?

Jacques

Of course you don't love me.

Irene

How absurd!

Jacques

What is absurd?

Irene

To say that.

Jacques

Not at all, why is it?

Irene

Come now, what are you reproaching me about?

Jacques

I'm not reproaching you about anything.

Irene

Have you any fault to find with me?

Jacques

No. Go along and do your errands. Please!

Irene

No, let's clear this up. I'd prefer that. [Removes her coat and puts it on divan.]

Jacques

What for? It's so useless.

Irene

If I've disappointed you in any way, tell me.

Jacques

In no way.

Irene

Don't I do all that I can to make you happy?

Jacques

All that you can.
Irene

Have I had any other thought than your happiness, since I've been your wife? Has my life had any other purpose? Don't I always ask myself, before doing anything, if you'll be pleased and whether you'll approve?

Jacques

Even in choosing your bedroom curtains,—quite right.

Irene

Don't make fun of me, please.

Jacques

I'm not making fun of you. You're an attentive, devoted and faithful wife. What more can I ask? If all that doesn't make me happy, I must be very hard to please.

Irene

I don't understand you any more, Jacques.

Jacques

I know it! That's why all this talk can accomplish nothing.

Irene

[Pause]: Then—then you're not happy?

Jacques

In any case, it's not your fault. I repeat that I have no reproaches to make.

Irene

[Wearily]: But what can I do, then?

Jacques

Nothing. There's nothing to be done.

Irene

Yet you have my every thought. You know that, don't you?

Jacques

No. I don't know that at all.

Irene

You don't?

Jacques

How do you expect me to know what your thoughts are? They're yours. They're no business of mine.

Irene

But I hide nothing from you. Nothing that might disturb you—I swear it.
THE CAPTIVE

JACQUES

As to that— [A gesture of futility.]

IRENE

You don't believe me? Well, then, question me.
I'd much rather have that.

JACQUES

No, no—no questions! Let's leave in the dark
what was meant to be in the dark.

IRENE

No! Since we've come to this, I want you to
question me! Perhaps you'll see how unjust you
are when you know everything.

JACQUES

Then there are things to know?

IRENE

Only things that can reassure you.

JACQUES

Tell me. I'm listening. [Pause.] Have you seen
her again?

IRENE

No.

THE CAPTIVE

JACQUES

Has she telephoned you?

IRENE

No.

JACQUES

Written?

IRENE

Yes.

JACQUES

When?

IRENE

Shortly after our return to Paris. [Pause.]
Twice.

JACQUES

Where are the letters?

IRENE

[Simplify]: I sent them back unopened.

JACQUES

Unopened?

IRENE

Word of honor.

JACQUES

How did you send them back?
Irene
By the person who brought them.

Jacques
How does it happen that I didn’t know about it?

Irene
You weren’t in. You had gone out.

Jacques
Both times?

Irene
Yes.

Jacques
They probably waited for me to leave before bringing them!

Irene
Perhaps. I don’t know.

Jacques
Then you’ve no idea what she wanted of you?

Irene
Oh,—to see me again, no doubt.

Jacques
What makes you think that?

Irene
I’m just supposing it.

Jacques
Is that all?

Irene
No.

Jacques
What else?

Irene
A few days after the second letter came her maid spoke to me in the street.

Jacques
Perfect!

Irene
It wasn’t—she, who had sent her.

Jacques
[Ironically]: Really?

Irene
No. She was very ill.

Jacques
[Same tone]: Well, well,
Irene

She'd been ill a long time. She had just had a relapse. All that night she'd been delirious. It seems ... that she had asked for me several times. ... So the maid thought it best to come and tell me.

Jacques

And then? What did you do?

Irene

Nothing.

Jacques

Nothing?

Irene

[Shaking her head]: I merely asked the maid to bring me news of her the next day. The next day the news was better. I told her not to come back.

Jacques

[Pause]: And then?

Irene

That's all.

Jacques

Absolutely?

Irene

Yes.

Jacques

Why haven't you told me this before?

Irene

I didn't want to worry you unnecessarily. You're so sensitive, you'd have been agitated despite anything I could say. I decided to wait a few days and then tell you.

Jacques

Why a few days?

Irene

She's going to Switzerland for several months to rest. I wanted to wait until she had gone.

Jacques

Who told you she was going? The maid?

Irene

Yes. [Pause.] Aren't you a little reassured now?

Jacques

I wasn't worried.

Irene

You know you can have confidence in me?
THE CAPTIVE

Jacques

But I've always had confidence in you, Irene. I never doubted that when the time came, you would act as you did. You promised when you married me never to see that woman again. I was certain that you never would see her again.

Irene

Then what's on your mind? Why aren't you happy?

Jacques

And you, are you happy?

Irene

I? [Pause.] Of course I'm happy.

Jacques

Oh! Come now!

Irene

[Going toward him]: But really, Jacques!... Haven't I everything to make me happy? We have all we need, we get along so well—you're kindness and generosity itself to me. What more can I wish for?

Jacques

Why do you try to make me believe that nothing is lacking in your life?

THE CAPTIVE

Irene

Because it's true!

Jacques

No, it's not true!— You're not yet thirty and I'm not thirty-five. Happiness, at our age, doesn't consist in leading a comfortable existence... a string of pearls—a couple of cars. It's too soon for that. It's love that's lacking, Irene; you long to love, just as I long to be loved.

Irene

What do you want me to say? You've convinced yourself that I don't love you—

Jacques

Ah, if you knew how hard it's been to convince myself of it. The stupidly hopeful stages I went through! I've clung desperately to the substitutes of love—from tenderness and friendship to the most pathetic of all—compliance. On a word or a gesture that I could interpret in terms of my desire I'd regain confidence. Those illusions are gone. I know that I can really mean nothing to you. I'm as incapable of making you happy as of making you unhappy. ... Oh, God! if only I could make you suffer!
THE CAPTIVE

Irene

You can.

Jacques

How?

Irene

By continuing to say these silly things!

Jacques

You know as well as I that they're not silly. Why
shut your eyes to it? Listen, do you know why I've
made an appointment with Madame Meillant?

Irene

Why, Jacques?

Jacques

It was to see the effect it might have on you;
whether you would object or seem annoyed. It
made you laugh. That's the only result I got.

Irene

Did you want me to weep?

Jacques

I wanted to see just how far your indifference
went.

THE CAPTIVE

Irene

Is it my fault if I believe in your love for me...
if I don't fear your being unfaithful?

Jacques

If you loved me, you would fear it. But the
truth is, that it wouldn't matter to you in the least.

Irene

That's not so!

Jacques

Oh, yes, it is.

Irene

It would hurt me a great deal?

Jacques

Hurt you?

Irene

Of course?

Jacques

Tell me just how it would hurt you?

Irene

How can I tell you that? I don't know.
THE CAPTIVE

JACQUES
Well, try to imagine.

IRENE
I'd be very disappointed, very saddened. I'd feel that—that afterwards I would not like to be taken in your arms again as I did before . . . there.

JACQUES
[Looking at her mournfully]: As you did before?

IRENE
Yes.

JACQUES
You really like so much to be in my arms? Tell me!

IRENE
[Lowering her head]: Why—yes.

JACQUES
My poor Irene—so you think me blind?

IRENE
[Pause, then with an effort]: Have I—have I ever refused you?

JACQUES
You've had a great deal of courage.

IRENE
I thought I made you happy—that was all I wanted.

JACQUES
One can't give happiness so easily as that.

IRENE
I'm sorry.

JACQUES
Love, you see—is something very different.

IRENE
Everything I could give you—I've given. If that doesn't suffice you—

JACQUES
No!

IRENE
Then, look somewhere else, that's all.

JACQUES
You'd like that, wouldn't you? What a deliverance for you that day would be!

IRENE
Oh! Jacques, that will do! [Pause.] And any-
THE CAPTIVE

way, it's getting late and I must be going. [Gets coat from divan, puts it on and goes toward door.]

JACQUES

Irene?

IRENE

What?

JACQUES

Come here.

IRENE

What do you want?

JACQUES

Forgive me. I didn't mean—to hurt you. If I have, forgive me.

IRENE

[Going towards him]: Why are you so unjust?

JACQUES

Well, you see, I can't get used to it.

IRENE

Used to what? My not loving you? But I do. You are everything that I admire, everything that pleases me, everything that I respect in this world!

JACQUES

[Dejected]: Yes, I suppose so.

IRENE

Well, do you think that many wives can say as much of their husbands?

JACQUES

I wasn't asking for as much, either.

IRENE

Do I love any one else but you? I don't, do I? Well then? . . . If you had been told a year ago that you held the first and only place in my life, wouldn't you have been happy?

JACQUES

Of course.

IRENE

Do you think my feeling for you hasn't grown since I asked you to keep me here? You remember that day, don't you?

JACQUES

Yes.

IRENE

[Smiling—comes close to him]: And at Montcel, three weeks later, the mayor's speech and the little chapel, where it was so cold; you remember that too?
Jacques

Yes.

Irene

Do you regret what happened that day?

Jacques

Do you?

Irene

No.

Jacques

That's something anyway.

Irene

Then—will you kiss me?

Jacques

You want me to?

Irene

Yes,—I do. [He takes her in his arms and holds her there a moment, quietly, looking at her. She leans forward to kiss him, her left arm is raised to clasp him, when her eyes rest on her wrist watch.] Oh, look! Quarter to four! Can that be the time?

Jacques

Yes.

Irene

I had no idea! Oh! what a nuisance. Now I won't have time to go to the decorator's. Hurry, dearest!

Jacques

What?

Irene

Aren't you going to kiss me?

Jacques

[Drawing away]: No, you're late already.

Irene

It doesn't matter.

Jacques

No, no—run along.

Irene

Don't be silly! Just because I said. . .

Jacques

Go on. . . Go— [He turns his back to her and walks away.]
THE CAPTIVE

Irene
Great heavens, but you’re touchy!

Jacques
Please go!

Irene
[She sighs]: See you later, then?

Jacques
Yes. [Irene goes toward door. At the door she turns around.]

Irene
I hope you won’t make love to that woman?

Jacques
Thank you for thinking of it!

Irene
You promise me you won’t?

Jacques
Yes, yes, of course. [Irene goes out at back. Jacques sits down, thoughtful, a bitter expression on his face. After quite a pause, he sees on the desk the letter Françoise has written, takes it, puts it in his pocket, goes and opens a cabinet and takes out a rather bulky envelope, which he brings to the desk. He empties its contents: letters. He picks one at random and reads it. At that moment a bell is heard. He puts the letters back in the envelope. Georges enters.]

Georges
Madame Meillant, monsieur.

Jacques
Ask her to come in. [Puts letters in desk drawer. A moment later Georges ushers Françoise into the room and retires.] How are you, Françoise? It was sweet of you to come. [He kisses her hand.]

Françoise
Oh, I only came to get my letters. Don’t imagine it was for any other reason.

Jacques
I’m imagining nothing at all. But I may thank you for having come, mayn’t I?

Françoise
Why didn’t you give the maid the letters as I asked in my note? It would have been much simpler.
THE CAPTIVE

Jacques
I preferred their passing directly from my hands into yours. It seemed to me the safest way. And after all, why not say it: I wanted to see you again.

Françoise
Really? And you didn't ask yourself if I wanted to see you?

Jacques
I ventured to think that if that were too disagreeable you wouldn't come.

Françoise
I wanted my letters, I've just told you that. You don't seem to realize that I've been waiting for them a year.

Jacques
They were here and I was circling the world. Unless I were to return especially from Japan to get them——

Françoise
You could have sent them to me before you left.

Jacques
I didn't have the time.

THE CAPTIVE

Françoise
You left very hurriedly.

Jacques
Very. But you weren't anxious about your letters, were you? You knew they were in safe-keeping.

Françoise
Oh, you think so? And suppose your wife had taken a fancy to search your desk?

Jacques
That's quite unlikely.

Françoise
Just the same, such things do happen.

Jacques
Not here.

Françoise
Then your wife isn't jealous?

Jacques
Not at all.

Françoise
You're lucky! She's not in, I hope.
Jacques
No, she’s just gone out.

Françoise
[Going to table and regarding picture of Irene]:
Is this she?

Jacques
Yes.

Françoise
My compliments.

Jacques
Thanks.

Françoise
Why didn’t you tell me the truth the last time I came here?

Jacques
The truth?

Françoise
Yes; that you were going to be married. I should have preferred that, you know. It would have been nicer. Besides, at least it was a reason.

Jacques
I didn’t tell you because I didn’t know it myself.

Françoise
You didn’t know it?

Jacques
No.

Françoise
And three weeks later the papers announced that you were married!

Jacques
Yes.

Françoise
You didn’t lose much time, then?

Jacques
Once a thing like that is decided upon ... 

Françoise
She’s a childhood friend, isn’t she?

Jacques
She’s a cousin.

Françoise
First cousin?

Jacques
No.
Françoise
Just as well!—And you’ve loved each other always, of course?

Jacques
Well—

Françoise
Oh, you can tell me now. I really don’t know why I’m asking you; it matters to me so little.

Jacques
Then—

Françoise
Give me my letters, won’t you?

Jacques
Are you in such a hurry to get them?

Françoise
Yes.

Jacques
Why?

Françoise
Because.

Jacques
I’m not asking you for mine!

Françoise
I burned them long ago.

Jacques
Really?

Françoise
Besides, for all the letters you ever sent—and for all they ever said—

Jacques
Just the same, it wasn’t very nice to burn them.

Françoise
Why should I have kept them?

Jacques
To re-read them now and then.

Françoise
I had other things to do.

Jacques
Ah?

Françoise
Jacques—my letters!
THE CAPTIVE

Jacques
Not right away! Wait a bit. We've so many things to say to each other first.

Françoise
We have absolutely nothing to say. Besides, your wife may come in at any minute, and I'm no more anxious to meet her than she is to meet me.

Jacques
Sit down. She won't be here for at least an hour. And even then she won't come into this room.

Françoise
How do you know?

Jacques
I told her I was expecting you.

Françoise
You told her that?

Jacques
Yes.

Françoise
And she was willing?

Jacques
Of course.

THE CAPTIVE

Françoise
Well! You have trained her properly!

Jacques
Now, do sit down and tell me everything.

Françoise
But I've nothing to tell you. [Sits on divan.]

Jacques
Oh! Come now! [Draws up chair and sits near her.]

Françoise
What do you want to know?

Jacques
With whom are you in love?

Françoise
That, my dear Jacques, is my—

Jacques
What do you care? I promise not to tell a soul. . . . Is it Moreuil?

Françoise
Perhaps.
Jacques
Seriously? Moreuil? Oh! but he’s an awful looking fellow! [He looks at her. She does not falter.]
No. You didn’t protest. It isn’t Moreuil. Then who is it?

Françoise
Heavens, you’re impossible! [She laughs.]

Jacques
Ah! you’re laughing—that’s nice.

Françoise
I’m laughing because you disarm me. But, believe me, I’ve no desire to.

Jacques
You should laugh. It’s very becoming to you. You’re lovely when you laugh.

Françoise
I don’t care to be lovely.

Jacques
What a fib!

Françoise
Do you think I care a thing about attracting you now?

Jacques
Oh, I don’t say that you care especially about it,—but you’d just as soon I thought you pretty. Well, I find you pretty, very pretty, even prettier than I remembered. Were you as pretty as this before?

Françoise
Jacques, please give me my letters and let me go.

Jacques
I’ll give them if you tell me with whom you’re in love.

Françoise
I’m in love with no one.

Jacques
No one?

Françoise
No!

Jacques
Is it true?

Françoise
Oh! . . . I’d tell you . . . why not?

Jacques
[Thoughtfully, looking at her]: Françoise? . . .
Françoise
What?

Jacques
If you love no one, won't you—try to love me a little?

Françoise
You? Ah, no, I should say not!

Jacques
Why?

Françoise
No, thank you! That's all over, fortunately.

Jacques
[Pause]: Too bad—

Françoise
You think so?

Jacques
Yes, it's too bad... If you had wanted to love me... just a tiny little bit... I could have loved you so much.

Françoise
You?

Jacques
Yes.

Françoise
You, love? Why, you don't even know what the word means!

Jacques
Do you believe that?

Françoise
I know it. For you, love is an amusing pastime. It isn't your fault; you were born fickle.

Jacques
I was born faithful, Françoise.

Françoise
Faithful to whom?

Jacques
To you, if you wish it.

Françoise
And your wife, what about her? Are you already dissatisfied with her? Poor girl! How I pity her!

Jacques
She isn't to be pitied.
THE CAPTIVE

Françoise
One year! Not even that—eleven months! Eleven months ago you married her, and already you’re looking for an adventure. But then I was certain how it would turn out.

Jacques
Really?

Françoise
When I read your note a while ago, I didn’t have a moment’s doubt. From the way in which you asked me to come, I understood immediately what you wanted.

Jacques
And you came, just the same?

Françoise
Because of my letters.

Jacques
True enough,—pardon me!

Françoise
But I knew perfectly well that you were thinking much less about returning them to me, than in seeing if I still loved you. I know you, Jacques!

Jacques
Not so well.

Françoise
Oh, come now, it’s so natural. After that long trip, you came back to Paris, and began getting bored. For a man like you, married life is terribly monotonous, isn’t it? A distraction’s almost imperative! Only, my dear Jacques, you were wrong in thinking me still available. Your Françoise no longer loves you! And that’s that!

[Pause]: Well—never mind. . . . [He rises.]

Françoise
That surprises you, doesn’t it?

Jacques
What?

Françoise
That one should be able not to love you.

[Sadly]: No, it doesn’t—it doesn’t surprise me in the least, I assure you. It’s the way things have been going.

Françoise
[After a moment]: Well, then?
JACQUES
Then nothing. I'm going to give you your letters. That's all. [He goes to desk, takes out the envelope containing the letters and brings it to Françoise.] They are all there.

FRANÇOISE
[Looking at him]: What's the matter? [She takes letters and puts them in her lap.]

JACQUES
Nothing.

FRANÇOISE
[She rises and letters fall to floor]: Why do you look so unhappy, all of a sudden?

JACQUES
Do I?

FRANÇOISE
You're not going to tell me that I've hurt you?

JACQUES
No.

FRANÇOISE
Then what's troubling you?

JACQUES
Nothing, my dear, nothing at all. I'm unhappy because—because we're going to part and will never see each other again, that's all.

FRANÇOISE
What do you care?

JACQUES
I shall miss you.

FRANÇOISE
Have you missed me much during the past year?

JACQUES
Perhaps—

FRANÇOISE
What a story! You would have told me!

JACQUES
How?

FRANÇOISE
You could have written me,—I hadn't forbidden you to.

JACQUES
That's true.
THE CAPTIVE

Françoise
Not a line—not even a post card—nothing! And still you expect me to love you. You must admit it would be too stupid of me!

Jacques
It's never stupid to love. . . .

Françoise
It is to love you.

Jacques
That's funny!

Françoise
What's funny?

Jacques
How little you know me, my dear Françoise!

Françoise
Ah?

Jacques
Really.

Françoise
Whose fault is that, then?

THE CAPTIVE

Jacques
Oh! It's mine, I realize that.

Françoise
If you were capable of love, why did you never show it to me? Why did you always belittle the love I had for you? The day may come, Jacques, when you'll be sorry for that.

Jacques
Be content, my dear, I'm sorry for it already.

Françoise
No, not yet. You're still too young. But—

Jacques
You can't imagine how sorry I am, Françoise.

Françoise
Truly?

Jacques
Yes.

Françoise
[After a pause, looking at him]: You're without doubt the most bewildering man I've ever known! Things happen when one least expects them, with you—and when it's too late!
THE CAPTIVE

Jacques
Are you sure?

Françoise
Of what?

Jacques
That it’s too late?

Françoise
Of course.

Jacques
Françoise... [He takes her hand.]

Françoise
Don’t—

Jacques
Are you sure that way down, way down in you—there isn’t a little flicker—that might be revived—by my being very careful? ... Tell me?

Françoise
No! I don’t want to!

Jacques
Too bad.

THE CAPTIVE

Françoise
Where are my letters?

Jacques
On the floor. [He picks them up.]

Françoise
Give them to me.

Jacques
Will you do one last thing for me?

Françoise
What?

Jacques
Since it’s over, since we’re going to say good-by and never see each other again,—let me kiss you.

Françoise
You’re silly!

Jacques
Please. I’d like, just once, to see your eyes again—

Françoise
My eyes?

Jacques
Yes. Oh, not as they are now, not your everyday eyes. But the old-time eyes—the eyes I used to
know— [Going toward her.] I want to see those eyes again—just to see them.

**Françoise**

No.

**Jacques**

After that, you can go away. I shan’t try to hold you, I promise. Grant me that one little happiness. [*He moves to take her in his arms.*]

**Françoise**

[*Resisting*]: No, I don’t want to!

**Jacques**

Please, please let me.

**Françoise**

[*Imploring*]: Let me go!

**Jacques**

Françoise!—[*He embraces her.*]

**Françoise**

Let me go! I implore you! I don’t want to—[*More feebly.*] I don’t want to—I don’t want—[*Their lips meet. She abandons herself to him. The kiss, a long one, leaves her prostrated, her head thrown back on his shoulder, her eyes closed.*]
THE CAPTIVE

JACQUES

Do you really believe that that satisfies me?

FRANÇOISE

You don't want to hurt me all over again, do you?

JACQUES

No, Françoise.

FRANÇOISE

Then give me my letters and let me go!

JACQUES

No.

FRANÇOISE

You won't give them to me?

JACQUES

I'll bring them myself to your house.

FRANÇOISE

No!

JACQUES

In a little while.

FRANÇOISE

You will not!
THE CAPTIVE

Françoise
Oh! It's going to begin all over again.

Jacques
What is?

Françoise
Everything, as it was before.

Jacques
Not as it was before.

Françoise
Oh!

Jacques
You'll see!

Françoise
It will be just the same, I know.

Jacques
No.

Françoise
Why? What's been changed?

Jacques
Me.

THE CAPTIVE

Françoise
Do you believe people change?

Jacques
They learn a little.

Françoise
[Smiling]: While traveling?

Jacques
Yes, while traveling.

Françoise
What do they learn?

Jacques
To love the people of their homeland, the people who speak their language. It's tiresome to talk when one isn't understood. One wearies of it.

Françoise
[Surprised, looking at him]: Poor Jacques!

Jacques
Don't pity me; I've come back to my own people.

Françoise
[Leaning against him; tenderly]: Oh! Jacques—it's terrifying! I already loved you when you were
THE CAPTIVE

quite detestable; what will it be like if you start being a darling?

JACQUES
You'll love me a little more, that's all.

FRANÇOISE
[Nestling against him:] My dear one . . . I'm happy. . . . [Pause.]
[The slam of a door is heard. JACQUES listens in surprise. FRANÇOISE starts. They separate.]

FRANÇOISE
What is it?

JACQUES
Probably my wife returning.

FRANÇOISE
[Nervously:] Ah! I knew it!

JACQUES
Don't worry, she won't come in. [They listen a few seconds in silence.] You see? Does that reassure you? You can go without meeting a soul.

FRANÇOISE
[Very moved:] But—you're coming?

THE CAPTIVE

JACQUES
Of course I'm coming!

FRANÇOISE
Till you do, my love!

JACQUES
Till I do, my love! [He opens the door. She goes out, he following her. A few seconds later he re-enters followed by GEORGES.]

GEORGES
Madame asked me to let her know as soon as you were alone, monsieur.

JACQUES
[Puts letters away. Annoyed]: Well . . . go and tell madame. Then bring my hat and my overcoat.

GEORGES
Yes, monsieur. [He goes out at right to IRENE's room. A moment later IRENE enters.]

JACQUES
Back already?

IRENE
Yes. [She seems curiously disturbed and unnatural.]
THE CAPTIVE

Jacques
You weren't gone very long. Well,—what about the painting?

Irene
What painting?

Jacques
Praxine's painting—the one you wanted to buy.

Irene
Oh, yes.

Jacques
Didn't you bring it back with you?

Irene
No . . . Jacques, I'd like to talk with you . . . May I? [Georges enters from rear door with Jacques' hat and coat.] Oh, are you going out?

Jacques
Yes, but I have a few minutes to spare. [To Georges.] Put them there. [Georges puts hat and coat on arm of divan and goes out.] What did you want to tell me?

Irene
I'll wait until you come back.

THE CAPTIVE

Jacques
Please don't.

Irene
I'd delay you. [He looks at her and is struck by her appearance.]

Jacques
What's the matter with you?

Irene
Nothing. I'll tell you when you get back.

Jacques
No. Tell me now.

Irene
It's not so urgent.

Jacques
Oh, come, tell me—what is it?

Irene

Jacques
Leave Paris?

Irene
Yes.
THE CAPTIVE

Jacques

But what for?

Irene

I'm just asking you to.

Jacques

What does it mean? Where do you want to go?

Irene

We might go for a while to Montcel. Father would be only too happy. He suggested it several times. All we need do is wire the caretaker. He'd meet us at Limoges with a car.

Jacques

But why do you want to leave Paris? We've hardly been back a month!

Irene

I know.

Jacques

Why this whim?

Irene

It's not a whim.

Jacques

Explain yourself, then.

THE CAPTIVE

Irene

I hoped—that you'd understand.

Jacques

That I'd understand?

Irene

Yes.

Jacques

No, I don't understand.

Irene

I mustn't—remain here.

Jacques

[Forcibly]: But why not?

Irene

[Trembling all over, her head lowered]: I've seen her again.

Jacques

Ah?—[Pause.] Where?

Irene

Praxine's... She knew I was to be there. She was waiting for me.
THE CAPTIVE

Jacques
How did she know?

Irene
She knows everything.

Jacques
Then she knows Praxine?

Irene
She had met him once, in Vienna.

Jacques
Did you know that?

Irene
No, of course not.

Jacques
So—you spoke to her?

Irene
She spoke to me.

Jacques
In front of Praxine?

Irene
No.

Jacques
What did she say to you?

Irene
Oh!—I don’t remember now.

Jacques
You don’t want to tell me—

Irene
Really, I don’t remember,—I was hardly listening.

Jacques
She asked to see you again, I suppose?

Irene
... Yes.

Jacques
What did you answer?

Irene
... That I didn’t want to.

Jacques
And then?

Irene
She said—that she would wait.
**THE CAPTIVE**

**Jacques**

Until when?

**Irene**

... Until I came.

**Jacques**

Isn't she going to Switzerland? [Irene shakes her head.] Or is she cured?

**Irene**

She says she doesn't care if she dies.

**Jacques**

Don't worry, she won't die. That's the old story.

**Irene**

She never lies.

**Jacques**

Can't her husband take her away?

**Irene**

They're not together any more. She has left him.

**Jacques**

Really?

**Irene**

[After a pause]: Jacques,—is it true that he came to see you a year ago?

**Jacques**

Yes. How did she know that?

**Irene**

She didn't tell me. [Pause.] It was after that, that she left him.

**Jacques**

So much the better for him. Is there no one with her who could take her away?

**Irene**

[Shaking her head]: No one. [Controlling her feeling.] She is alone—all alone—

**Jacques**

[After looking at her a while in silence]: Ah! She's very clever—one must admit that! [Irene shrugs her shoulders.] Mustn't she be clever to be able to upset you like this at your first encounter?

**Irene**

How do you know that she wasn't more upset than I!
THE CAPTIVE

Jacques

Of course, that was part of the plan! What surprises me, though, is that seeing you in this condition she should have let you escape, that she didn't attempt to hold you—

Irene

Do you think—that she didn't try?

Jacques

Well, then?

Irene

To get away, I had to promise that I'd go to see her later.

Jacques

[Ironically]: Splendid! [A slight pause.] And—do you intend seeing her?

Irene

You know very well I don't.

Jacques

Have you the courage not to?

Irene

Yes.

THE CAPTIVE

Jacques

It will be hard, won't it?

Irene

[Barely speaking the word]: Yes.

Jacques

How long—will you be able to resist?

Irene

I don't know. That's why I'm asking to go away.

Jacques

Well, then, go. Who's preventing you? You don't need me for that, do you?

Irene

You won't come?

Jacques

No.

Irene

Why?

Jacques

You want to know why? Look at yourself! You're breathless—your eyes are dazed—your hands are
trembling—because you’ve seen her again, that’s why! For a year I’ve been living with a statue and that woman had only to reappear for the statue to come to life, to become a human being capable of suffering and trembling! Well, I give up, Irene, do you understand? I give up! I’ve loved you more than anything in the world, you know that. I’ve proved it to you. As long as I hoped that some day you might love me as I loved you, as a man and woman can love each other, with body and soul, I accepted the rôle of your guardian. But now I’ve had enough. I resign from a useless and ungrateful task. Protect yourself, if you can. It doesn’t interest me any longer. It’s over! I’m tired of pursuing a phantom. D’Aiguines knew what he was talking about when he said, “Leave her alone, get out of her way, she isn’t for you.” He was right—Fortunately, there are women who are for us.

Irene
Madame Meillant, for instance?

Jacques
Yes.

Irene
And I’ve tried so hard.

Jacques
I didn’t ask you to. It was you who came to me.

Irene
Then you should have turned me away.

Jacques
You shouldn’t have said that you could love me.

Irene
How did I know? I tried my best to love you! You always speak of what you have done! What about me? What about me? What about my feelings,—did you ever know anything about them? Did you ever give them so much as a thought? You loved me, it’s true, but in your way.

Jacques
Were you expecting platonic love from me?

Irene
I expected a little more tenderness. Is there no spirit in love? Must it be only—the body!

Jacques
Yes, you loathed that, didn’t you? Go on, say it, be frank at least! [Irene lowers her head, and does not answer.] But don’t bother, don’t say it! What for? I’ve known it for a long time.
IRENE

[Without looking at him]: Have you?

JACQUES

You wouldn't have thought so, is that what you mean? Well, you are rid of it now. You can breathe freely at last! I'll never impose my desire again. No more of that drudgery. It's over! Aren't you going to thank me?

IRENE

[After a moment]: Have you nothing else to say to me, Jacques?

JACQUES

No, really, I haven't. I think we've said all there is to say! Everything is quite clear, now. You can do what you like—I don't care any more. [He takes his hat and coat from divan.] Good night.

[He goes out. She follows him towards the door. As it closes she utters a half stifled cry. Then she sits down, deep in thought, in a chair, her forehead resting in her hand. JOSEPHINE, the maid, enters from IRENE's room, carrying some flowers in a box.]

IRENE

What is it?
[After a few moments the rear door opens and JACQUES appears. He closes the door as he enters. He slowly takes off his hat and coat and sits down at his desk, meditating. At that moment the outer door of the apartment is heard to slam. JACQUES raises his head.]

JACQUES

[He rises, goes to door leading into Irene's room, opens it, steps in and calls gently]: Irene? . . .
[Again, louder and anxiously]: Irene? [He then re-enters, looking surprised, and crosses hurriedly to desk, where he rings bell. GEORGES enters.] Has madame gone out?

GEORGES

Yes, monsieur, just a moment ago.

JACQUES

Oh! [Pause.] Did she leave any message?

GEORGES

No, monsieur.

JACQUES

[After a pause]: All right, Georges. [He sits down at desk.] You can go. [GEORGES goes toward rear door then seeing hat and overcoat on chair, turns.]

GEORGES

Shall I take these away, monsieur? [JACQUES, absorbed in his thoughts, does not hear him. After a few moments, he raises his head and notices GEORGES standing there.]

JACQUES

What?

GEORGES

I was asking monsieur if I should put his hat and coat away?

JACQUES

[After a pause]: No. Leave them. I'm goin' out, too.

THE CURTAIN FALLS