

A Little Chaos

Screenplay

by

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*

(Second draft.)

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1 INT. PARIS, 1686. DE BARRA'S DRAWING ROOM. NIGHT 1

An Ermine moth on the edge of a glass. A table with a large number of books. A woman's hands work on a set of plans, one of several. She works with a ruler and ink quill. The moth lands on a set of plans. The woman's face looking at the moth.

This is MADAME SABINE DE BARRA, a landscape gardener.

Her face is intelligent and beautiful, slightly freckled from her work outdoors, her eyes are intense.

DE BARRA

This one you prefer?

She pushes her nail under its legs. She moves to the open French windows and releases the moth into the garden. The white moth flies into the blue night. The woman moves out into the garden. Sound of a door bell.

2 INT. DE BARRA'S HOUSE. HALL NIGHT 2

LOUISE opens the door.

3 EXT. OUTSIDE DE BARRA'S HOUSE. STREET. NIGHT 3

A man hands in a letter.

LOUISE

Thank you.

4 EXT. DE BARRA'S GARDEN. NIGHT 4

DE BARRA kneeling on the edge of a flower bed. She throws weeds onto the path.. A worm wiggles amongst weed roots.

She plucks out the worm, throws it back into the soil.

5 INT. DRAWING ROOM. NIGHT. 5

LOUISE looks through open French windows.

LOUISE

Madame.

6 EXT. GARDEN. NIGHT 6

DE BARRA looks up, and comes in wiping her hands.

7 INT. DE BARRA'S DRAWING ROOM. NIGHT. 7

DE BARRA opens the letter, and quickly scans it. Her hand drops, holding the letter. She breathes and wipes her hand across her brow, leaving earth smudged there.

LOUISE

Is it...?

DE BARRA nods.

DE BARRA

Eleven, tomorrow morning.

LOUISE smiles.

8 EXT. PARIS SKYSCAPE. DAYBREAK. 8

The view from DE BARRA's bedroom window.

9 INT. DE BARRA'S BEDROOM. 9

DE BARRA stands looking out at the Paris rooftops. Louise dresses her in a yellow gown.

LOUISE

Don't forget about the length. If you stand on the hem you'll rip it at the waist.

DE BARRA

It's pinching me here. (She points to the bust line under her armpit).

10 EXT. PARIS STREET. 10

DE BARRA passes a hat shop. She looks in the window, touches her head, enters the shop. DE BARRA leaves the shop wearing a new hat.

11 EXT. LE NOTRE'S HOUSE. DAY 11

DE BARRA at the gates. She pushes the gates open and walks in. Looks left to pleached horn- beams in a row. She walks up to lemon trees in tubs against a wall, then on to orange trees, row upon row all neatly clipped. A man leaves through the garden. They bow to each other. He indicates the front door. She walks toward it. DE BARRA considers the house. An old stone building, covered in vine. Above the door, on a stone plaque, the Arms of the city of Paris. Underneath the inscriptions, ' Director of the Royal Gardens of France.'

Under the sovereign reign of His Majesty Henri IV. Le Notre 1545.

Under the sovereign reign of His Majesty Louis XIII. Le Notre 1575.

Under the sovereign reign of His Majesty Louis XIV. Le Notre 1638.

DE BARRA turns away from the house, and walks back up the garden, breathing deeply. As she walks she mutters her prepared speech.

DE BARRA

Master Le Notre, I am delighted to make your acquaintance. I've been long... I've long been an admirer of your work...Master Le Notre..

12 INT. ANTE-CHAMBER. LE NOTRE'S OFFICE. DAY.

12

A CANDIDATE is leaving LE NOTRE'S office, he bows as he travels backwards.

CANDIDATE

Most kind. Thanking you, Sir.

He drops his papers, scrambles to pick them up.

CLAUDE MOULIN comes to the assistance of the hapless CANDIDATE.

He leaves the door ajar. MONSIEUR MOULIN is jolly and effusive. He wears perhaps a little too much rouge.

As he speaks, he whips a large ornate handkerchief about the air.

CLAUDE

Ah, there we are. And this way.
Good day. Yes, yes.

Three gentlemen, one looking over his shoulder, peruse this exchange.

13 INT. LE NOTRE'S OFFICE. DAY.

13

LE NOTRE with his back to the door, stretching.

DURAS (V.O.)

Le Notre?

LE NOTRE turns his head. He has a handsome, weather beaten face. He does not wear a wig. His hair is long and well cut.

His shoulders are large as are his hands. When he speaks his voice is deep and clear.

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

A dry old stick. Ah he's alright, he liked me. The strategy I employ I recommend this to you gentlemen, in complete confidence of course is to imitate.

14 INT. ANTE-CHAMBER. LE NOTRE'S OFFICE. DAY. 14

THIERRY DURAS is aged about forty five, has red hair and a large nose. He is shaped like a builder, with a terrific girth and a bad back. He speaks with an air of unfounded confidence. JEAN RICE is a skinny man. Sweating, he mops his brow. LE VIELLE smokes his pipe.

DURAS

Research the Master's plans. If you can, go and see the landscaping. Then pick a construction of his. Imitate it. Submit it, and you'll find yourself at an interview. They cannot resist flattery, it's all vanity to these big wigs.

15 INT. LE NOTRE'S OFFICE. DAY. 15

LE NOTRE listens to this information.

16 INT. ANTE-CHAMBER. LE NOTRE'S OFFICE. DAY. 16

DURAS

Of course once you are in, you must have the talent.

He goes to the window.

DURAS (CONT'D)

Speaking of which. That what we were, vanity. There's a hat now gentlemen.

They follow him.

RICE

This is this female person.

LE VIELLE

What? Where?

RICE

Down there. What's this her name is?

17 EXT. LE NOTRE'S HOUSE DAY. 17

DE BARRA in her hat walking through the ordered rows of planting.

18 INT. LE NOTRE'S OFFICE. DAY. 18

LE NOTRE walks to the window, looks down to DE BARRA in the garden

19 EXT. LE NOTRE'S HOUSE. DAY. 19

DE BARRA alone still rehearsing her speech.

DURAS (V.O.)

De Barra.

RICE

Oh, so you are familiar with her?

DURAS

I wouldn't say that.

DE BARRA finds herself at the centre of a symmetrical wheel..

LE VIELLE (V.O.)

Who is this person?

DURAS (V.O.)

Madame De Barra, De Barra
Landscaping.

She turns around full circle and pulls at her ear. She is missing one ear-ring.

LE VIELLE (V.O.)

Where is her husband? Does she attend with him? I have heard of wives like that, but they are usually in the country.

She removes its partner then continues to the extreme right of the wheel.

DURAS (V.O.)

No she is De Barra Landscaping.

LE VIELLE (V.O.)

Good Lord!

DE BARRA folds her arms, tapping her foot.

RICE (V.O.)

And she's here.

DURAS (V.O.)

Well I'm astounded by that.

LE VIELLE (V.O.)

I remember a man in the country had two wives and only one donkey-

DURAS (V.O.)
Because she's had no formal
training. She's jumbled

DE BARRA looks about, slides a foot toward a pot.

DURAS (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Some very odd ideas about form.
Uses the most ridiculous materials.
Not at all what Master Old Bones
would care for.

RICE (V.O.)
Perhaps she is very accommodating
with his old bone.

The three are very amused.

20 INT. ANTE-CHAMBER. LE NOTRE'S OFFICE. DAY. 20

LE VIELLE
Which puts me in mind of the man
with two wives and one donkey.

They stroll away from the window.

21 EXT. LE NOTRE'S GARDEN. DAY. 21

DE BARRA's skirt disappearing , as one pot wobbles, slightly
out of place.

22 INT. LE NOTRE'S OFFICE. DAY. 22

LE NOTRE closes the shutters. CLAUDE MOULIN enters.

LE NOTRE
I have the most appalling pain in
my face, from smiling. Do very few
people wash?

CLAUDE
Shall I open the shutters Master?

He places plans on the desk.

LE NOTRE
No, thank you. Though a little
camomile infusion, would help ease
things. Some wormwood to ward off
the -eh 'passengers' on the
candidates.

CLAUDE turns to leave.

LE NOTRE (CONT'D)
And Claude, the trio of highly
amused gents outside the door their
names please.

CLAUDE nods and opens the door, revealing-

CLAUDE
Monsieur Mauve.

LE NOTRE draws back his lips, showing his teeth, alarming the
candidate.

23 INT. LE NOTRE'S HOUSE. SAME MORNING

23

DE BARRA climbs to the top of the first floor landing and
enters. THIERRY DURAS strides toward her.

DURAS
Madame De Barra. You look splendid.

DE BARRA
So do you, Thierry. That's a new
coat, I believe.

DURAS
It is. Denise thought it wise to
show the business could support
such an expensive purchase. It
will be covered in mud by Tuesday,
but by then she thinks we will have
this job and the coat will have
been a worthwhile expenditure.

DE BARRA
Sound reasoning from your
villainous spouse.

DURAS
Treachery and deception! Denise is
exceptional at both business
attributes. Oh pardon me, may I
introduce Jean Rice? And do you
know Monsieur Daniel le Vielle ?
Gentlemen, Madame De Barra.

DE BARRA
Delighted, Monsieur. Are we all to
be interviewed at this time?

JEAN RICE
Daniel and I are not till this
afternoon, and Thierry has been in
already. I have arrived early to
spy out the other candidates.

DE BARRA
How did you fare?

DURAS
Well enough. He is a most amiable man, and can put you very much at your ease. He has a great interest in things. I spent upwards of an hour with him. Very detailed examination of the work. So we shall see.

DE BARRA
Well, that's the best of news.

DURAS
I am confident.

A little way off a study door opens. Laughter from within. MONSIEUR MAUVE leaves smiling. He strolls past, slightly euphoric. They acknowledge him.

DE BARRA
He seems happy, too.

DURAS
Of course one can never tell.

CLAUDE MOULIN emerges.

CLAUDE
Madame De Barra. In a moment, if you please.

DE BARRA
Oh, so soon. Well...gentlemen.

DURAS
The best of fates for you.

ALL
Quite so indeed.

She crosses to Claude.

CLAUDE
Good morning Madame I am Claude Moulin secretary to Master Le Notre.

They move off.

CLAUDE (CONT'D)
Have you had the pleasure of meeting him before?

DE BARRA
I have not.

CLAUDE
He is a charming man.

DE BARRA
So I have heard.

CLAUDE
A most kindly man. He once kissed
the Holy Father on the cheek. Went
right up to the Holy Father, hugged
him and said 'Hello, Holy Father'.

DE BARRA
My goodness me.

CLAUDE ushers her into LE NOTRE's office. She smiles and
enters.

24

INT. LE NOTRE'S OFFICE. DAY.

24

He sits behind his desk, writing.

The shutters are closed on the brilliant sunlight outside,
making it difficult to see LE NOTRE.

CLAUDE puts DE BARRA's plans on the desk.

CLAUDE
Master Le Notre, may I present
Madame De Barra?

LE NOTRE looks up for an instant, points to a chair, and
continues writing. DE BARRA a little taken aback, glances at
CLAUDE. He points to the chair. She sits and he leaves. She
waits, her eyes become accustomed to the gloom. After a while
LE NOTRE throws down the quill, rubs his eyes, and peers at
her.

LE NOTRE
Madame.

DE BARRA
Sir, I am delighted to make your
acquaintance. I have long been an
admirer of your work, and I am so
pleased to attend-.

He rummages through papers, rudely interrupting her.

LE NOTRE
These are your plans, Madame?

DE BARRA
Yes, some are to be seen around the
country, others are in progress.
Not yet completed.
(MORE)

DE BARRA (CONT'D)
 However, as the job application states, there are two sets of plans to your instructions. The fifth and sixth, I believe. The rustic grove fountain and the remodelling of the existing carriage driveway.

LE NOTRE makes no attempt to find the plans.

DE BARRA (CONT'D)
 Perhaps at the bottom.

LE NOTRE
 I have examined them.

DE BARRA
 Ah. So.

LE NOTRE drums his fingers a little.

LE NOTRE
 May I ask you a question, Madame?

DE BARRA
 By all means, Master

LE NOTRE
 Are you a believer in order?

DE BARRA
 Order?

LE NOTRE
 In order over landscape?

DE BARRA
 Well, I admire it.

LE NOTRE
 Looking at these plans there seems to be no trace.

DE BARRA
 I would not agree. I think there is pattern enough in number six to --

LE NOTRE
 I ask you again, do you believe in order over landscape?

A pause.

DE BARRA
 Order seems to demand that we look back to Rome or to the Renaissance and reproduce the glories of the past, in order to feel good about ourselves in the present.

LE NOTRE says nothing.

DE BARRA (CONT'D)

What I am saying is, surely there is something uniquely French as yet uncelebrated by us. Perhaps we do need the rules of order to attain it. To push forward into the future, into the new.

More silence.

DE BARRA (CONT'D)

As you have with the gardens at Vaux-le-Vicomte.

After a little.

LE NOTRE

All of my work is based on a principle you choose to deny. I wonder that you tender yourself for a position with someone you believe to be passé.

DE BARRA

Sir, I have nothing but admiration for the scale of your work. You were the first to use such techniques. I apologise for any insult I may have unwittingly..

He moves to the door. His face still in shadow.

DE BARRA (CONT'D)

...offered you.

LE NOTRE

Perhaps, Madame, when you have been in the public eye, and available for public ridicule, for as long as I have, you will think again about this conversation. Good day to you.

He opens the door, and she leaves.

25 EXT. COUNTRY ROAD OUTSIDE PARIS. MORNING. 25

A coach travels along.

26 INT. MOVING. COACH. 26

DE BARRA sits still stunned.

27 EXT. COUNTRY ROAD. OUTSIDE PARIS. DAY. 27

The coach arrives at the gates of a large chateau, goes through to a construction site at the back. A group of men working, paving and installing a fountain. DE BARRA gets out of the coach, goes to a small tent.

DE BARRA
Good morning, all.

They acknowledge her. One worker, LUKE, speaks.

LUKE
How was your interview? Well?

DE BARRA
Not so well.

She takes off her hat and dumps it in a rubbish cart. She looks over her plans, then goes to work. She gives instructions about the pipes. As she speaks, she buttons up her skirts at either side of her waist. She changes her shoes for lace-up boots, puts on large gardening gloves and starts to clear brambles.

Later that afternoon, she is covered in mud, red in the face, and sweating.

She flops down on the grass and surveys her work. She nods, pleased.

28 INT. DE BARRA'S HOUSE. EVENING. 28

DE BARRA take off her clothes and steps into a bath. She closes her eyes.

29 INT. DE BARRA'S HOUSE. DRAWING ROOM. A LITTLE LATER 29

DE BARRA sits with a needle, poking out thorns in her fingers. Beside her a candelabra sheds light on her finger. After a little, there is a faint whispering.

DE BARRA looks up, listens, puts her needle down, then taking the candelabra walks past a half eaten meal on the table and out through open French windows into the garden.

30 EXT. DE BARRA'S GARDEN. EVENING. 30

DE BARRA stands with the candelabra held high, listening. Silence.

A deep blanket of stillness covering the garden. DE BARRA shivers. There is a knock at the front door. She turns startled. LOUISE enters the drawing room.

31 INT. DE BARRA'S DRAWING ROOM. EVENING.

31

LOUISE
Madame, a gentleman wishes to see
you. Monsieur Le Notre.

DE BARRA comes in shutting the doors.

DE BARRA
Send him in.

She puts down her candelabra and starts to tidy the room,
then stops, calm in her mess. LE NOTRE enters.

DE BARRA (CONT'D)
Monsieur.

LE NOTRE
Madame.

A small silence. DE BARRA considers him, seeing him clearly
for the first time.

DE BARRA
You are welcome here. Will you
sit?

There is nowhere to sit.

LE NOTRE
Thank you, Madame. I shall stand. I
will not take too much of your
time. I have an apology to make.

DE BARRA
You did not care for my plans. I
am none the less for it. In plain
truth, I am used to it. It is
after all business, and I am in
business. No apology is necessary.

LE NOTRE
I did not say that I did not care
for your plans. I said I could find
no order in them. An apology is
necessary because of...

DE BARRA
But you explained that order was of
the highest importance to you and
your work.

LE NOTRE
An apology is necessary. I was rude
and overbearing.

DE BARRA
I am not unused to it. Men often
patronise women in business.

LE NOTRE
Am I now to be included in your
past transgressors? Have pity on us
'We come only to apologise...'

DE BARRA opens her mouth to respond, changes her mind, says
nothing.

He considers this, then his stomach rumbles loudly.

32 INT. DE BARRA'S HOUSE. DINING ROOM. NIGHT.

32

DE BARRA sits at the table watching LE NOTRE devour a simple
supper. As he eats he shoots glances at her, making
appreciative noises.

After a while, he recovers himself.

LE NOTRE
I spied on you on the day you
attended the interview. You moved
one of my pots.

DE BARRA
I did ?

LE NOTRE
You did. I am also informed about
your lack of formality.

DE BARRA raises an eyebrow.

LE NOTRE (CONT'D)
Informality. In your work.

LE NOTRE wrong footed, begins to growl.

LE NOTRE (CONT'D)
Madame if you bear with me here,
you will find the lack of character
is all on my side.

DE BARRA tilts her head.

LE NOTRE (CONT'D)
After my ill tempered interview
with you, I confirmed what I had
suspected. Several of the other
applicants had merely submitted
versions of my own work. You showed
no such consideration for my
vanity. You are quite entitled to
your very sound opinions. I think I
have been fooling myself, a little.

33 INT. DE BARRA'S HOUSE. KITCHEN. NIGHT.

33

DE BARRA enters with an empty wine bottle and bowls, on a tray. LOUISE takes it from her. She is dressed to go out.

LOUISE

Sacred heart of Jesus, it is a wonder that he did not swallow the cutlery.

DE BARRA

He was hungry. Oh, you look lovely, do you have enough money?

LOUISE

Yes, I do. Do you want me to stay?

DE BARRA

No. Enjoy yourself.

Louise exits. DE BARRA picks up another wine bottle and puts it on the tray. She rushes about looking under cloches until eventually she locates some cheese and a gateau. She pokes at the gateau to see if it's stale, then loads it onto the tray.

34 INT. DE BARRA'S HOUSE. DINING ROOM. NIGHT.

34

DE BARRA enters. LE NOTRE is not there. The French windows into the gardens are open. She puts the tray down and looks out into the garden.

35 EXT. DE BARRA'S GARDEN. NIGHT.

35

LE NOTRE is lighting the last in a series of candles. This is DE BARRA's haven. The walled garden is 40 foot long by 20 foot wide. Every inch of space is filled. Statues, small fountains, mirrors, and alcoves are all planted. Jasmine, tuberose, sunflowers, clematis viticella, tropaeolum, and lemon trees. It is beautiful and original.

DE BARRA watches LE NOTRE. He turns to her.

LE NOTRE

My father taught me gardening. I was small and eager. He encouraged me to see beauty and recreate it, not as an exercise, more as an act of faith. Do you see? He told me that God put us first into a garden, and when we lost Eden we were fated to search and re-invent it again. That was our destiny. But only some of us had the gift of knowing this. Only some of us had that gift.

He looks at her.

36

INT. VERSAILLES. A LARGE HALL. MORNING

36

A large gathering of people stand about waiting, as other men work at fitting plaster cornices to the ceiling. More arrive with ladders, planks and crates of sectioned cornices. All are covered in plaster.

Double doors open at the top of the hall into an explosion of sound.

The plaster men push on against the tide of the advance.

The party progresses through the crush of petitioners. Secretaries accept some of the bills, quotes for materials, etc.

LE NOTRE and CLAUDE are the centre of the party. The object of attention. They forge on.

CLAUDE spots SUALEM and DE VILLE, distinguished architects.

He moves away through the throng to collect them. Then attempts to reunite with the main group, unsuccessfully.

At the other end of the hall LE NOTRE has reached the doors.

He looks about for CLAUDE. As the doors are shutting CLAUDE's hand, complete with waving lace handkerchief, appears out of the mass.

LE NOTRE grabs CLAUDE's arm, pulls him forward through the doors at the bottom of the hall. SUALEM and DE VILLE following close behind.

Door slams shut. All are gone. The plaster men are left spinning.

LE NOTRE (V.O.)
Welcome to Versailles.

37

INT. ANTE-CHAMBER. DAY.

37

DE BARRA sits. She looks up, as LE NOTRE reaches her ahead of the others.

LE NOTRE
You found your way here without too much effort, I hope?

DE BARRA
Your map was wonderfully accurate. I shall need it to get out again.

LE NOTRE
We shall be travelling about a bit. But we'll be together, so you will not need your map until later.

DE BARRA

Well, I shall hoard it then like
Theseus and his ball of string in
the maze of the Minotaur.

LE NOTRE

Greeks. Well, here are some
Romans.

SUALEM and DE VILLE arrive with CLAUDE, who rushes to open
the office door. LE NOTRE ushers DE BARRA in.

38

INT. LE NOTRE'S OFFICE. VERSAILLES. DAY.

38

LE NOTRE

Messieurs Sualem and De Ville are
building the Marly waterworks,
which we hope will alleviate the
severe water shortage here at
Versailles. Gentlemen Madame De
Barra.

DE BARRA

Ah. Then, gentlemen, are you
responsible for the Louveciennes
aqueduct?

BOTH

Yes, indeed. That is so.

DE BARRA

May I?

DE VILLE

Please do.

The three crowd around the plans of the aqueduct.

DE BARRA

So you started in 1681, and this is
where you are now.

SUALEM

We are the two snails.

DE BARRA

If you are snails, then you are on
wheels and fuelled by gunpowder. I
would never have believed that such
progress was possible in such a
small expanse of time. You must be
delighted with yourselves. What
are these red lines? What do they
indicate?

SUALEM

Blasting sites.

DE BARRA
And what force are you required to
use. Does it vary?

DE VILLE
Why not judge for yourself? Come
and see our site. We blast again on
Tuesday.

DE BARRA smiles, looks up at LE NOTRE. He smiles back.

39

EXT. VERSAILLES. BESIDE A HOLLOW. AFTERNOON

39

LE NOTRE and DE BARRA are walking towards an area being laid
out for a picnic by attendants. They sit.

LE NOTRE
I hope you are hungry.

DE BARRA
Yes I am. Do you sometimes forget
to eat?

LE NOTRE
Often. This is pate from Madame De
La Tour.

She tastes.

LE NOTRE (CONT'D)
It is good, isn't it?

DE BARRA
Very good.

LE NOTRE
She feeds the ducks on seaweed.

DE BARRA
I've never heard of that.

LE NOTRE
When she started it was all she
could afford, but they gobbled it
up anyway, and soon everybody
wanted salty pate. So she turned a
necessity into a virtue.

DE BARRA
A virtue, yes

She laughs.

LE NOTRE
What amuses you?

DE BARRA

Eleanor Fitzgerald was an Irish woman who endured an acrimonious marriage to an upstart called Ulick Burke. When she died he put on her tombstone, 'Here lies Eleanor Fitzgerald, her virtues exceeded her failings.'

LE NOTRE

How noble of him.

DE BARRA

Can you imagine? I'll gamble several thousand louis, she was raging that she died first.

LE NOTRE

Do you think he showed her the epitaph before she died?

DE BARRA

That would be enough to send a woman into a mortal fit. I would have stuck an arrow in his eye.

LE NOTRE

Perhaps she was a harridan and that is all he could manage on her behalf. Being truthful, that is.

DE BARRA

You do not believe in lying on such occasions? Isn't it expected?

LE NOTRE

Not when one has the opportunity of remaining forever uncontradicted on the matter.

DE BARRA

The power of that.

After a moment.

DE BARRA (CONT'D)

Why am I here?

He produces a plan.

LE NOTRE

If you look here, it is essentially your plan. Number six in your submission I believe.

DE BARRA

Number six yes.

LE NOTRE

This is entirely original to myself. You see how it fits onto this end of your plan.

He spreads it out.

LE NOTRE (CONT'D)

Now you see the extent of the enterprise.

DE BARRA leans forward to read it.

DE BARRA

A large flat area. An arena with tiered sides...

She raises her head and looks around.

LE NOTRE nods, indicating the natural bowl they are sitting beside.

LE NOTRE

The orchestra will be up here.

He pats the ground.

DE BARRA

A ballroom. An outdoor ballroom.

LE NOTRE

Select whatever suppliers you care to. Commission whatever embellishments you consider appropriate. Here is the budget. (He hands her a piece of paper.) Try not to exceed it.

DE BARRA reads the figure.

DE BARRA

I am to build it?

LE NOTRE

Choose whatever assistants you wish. We used to have a pool of builders, but they were all paid far too much for their services. Such was the price of convenience. Fat lazy builders.

DE BARRA

Goodness. Well, I am very pleased. I don't know what to say. It has been an ambition of mine for so long...

DE BARRA trails off, stares at the ground.

LE NOTRE

Quite.

She watches him eating some ripe cheese. After a little.

DE BARRA

I should like to know if you are using Thierry Duras. Duras Landscaping - you interviewed him the same day as me?

LE NOTRE

Don't recall.

DE BARRA

Red hair, fat nose.

LE NOTRE

Duras? Oh, yes. No, I will not require him. He would be entirely suited to being an assistant. His plans were derivative, no scale or vision. You may have him, certainly.

DE BARRA

Good God, no. He is insufferable. And has treated me on several occasions to his opinion of working women, unaware that his wife runs his business. But is that your opinion of his work? I'm shocked.

LE NOTRE

Why so?

DE BARRA

I thought his plans would have been to your liking. There is much order and classicism about it.

LE NOTRE

How would that influence me?

DE BARRA

Did you not berate me for the absence of both these qualities?

LE NOTRE

Yet you are here, and he is not! You must puzzle it out for yourself, Madame.

Sunlight blinds her, she shades her eyes with her hand. A child cries.

40 INT. DE BARRA'S DRAWING ROOM. NIGHT.

40

DE BARRA has fallen asleep on her plans. The clock strikes three . A child cries. DE BARRA after a little stirs, then sits up. Still half asleep she starts off in the direction of the crying child.

DE BARRA
Alright, mamma's coming.

She bangs her head on a piece of furniture, reeling back. The child stops crying immediately. Fully awake, she realises she was dreaming. She looks about, then slides down the wall, sitting on the floor hugging her knees. Fade to black.

41 INT. PARIS. LE NOTRE'S OFFICE. MORNING.

41

Shutters closed. Outside the window we hear the wheels of a cart being dragged along the path. LE NOTRE opens the shutters. A large topiary chicken stands in a pot on the cart. DE BARRA and two workmen nearby.

LE NOTRE
(Looking out the window)
Madame. What pray is that?

DE BARRA
A chicken. A gift.

The workmen leave. DE BARRA walks toward the window.

LE NOTRE
It appears to have an entirely
demented demeanour. Is it leering?

DE BARRA
Yes, it is. I chose it for that
quality.

LE NOTRE
You have hurt your head.

DE BARRA
Yes, I hit it.

LE NOTRE
How?

DE BARRA
I bumped into a wardrobe. I was
asleep, sleep walking, dreaming I
was somewhere else.

A silence.

LE NOTRE

Claude has your banker's note. I shall see you in a month. Good luck.

DE BARRA does not move. LE NOTRE looks at her.

LE NOTRE (CONT'D)

Thank you. I shall call your chicken -- Chaos

DE BARRA

Chaos. Good. I like that.

She walks away.

LE NOTRE

Chaos in the garden of order.

42 EXT. VERSAILLES. SITE OF THE ROCKWORK GROVE. MORNING. SOME 42 WEEKS LATER.

DE BARRA's workforce are steadily excavating the tiers into the side of the hill. As they dig out each row, they support the tiers with timber. Many tiers are as yet unsupported. DE BARRA regards her hands, covered in earth, dirt under her broken nails. She chews them as her work is being inspected by an OFFICIAL in a large wig.

Someone is whistling a sea shanty. The OFFICIAL's entourage follows him around. DE BARRA nods as he fills in forms. She listens, he moves. She stops as a cart load of timber arrives. DE BARRA looks into the cart. She remonstrates with the DRIVER. The DRIVER throws his hands in the air. The inspection ends. They bow, and leave.

A little way up the hill DURAS watches. He is whistling to himself, then looks up to a darkening sky.

MADAME LE NOTRE (V.O.)

We waited perhaps an hour, for a gaming table.

43 INT. LE NOTRE'S HOUSE. HIS STUDY. EVENING.

43

LE NOTRE's face still, thinking.

MADAME LE NOTRE (V.O.)

The Marquise de Montespan and her friend, Lauzun, had monopolised the centre table for four hours, thus all bookings were behind.

44 INT. LE NOTRE'S HOUSE. HALL. EVENING.

44

Doors open into all the rooms down the house. MADAME LE NOTRE's voice echoes. The sound of her heels on the floorboards, moving about the house.

45 INT. LE NOTRE'S HOUSE. STUDY. EVENING. 45

LE NOTRE as before. He picks up a quill. Starts to write.

MADAME LE NOTRE (V.O.)
The Marquise is very stout. Her
legs, it is said, are now the size
of two small men.

46 INT. LE NOTRE'S HOUSE. HALL. EVENING. 46

MADAME LE NOTRE appears in the door frame. She is an elegant woman in her early fifties. She has fine bone structure, and her voice matches her husbands tone, but has none of its warmth. She is opening letters.

MADAME LE NOTRE
Anyway then came the news that her
house was on fire. Well, we felt
sure this would end her winning
streak. Apparently not.

She walks out of sight into the next room.

MADAME LE NOTRE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
The Marquise decided to play on
despite this alarming development.

She returns for a minute. She walks back into view.

MADAME LE NOTRE (CONT'D)
Her children were safe, so what
could she do ? She showed wonderful
spirit and was clapped for it. All
there admired her.

She walks away.

47 INT. LE NOTRE'S STUDY. EVENING. 47

LE NOTRE finishes his letter and seals it. His wife is watching him. A faint smile threatens her mouth. There is a distant roll of thunder.

MADAME LE NOTRE
Shall I post that for you ?

LE NOTRE
No. Thank you. I must send it now.
It's business.

MADAME LE NOTRE says nothing, but raises a quizzical eyebrow.

He rings a bell. MADAME LE NOTRE watches, lit by lightning.

48 EXT. THE ROCKWORK GROVE. EVENING. 48

The rain pours down on mayhem. All of the tiers are collapsing. They scramble around in the mud attempting to reinstate them. DE BARRA sits, resigned. Clamped on her head by a head scarf, a sodden straw hat. Lightning flashes.

DURAS arrives with a cart load of timber, and his workforce. DE BARRA looks down at him. He jumps down into a puddle, roars laughing, and mimes scrubbing himself in a bath. Despite herself DE BARRA laughs.

DURAS and his men leap up the bank and begin to secure it with timber.

49 INT. LE NOTRE'S HOUSE. DINING ROOM. EVENING. 49

LE NOTRE eats alone. Outside the rain pours down.

50 EXT. THE ROCKWORK GROVE. MORNING. 50

Having worked through the night, DE BARRA and DURAS are covered in mud. Her hat dribbles, water runs off her chin. Everywhere there are pools of last night's rain.

They have successfully laid the timber, and saved the tiers. They unload grass seed in sacks from a cart.

DE BARRA

Go on.

DURAS

So, by the second week after the interview it was apparent that my master plan had not worked, if you'll excuse the pun. That's good though, master plan. You know, he's the Master.

DE BARRA

Go on.

DURAS

Yes, well I learned, after some inquiries, who had got commissions, and everybody had labourers coming out of their ears, except you. You were, in my humble opinion, under laboured.

DE BARRA

It was false economy on my behalf. The elements conspired against the 'great' business woman.

DURAS

I knew you would not take me or my men unless you had to. I chose my moment. Besides I have little ones and they make me proud even if I am humbled elsewhere.

DE BARRA looks at him with admiration.

DURAS (CONT'D)

And then there's Denise whose instructions, what I would never go against, were to-

DURAS stamps his foot, hands on his hips, he squeaks in a tiny feminine voice.

DURAS (CONT'D)

'Ask her for work !' A man snaps, like a carrot, exposed to the Leviathan.

He throws back his head, blasts out a laugh, repeats his performance in dumb show.

DURAS (CONT'D)

Like a caRrot, I tell you !

A messenger arrives. He approaches cautiously.

MESSENGER

Madame De Barra?

DE BARRA

Yes.

He hands her a letter. She opens it and reads. Hands it to DURAS.

DURAS

You may inform Master Le Notre that Madame De Barra would be honoured to attend His Majesty's reception at the Louvre.

MESSENGER

Thank you Madame.

He leaves, bowing. She turns to DURAS. They laugh.

DURAS

Denise will love this.

DE BARRA

We should all get some sleep. It seems I must make an appointment to be fitted for a new gown.

DURAS

Make a commitment to me this very moment. Solemnly swear, not to change that hat.

51 INT. MOVING COACH. PARIS. NIGHT. 51

DE BARRA grips a pearl tiara with a lace mantilla, as the coach bumps about.

52 EXT. PALAIS DE LOUVRE. ENTRANCE RUE RICHELIEU. NIGHT. 52

LE NOTRE comes out of the Louvre into the coach courtyard, acknowledging some newcomers getting out of coaches. Carriages are lined up jammed with dignitaries waiting to announced They climb in and out of each others' coaches. Sedan chairs queue up the stairs to the entrance. Pages pester occupants. Flower sellers, fan sellers and tourists intermingle with dogs, parrots, monkeys and beggars. Chaos and controversy reigns at the Louvre.

LE NOTRE discreetly checks a pocket watch. He looks about.

53 EXT. PALAIS DE LOUVRE. ENTRANCE RUE RICHELIEU. NIGHT. 53

A coach arrives and DE BARRA steps out. She wears a beautiful ivory silk gown trimmed with gold. Her hair is dressed, and falls in curls around her bare shoulders. On her bosom, a pearl and diamond necklace matches her earrings. LE NOTRE watches her emerge. She looks up at him and smiles. He comes forward to meet her.

LE NOTRE

You are...

DE BARRA

Late.

LE NOTRE

No.

DE BARRA

Early?

LE NOTRE

No.

DE BARRA

What then?

LE NOTRE

Here.

They go through the door into --.

54 INT. LOUVRE STATE RECEPTION ROOMS. HALL. NIGHT. 54

The hall is packed. Sedan chairs block all traffic. DE BARRA sets off to join the queue. LE NOTRE cups her elbow and steers her to another door.

LE NOTRE
These people have to be announced.
We don't, so we may go in here.

55 INT. LOUVRE STATE RECEPTION ROOMS. NIGHT. 55

Guests and courtiers mingle under brilliantly lit chandeliers, decorated with rose wreaths. There is an almighty crush, though everybody seems used to it.

Music plays from a gallery.

At the other end of the room, the fraught queue of those having shed their Sedan chairs is winding up a marble staircase to a central platform where they are announced.

Another marble staircase leads back down. The most important person is carried about on a armchair by servants and surrounded by their families.

These armchairs are in short supply.

People scuffle about, snatching armchairs from each other, jockeying for better positions and stuffing themselves into emerging gaps. This procedure is at its most alarming on the stairs, where, amid angry exchanges, gentlemen bang the banisters with their canes.

Once announced, their armchairs are recycled and walking down the opposite staircase, adjusting paraphernalia, their tempers are much improved.

DE BARRA looks at LE NOTRE.

DE BARRA
What could be happening there?

He shrugs.

LE NOTRE
The noble party receive the
armchair. Etiquette, nonsense.

They move along with the rest of the crowd.

LE NOTRE (CONT'D)
I do not know your Christian name.

DE BARRA
Sabine.

LE NOTRE
Sabine. Mine is Andre.

DE BARRA
Yes, I know.

LE NOTRE
Did I tell you? I don't recall.

DE BARRA
Everybody knows your name.

LE NOTRE
You seem considerably unimpressed
by this. Again you show no
consideration for my vanity,
Madame.

DE BARRA
I am quite sure you possess none.
Now.

LE NOTRE
What of you, Madame Sabine de
Barra, are you a woman prone to
vanity?

DE BARRA
You remember my hat?

LE NOTRE
It would be impossible to forget.

DE BARRA
You did not care for it.

LE NOTRE
Perhaps I should simply say that I
liked your head with your hat on it
and your face under it.

DE BARRA
That is where you are sure to find
it.

They walk on. After a little DE BARRA laughs.

DE BARRA (CONT'D)
The hat was a considerable expense,
am I now to understand that it was
entirely unnecessary ?

LE NOTRE
Most definitely.

DE BARRA
Good.

56

INT. LOUVRE. THE THRONE ROOM. NIGHT.

56

Two ornate chairs stand on a platform with an elaborate canopy of gold and blue embroidered *fleur de lys*, trimmed with ermine.

The royal party is announced. All turn and bow, silence descends. The royal party consists of the KING, LOUIS, and QUEEN MARIE THERESE, then their son known as 'MONSEIGNEUR', LOUIS THE GRAND DAUPHIN, also the King's brother PHILIPPE DUC D'ORLEANS, known as 'MONSIEUR' and his wife CHARLOTTE, PRINCESSE PALATINE, known as "MADAME" -- they place themselves further down the room.

Doors open, and MARQUISE DE MONTEMART DE MONTESPAN, the King's favourite, and mother of at least six of his children, enters with three of the children. LOUIS AUGUSTE, aged about fourteen, LOUIS ALEXANDER, aged about five, and LOUISE FRANCOISE, aged eight. There is friction at their entrance. This is noted by all. MONTESPAN is entirely unperturbed by it. She is fat, beautiful, and scans the crowd with a jaunty eye. The KING glances at her. He waits for silence.

LOUIS

Be it known that we intend to hold
court at the chateau Versailles,
within the month of May.

A discernible groan runs through the crowd.

LOUIS (CONT'D)

This announcement is made with
considerable personal happiness. We
hope it will be greeted with the
same.

The court stares forward at LOUIS. His face shows a slight disappointment followed by a glare. The court responds smiling and clapping.

His humour improves.

LOUIS (CONT'D)

To this auspicious end, France's
greatest masters have worked for a
quarter of a century to create for
us a place of exquisite and
matchless beauty. Versailles shall
be the heart of our Kingdom. A
centre for excellence executed with
unparalleled skill and inhabited by
the finest examples of humanity.

The court laugh.

LOUIS (CONT'D)

And for the people, the back bone
of our country, there will be
gardens. Gardens to refresh the
spirits and replenish the soul.
Beauty fit for the gods of old, to
behold. Each new turn will bring
another excitement. Perhaps a
fountain whose gentle flow is balm
enough to ease a ringing ear.
Scented groves of orange blossom
blown by temperate winds. Their
hearts restored, their spirits
lightened, their thoughts again
return to the warmth of love.

DE BARRA's face as she listens.

LOUIS (CONT'D)

Heaven shall be here.

DE BARRA looks at LE NOTRE. LE NOTRE looks at her. DE BARRA
smiles at him and looks back to the King.

LOUIS (CONT'D)

Out of beauty will come forth
strength. France will shed light
where there is darkness across
Europe and the world. What light,
what beauty, what strength,
Versailles, Versailles, Versailles.
Glory be to God! Long live France.

LOUIS bows his head as if in prayer. The court and crowd
greet the speech with loud and sustained applause.

57 INT. LOUVRE BUFFET ROOM. NIGHT.

57

Supper is laid out. DE BARRA is served supper by a house-man.
LE NOTRE, a little way off, speaks to an amputee who bows and
leaves him. MONTESPAN and her entourage tour the room. MADAME
LE NOTRE is part of this clique. LE NOTRE watches as,
believing herself unobserved, flirts with a young man. DE
BARRA joins him unaware of this.

DE BARRA

I shall be as fat as the Marquise.

LE NOTRE

Marquise de Montespan. She made
quite an entrance.

They both turn to look at MONTESPAN. She continues touring
with her friend LAUZUN. Everyone is happy to meet her.

She is being introduced by LAUZUN to a gentleman with a very pretty daughter. The ladies delight in the young woman, who is very shy.

DE BARRA (V.O.)
Is she still -- the King's
mistress? Those were his children
with her.

LE NOTRE (V.O.)
Yes, but she is out of favour. It
is a perilous life being the King's
favourite, but the Marquise had
occupied that position with
considerable flair for twenty
years. Until now.

MONTESPAN takes the young woman's hands and speaks seriously to her.

Her father listens, nodding. LAUZUN collects notes from the fathers of the young suitors, eager to meet the girl. MADAME LE NOTRE continues her flirtation, distancing herself slightly from the others.

DE BARRA (V.O.)
As long as any marriage. Out of
favour, what does that mean ?

LE NOTRE (V.O.)
There is,- if one listens to
gossip, I never do -.

DE BARRA (V.O.)
The very thought of it.

MONTESPAN is handed the notes. She decides on the suitors, beckons one over and introduces him. MADAME LE NOTRE leaves with the man. LE NOTRE watches her leave. DE BARRA watches him looking at the couple, still unaware of the connection. Her instincts jangle.

DE BARRA (CONT'D)
Do you know that lady ?

LE NOTRE
That lady I do not know at all, I
am sorry to say. But we are not
unconnected.

He looks back at DE BARRA, a little uncomfortable.

LE NOTRE (CONT'D)
Shall we continue to talk nonsense,
for this evening at least ?

DE BARRA
Do blither on, I insist.

She smiles, as does he, relieved. He looks at her quizzically.

DE BARRA (CONT'D)
We were speaking about favourites,
and being, favoured.

LE NOTRE
Ah yes.

He steers her through the double doors, and out -

58 EXT. THE LOUVRE. THE BANKS OF THE SEINE. NIGHT. 58

The banks of the Seine. There are lanterns lit, and tables. People sit about, some on the grass bank, eating, talking.

LE NOTRE
There is a new star, Marquise de
Maintenon. This lady, it is said,
is in favour. Some say this will
bring change.

They sit on the bank.

DE BARRA
I see. Which lady is she ?

LE NOTRE
Maintenon has devoted herself to
God. She never attends anything as
frivolous as a party.

DE BARRA
Fear of corruption. It seems an
extraordinary life. And your life,
is it as complex as those around
you?

LE NOTRE
My life?

He considers what to say. Before he can answer, a pair of extraordinarily ornate shoes, followed by stockings, coat, and finally face and hat, come into view -- PHILIPPE DUKE D'ORLEANS, "MONSIEUR".

MONSIEUR
Nolly, my dear old cabbage. Stand
and give me a kiss. Do so
instantly, or I shall take grave
offence!

LE NOTRE grips MONSIEUR with great friendliness, and kisses him. MONSIEUR stands back and fans himself.

LE NOTRE
Monsieur! How well you look. It
is good to see you. -- what a
splendid hat.

MONSIEUR
Do you think so? Well I am trying
it out. As you know, I never wear a
hat.

LE NOTRE
No.

MONSIEUR
No! For fear of squashing me wig.
You have no such fear.

LE NOTRE
No, none.

MONSIEUR
Quite so. I am trying it out. A new
milliner. There was an ugly
skirmish with the rest of the
reptiles.

He glances about the courtiers.

MONSIEUR (CONT'D)
But --

He touches his hat.

MONSIEUR (CONT'D)
But, who pray tell is this? Lady,
you are prostrate! Allow me to
assist you to an upright position.
Really, Andre.

LE NOTRE
May I present His Royal Highness,
Philippe, Duc d'Orleans? Your
Highness, this is Madame de Barra.

Takes her hand and kisses it.

MONSIEUR
Delighted, Madame. Well!

Looking at her dress and shoes, hair and so on.

MONSIEUR (CONT'D)
How is it a woman of exquisite, yet
not, unlike myself, ostentatious
taste, falls in with a clay kicker
like Andre here?

DE BARRA

Your Highness, I must confess to being a clay kicker myself, thus our association.

MONSIEUR

Heart of Jesus! No it cannot be. I am unable to picture it. Do tell us how it is that you are.

A young man, loudly clearing his throat, touches MONSIEUR's arm. MONSIEUR, without missing a beat, continues.

MONSIEUR (CONT'D)

May I present the Marquis du Vasse -
- Monsieur Andre le Notre and
Madame de Barra.

DU VASSE

Madame...Monsieur Le Notre. I am delighted to make your acquaintance. I have long been an admirer of your work, so...I'm delighted make your acquaintance now--,

MONSIEUR

But, Madame, the mystery remains. What is a woman of such restrained sophistication doing with Nolly here? You see Madame, as you may surmise I am licensed to speak from the opposite end of the fashion scale. I tend to tumble into unrestrained fakery. I don't apologise for it, I like it about myself. Answer, Madame -- stop me talking!

DE BARRA

Your highness, it was the only thing I knew how to do. It was a gradual process. For money.

MONSIEUR

That old thing. And you enjoy your profession? It stimulates you?

DE BARRA

It has seen me through some very hard times, allowed me to be independent.

MONSIEUR

I see. I wish I could say the same for myself, but I am not at all independent and simply do as I am told.

'MADAME', PRINCESS PALLOTINE, wife of MONSIEUR, bears down on her husband. A large German woman, she is jolly and blonde.

MONSIEUR nods in her direction.

MONSIEUR (CONT'D)

Even down to marrying large German women. Though I confess I like her better than my last wife, who is dead as a doornail now. (He mouths 'Thank God'.) English, you know.

MADAME arrives. The group all bow to her, and she to them.

MADAME

Do kiss me, husband. I am in need of affection.

She picks up the Duke, and kisses him on the lips, flashing a look at DU VASSE, who flicks out his fan in a flush of temper. MADAME places her husband back on his heels. He giggles. She takes a deep breath, happy about her show of strength.

MADAME (CONT'D)

It is wonderful to have access to one's spouse. My dearest, you promised to come see my new rock. I think you will find it most interesting. A fossil, the creature no longer exists, but is trapped in my rock. I like it as well as my stone from the skies, perhaps better.

MONSIEUR

It is perhaps the one thing we have in common, a rock collection. (He fingers his many diamonds.)

MADAME

You are very droll, sir. How lucky I am to have you.

DU VASSE raises an eyebrow in disdain.

MADAME (CONT'D)

And how lucky you are I do not have your taste in rocks.

She fingers his diamonds. They giggle together.

MONSIEUR

Or that I have to wear your collection around my neck!

He mimes struggling under a heavy weight. They hoot together. MONSIEUR collects himself, dabbing his mascara'd eyes with an ornate handkerchief.

MONSIEUR (CONT'D)

But I'm being very rude, allow me to introduce my wife, Princess Pallotine, Duchesse d'Orleans, known affectionately as 'Madame'...

They bow to one another.

MONSIEUR (CONT'D)

Madame, may I present, Madame De Barra, Madame de Barra is...(Turning to LE NOTRE) Oh do tell us, Nolly, what Madame de Barra is engaged to do? Hold for this, my dearest, this will interest you!

LE NOTRE

Madame De Barra has designed a beautiful fountain, a water cascade, which she is building at present at Versailles. It is quite unusual, nothing like it exists in the gardens.

There are oohs and ahhs from the party. They crush a little closer.

LE NOTRE (CONT'D)

Further plans include an outdoor ballroom, and an arena with tiered sides, for sitting. A place of exquisite and matchless beauty, as His Majesty so eloquently said.

MADAME

How fascinating! I am a great admirer of engineering. Yes, I do like it so. Madame, you must promise to show me!

DE BARRA

Nothing would give me greater pleasure, Highness.

LE NOTRE

Perhaps, in the meantime, Your Highnesses would care to have lunch with us at the site of the Louveciennes aqueduct? Shall we say Tuesday, after Mass?

MONSIEUR

Is it in the country? God, I always disappear in the country.

MADAME

We should love to come Master.

MONSIEUR

And now that we are to move to Versailles, everybody will forget about me. I shall become a human jellyfish, a miserable formless being, a polyp.

MADAME looks to MONSIEUR.

MONSIEUR (CONT'D)

We should love to come, Nolly.

He looks at DU VASSE, who whispers behind his fan..

DU VASSE

We shall be a...large party. Everybody here should really attend. I imagine.

MADAME raises an eyebrow, but lets it go.

MADAME

Come, Madame De Barra, take a turn about with me, and tell me of your scheme.

They set off together, followed by a happy DU VASSE and entourage. Monsieur blows him a kiss. Delighted he minces along behind.

MONSIEUR

Well, Nolly. Madame De Barra has certainly thrilled my dearest. Has she thrilled you also?

LE NOTRE

She is very diverting, and extremely clever at what she does. I think.

MONSIEUR

Do you, indeed? I am glad. Good man.

He pats LE NOTRE's arm.

LE NOTRE laughs with MONSIEUR, but looks after DE BARRA.

DE BARRA looks back and smiles at LE NOTRE.

59 EXT. DE BARRA'S GARDEN. NIGHT. 59

DE BARRA sits in her dressing gown. Her hair still dressed. She begins to take it down. The garden breathes with scented stock, jasmine, night flowers for moths. A large still moon. A nightjar calls. She looks up.

60 EXT. PARIS. LE NOTRE'S GARDEN. NIGHT 60

LE NOTRE stands outside in the garden, looking at 'Chaos', the topiary chicken. MADAME LE NOTRE appears at the garden gate. She is just arriving home. She has the young man with her from the Louvre. They laugh together. She spots LE NOTRE. Says goodnight to the man. He leaves, bowing to LE NOTRE.

MADAME LE NOTRE

Andre. I did not see you there in the gloom. Did you enjoy your evening?

61 EXT DE BARRA'S GARDEN NIGHT. 61

DE BARRA as before listening, for the bird. Silence.

62 EXT. LE NOTRE'S GARDEN. NIGHT. 62

LE NOTRE

Yes, Madame, I did. As much I imagine as you did yours.

He looks back at 'Chaos'.

MADAME LE NOTRE

Where is that going?

63 EXT. DE BARRA'S GARDEN. NIGHT. 63

DE BARRA's face in the silence. Behind her a blurred form moves quickly.

64 EXT. LE NOTRE'S GARDEN NIGHT. 64

Husband and wife look at one another.

65 EXT. DE BARRA'S GARDEN NIGHT. 65

DE BARRA turns to see an urn wobble. Then fall. In silence.

She stops dead. Stares at the urn. There is no sound anywhere in the garden. A second later the sound of the urn crashing. She jumps. Birds fly up into the night sky.

66 EXT. LE NOTRE'S GARDEN. NIGHT. 66

Husband and wife as before. A flutter of wings.

LE NOTRE
I do not know, yet.

67 EXT. THE ROCKWORK GROVE. MORNING. 67

DURAS and some of the workforce are planting the grass seed.

Others dig trenches for pipes. The shape of the cascade is emerging from one side of the hill. It is roughly built with stone and mortar.

DURAS is reading a note. He folds it up, chortling.

DURAS
I may not attend labours today, as
I am lunching with His Royal
Highness and His Royal Highness's
wife and a whole load of other
fellows in fancy knickers. And
they're lovely. they're all
lovely...

He roars laughing.

68 EXT. ABOVE THE SITE OF THE LOUVECIENNES AQUEDUCT. (JUNCTURE OF THE RIVERS EURE AND SEINE.) DAY.

Music. DE BARRA and LE NOTRE together with DE VILLE and SUALEM stand at a ridge. Below them, the aqueduct is being built. A great number of men work at clearing rubble. The river below is dammed and we see a new course for it.

A man announces that blasting will commence. By a series of flags, each area indicates that it cleared and ready.

The men wait looking up, flags held high.

The FOREMAN raises a green flag.

The men immediately take cover. Two 'runners' stand by with lit torches.

The FOREMAN gives a second signal.

The runners light the fuses at the centre of the rock-face. The first fuses are long, but become shorter as the runners separate and work their way to both ends of the rock-face.

The party above looks down at the progress. The runners complete the last two charges. Then they run at top speed in silence, to safety.

The first man reaches cover, sweat pouring off him. Looking down, the party see the second man stumble and fall.

There is a sharp intake of breath. But the man jumps up, and races to his colleagues as, roaring, they pull him in.

DE BARRA and the others look down in silence. A small breeze.

A flash, then the first explosion, second, third and so on, staggered from the centre. The rock face begins to collapse.

SUALEM, DE VILLE, the FOREMAN and LE NOTRE pull back from the edge as the explosion hits and shakes them. DE BARRA does not.

LE NOTRE looks over at her. DE BARRA's face as it is shaken by the blast. She closes her eyes. LE NOTRE moves to grab her.

DE BARRA opens her eyes as LE NOTRE reaches her. Her face entirely unafraid, blank, she looks at him.

Rubble and dust pour down behind them. He brings her back from the edge. He holds on to her. She coughs.

LE NOTRE

You are reckless, Madame.

DE BARRA looks at him.

DE BARRA

Am I?

69

EXT. THE RIDGE ABOVE THE AQUEDUCT DAY.

69

Several carriages arrive with a considerable entourage of dogs and outriders, one of which is MADAME in full riding habit. She jumps down, and strides forward.

MADAME

Da sind alles! Well, I am so excited. I heard the explosions. I feel I had missed it all. May we have another, please?

LE NOTRE

Of course, Highness, if it is your wish. May I present Monsieur Sualem and Monsieur de Ville. Gentlemen, her Royal Highness, Princess Palatine, Duchesse d'Orleans.

They bow, and each in turn takes her hand and kisses it.

DE VILLE

Princess.

SUALEM

Highness.

MADAME

Gentlemen. I am delighted to be here. I am so excited by this excursion. Do you know, today at mass the King continually frowned at me for jiggling about. I think it only marginally better than him poking me when I fall asleep, as I usually do. But I did not mind. I knew I was to have a great day here. Gentlemen, do show me your rock face. Ah, there is Madame de Barra.

All around tents are being erected and tables unpacked. Screens are put up by maids. Behind the screens, some LADIES take small china objects shaped like sauce boats under their skirts, and relieve themselves, together. They chat and laugh.

Further along, GENTLEMEN wash their faces at stations set up with china basins. HOUSEHOLD MEN stand by with fresh shirts.

Guns are unloaded and dogs are watered. A kitchen is set up, chefs discuss the unloaded food and drink.

A large carriage stands alone, without its horses, which have been unhitched and are being watered in the background. The blinds are down. A servant walks by, deposits a wicker basket and leaves. The carriage creaks from inside.

MONSIEUR (V.O.)

Is this the country ?

Horses look up.

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

Are we in the country ?

Raising his voice.

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

Have we reached hell?

Silence.

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

Why do I ask when I am positive that we have? Because everybody has forgotten about me.

Pause.

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

I am just a ghost in a landscape.

He sighs.

The SERVANT walks back to collect the wicker box. As he does the carriage shifts. Nervously he opens the carriage door.

MONSIEUR's head with an enormous dressed wig, his face powdered, rouged and lipsticked, looms out.

70

INT. THE DINING TENT. ABOVE THE AQUEDUCT. DAY.

70

A large tent, set with rose bowls, candles. All are seated finishing the last course. Housemen stand by to serve. The sides of the tent are opened to views across the countryside. MONSIEUR and MADAME face each other at opposite ends of the table. To the right of MADAME sits DE BARRA, and to MADAME's left, DE VILLE. He makes a paper boat for MADAME. At the other end of the table, LE NOTRE sits to the right of MONSIEUR and to his left SUALEM. MONSIEUR recites from Racine's "Phedre" to LE NOTRE. His head is bent, hand over his eyes in an effort to concentrate, occasionally prompted by the courtier to LE NOTRE's left. He finishes to loud applause.

MONSIEUR

It is my favourite speech. Racine is so clever. He has all one would wish for in a play -- plot, language, beautiful rhythm. Now, no doubt, he will be dragged into the country with the rest of us. I do so hate the country. I find afterwards that some form of life has crept into one's clothing. (Whispering to LE NOTRE) And one's dearest friend is banished to the outer shrubbery.

They look over towards the bushes, where an ill concealed DU VASSE is coughing and sneezing.

LE NOTRE

Ah!

MONSIEUR

Oh wretched earth, that ever I was sent to wiggle about on you, unfriendly sod.

MADAME

Nolly, come along, it is your turn, won't you sing for us?

LE NOTRE

Ah, Madame.

MADAME

Do say you will now, make a
princess very happy.

LE NOTRE

I croak unaccompanied. If we had a
musician to assist me.

MONSIEUR's eyes dart toward the shubbery.

MADAME jumps up.

MADAME

The Marquis! He can play. Du Vasse,
come out now. We need you!

DU VASSE pokes his head out a little startled.

DU VASSE

Your Highness?

MADAME

And bring your guitar.

DU VASSE emerges.

MADAME (CONT'D)

Goodness, you look like a man on
the way to a funeral who just found
out he is the corpse! The Master
wishes to sing and you are the only
member of the party who can play,
so...

She sits happy with herself.

DU VASSE

Master?

Monsieur conceals his glee behind a lace fan.

MONSIEUR

(Whispering)

Darling Nolly, I kiss you a
thousand times, I-

LE NOTRE

Shall we try 'Lovely Selina'?

As he sings, everybody grows quiet and thoughtful. The song
fills the atmosphere with bitter sweet melancholy. LE NOTRE's
voice glides clear in the air. Steady and true, it is sweet
as a bell. Couples take each others hands. Those who are
alone hug themselves. They tilt their heads and ponder why.
Private moments are strewn across faces. DE BARRA hardly
breathes.

He finishes. Released from the song's spell the ladies take roses from the bowls, kiss them and throw them to him. Some gentlemen stand and doff their hats. Others sit, hands clasped nodding. All are delighted by this unexpected revelation.

LE NOTRE catches the roses. He looks at DE BARRA.

DE BARRA looks back steadily.

LE NOTRE (CONT'D)
I thank you all, but especially the
Marquis.

The company applaud DU VASSE.

LE NOTRE (CONT'D)
Now I should like to hear Suzanne
sing, Madame la Duchesse, please.

A woman in her sixties stands and begins.

SUZANNE
Find me a lonely cave...

DE BARRA sits back in her chair and smiles at MADAME

MADAME
(Privately)
Do you know, Madame, that my
husband and the Marquis are lovers?

DE BARRA
Is that so, Madame?

MADAME LE NOTR
Yes, this was so before I arrived.
He is what he is.

At the other end of the table, MONSIEUR listens to the singing. He smiles at DU VASSE.

MADAME
It has not stopped us having
children, and he loves them dearly.
In battle he is immensely brave,
always at the front with his men,
although he arrives a little later
than anybody else. Well, he has a
lot of dressing to do. I respect
him for that. It is hard to be
brave, don't you think?

MADAME's face.

MADAME (CONT'D)

And he has a very good heart. He has a short temper, but that, I think, is as a result of having too much blood. We suit each other. My sister married a simpleton. I am happy with my choice.

DE BARRA watches LE NOTRE.

71

EXT. A MEADOW. DAY.

71

The company walking together. A little behind them DE BARRA and LE NOTRE.

MONSIEUR

Another thing about the country is the muck. One encounters it everywhere. Or beasts making muck. The country is full of muck.

DE BARRA at LE NOTRE's shoulder.

DE BARRA

You sang beautifully.

LE NOTRE

Thank you.

DE BARRA and LE NOTRE walk on, making their way through a small oak wood. The wood, the stones covered by moss, the bark.

LE NOTRE (CONT'D)

Could ever anything be more beautiful than this? I sometimes feel entirely defeated by life's extremities, the bad choices I have made, the lack of bravery. And I see myself for what I really am.

DE BARRA

What is that?

LE NOTRE

Less, much less, than I had hoped. Then I come to a place like this, feel the wind, watch the creatures, and gradually a small courage takes hold of me, and I feel fitter for things.

DE BARRA

Do you feel like that often?

LE NOTRE

More so as I age.

DE BARRA
You're terribly aged.

LE NOTRE
Decrepit.

DE BARRA
And your wife, she does not
accompany you abroad?

LE NOTRE
Abroad?

DE BARRA
That is, she does not come out with
you. That is, other times, besides
now? Or does she? That is what I
am asking.

LE NOTRE
You are very direct, Madame.

DE BARRA
I feel you know all about me, and
that I know nothing about you.

LE NOTRE
I know a little about you. You are
also married.

DE BARRA
My husband died.

LE NOTRE
I am very sorry to hear it. How
long ago did this happen?

DE BARRA
Five years now.

LE NOTRE
Do you have children?

DE BARRA
A little girl, but I lost her too,
at the same time, all at once.

LE NOTRE
Are you able to speak of it?

DE BARRA
Not really, I find it very hard to.

LE NOTRE
Are you recovered from it? I wonder
if that is possible.

DE BARRA

I've continued. After a little. I cannot remember them before the accident. I don't remember them alive. Only dead. You see.

LE NOTRE

No memory of them at all?

DE BARRA

Some. Here and there. I know I dream of them, but I can never remember when I wake. I am haunted by them. Ghosts. That is what they are. Barely there. After they were killed I took all their clothes, toys, shoes, books, everything and put them in a trunk, in the attic. I have never had the courage to look in there. I may never. So for me it is as if they never existed. Ghosts.

She collects herself. After a little.

DE BARRA (CONT'D)

But you did not answer me about your wife. I think it may be time to ask.

LE NOTRE

Well, we have an arrangement. I miss what we once were. It is disappointing and, in a very casual way, shocking.

DE BARRA

How so?

LE NOTRE

Well. It is intimate. I feel a little uncomfortable.

DE BARRA

Don't, then.

LE NOTRE

No, I would like to. She is very popular and respected by her friends. I feel disloyal in discussing her faults.

DE BARRA

You are not Eleanor Fitzgerald's husband then.

LE NOTRE

No, I am not. I have lived inside a kind of settled interpretation of the truth for so long now that, it is hard to break free of it.

DE BARRA

It's hard to look at yourself.

LE NOTRE

Yes, but you have been so honest with me. It is shocking to me, because, sometimes my wife reveals her opinion of me, just in passing and quite unaware she is doing so. It is very hurtful suddenly to know how low I am in her estimation. How did it come to this? She is after all the only person one has to keep faith with.

DE BARRA

Today you said I was reckless. To be reckless is to abandon safety. But you see that is not entirely true. It is safety that has abandoned me.

She stops, tries steadying herself against a tree. LE NOTRE walks over.

DE BARRA (CONT'D)

I have a terrible feeling just here.

She touches her stomach.

LE NOTRE

What is it?

DE BARRA

Fear, I think.

LE NOTRE

It's good to feel fear.

DE BARRA

Why ?

LE NOTRE

Dead people don't feel it.

DE BARRA

You don't think my family are frightened, wherever they are?

LE NOTRE

It is you who are frightened.

DE BARRA

Oh, this is exhausting, this fear
business. How do you stop it?

LE NOTRE

You can't always, when you are
alive.

DE BARRA

I am a little shaky. Are you
keeping your guests waiting? Is it
not rude?

LE NOTRE

Take your time, it does not matter.
Good. Now you look a little
better, let me show you this tree.
They move deeper into the woods and
come to --

72

EXT. A CLEARING. DAY.

72

A large old oak stands, its roots rolling over boulders of
moss. It is bowed and festooned with pieces of ribbon or
cloth tied to the branches. Small thin candles burn all
around it. The wind catches shoes tied on by their laces.
Strands of coloured glass dangle beside walnuts made into
bells. Miniatures are nailed to the tree. A child's face
here, a woman's there, some drawn by children. Handkerchiefs,
crosses, dolls, all glint in the candlelight.

LE NOTRE whispers.

LE NOTRE

It is a shrine.

DE BARRA

It is beautiful.

LE NOTRE

All these little prayers for a safe
journey. To rest.

Music. They spend some time reading the notes, exchanging the
messages. After a little they come across a worn stone. LE
NOTRE lights a candle and places it on the tree. He kneels on
the stone and prays. DE BARRA leans against the tree watching
him. LE NOTRE finishes his prayer, crosses himself and looks
up at her. They look steadily at each other. A breeze blows
through the woods.

DE BARRA

Can you see me, as clearly as I see
you?

LE NOTRE

Yes.

In the distance, the sound of horses approaching.

73 EXT. A MEADOW. EVENING.

73

The riders dismount. MONSIEUR and the rest of the ladies and gentlemen stand waiting.

A messenger, a nobleman, approaches them.

MESSENGER

The Queen is dead.

74 EXT. THE CAMP. EVENING.

74

The camp is quickly being dismantled, the noble party are gathering themselves.

DU VASSE

At least the autopsy is over. The smell of those steaming organs, I can barely manage it. We escaped that.

MONSIEUR

Yes. Some consolation. Well, quickly, everyone.

MADAME

Madame du Maintenon, your day attends. Saintly old bitch.

LE NOTRE walks DE BARRA to her coach.

LE NOTRE

I remember the first time I saw the Queen. I was surprised her eyes were blue. Poor little Spanish woman, has her head chopped off and her organs on a table by now.

DE BARRA

Why would they chop her head off?

LE NOTRE

They just do it to see what she died of.

DE BARRA

And you all watch this?

LE NOTRE nods.

DE BARRA (CONT'D)

Ah. Everybody dies.

They stand a little awkward together, unsure as to how to continue.

LE NOTRE
There will be a lot of activity
now.

DE BARRA
You must attend the funeral I
suppose?

LE NOTRE
Yes.

DE BARRA
Is it a protracted business, do you
wait for ambassadors to arrive?

LE NOTRE
No it is over quite quickly...

DE BARRA
Oh.

They look at each other, desperate to recapture some of their
lost intimacy.

DE BARRA (CONT'D)
Well, I should go.

She turns to step up into the coach, stops, faces him, and
kisses him gently on the mouth.

The carriage door shuts, she is gone.

LE NOTRE watches her go, rooted to the spot.

75 INT. CHAPEL. THE QUEEN'S FUNERAL. MORNING

75

MONTESPAN and MADAME sit squeezed together, muttering.

MONTESPAN
Lord save us, what a performance.

MADAME
Racine has missed a great
opportunity to utilise such a gift.

MONTESPAN
He has been spared that, would that
we were.

MADAME
It is an amazement to me, that with
such a devotion, a convent has not
claimed the sainted lady.

MONTESPAN

Costumes are not as lavish.

A black velvet shoe, with a buckle of diamonds. The sound over the organ music, of sobbing. A gloved hand clutching a diamond crucifix discreetly scratches the exposed foot, beside a stone paw.

The hand travels back up to its owner, a woman in a black velvet gown

half kneeling, half sitting, clinging to the QUEEN's stone coffin weeping. Her face hidden by a lace mantilla. This is MADAME DU MAINTENON.

The coffin she clings to is at the centre of the chapel, a vast catafalque. The canopy, an ornate gold frame and royal blue velvet stamped with the *fleur de lys*, trimmed with ermine and draped, its four corners tied to the chapel walls.

The catafalque has a carved crown on top of a rotund roof lit with four candelabras, housing four plaques depicting skulls. Four columns sweep down to marble plinths, with life size statues of angels.

Inside, the carved marble sarcophagus, draped with a gold embroidered tapestry bearing the royal coat of arms, stands on eight lion's paws.

Behind MAINTENON the cardinal clears his throat. Behind him LOUIS. MAINTENON gets up, collects herself, turns to LOUIS and reveals her face. Her beautiful face, perhaps not as ravished with tears as one would expect. With abundant black hair, aged forty-eight, she is a striking individual.

She bows deeply to LOUIS, who takes his seat, a box with a crown canopy.

Beside him a smaller box, again with a crown, empty. MAINTENON backs away, takes her seat beside MONTESPAN and MADAME whose eyes roll to the heavens. The court sits.

At the pulpit, the cardinal begins the sermon in Latin.

Present are all members of the royal household and bishops. The KING sits listening intently.

Further back in the congregation LE NOTRE stands, his head bowed. Beside him, MADAME LE NOTRE. Her young man stands nearby, his eyes shifting. He nods his head toward the door.

MADAME LE NOTRE glances at her husband. He turns to her with little interest, and then looks back through the open windows onto the gardens. MADAME LE NOTRE looks out too, then looks back at him puzzled.

76

EXT. THE ROCKWORK GROVE. EARLY MORNING.

76

The wood supports are gone from the tiers. A light sprinkling of new grass covers them. One of DE BARRA's men is watering the tiers.

DURAS and DE BARRA are laying pipes across the ballroom floor.

Some of their men operate a makeshift forge.

DE BARRA

Worms?

Then pointing to the trench.

DE BARRA (CONT'D)

The trench is very waterlogged, we'll need to drain this whole area again.

DURAS

Gravel or sand under the pipes, that's what the others at the Colonnade site are using. Yes, worms. Common enough in a child. Oh but the poor little lamb, awake at night, squealing as they tickle her baby arse, because that's when they come out, at night.

DE BARRA

Wigglers. My daughter Marie Claire had a very bad dose. Are they using copper sleeving above ground? I should order the gravel. Wigglers she called them.

DURAS

Yes, copper. Luke! Take the cart into town and get four bales of medium gauge rope and a load of gravel. Denise has tried all sorts of cures, I do not know if you have ever had to stick ointment up your own child's arse, Sacred heart of divine God, I was not fit for a week.

DE BARRA

Luke! There is an apothecary I found eventually. (To Luke.) We have no custom with Monsieur Bande on main street, Monsieur Bandit more like. (Luke goes.) He made me up a tincture called Miraculous Goosefoot. Chenopodium

DURAS
Pigweed. It worked?

DE BARRA
Yes. It is poisonous, so you must have a master apothecary. By the way, tomorrow I go to Marly, to meet Monsieur De la Quintinie. Have you read his book on pears? It's good, I have to order our plants from him. What was I saying? Oh yes, pigweed works wonders with worms. Least ways it did for Marie Claire.

DURAS
I'll send a message to Denise now. Luke! This is the first time I have heard you talk of your daughter.

DE BARRA looks at him astounded.

DE BARRA
She popped up. The wigglers first, and then Marie Claire.

DURAS
Do you remember nothing, Sabine?

DE BARRA
Fragments. More lately.

DURAS
Common enough for people to deal with death that way. An accident is hard to accept. And it dealt you the cruellest blow.

He watches her think this out.

DURAS (CONT'D)
Marie Claire's wigglers eh? (LUKE arrives) Hammer the wigglers!

LUKE
Right ho!

He leaves mumbling his list. They watch him.

77 INT. PARIS. LE NOTRE'S HOUSE. THE COLLECTION ROOM. DAY 77

LE NOTRE is polishing his collection of porcelain. He inspects each piece, before replacing it carefully back. After a little he loses interest. Watches a spider whip down her web, and cocoon a fly. MADAME LE NOTRE puts her head around the door.

MADAME LE NOTRE
 Andre. Shall I leave lunch out for
 you? I have an engagement. Have you
 eaten breakfast ?

LE NOTRE
 I am not really hungry at present,
 perhaps later.

MADAME LE NOTRE
 (She nods, watching him)
 Have you a new piece?

LE NOTRE
 Yes, I do. I am just puzzling
 where to put it.

MADAME LE NOTRE
 It looks good there.

LE NOTRE
 That does, yes. But, it's not the
 new piece.

MADAME LE NOTRE
 Oh.

78 EXT. PARIS . DE BARRA'S HOUSE. MORNING. 78

A coach stands outside DE BARRA's house, she and the DRIVER
 put plants into the coach.

DE BARRA
 Try not to bend the tops.

79 INT. FONTAINEBLEAU. OUTSIDE MADAME DU MAINTENON'S ROOMS. 79

The door of MAINTENON's room opens and the KING comes
 through, leaving MAINTENON and his children bowing. He turns
 to the court. They bow. They wait. The KING looks at them.
 After a little some look up, exchanging glances.

LOUIS
 I wish to go to Marly. And I wish
 to be alone.

The court stare at him still bowing. He walks through them.

80 INT. DE BARRA'S COACH. ON THE ROAD TO MARLY. DAYBREAK. 80

Inside the coach DE BARRA surrounded by plants.

81 EXT. THE KINGS COACH. EARLY MORNING. 81

The coach roars on. with outriders.

82 INT. DE BARRA'S COACH. EARLY MORNING. 82

DE BARRA looks out at the oncoming coach.

83 EXT. THE KING'S COACH ON THE ROAD TO MARLY. EARLY MORNING. 83

The coach about to overtake DE BARRA'S coach.

84 INT. DE BARRA'S COACH EARLY MORNING. 84

DE BARRA looks out at the passing coach. Beside her sits MARIE CLARE, a little girl about six years old. She looks like a carbon copy of DE BARRA.

DE BARRA does not see her. No sound, complete silence.

85 EXT. THE KING'S COACH ON THE ROAD TO MARLY. EARLY MORNING. 85

The KING's coach overtakes DE BARRA's coach with a deafening roar.

86 INT. DE BARRA'S COACH. EARLY MORNING. 86

DE BARRA alone again. MARIE CLARE is gone.

DE BARRA

The wheel came off their coach.

She nods slowly, accepting this new revelation.

87 EXT. MARLY. EARLY MORNING. 87

Marly Chateau has just been built. Much smaller than Versailles, it is not yet complete and some of the gardens are still being laid out. Box wood hedges are being planted. There are beds mapped out in sand, and string is tied to small stakes to mark the height. Pots stand in line waiting to be planted in the bare soil.

Gardeners work industriously in the morning sunshine.

In the fruit garden MONSIEUR DE LA QUINTINIE stands beside a pear tree. He fingers the ripening pears. He is a large jolly man, a farmer with an ornate wig. QUINTINIE chortles away to himself.

QUINTINIE

My beauties.

He looks up as he hears the KING's coach arrive.

88 EXT. MARLY. EARLY MORNING 88

MONSIEUR DE LA QUINTINIE is being ushered out of the gardens and the workers are invited to leave. The outriders and the KING's coach pull away.

The KING stands alone. He walks through to the centre of the gardens, takes off his jacket, wig, waistcoat and sits on a rustic seat. A bald man enjoying the sound of birdsong.

89 EXT. MARLY. MORNING. 89

DE BARRA's carriage arrives. She gets out, the coachman unloads the plants into a cart. She pays him. He leaves. DE BARRA looks about at some length. She spots the man on the seat, and sets off in his direction.

DE BARRA
Monsieur de la Quintinie.

The KING looks up, shading his eyes.

DE BARRA (CONT'D)
I am very happy to meet you.

She curtseys.

DE BARRA (CONT'D)
I am Madame de Barra. I am directed by Monsieur Colbert of (she takes out a letter) The Office of Buildings of Versailles, to order shrubs, such as I require, from your goodself. But I am blinding you. Shall I sit here?

She sits beside him.

DE BARRA (CONT'D)
I brought with me a selection of the perennials I have found to be the best in my own garden in Paris. I thought we might exchange? I have taken the liberty of sketching a small plan to illustrate the growth of these plants. I see it could fit your beds very well. Perhaps you could?

She puts some of the plan on his knees, smiling.

DE BARRA (CONT'D)
It is very rough, and everything here is still in its infancy.

She points to a rose.

DE BARRA (CONT'D)
Is that *Quatres Saisons*?

The KING realising she is asking him.

LOUIS
Yes. I believe so.

DE BARRA
I'll take a sniff.

She goes over and smells it.

DE BARRA (CONT'D)
Oh, it is divine, and a good colour too. So let me see. I have something I inveigled from John Gerard. A clematis called *viticella plena elegans*. It looks like a tiny, raggy rose. No scent, though.

Something occurs to her.

DE BARRA (CONT'D)
In truth, sir, should you not take a sniff yourself?

She points to the rose.

LOUIS
A sniff? A sniff?

He looks at her. She nods.

LOUIS (CONT'D)
I believe I should, Madame de Barra.

He gets up to do so.

LOUIS (CONT'D)
Nothing would suit me better today than for me, the King's gardener, Monsieur de la Quintinie, to take a sniff. And some advice on perennials.

He inhales deeply. She watches him amused by him naming himself.

LOUIS (CONT'D)
Most refreshing. You say you have a selection of plants?

DE BARRA
 Yes, indeed. I had them unloaded
 into a little cart, intending to
 have them conveyed here, but -

She looks around.

DE BARRA (CONT'D)
 -- there seems to be no one about.

LOUIS
 Yes, I wished to be alone. I had
 them sent away.

DE BARRA looks at him a little perplexed.

DE BARRA
 I see. If you wish to be alone I
 could come back.

LOUIS
 No! No, no. I find that you are the
 very company I need today. Allow
 me, Madame, to assist you.

DE BARRA
 Most kind, Monsieur.

DE BARRA realises that something is afoot. They walk to her
 cart. She decides to set a trap.

DE BARRA (CONT'D)
 It is a beautiful day.

LOUIS
 Yes. Yes, it is.

DE BARRA
 You are a devoted pear-man, master?

LOUIS
 Pears? I quite like them. Not
 overly.

DE BARRA
 I see. I think the master is
 playing a trick on me.

LOUIS
 A trick?

DE BARRA
 Yes. I do know of your book on
 pears.

LOUIS
 My book on pears.

He thinks.

LOUIS (CONT'D)

Oh yes, of course, I have written a book on pears. I believe I said I liked them a lot, in my book.

DE BARRA

I believe you did. And perennials. You like flowers, sir?

LOUIS

Indeed, Madame de Barra, I love all flowers passionately. However, I am banished from using as many as I would like at Versailles by the master Le Notre. He indulges me with some small parterres at the front. So I am reduced, rather pathetically, to building Chateaux simply for the front gardens. I have long given up hope of converting the master to my passion. I had hoped to be able to persuade him when we took up residence, but.

The KING stops, realising he has given himself away.

DE BARRA curtsseys.

LOUIS (CONT'D)

You are wise to me now, Madame De Barra. Perhaps we could ignore all that, and continue as before. Today I am Monsieur de la...Quin - tin - ie.

DE BARRA

Indeed, and you are. Sire.

LOUIS

Good.

They walk on together.

DE BARRA

You are the better for the move to Versailles, sire?

LOUIS

Very much. It is better for the children to be away from the city, and in the fresh air. My brother hates it. I know that he sneaks back to Paris. It is a crush for everybody, as yet there is still a great deal to be done.

(MORE)

LOUIS (CONT'D)

I felt though, that I should never get the builders out, unless I moved in. Are you familiar with builders, Madame de Barra?

DE BARRA

Not on that scale, sire, however I do work with them in landscaping, and at present I am building in your gardens at Versailles.

LOUIS

Is that so? Which construction would that be?

DE BARRA

The Rock-Work Grove, sire.

LOUIS

I am familiar with it. How very interesting.

DE BARRA

Although I would be uncomfortable about claiming it as my own, sire. The master took a simple sketch and made it outstanding. So you see my reluctance.

LOUIS

Madame, your name is credited with the design, then 'further assisted by Le Notre'. This is a surprise to you?

DE BARRA

Yes, your majesty.

LOUIS

Well, we are all surprised, Madame de Barra.

DE BARRA smiles.

LOUIS (CONT'D)

You admire the master, Madame de Barra?

DE BARRA

He is the most complete person I know.

LOUIS

Madame, you make me lonely for someone to describe me thus. Shall we see your flowers?

Music. The KING and DE BARRA inspect the plants in the cart. Each plant is numbered and illustrated in a little book with the height and width they grow to. They place them with other plants already in the embryonic beds.

The KING's tools placed on a silver box. They inspect them. She shows him hers. They have the same pruning knives. He takes a shine to one of her tools, she insists that he keep it, he is thrilled.

Music. The rose garden. The KING shows her the new rose, *rosa centifolia muscosa*, a moss rose. Others about include *rosa centifolia*, *rosa parvifolia*, *rosa gallica officinalis/vericolor*, *rosa alla maxima*. They look about, then dead-head.

The fruit garden. DE BARRA and the KING sit on a rustic seat, eating pears. Their hands are muddy. They sit for a while in silence.

LOUIS (CONT'D)

My wife died recently, did you hear?

DE BARRA

I did, sire, I was sorry to hear it. I was widowed myself some years ago.

LOUIS

Were you indeed, Madame de Barra? My regrets to you. Was it an arranged marriage, or a love match?

DE BARRA

A little of both. Master Le Notre said the queen had blue eyes.

LOUIS nods.

DE BARRA (CONT'D)

I remember the day of your marriage, Sire, but then most French people would.

LOUIS

I hope so. It cost enough, though her father paid for a large portion, bless him. Her father was, between ourselves, astray in his wits. In fact there was a rumour abroad that he could only digest human milk. The noble party greeted this with glee, and hundreds accompanied me on the journey to Spain in the hope of seeing him grapple with a wet nurse at the royal banquet.

(MORE)

LOUIS (CONT'D)

In the event they were disappointed. I was very apprehensive, as you can imagine, her family were known in Europe as a long blood line, not a good thing. She was not simple -- more an innocent. She never developed really. She rarely spoke French... But she was nice... And devoted to me.

He takes out a small leather bound book.

LOUIS (CONT'D)

I found this after she died.

He shows it to DE BARRA.

LOUIS (CONT'D)

It is just an account of our lives. The writing is like a child's. And you see here? She has saved a flower from a bouquet I gave her. And has written -- my Spanish is not as good as it used to be -- (reads the Spanish), 'Hoy, salve una flor desde su majestad', which is 'Today I save a flower from his majesty', then the time and place. And here is a ribbon from a costume I wore at a fête. I think -- yes, here it is -- at the Louvre, then the date... Nearly twenty years ago. It was an amazement to me. This little woman's secret life. I feel the loss of it.

DE BARRA

Why would you not, sire? It is a simple response in your very elaborate world. It is private.

LOUIS

You are right, Madame de Barra. I would like to marry again, this time someone I choose, not the state.

DE BARRA

Has your majesty someone in mind?

LOUIS

Yes, I have, but the lady is very pious, and will not entertain relations outside of matrimony. So, I cannot proceed the way I usually do.

(MORE)

LOUIS (CONT'D)

Most evenings I stroll over to her rooms and we sit and talk. She is very clever. Problematically, she is of no birth, But it is the ease of it I like. The ease. So you see, I am at a little impasse.

DE BARRA

If you were to be married to the lady of your choice, would it be necessary for everyone to know? Perhaps a lot of problems that arise from such a match need never arise, if they were never acknowledged.

LOUIS

Go on.

DE BARRA

If the ceremony were private, between the couple. Well, who would be in a position to argue or challenge the outcome, if they were not given the opportunity to do so before the marriage? They would be foolish to do so afterwards, when it was done.

LOUIS

You are right, Madame De Barra.

He thinks about this.

LOUIS (CONT'D)

When it was done...How would that be.

He reaches a conclusion.

LOUIS (CONT'D)

I have always felt it to be my state duty to 'favour' as many ladies as possible. They make quite a good living afterwards on the strength of it, you know. However I see that I must retire from such duties, now that I am to be a married man. And between ourselves, it is a relief to me. There is always someone knocking on the door, looking to be hammered.

DE BARRA

Honoured, sire.

LOUIS

Yes, honoured, what did I say?

DE BARRA
Hammered, sire.

LOUIS
Ah...Do you think they would guess?

DE BARRA
Oh yes. Very quickly.

LOUIS
Yes. Good.

He kicks over a stone and reveals an ants' nest. The Queen sits in the middle of hundred of worker ants, frenetic activity all about her.

LOUIS (CONT'D)
Montespan will be disappointed.
All her spells to no avail. And
fat, too.

The King eats his pear and swings his legs. They watch the ants activity.

LOUIS (CONT'D)
I shall write a letter from one
gardener to another, shall we say
for seeds sown. It will place you
inside the court. My eye will be
always be on you both, in a friendly
manner. I will not forget our day
in the garden. Thank you, Madame de
Barra.

DE BARRA smiles. He begins to dress himself.

LOUIS (CONT'D)
I am dressing myself. Is me wig
straight?

DE BARRA nods they talk on. As they do we see from above that, hundreds of people wait for the King outside the gates of the gardens.

The plaque above the door, with the arms of Paris.

A little way off DE BARRA sits in her coach. She has the King's letter in her hands, addressed to LE NOTRE. She turns it over in her hands considering what to do. She flags down a boy passing.

91 EXT. LE NOTRE'S HOUSE. DAY. 91

MADAME LE NOTRE answers the door, takes the letter from the boy.

She looks in the direction of DE BARRA's coach.

92 INT. DE BARRA'S COACH. DAY. 92

DE BARRA recognises her as one of the women in the MONTESPAN entourage. With a sharp intake of breath she realises that is looking at MADAME LE NOTRE. Her first instinct is to leave, to run away. Her hand reaches up to signal the driver. She resists this urge, finds the courage to stay, and think about what she should do.

She takes deep breaths to steady herself, comes to a decision. She propels herself out of the coach with one word.

DE BARRA

No.

93 INT. LE NOTRE'S HOUSE. PARIS. THE COLLECTION ROOM. DAY. 93

LE NOTRE sits with his porcelain. MADAME LE NOTRE puts her head around the door. She is holding the letter.

MADAME LE NOTRE

Andre, are you still fiddling with your bits. This has just been delivered, it has the *fleur-de-lys*.

LE NOTRE

It helps me think.

She hands him the letter.

MADAME LE NOTRE

So, Is it from the King , I wonder?

LE NOTRE tilts his head, not looking up. He reads, his face changes.

MADAME LE NOTRE (CONT'D)

Good, good. I must leave.

LE NOTRE

Hmm, hmm. (He puts the letter into his coat)

A knock at the front door.

MADAME LE NOTRE

For me, I think.

A servant answers. DE BARRA's voice.

LE NOTRE starts out the door.

MADAME LE NOTRE's face as he goes by her, and out into --

94 INT. LE NOTRE'S HOUSE. HALL. DAY.

94

DE BARRA is handing her card to a servant.

DE BARRA
I was just about to leave a card
for you.

She looks over his shoulder slowly, then back to him.

LE NOTRE
Come in!

DE BARRA
Are you eating?

LE NOTRE
No, not yet. Are you hungry?

DE BARRA
I've had several pears. But, no I-

MADAME LE NOTRE comes in. DE BARRA stops talking. LE NOTRE turns to his wife. A moment as the three look at each other.

LE NOTRE
Madame de Barra, may I present my
wife, Madame le Notre?

DE BARRA
I am delighted to make your
acquaintance. Please forgive my
terrible manners, arriving
uninvited.

MADAME LE NOTRE
You are most welcome, Madame.

LE NOTRE
Madame de Barra is building one of
the garden features for me in
Versailles.

MADAME LE NOTRE
Not by yourself, I hope.

DE BARRA
No, indeed.

LE NOTRE
Will you not stay and have lunch
with us, cancel your engagement,
whatever it is, please do?

A delicate situation for husband and wife. Again silence. DE BARRA watches them both.

DE BARRA

Have you an engagement, Madame?
Please do not let me put you under
any obligation. I will come again
at a more convenient time. That is,
if I am asked.

She turns to leave. A knock at the door.

MADAME LE NOTRE

Madame, you must stay, because I
must go. If we both go, Andre will
be alone, and will not eat
anything. We will speak again,
though, I will insist on it.

DE BARRA

Madame.

Madame LE NOTRE goes to the front door. The door is opened
and a sedan chair waits for her.

MADAME LE NOTRE

I shall be back in the evening,
around seven. Andre.

LE NOTRE

Yes. Good.

MADAME LE NOTRE turns to leave.

LE NOTRE steers DE BARRA into the collection room.

LE NOTRE (CONT'D)

How did you fare this morning, what
were you doing?

MADAME LE NOTRE turns back to watch them.

DE BARRA

I was in Marly, meeting Monsieur
Quintinie.

MADAME LE NOTRE's eye catches the hall tray, with DE BARRA's
card on it. She picks it up puts it into her purse. She
leaves.

LE NOTRE

And how many others know of this
encounter?

DE BARRA

Nobody, although thousands of people were waiting for him outside the gates, which made me feel uncomfortable. There is always this, eh, business, about being favoured.

DE BARRA looks at LE NOTRE.

DE BARRA (CONT'D)

A delicate situation. I cannot say I expected this from our business contract, Kings and things, really this is your area. I have learned quite a lot about you today, I don't feel quite so disadvantaged.

LE NOTRE

Your eyes narrowed when you said that.

She comes to the point.

DE BARRA

I recognise your wife. She is part of the Montespan entourage.

LE NOTRE

Yes she is.

DE BARRA

You did not tell me it was she, at the Louvre.

LE NOTRE

No.

DE BARRA

Am I part of an amusement for you both?

LE NOTRE

No!

DE BARRA

I am very exposed here. Please allow me to finish. When you spoke about the understanding you had with your wife, I, foolishly perhaps, assumed she did not live here. It is the custom I know, very sophisticated. Is it honest. Are you ?

LE NOTRE goes over to her.

LE NOTRE

No. I have not been honest since I watched you in my garden. Your heart beats fiercely, mine just ticks. I have no gifts to offer such a wonder, I am as artificial as the gardens I build.

DE BARRA grips his arms.

DE BARRA

Your gift to me is already given.

She takes his hand and places it on her heart.

DE BARRA (CONT'D)

If you are hungry I will feed you.
If I am mad, you will tell me. This is our contract.

LE NOTRE

You are not mad.

DE BARRA

You do not know all of me, yet. I am dishonest too. Promise.

LE NOTRE

Yes.

They kiss as lovers deep in passion. After she takes his face in her hands.

DE BARRA

Are you hungry?

LE NOTRE

Starving.

96 EXT. OUTSIDE PARIS. AN INN. AFTERNOON 96

Music. An old inn stands beside the river. DE BARRA's hat hangs on the side of a chair. A woman clears the remains of lunch.

97 INT. THE INN. THE BEDROOM. AFTERNOON 97

DE BARRA and LE NOTRE naked, they grip each other intensely, their eyes and limbs locked. They bend and twist, bite and kiss, crying out, their spirits starved. They push together fusing in the shock of orgasm.

98 INT. THE INN. AFTERNOON. 98

DE BARRA weeps. LE NOTRE rocks her gently.

99 INT. LE NOTRE'S HOUSE. HALL. LATE AFTERNOON. 99

MADAME LE NOTRE arrives home. Taking her cloak off, she stops, listening.

MADAME LE NOTRE

Andre.

She stands in the silent hall.

100 EXT. THE ROCKWORK GROVE. LATE AFTERNOON. 100

DE BARRA stands, smiling. Behind her the marble is being laid on the cascade, and dance floor. LE NOTRE stands a little away from her, he is smiling.

LE NOTRE

Is this what you want to do? I shall be miserable without you.

DE BARRA

And I shall be miserable without you. Gloriously miserable.

LE NOTRE laughs. Then takes her in his arms and kisses her.

101 EXT. THE ROCKWORK GROVE. LATE AFTERNOON 101

LE NOTRE's carriage pulls away. Turning DE BARRA walks into the fading light. He shouts after her.

LE NOTRE (V.O.)

Do you miss me yet ?

DE BARRA laughs.

102 INT. LE NOTRE'S HOUSE. LE NOTRE'S STUDY. EVENING. 102

MADAME LE NOTRE sits in the twilight. The street door opens, and LE NOTRE's voice is heard talking to the houseman. She sits up. LE NOTRE enters and goes over to his desk. She watches him in the gloom.

MADAME LE NOTRE

Andre.

LE NOTRE turns swiftly to her.

LE NOTRE

Madame.

He turns back to his desk, collecting letters. He picks up the KING's letter.

MADAME LE NOTRE
I've been waiting here for you.

LE NOTRE does not respond. MADAME LE NOTRE voice is practised nonchalance.

MADAME LE NOTRE (CONT'D)
We really must try to communicate
our whereabouts, otherwise how
shall I know where you are, or you
me.

Still with his back to her.

LE NOTRE
Is there something you need Madame?

MADAME LE NOTRE get up and walks into his eye line.

MADAME LE NOTRE
Forgive me if I come straight to
the matter. I have been wondering
about your friend.

LE NOTRE looks up.

MADAME LE NOTRE (CONT'D)
The builder. Madame de Barra. Is it
not?

LE NOTRE does not respond.

MADAME LE NOTRE (CONT'D)
I wonder if, if I should be
expected to, if she is to be an
aspect of your life, that I must
now include? I can see no reason
for her being here, other than you
alerting me to this possibility.

LE NOTRE
Continue Madame.

MADAME LE NOTRE
Andre, a builder.

LE NOTRE
I am a builder, Madame. You are
funded by that profession.

MADAME LE NOTRE laughs.

MADAME LE NOTRE
That is very amusing. Perhaps that
is the fantasy between you and she.
So be it.

(MORE)

MADAME LE NOTRE (CONT'D)

I must request that you keep this
fantasy separate from our lives.
That it does not impinge on the
dignity of our marriage.

LE NOTRE looks at his wife, his features darkening in the
gloom. He says nothing for a while, then walks toward the
door.

LE NOTRE

I leave for Fontainebleau, for the
weekend.

MADAME LE NOTRE's face changes.

LE NOTRE exits into --

103 INT. LE NOTRE'S HOUSE HALL. EVENING.

103

MADAME LE NOTRE follows him...

MADAME LE NOTRE

Fontainebleau? That is odd, I was
not aware there were weekend
activities. The Marquise must have
forgotten..

MADAME LE NOTRE a little off balance adopts a conciliatory
tone. She moves toward him.

MADAME LE NOTRE (CONT'D)

It is so long since we spent time
together. I am exhausted by the
city, shall I --

LE NOTRE moving away quickly.

LE NOTRE

That will not be possible. I intend
to spend the weekend with somebody
else. Plainly, Madame, that is the
position. If you will excuse me.

He takes out the KING's letter carefully leaving it on a side
table, then leaves. MADAME LE NOTRE stands for a moment, then
moves to pick up the letter, begins reading.

104 EXT. THE SITE OF THE ROCKWORK GROVE. EVENING.

104

DE BARRA is working by lantern. Everyone else has gone home.
She drills a small hole in the lava nodes, threads wire
through it, twists the wire into a loop, then throws the rock
unto a large pile of the same. One cracks in two revealing a
crystal. She looks into its kaleidoscope of colour, smiling.

MARIE-CLARE
 (Whispering)
 Mamma..

DE BARRA jumps up, kicks over the lantern. Darkness.

DE BARRA
 Marie-Claire!

After a little.

DE BARRA (CONT'D)
 It's dark here, sweetheart, don't
 be frightened.

DE BARRA lights her tinderbox, tears stream her face. MARIE-CLARE is gone.

DE BARRA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 I know she is dead.

105 INT. DE BARRA'S BEDROOM. NIGHT.

105

DE BARRA and LE NOTRE sit up in bed together. She a little apart from him, speaking quietly.

DE BARRA
 I saw them place her small coffin
 in the earth. And in that earth
 went the warmth of faith, and part
 of my reason. I have never spoken
 about it because I believe, that
 people would doubt my sanity. I
 doubt it myself. I hear her so
 clearly, I feel her. You see now
 the importance of our contract. Do
 you think- am I mad?

LE NOTRE
 No. I think you are locked into the
 past, and feel it as intense fear
 in the present. But you know the
 difference between them. It can
 only injure you when you cannot
 tell the present from the past.

DE BARRA
 That would be a black day.

LE NOTRE
 We will deal with events as they
 happen.

106 EXT. FONTAINEBLEAU. THE CHATEAU. EVENING.

106

The old chateau is situated in the town of Fontainebleau behind ornate gates. Its solid yellow stone is lit by torches. DE BARRA's coach arrives. She steps out and is met by the MAITRE D'HOTEL. He bows deeply, and checks her name in a large book.

LE NOTRE steps out.

MAITRE D'HOTEL

Madame de Barra, good evening. I am Jean-Paul du Chiavillar, Marquis du Monk. On behalf of the royal household, I welcome you, Madame. This is Marie.

A young woman curtseys.

MAITRE D'HOTEL (CONT'D)

She will look after you this weekend. Should you require any specific body services, please inform Marie, as with special dietary requirements. You have about an hour before the reception with the other guests. Supper is at ten thirty, with entertainment continuing until two. If you encounter any difficulties, please inform me. Allow me to wish you the best of times for your stay at the chateau.

He hands her some printed sheets. He brings her to the stairs, bows.

MAITRE D'HOTEL (CONT'D)

Madame.

He turns to deal with LE NOTRE, who winks at DE BARRA.

MARIE and a houseman carry her luggage up the stairs. DE BARRA waits for LE NOTRE. He looks up at her and mouths.

LE NOTRE

Go on.

She goes reluctantly, when she glances back he is gone.

107 INT. FONTAINEBLEAU. DE BARRA'S ROOM. EVENING.

107

DE BARRA goes to the window, looks out.

MARIE

I have drawn a bath. And if you please, Madame, which gown will I put out for you?

DE BARRA

The lilac, I won't require much with my hair. It's my own.

MARIE

Very well Madame.

Her eye is caught by papers on a table.

DE BARRA

What is this?

MARIE

Room-plan, Madame. The occupants are listed on the back with their room numbers.

DE BARRA

Oh. Very useful.

C. U. room plan. DE BARRA's finger finds LE NOTRE's room number.

DE BARRA looks up.

108 INT. FONTAINEBLEAU. DE BARRA'S ROOM. EVENING.

108

DE BARRA looks nervously at the clock. A knock at the door. MARIE opens it. In the doorway, LAUZUN.

Aged between forty and fifty, he is handsome and tall, exquisitely tailored, and every inch the aristocrat.

DE BARRA is taken aback. She was expecting LE NOTRE.

LAUZUN

Madame de Barra, I am Antoine Lauzun Nonpar de Laumont, Marquis de Puy Guilhem, count Lauzun. I have the good fortune to enjoy your company for a little of the evening.

DE BARRA

Sir.

He steps in.

LAUZUN

How beautiful you look.

DE BARRA

Thank you, sir, I believe it is compulsory.

LAUZUN

Indeed. However, some ladies find it more of a challenge.

DE BARRA

I am bound to say sir, I see no trace of that challenge in you.

She curtseys.

LAUZUN

Thank you, Madame. But do not talk to me about it, I am ruined by the expense. I am at present squashed into a tiny apartment with no windows, but on the right side Eof the chateau, thank God. It is costing upward of two hundred gold louis every month. It is shocking, Madame, shocking, and worse, it is interfering with my gaming .

DE BARRA

Shocking.

LAUZUN

Shocking. Madame, you make me forget myself. May I present a token from His Majesty to welcome you here?

He gives her a box.

DE BARRA

Thank you. What shall I call you, I would be unsure, you have so many titles?

LAUZUN

Why, Antoine, Madame. Call me Antoine.

DE BARRA

Thank you, Antoine, and I am Sabine, by the way.

She opens the box, a *quatres saisons* rose is in it. She smiles.

LAUZUN

I must confess to you, Madame,
escorting you down is something of
a coup.

DE BARRA

How so?

LAUZUN

There are several parties anxious
to meet you.

DE BARRA

I am no one. What could the
interest be?

LAUZUN

Madame, you answer yourself. You
are no one, where everybody is
someone. Yet you are here, and that
makes you more the someone.

DE BARRA

Ah.

LAUZUN

Mmmm.

They turn the corner.

Their progress takes them to the top of the stairs. Several
other couples do the same.

LAUZUN (CONT'D)

We are a small community, there is
only about two thousand of us.
Everybody knows everybody else,
everybody has worked their way
through the group.

DE BARRA

Worked their way through?

LAUZUN

Fought with, had an affair with,
that kind of thing.

DE BARRA

I see.

They descend the stairs.

LAUZUN

So when somebody new arrives,
everybody wishes to acquaint
themselves. Especially if they
have any conversation.

(MORE)

LAUZUN (CONT'D)

You may be as ugly as a toad, but if you have conversation, people will scramble over each other to meet you.

DE BARRA

I see. So people will ignore me snatching a passing fly from the air with my tongue, as long as I have good subject matter?

He laughs.

LAUZUN

Oh, Madame.

DE BARRA

Sabine.

LAUZUN

Now you see people are looking our way with interest, because of my mirth. But I am under strict instructions to convey you to one particular lady.

They reach the end of the stairs. DE BARRA looks about for LE NOTRE. They go toward the doors to the ballroom.

110 INT. FONTAINEBLEAU. THE BALLROOM. NIGHT.

110

The crowded room is lit by candles in chandeliers twisted with roses. Music is playing. DE BARRA looks around for LE NOTRE. He stands at a distance watching. She is unaware of this.

LAUZUN

Ah, there is the lady.

DE BARRA and LAUZUN step into a group.

LAUZUN (CONT'D)

May I have the pleasure to present Madame de Barra to Marquise du Montespan?

MARQUISE DU MONTESPAN turns round, DE BARRA is again completely surprised, and anxious. She scans her entourage for MADAME LE NOTRE but does not see her. The MARQUISE is covered in diamonds and pearls. When she speaks she drawls. She has warmth and spirit. Her laughter is very infectious.

MONTESPAN

Heavens, The lengths I have had to go to. Madame, I have bribed, lied and used every form of deception, to meet you now.

LAUZUN

How much did you pay the Maitre
d'Hotel.

MONTESPAN

Four gold louis. Was that too much?

LAUZUN

Money well spent. Madame de Barra
is everything Princess Pallotine
described. She served me a classic
witticism on the stairs. I had no
control. I just burst out laughing.

MONTESPAN

On the stairs, very well placed,
above everybody. Lauzun, you are a
sweet-heart, I love you dearly,
kiss me now. (He does so on her
cheek) And leave me to explore my
prize.

LAUZUN

I shall enjoy you later. Madame...

He kisses her hand.

DE BARRA

Thank you, Antoine. Good luck -- at
the tables.

LAUZUN

I feel lucky tonight.

He bows and leaves. DE BARRA turns back to MONTESPAN.

DE BARRA

He is your friend, Madame la
Marquise?

MONTESPAN

Yes, my friend, and a divine lover.
What can I say, Madame, events
overtook us, before I had the
King's interest. But now we must
find Pallotine. Come, let's walk
together.

MONTESPAN takes her arm.

MONTESPAN (CONT'D)

So, what do you think of us,
Madame? We mice in a trap. This is
the first time you are at Court?

DE BARRA

Yes. But I cannot say about the
trap.

(MORE)

DE BARRA (CONT'D)

I have not the least of blood in me. So unlike the people here, I would not be required to attend.

MONTESPAN

No birth at all, Madame?

DE BARRA

Not a drop.

MONTESPAN

So you are here entirely on your own merits.

DE BARRA

I know a famous man.

MONTESPAN

I see. I was going to offer you Lauzun, you are ahead of the game.

MADAME

Athenais!

PRINCESS PALLOTINE and her court arrive. They kiss on each cheek.

MADAME (CONT'D)

Madame de Barra, I am very happy to see you again.

DE BARRA

Princess.

MADAME

Oh please call me 'Madame'. It is affectionate and everybody does.

DE BARRA

Madame.

MADAME

Good, good. What a lovely time we had at lunch.

MONTESPAN

You were at lunch together? I wish to hear it all, every detail. But first let me introduce the rest of the ladies.

LE NOTRE watches as she steers DE BARRA into --

111 INT. FONTAINEBLEAU. ANTE-CHAMBER. NIGHT.

111

A small room full to the brim of women. Music. They crowd round DE BARRA.

As they are being introduced, they look directly at her, they study her openly, touch her hand, turn it over, take off her rings, try them on themselves. Look at her shoes. One tugs her hair to find out if it is real. DE BARRA yells, they all laugh.

From above the women crowd round, some join the group, some bring others as they investigate.

DE BARRA, at first a little apprehensive about being touched, begins to enjoy herself. She looks at the two women and smiles.

FIRST LADY

Do you dig earth?

DE BARRA

Yes.

FIRST LADY

Are you blackened by the sun, no.

DE BARRA

Yes, a little.

SUZANNE

Let us see. Show us your breasts, are they pretty?

DE BARRA does not know what to do.

SECOND LADY

Would you like to see mine? Mine are the most beautiful.

She shows DE BARRA her breasts.

ALL

Yes they are, apart from Suzanne, who is seventy.

SECOND LADY

Oh yes, hers are perfect. You see. Here, touch.

DE BARRA does.

THIRD LADY

Are you married?

DE BARRA

Widowed.

THIRD LADY

Did you like your husband?

DE BARRA

Yes, I did.

SECOND LADY
Children? And your own teeth.

DE BARRA
One a little girl, but not living.

They stop playing around and listen intently.

MADAME
When did she die?

DE BARRA
Five years ago. She was six.

They all nod, again touching her hand, squeezing it.

MONTESPAN
Pallotine has lost Louis too.

MADAME
Yes. He was four, so little and beautiful.

DE BARRA
I am so sorry, princess.

FIRST LADY
Charles was one.

SECOND LADY
I lost Joan and Ann together, smallpox.

DE BARRA
I too lost my husband and child together.

SUZANNE
I lost my husband and son on the battlefield. They died in each other's arms. I am barely here.

SECOND LADY
How did your family die?

DE BARRA
A coach accident, they died together quickly, there is something else, but I -

She trails off unable to finish.

THIRD LADY
Do you find it hard to remember ?

DE BARRA
Yes, I know I dream of them, but I cannot remember all the dreams.

MADAME

Yes, that can happen.

SUZANNNE

To me it did. But then some time later, a small shock of recognition, on seeing a flower in a field one day, one the three of us knew from a holiday in the south, then it came back slowly.

DE BARRA

Do you think I will remember?

SUZANNE

Yes, when you are strong enough to remember, my dear, when you are strong enough.

MADAME

Athenais has lost Louise.

MONTESPAN

Yes, I had such hopes for her, a King's daughter. We are not allowed to speak of death at court. The King does not like it, so he has banned it. But we speak about it amongst ourselves. Nobody can ban a child from its mother's heart. So.

Something occurs to MONTESPAN.

MONTESPAN (CONT'D)

Oh, when I think of it. I commended all my children into her care. How she has turned on me now.

They fan themselves, stamp their feet, toss their heads.

DE BARRA

Who is this lady?

MONTESPAN

Madame la Marquise de Maintenon.

DE BARRA

Is she here?

MONTESPAN

Lord save us, no!

DE BARRA

How has she deceived you ?

MADAME

She has manipulated the King's affections,

MADAME whispers.

MADAME (CONT'D)
 She is turning Louis against
 Athenais, already she has ousted
 Madame le Notre from the Montespans
 entourage.

MADAME waits for the impact of this news to penetrate. DE
 BARRA looks a little alarmed. MADAME nods slowly.

MADAME (CONT'D)
 Do you see ? It was Maintenon not
 anyone else.

Outside the voice of --

SWISS GUARD
 The King comes!

They collect themselves together, move out the door.

112 INT. FONTAINEBLEAU. THE BALLROOM. NIGHT.

112

MONTESPAN
 You have not told me the identity
 of your famous man.

DE BARRA says nothing smiling.

MONTESPAN (CONT'D)
 You are resisting, but it is
 useless, I will know all. Have you
 been presented before, Madame?

DE BARRA
 No, Madame, I have never met the
 King, only the King's gardener.

MONTESPAN
 I shall present you.

DE BARRA and MONTESPAN arrive late. All the others are bowing
 or dropped in deep curtseys.

LAUZUN
 Just in time.

The KING arrives. He is dressed in his traditional costume of
 THE SUN KING. His plumed hat, dress coat, stockings, and
 finally shoes, are all heavily embroidered in gold thread.
 All studded in diamonds. He has a huge entourage.

As he is introduced to a party he notices the line of bowed
 heads turned away from him.

His eyes travel down the line to find DE BARRA and MONTESPAN, dropping in curtses, just a fraction late. He looks quizzically at them, sets off in their direction.

MONTESPAN

Your Majesty, it is my pleasure to present Madame de Barra.

LOUIS

Madame de Barra.

DE BARRA

Your Majesty.

LOUIS

Is that *Quatres Saisons*, Madame de Barra?

DE BARRA

It is, sire, a gift from the most famous gardener in the world.

LOUIS

Should we not take a sniff, Madame de Barra?

DE BARRA

Allow me, your majesty.

She unclips her rose, and he smells.

LOUIS

It has a light honest scent. It is very refreshing, Madame de Barra. Some other roses are over-scented and overblown..

He looks at MONTESPAN.

DE BARRA summons up all her courage in defence of her new friend whose demise she has influenced.

DE BARRA

That fate awaits all roses, sire.

LOUIS

Is that so, Madame de Barra?

DE BARRA

All roses are open to the elements your majesty. They bud, bloom and fade.

LOUIS

Continue, Madame.

DE BARRA

In the garden the rose grows entirely unaware, she follows a pattern of growth, changing naturally from one state to another, in order that future seasons may exist, and although the elements may treat her cruelly, she knows nothing of it, and continues to her end, without judgement on her beauty. Alas, it is not the same for us.

MONTESPAN listens intently.

LOUIS

If such a rose could speak, what would she say?

DE BARRA

She would say 'Yes, I am here, and gave service under nature's eye, and after me my children will be. Is there any greater contribution, or more graceful end?'

MONTESPAN looks at the KING. The KING considers this.

LOUIS

A wise rose.

He looks at MONTESPAN. Her face is proud, a tear runs down her face.

LOUIS (CONT'D)

And what protection can we afford this rose from these harsh elements of change?

DE BARRA

A little warmth, from the sun, can do wonders for the growth of a rose, your majesty.

LOUIS

We shall see, Madame de Barra. Now walk with us, and describe your progress in our garden.

They start off through the crowds.

MONTESPAN stays behind with MADAME who puts her arm around her waist.

MONTESPAN

Kindness, unbribed.

The KING with the noble party makes his way through the crowds, who bow and curtsey, like a widening wave from his centre. Some are nobles, ministers, civil servants, others from the provinces, even butchers and bakers. He introduces DE BARRA to one and all, gradually covering the room. All the while she looks for LE NOTRE.

LE NOTRE stands with MONSIEUR, LOUIS's brother, at the doors of the supper room. He sees DE BARRA and smiles.

LOUIS

Now here is the man you are
responsible to, Madame de Barra.
Well now, master, brother.

They bow first, then LE NOTRE and the KING grip arms.

MONSIEUR

King Monsieur, it is a delightful
party, should we eat now, do you
think? Madame de Barra, I am very
happy to see you.

DE BARRA

Your Royal Highness. I am
delighted to see you.

LOUIS

Yes, Andre, you gave a luncheon, I
hear.

LE NOTRE

Sire, I did.

LOUIS

You know Lauzun?

LAUZUN

Monsieur Le Notre may I present to
you Madame de Barra, whom it is my
pleasure to escort this evening?

LE NOTRE

We have met, thank you, sir.
Madame.

MONSIEUR

We should eat, King Monsieur,
before those at the back get
cranky, what do you say?

LOUIS

I think so, brother. Master le
Notre, since Madame de Barra is
responsible to you during the day,
I order you now to be responsible
to her this evening.

(MORE)

LOUIS (CONT'D)
See to her every need, watch for
her comfort, indulge all her
wishes.

He takes DE BARRA's hand, kisses it and hands it to Le Notre.

LE NOTRE
It will be my pleasure, majesty.

LOUIS turns to LAUZUN.

LOUIS
Four gold louis is never enough to
influence the situation for long.

LAUZUN bows.

LOUIS and MONSIEUR walk into the supper room.

MONSIEUR
I am famished. I'd eat the lamb of
God! What's for supper? I hope
game. What did you decide on, King
Monsieur?

LOUIS
Oh, a little of everything. I like
your hat.

MONSIEUR
And I do not care for your 'Hat' at
all, 'King' Monsieur. It would be
far too tight on my little
numbskull.

LOUIS
It is just as well brother, it only
comes in the one colour.

They laugh together.

113 INT. FONTAINEBLEAU. OUTSIDE DE BARRA'S BEDROOM. NIGHT. 113

LE NOTRE opens the bedroom door and stands back waiting.

DE BARRA emerges from the shadows, moves quickly toward the
door.

LE NOTRE stops her going in.

LE NOTRE
You are very bourgeois, Madame. I
assure you nobody here could give a
toss about us, we are answerable
only to each other. I want people
to see us together. I like it.
(MORE)

LE NOTRE (CONT'D)
That's enough middle class nonsense
from you. Let me make love to you.

DE BARRA
Brute of a nobleman.

LE NOTRE
With a very soft tongue.

114 INT. DREAMSCAPE

114

A man and a little girl, their faces dark, stand holding hands at the edge of a drop. They look over the drop.

They whisper to each other in the silence, then look back to DE BARRA standing further back, dressed in black, a veil over her face.

They beckon her over, showing her the edge.

As she moves she loses her footing.

She looks down to find she is standing on the edge of an open grave, a coffin falling into it.

It reaches the bottom of the grave with a massive bang.

From behind we watch DE BARRA struggle to regain her footing as earth flies up from the grave.

115 INT. FONTAINEBLEAU. DE BARRA'S BEDROOM NIGHT.

115

DE BARRA jumps up screaming.

LE NOTRE wakes, he grabs her.

LE NOTRE
You're here with me. You're with
me.

He succeeds in calming her.

DE BARRA
I was there, I saw them die.

116 EXT. THE ROCKWORK GROVE. AFTERNOON.

116

The lava rocks are in place on the cascades, men are fixing the Madagascar shells across the rims, from where the water will flow. The lava nodes that DE BARRA was drilling are also being fitted to the entrance walls. Red marble slabs are in place on either side of the cascades.

In the centre of the ballroom, DE BARRA and DURAS open crates, inside a gilt lead vase. It is late afternoon and hot. Both are sweaty and grimy.

DURAS shouts up to a man waiting with a horse and cart.

DURAS
Yes, this is ours.

He looks at a silent DE BARRA.

DURAS (CONT'D)
You won't mind me saying that you seem a bit flat for a woman who is conducting the love affair of the century.

DE BARRA
I know. I do love him. It is so acute. I feel it in my finger tips. Here too.

She touches her heart.

DE BARRA (CONT'D)
You are used to all this with Denise, perhaps it will mellow. I am so grateful not to be lonely. I don't know why it is frightening, I...

DURAS takes her hand and pats it.

DURAS
All you may do is to try.

She nods.

117 EXT. THE ROCKWORK GROVE. EVENING.

117

DE BARRA is sitting on a crate watching the evening sun.

Some of her men are leaving. She calls goodnight to them. After a little, she sits up and turns.

MADAME LE NOTRE is standing watching her.

MADAME LE NOTRE
Good evening Madame.

DE BARRA stands.

MADAME LE NOTRE takes a long look at DE BARRA, who initially startled, grows more resolute in the face of this acrid appraisal.

DE BARRA

Good evening. Is there something you wish ? I regret I may not offer you any comforts, perhaps you would care to sit.

MADAME LE NOTRE casts her eyes on the crate. She laughs, a deep murmuring unpleasant sound.

MADAME LE NOTRE

You are all kindness Madame. Allow me to decline. You are a widow, I believe, Madame.

DE BARRA

Yes, I am.

MADAME LE NOTRE

How long?

DE BARRA

Five years, Madame.

MADAME LE NOTRE

How lonely that must be. No husband to bed. But then, perhaps you are not in need of constant attention. Have you dried a little?

MADAME LE NOTRE raises an eyebrow. DE BARRA says nothing.

MADAME LE NOTRE (CONT'D)

I know, Madame, you have relations with my husband. I offer you no malice. Indeed I feel only a sense of relief. For some time now I have known that Andre has had some secret happiness. I was not sure of the source, until, that is, I met you. Did that ever happen to you, Madame? Did you ever see someone, and know they were to play a role in your life?

DE BARRA does not respond. An unpleasant sound like a laugh emanates from MADAME LE NOTRE. She steps forward to DE BARRA, lowers her voice till at the end of her speech it is seductive.

MADAME LE NOTRE (CONT'D)

We have an agreement, Madame, which enables us both to entertain relations outside of our marriage. Frivolous liaisons, Madame, a diversion. You are not the first, Madame, and I believe at the moment not the only one.

(MORE)

MADAME LE NOTRE (CONT'D)
Understand me, Madame, it suits us,
my husband and I, this way.

She comes a little closer. Her eyes hold DE BARRA's. She
whispers.

MADAME LE NOTRE (CONT'D)
Pretty thing.

DE BARRA breaks free of this hypnotic grip.

DE BARRA
Thank you, Madame, for your
directness. I shall consider what
you have said.

MADAME LE NOTRE
Good day, Madame de Barra.

MADAME LE NOTRE turns slowly and walks away into the dusk.

118 INT. THE CHAPEL. MORNING

118

The procession to mass.

The KING and members of the court enter the chapel from the
back. Including MONSIEUR and MADAME DE MONTESPAN, LAUZUN and
all those previously featured. A slow progress to the altar.
They genuflect, and move toward their seats.

The KING waits until they are still. Suddenly revealed,
MADAME DU MAINTENON. He takes her hand and begins leading
her.

MADAME DU MONTESPAN beside MADAME, PRINCESS PALLOTINE watch
the KING's progress.

MONTESPAN's face as she realises the KING has married
MAINTENON.

MONTESPAN
They're married.

MADAME DU MAINTENON seated in the QUEEN's box.

C. U. MADAME DU MONTESPAN.

119 INT. DE BARRA'S HOUSE. ATTIC. DAY.

119

Sound of a woman crying.

We come through the attic doors into a darker room, moving
past some stacked books, boots, tiny wooden chair for a
child, some baby clothes, a man's toilet equipage, combs and
hair brushes, child's wooden toy, ribbons.

120 INT. THE CHAPEL. DAY 120

C. U. MADAME DU MONTESPAN. SHE LOOKS DOWN, TREMBLING.

121 INT. DE BARRA'S HOUSE. ATTIC. DAY. 121

Some drawings made by a child, shells, mittens, scrap book, bouquet of dried flowers. A rag-doll. DE BARRA's hand picks up the doll. She smells it.

122 INT. THE CHAPEL. DAY. 122

MADAME DU MONTESPAN looks up at her and the KING's children. They sit in a row. All look like versions of LOUIS. The eldest, DU MAINE, looks back at his mother. He blows her a kiss.

123 INT. DE BARRA'S HOUSE. ATTIC. DAY. 123

DE BARRA's face. She kisses the doll, closes her eyes.

124 INT. THE CHAPEL. DAY. 124

C. U. MADAME DU MONTESPAN's face. She smiles back at DU MAINE, collects herself a little, and slowly looks at the KING in his box. He looks back at her, an enigma.

125 INT. DE BARRA'S HOUSE. ATTIC. DAY. 125

DE BARRA puts on a man coat. She puts her hands in the pocket. She takes out a letter. DE BARRA's face, puzzled.

126 INT. THE CHAPEL. DAY. 126

The KING looks away. MONTESPAN. A flash of anger passes over her face.

127 INT. DE BARRA'S HOUSE. ATTIC. DAY. 127

DE BARRA's face reading the letter, the same flash of anger.

128 INT. THE CHAPEL. DAY. 128

MONTESPAN now has anger to hold on to. MADAME holds her hand. LAUZUN mimes cutting his own throat, he points to the KING. MONTESPAN bursts out laughing. She looks back at her children.

129 INT. DE BARRA'S HOUSE. ATTIC. DAY. 129
DE BARRA puts down the letter.

130 INT. LE NOTRE'S HOUSE. THE HALLWAY. EVENING 130
LE NOTRE puts on his coat. MADAME LE NOTRE is watching.
She comes down the stairs.

MADAME LE NOTRE
Are you leaving?

LE NOTRE looks up at her approaching.

LE NOTRE
Yes.

He smiles and starts to turn away.

MADAME LE NOTRE
May I speak with you?

LE NOTRE
If you wish.

MADAME LE NOTRE
How handsome you look. I find
myself wishing that things between
us were better.

LE NOTRE
Is your allowance sufficient? If
you have some expense?

MADAME LE NOTRE
It is quite sufficient, thank you.
I wish relations between us,
resolved. It is a long time since
you have visited me, Andre. I miss
you.

LE NOTRE
It will pass, Madame.

MADAME LE NOTRE
I wish us to be as we once were. I
want you in my bed. I want you to
love me as a wife.

LE NOTRE
Will it not be a little crowded,
Madame?

MADAME LE NOTRE
Please, let us not live in the
past.

LE NOTRE

The past, Madame, is what has damaged the present.

MADAME LE NOTRE

We are married, Andre, could we not look to the future? I feel us at the edge of, of something. I am trying to pull us back, Andre, you must make the sensible choice here. I beg you, do not exclude me -- again.

LE NOTRE

I remind you, Madame, that it was you who embarked on this path. You, and only you, dictated how we live now, and you did it, Madame, when I needed you most.

MADAME LE NOTRE

Andre, you shut me out, you would not let me love you. You cannot say I did not try. I did not know what to do. I felt you hated me.

LE NOTRE

I did not then. But the years, Madame, have taken their toll.

MADAME LE NOTRE

Don't go!

LE NOTRE

You have been free to live your life as you wished, without any embarrassment from me, no matter how humiliated I have been. I ask you now to extend me the same courtesy.

LE NOTRE exasperated takes a moment, then quietly continues.

LE NOTRE (CONT'D)

I intend leaving you. I will offer you a good settlement, you will be comfortable. I cannot... any longer.

MADAME LE NOTRE

Andre, I cannot share you, I beg you not to go.

LE NOTRE

I begged you once, Madame, do you remember? Allow me now to give you the same advice you gave me then.

(MORE)

LE NOTRE (CONT'D)
 You said, 'It is a matter of feeling special. If we are unable, one to make the other feel special, then we must just accept it, seek comfort elsewhere, with others. It is an honest contract, my dear, you'll grow used to it. It is the practical solution.' The practical solution. This is a bad end for you and me, and I am sorry for it.

He moves to the door. Quietly MADAME LE NOTRE plays her card.

MADAME LE NOTRE
 Sorrier still when you speak to your builder.

LE NOTRE turns, looks at her.

LE NOTRE
 What have you done?

MADAME LE NOTRE
 Informed her of your partiality to variety. Assured her of your continued devotion. To me.

LE NOTRE
 No more Madame. No more, ever.

He leaves. MADAME LE NOTRE slumps down on the stairs.

MADAME LE NOTRE
 Despair. Despair.

131 INT. DE BARRA'S HOUSE. ATTIC. EVENING.

131

DE BARRA sits on the floor of the attic wrapped in her husband's coat. The letter still in her hand, something else catches her eye.

The little rag doll caught in the rays of evening sunlight.

A man coming forward out of evening light, calling. He has the doll in his hand.

MONSIEUR DE BARRA
 Sabine! Sabine! Sabine!

DE BARRA stands up, pinned to the wall by the sight of her dead husband.

DE BARRA
 Phillippe.

He stops. MONSIEUR DE BARRA husband of SABINE DE BARRA. Aged about forty eight. He stands in her past.

MONSIEUR DE BARRA
There you are.

He looks a little to the right of DE BARRA speaking to someone behind her.

132 INT. DE BARRA'S COUNTRY HOUSE. PAST. MORNING. 132

Asleep on her bed, in her house, six years ago, DE BARRA PAST wakes up.

DE BARRA PAST
I was sleeping. You're dressed.

MONSIEUR DE BARRA opens curtains. As he does the light floods into the room, DE BARRA PAST squints in the light.

133 INT. DE BARRA'S HOUSE. ATTIC. EVENING. 133

DE BARRA PRESENT squints in the light.

134 INT. DE BARRA'S COUNTRY HOUSE. PAST. MORNING. 134

He turns, smiling, opening the window.

MONSIEUR DE BARRA
I'm off on business to Chartres today. I thought I would take Marie-Claire, there is a good puppet stand, and a pie shop. Two requisites for a happy child.

DE BARRA PAST sits up in bed. He turns back to the window.

MONSIEUR DE BARRA (CONT'D)
Marie Claire, are you there?

DE BARRA PAST
I have a delivery today so I'll stay.

MARIE CLAIRE (V.O.)
Papa!

135 INT. DE BARRA'S HOUSE ATTIC. EVENING. 135

MARIE CLAIRE (V.O.)
Mama!

DE BARRA PRESENT immobile, her face blank.

136 INT. DE BARRA'S COUNTRY HOUSE. PAST. MORNING.

136

DE BARRA PAST
Good morning my sweet girl!

MONSIEUR DE BARRA at the window.

MAIRE CLAIRE (V.O.)
Did you find her ?

MONSIEUR DE BARRA
Here is Belle Boobie, asleep in
mama's room.

He holds the doll up to the window. The doll's face peeps
over the sill.

He speaks in the doll's voice.

MONSIEUR DE BARRA (CONT'D)
Hello Marie Claire!

MARIE CLAIRE (V.O.)
Oh! Belle Boobie, you are a naughty
doll. Come here and I shall punish
you severely.

MONSIEUR DE BARRA
That's what you always say, but you
never do! I bet if I jumped out
this window you would not be able
to catch me.

He tosses the doll out of the window. Then asks in mock
horror --

MONSIEUR DE BARRA (CONT'D)
Oh my goodness! Is she alright?

137 EXT. DE BARRA'S COUNTRY HOUSE PAST. MORNING.

137

MARIE-CLARE in the driveway. She picks up her doll. She looks
up at the windows of the house.

MARIE CLAIRE
Don't be silly Papa, she's made of
cloth, you can't hurt her.

138 INT. DE BARRA'S HOUSE. ATTIC. EVENING.

138

DE BARRA as before.

139 INT. DE BARRA'S COUNTRY HOUSE PAST. MORNING. 139

At the window, DE BARRA PAST stands with her husband, watching her girl.

MONSIEUR DE BARRA
Heavens, what a relief ! I shall
have to sit down now.

He staggers away from the window, leaving DE BARRA PAST.

MONSIEUR DE BARRA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Sabine, I have something to tell
you.

140 EXT. THE STREETS OF PARIS. LATE EVENING. 140

LE NOTRE walks along the streets to DE BARRA's house.

141 INT. DE BARRA'S COUNTRY HOUSE. PAST. MORNING. 141

Still at the window, DE BARRA PAST is silent. She turns to her husband.

He sits on the bed.

DE BARRA PAST
How long?

MONSIEUR DE BARRA
Five years, maybe six.

After a moment.

MONSIEUR DE BARRA (CONT'D)
I feel better now it is out in the
open.

DE BARRA PAST
Do you? I regret to say I do not
feel better at all.

MONSIEUR DE BARRA
Yes, of course, Sabine. I...But
how do you feel -- are you greatly
upset at this news? We are not
exactly close. And most men take
mistresses in due course, in such
circumstances. I...

DE BARRA PAST
Well, God forbid I should stand in
the way of 'due course'.

DE BARRA PAST looks out the window.

142 EXT. DE BARRA'S COUNTRY HOUSE. PAST. MORNING. 142
MARIE-CLAIRE playing.

143 INT. DE BARRA'S HOUSE. ATTIC. NIGHT. 143
DE BARRA like a statue against the wall of the attic.
Listening.

DE BARRA PAST (V.O.)
When will you next meet 'due
course'? What is her name?

MONSIEUR DE BARRA (V.O.)
Diane.

DE BARRA PAST (V.O.)
Diane. So when?

MONSIEUR DE BARRA (V.O.)
Not today. She lives in Berry.

DE BARRA PAST (V.O.)
That is not far from here.

144 INT. DE BARRA'S COUNTRY HOUSE. PAST. MORNING. 144
MONSIEUR DE BARRA joins his wife at the window, watching
their girl.

MONSIEUR DE BARRA
Sabine, could I bring Marie-Claire
to meet her? I talk so much about
her to Diane and she has no
children of her own, so I
thought...

She moves away from him.

DE BARRA PAST
You ask me that now.

MONSIEUR DE BARRA
Yes, you are right, of course. We
will talk again on the matter.

The sound of a coach arriving.

MONSIEUR DE BARRA (CONT'D)
Oh, here is the coach now. Marie-
Claire is jumping about. I regret
any offence, Sabine. You have been
an excellent choice for me as wife.
I wish I could say the same for me
as your husband, but I find I
cannot.

(MORE)

MONSIEUR DE BARRA (CONT'D)

I have not as much drive as you.
But I have often wondered if that
was not the very reason you chose
me.

DE BARRA PAST

Maybe.

MONSIEUR DE BARRA

Well, anyway. I must go. Stay where
you are. Don't feel...

He moves towards the door.

DE BARRA PAST

When will you be back?

MONSIEUR DE BARRA

This evening, Madame.

DE BARRA PAST

Do not Madame me, Phillippe.

He leaves. DE BARRA PAST puts on her robe and moves back to
the window.

145 EXT. DE BARRA'S COUNTRY HOUSE. PAST. MORNING.

145

Outside, MARIE-CLAIRE is still jumping, The doll is thrown in
the air.

DE BARRA PAST speaks out the window.

DE BARRA PAST

Marie-Claire, tie your laces,
you'll fall over them!

MARIE-CLAIRE

I can't, mamma! -- come and give me
a kiss!

DE BARRA PAST

All right, sweetheart, wait for me!

MONSIEUR DE BARRA appears below. DE BARRA PAST pauses to
watch. JEAN points at a wheel. They discuss it in low voices
then go on. DE BARRA PAST moves quickly to the door.

146 EXT. DE BARRA'S COUNTRY HOUSE. PAST. MORNING.

146

DE BARRA PAST reaches the front door as the carriage is
pulling away.

DE BARRA PAST

I did not get my kiss!

DE BARRA PAST looks after the carriage. One wheel is rickety.

DE BARRA PAST (CONT'D)
That wheel is bad, Jean.

JEAN
I told the master. He felt it would
do till Berry.

DE BARRA PAST
Berry?

In the window MARIE-CLAIRE waves, smiling. DE BARRA PAST
walks forward a little, then starts to run.

DE BARRA PAST (CONT'D)
Marie-Claire! Marie --!

147 INT. THE COACH. PAST. MORNING. 147

Inside the coach MONSIEUR DE BARRA bangs his cane on the
roof, the driver speeds up, and the coach turns a bend in the
road. He smiles at his daughter.

148 EXT. DE BARRA'S COUNTRY HOUSE. PAST. MORNING. 148

DE BARRA PAST reaches the turn in the road, the road zig-zags
down the hill in front of her.

She scrambles down the bank to intercept the coach and runs
into the path of the coach, waving down the coachman.

The horses are startled. As they rear up the coach lurches
backwards, the wheel comes off, the coach slides to the edge
of the hill.

The weight of the carriage pulls it further over the edge.

DE BARRA PAST
Get out! Get out!

In the window, the faces of her husband and child. Then the
coach goes over. DE BARRA PAST leans over the edge. Silence,
then an enormous crash. A cloud of dust consumes her.

As the dust clears DE BARRA PAST turns from the edge of the
abyss. Her face blank. People come running. DE BARRA PAST
doesn't speak. She turns around and walks away.

149 INT. PARIS. DE BARRA'S HOUSE. ATTIC. NIGHT. 149

DE BARRA, her back pinned to the attic wall. She looks down,
a massive bang. She closes her eyes.

When she opens them again she is once more on the precipice looking over at the falling carriage as it reaches the bottom.

It is crushed.

DE BARRA's face absorbing this horror. For the first time her buried emotions shoot up through her body. She runs down the stairs screaming.

150 EXT. PARIS. DE BARRA'S GARDEN. NIGHT. 150

DE BARRA runs into the garden. She stands still, then begins to tear it to pieces.

151 INT. DE BARRA'S KITCHEN. NIGHT. 151

Inside, LOUISE, in the kitchen drying her hands, hears DE BARRA. She runs into the garden.

152 EXT. PARIS. DE BARRA'S GARDEN. NIGHT. 152

She sees DE BARRA and the continuing destruction.

LOUISE

Madame!

DE BARRA

Don't touch me!

153 EXT. THE STREETS OF PARIS. NIGHT. 153

LE NOTRE walks across Paris to DE BARRA's house.

154 EXT. PARIS STREETS. NIGHT. 154

LOUISE runs through the streets. She disappears up an alley just as LE NOTRE arrives into view. He thinks he may have seen her, but moves on quickening his pace.

155 EXT. PARIS STREETS. NIGHT. 155

LOUISE stands on the corner of the street. She asks directions from a passer-by.

156 EXT. PARIS DE BARRA'S GARDEN. NIGHT. 156

DE BARRA smashes one of the mirrors -- long slivers of glass fly about her face.

157 EXT. PARIS LE NOTRE HOUSE. NIGHT. 157

LOUISE hammers on the door it glides open. MADAME LE NOTRE looks up.

158 EXT. PARIS DE BARRA'S GARDEN. NIGHT. 158

DE BARRA stares down at the long shards of glass. She picks one up.

159 EXT. THE STREETS OF PARIS. NIGHT 159

LE NOTRE stops, looks behind, beginning to become alarmed.

160 EXT. LE NOTRE'S HOUSE. NIGHT. 160

MADAME LE NOTRE stands at the door of her house, watching LOUISE leave. Her face a mask.

161 EXT. DE BARRA'S GARDEN. NIGHT. 161

DE BARRA looks at her face in the broken glass, She touches her neck

162 EXT. PARIS. OUTSIDE DE BARRA'S HOUSE. NIGHT. 162

LE NOTRE arrives at the top of the street. He sees the door wide open.

163 EXT. PARIS DE BARRA'S GARDEN. NIGHT. 163

A ringlet of hair appears in the broken mirror. DE BARRA turns to see MARIE-CLAIRE crouching down beside her.

The two faces, mother and daughter.

DE BARRA smiles, and starts to cut her own throat, MARIE-CLAIRE frowns, DE BARRA stops. MARIE-CLAIRE tilts her head.

MARIE-CLAIRE

Lovely mamma.

She touches her cheek, and begins to fade.

DE BARRA

No, don't go, don't leave me.

She starts to cut again. This time LE NOTRE's hand stops her. She struggles until she recognises him, then she collapses weeping.

DE BARRA (CONT'D)
She was the most beautiful thing I
ever made and I killed her.

164 INT. PARIS. DE BARRA'S HOUSE. ANTECHAMBER OF HER BEDROOM. 164
NIGHT.

DE BARRA sits in a chair. LE NOTRE washes her cuts and
bruises.

LE NOTRE
Did you know for certain he was
taking Marie-Claire away for good?

DE BARRA shakes her head.

DE BARRA
I do not know even now, what he
intended. I am certain that I am..
It was me , who... I am responsible
for their deaths.

LE NOTRE
That is a very hard thing to feel.
Did you intend them to die? Is that
what you planned? No.

DE BARRA
No.

LE NOTRE
Your husband decided the coach was
road-worthy. He took away the
child.

DE BARRA
I cannot blame him. He did not
startle the horses.

LE NOTRE
What if no one person is to blame,
and what use is blame? It is enough
to have it happen to you, it is
enough to recover from it. That is
as much as we may ask of ourselves.
That is enough.

DE BARRA nods.

DE BARRA
That is a different way of looking
at things.

LE NOTRE
What is it that would help you?

DE BARRA
If you held me.

He puts his arms around her.

DE BARRA (CONT'D)
Am I the only person you are
sleeping with ?

LE NOTRE
Yes. My wife spoke to you?

DE BARRA
Yes. I did not believe her. What
will happen to her?

LE NOTRE
I believe it will take her a while
to grow used to us. We have been
ugly to each other. I am to blame
for it as much as she, the more
badly she behaved, the more
righteous I felt. I was pure, and
she was the demon. This was not the
way we started, so we must have
taught each other to behave that
way.

DE BARRA
Phillipe once asked me if I chose
him because he suited my purpose in
life. I would be free to pursue a
life in business, were I with him.
I did not chose him as a husband,
companion and lover. He was right.
I was wrong.

LE NOTRE
We shape each other. It is
difficult to get everything right.
More difficult still, to admit to
being wrong.

Music.

DE BARRA and LE NOTRE lie on the bed in each other's arms.

She sleeps peacefully, then wakes. They talk. Later in the
morning she comes in from the garden with flowers. He looks
alarmed.

A flower bouquet stands in a vase. DE BARRA and LE NOTRE sit
at a breakfast table. She looks at the flowers, turns to him
and smiles.

DE BARRA
You haven't sneezed for twenty
minutes.

LE NOTRE
I must be forming some tolerance.

DE BARRA
Andre?

LE NOTRE
Yes?

DE BARRA
I feel my face is sliding down my skull.

LE NOTRE
Is that so Madame?

DE BARRA
I know because I used to have a mole here and I patched it. Now, it is here, much further down.

LE NOTRE
Mmmmm.

After a little.

LE NOTRE (CONT'D)
They say your nose continues to grow on your face.

DE BARRA
What do you mean?

LE NOTRE
It grows. That is why elderly people have large noses...Like parsnips.

DE BARRA
Oh, my God...I wish you hadn't told me that. About the nose.

LE NOTRE laughs quietly.

DE BARRA (CONT'D)
Call me Madame again.

165 EXT. ROCKWORK GROVE. VERSAILLES. NIGHT.

165

A band of musicians tramp through the undergrowth in the dark.

FIRST MUSICIAN
This isn't the right way. I can't see my hand in front of my face.

They bump into each other. One falls down.

SECOND MUSICIAN

Oh for heavens sake ! I have to
rent this garb, blasted shoe is
drenched.

FIRST MUSICIAN

We should of gone left at the last
thingy, grotto.

THIRD MUSICIAN

Would the gentlemen agree at least
on where we are now?

He jumps up and down, trying to see over the hedge. The
others regard him.

Over the hedge DURAS waits. There is a twang of strings. He
considers this, looks about.

At the entrance to the Rockwork grove DE BARRA and LE NOTRE
wait. LAUZUN arrives. He bows to them both.

LAUZUN

Lady, Master, it is a great
occasion for you both.
Congratulations to you.

LE NOTRE

Thank you sir. But this is Madame
De Barra's night.

LAUZUN

May I beg a favour, Madame? There
is another lady, anxious to speak
with you, before the festivities.
May I convey you ? It will only
take a moment.

DE BARRA looks at LE NOTRE.

LE NOTRE

We have some time in hand. Go.

DE BARRA and LAUZUN leave the Rockwork Grove

166 EXT. THE GARDENS. VERSAILLES. NIGHT. 166

A carriage stands at a discreet distance. LAUZUN gestures to
it.

He keeps watch. DE BARRA opens the door, gets in.

167 INT. THE CARRIAGE. NIGHT. 167

Inside MONTESPAN sits waiting. DE BARRA sits.

MONTESPAN

You came. Thank you, dear friend. I will not take up your time on this your wonderful evening of achievement.

DE BARRA

Marquise, are you not staying ?

MONTESPAN

No. That is why I wished to see you now. I would not for the world offend you. I was worried that this would be the case.

DE BARRA

What has happened?

MONTESPAN

The King has married Maintenon. And I am sent to the country. I may not appear at court any longer.

MONTESPAN hangs her head, she cries. DE BARRA sits beside her.

DE BARRA

My dear lady...

She takes out a handkerchief.

DE BARRA (CONT'D)

Here, my sweet girl, let me do this, for you.

She wipes her tears away.

MONTESPAN

Do you think I cry from sorrow ? I do not, it is relief. I have known for some time now that I had lost his love. Being as fat as I am, in some way is a testament, an admission, that I had lost the battle. My strength had ebbed. How did I know this and then become fat?

DE BARRA

Perhaps there is another way of looking at things. Maybe you wished for an end. I have learned, very painfully, that we see only as much as we are able to bear. Did you ever see this happen to anyone else?

MONTESPAN thinks very hard. Then gradually it begins to become clear.

MONTESPAN
La Valliere, Louise.

DE BARRA
Who was she?

MONTESPAN
Louise La Valliere was Louis' favourite, before me.

DE BARRA
What became of her?

MONTESPAN
After Louis stopped loving her, she withered, ghosted about, powerless. When her son died, Louis's son, he never even bothered to see her. He said he was too sinful to --

MONTESPAN throws her head back and laughs.

MONTESPAN (CONT'D)
to visit so pious a nun. A *nun*!

DE BARRA
She was in a convent?

MONTESPAN
Yes!

DE BARRA
A fate worse than death.

Both women collapse laughing.

DE BARRA (CONT'D)
But that is terrible, about her son.

MONTESPAN
She was not very bright in the head, Louise. But you are right. I think that is what I fear most. Loss of prestige, for my sons. Do you think I manipulated my own end?

DE BARRA
Very wisely. You do not have to stay, to ghost about. You are free. And you would make a wicked nun.

MONTESPAN muses the idea appealing to her.

MONTESPAN

Yes... No.

They laugh again.

MONTESPAN (CONT'D)

You have been an inspiration to me
Madame Sabine De Barra. I shall
hold my own court, in the country,
the smelly old country. You will
visit me?

De Barra nods enthusiastically.

MONTESPAN (CONT'D)

Good. And I shall have many lovers.
I, it is, who has tired, of that
majestic piece of stale bread !

They hug each other.

168 EXT. THE ROCKWORK GROVE. VERSAILLES NIGHT.

168

DE BARRA rejoins LE NOTRE.

LE NOTRE

How is the Marquise?

DE BARRA

Much improved. I had not the
stomach to tell her of my part in
her downfall.

LE NOTRE

It is not always necessary to be
honest. On occasion it could be
classed as reckless.

DE BARRA

You once accused me of being
reckless, does that mean I am now
safe?

LE NOTRE

No one is safe. So let us be happy.

The SWISS GUARD arrives.

SWISS GUARD

The King comes!

A fanfare announces LOUIS. He arrives in a wheelchair.
Stepping out he tips his hat to DE BARRA and LE NOTRE. They
walk inside to the assembled Court, who bow and part,
clearing the way to the waterworks key. It is lit by a
single candelabra.

The musicians behind the yew hedge which surrounds the Rockwork grove wait for a signal from THIERRY DURAS who looks down to DE BARRA.

She crosses her fingers.

DE BARRA

Sire.

All bow. LOUIS acknowledges them.

DE BARRA (CONT'D)

Honoured guests of the court of His Majesty King Louis the fourteenth of France, I beg your indulgence to bestow upon all here present, my interpretation of a little order and a little chaos.

LE NOTRE laughs, as do the others. DE BARRA claps her hands.

DURAS signals to the musicians. They play. DE BARRA turns the key.

The KING looks up. The water begins to bubble.

DURAS and DE BARRA's men enter with the candelabras and light the water as it flows down the cascade. We see the shells, the rockwork, the lapis, the red marble of the dance floor.

The water flows through the moat and around the feet of the Court.

DE BARRA claps her hands again

The fountains spray. She takes the key from the waterworks, bows, and presents it to a smiling LE NOTRE, who presents it to the King.

All applaud. The KING takes DE BARRA to the ballroom floor.

The KING and DE BARRA dance. After a little, LOUIS hands DE BARRA to LE NOTRE. The couple dance, as do the rest of the Court.

Pull back to see the Court, the fountains, the moonlight.

Pull back again to include Versailles, then the countryside.

Further back into the country, a graveyard. One stone, MARIE-CLAIRE DE BARRA. Another, PHILIPPE DE BARRA. On both: 'REST IN PEACE'.

END