

I 'VE LOVED YOU
SO LONG

by
PHILIPPE CLAUDEL

1. INT. AIRPORT CAFETERIA - DAY

A cafeteria in a quiet airport in the provinces. Few passers-by.

A single woman in her mid-40s (JULIETTE) sits at a table. Sips coffee. Gazes around her as if discovering something new - she often has an expression of eager surprise, as if seeing things, people, places for the first time ever.

She seems uncomfortable in the clothes she is wearing. At her feet is an old-fashioned suitcase.

A younger woman (LEA, early 30s) appears behind Juliette. Less than a meter away.

Juliette hasn't noticed her. Clearly deeply moved, Léa quietly observes her for a few seconds.

Then, sensing a presence, Juliette looks round.

Léa leans forward and hugs her tight before Juliette has time to react. Juliette is slightly taken aback.

She doesn't return the hug at first. Then awkwardly puts her arms round Léa.

2. INT. LÉA'S CAR - DAY

Léa is driving.

Next to her, Juliette tugs at the sleeves of her sweater.

LEA

Is it too big?

JULIETTE

No.

LEA

I like that sweater. The skirt, too. I often wear them.

Juliette doesn't reply.

LEA

I thought it would be better to wait until you arrived to go shopping for clothes.

Léa glances at Juliette.

Beat.

There's something out of place about Juliette. She even sits oddly in the car seat, as if unused to it.

LEA

Did you have a good trip?

JULIETTE

I don't like flying.
Léa glances at her again.

JULIETTE
Have you lived here long?

LÉA
Ten years. I finished my PhD here, met
Luc, got married, was offered the
job... The usual stuff.

Juliette is silent.
The CAMERA lingers on her face.

3. INT. LEA'S HOUSE - DAY

Léa shows Juliette into the house.

LÉA
Welcome to our kingdom! The kitchen's
over there with the living room
opposite, our home offices and a
library at the far end. Upstairs,
there's just bedrooms. Do you want to
see yours?

Juliette replies by a slight nod and the flicker of a smile.
Léa leads the way up the stairs.

On the first landing, she shows Juliette into a room.

LEA
Will it be okay?

JULIETTE
Fine.

LÉA
That little door leads to your private
bathroom.
(glances at her watch)
Yikes, I have to pick up the girls!
I'll be back in half an hour. Will you
be okay on your own?

Juliette nods.

Léa hurries out. On the landing, she stops in her tracks.
Slowly retraces her step, looks at Juliette and says in a serious
tone:

LÉA
I'm glad you're here.

Léa gives Juliette a kiss on the cheek and goes.
Juliette is expressionless.

OS, feet dashing down the stairs. The jangle of keys.

LÉA (O.S.)

Take a look round the house, if you want!

The front door thunks closed.

Juliette hasn't moved an inch.

She remains motionless like that for a long Moment.

4. INT. LÉA'S HOUSE - DAY

MONTAGE of Juliette's tour of the house.

In the living room, she strokes a cat dozing on a chair.

In a study, she runs her hand over the back of a couch. Gazes at framed photos.

In the kitchen, she pours herself a glass of water. Drinks slowly, leaning back against the fridge.

Upstairs, Juliette opens a door. A child's bedroom. She closes the door hurriedly.

She opens another door. A library full of books. With a single bed and two chairs. Sitting in one of the chairs, an elderly man is reading.

JULIETTE

I'm sorry, I... I didn't think anyone was home.

The old man looks up without a word and smiles at her.

JULIETTE

I... My name's Juliette. I'm Léa's sister.

Still not a word. Just a kindly smile.

JULIETTE

Like I said, I'm very sorry.

Smiling, the old man goes back to his book, as if indifferent to her presence.

5. EXT/INT. LEA'S HOUSE - DAY

Léa closes the back door of the car. She has a two-year-old girl (EMELIA) in her arms.

Another little girl, (CLELIS, known as Little Lili) waits on the sidewalk. She looks 8-9 years old. Both girls are Asian.

LÉA

Lili, open the gate, will you? You know it's hard when I'm carrying Emelia.

They go through the gate into the small front garden.

LILI

Is Auntie Juliette going to stay with us forever?

LÉA

No, sweetheart, just some time. Be nice to her, okay? She's tired. Don't pester her.

They enter the house.

LÉA

Juliette? It's us!

Juliette comes down the stairs. The kids gaze up at her. As soon as she reaches the bottom step, Lili rushes over.

LILI

Hello, Auntie!

Juliette seems quite distant, or maybe just ill at ease.

Lili stands on tiptoes to give her a kiss. Juliette hesitates fractionally before giving her a kiss back. Emelia gurgles the word "Auntie" repeatedly.

LÉA

These are my two princesses, Clélis - but everybody calls her Little Lili - and little miss Emelia. Give Juliette a nice smile, sweetie!

LILI

Auntie, come and see my bedroom!

LÉA

Don't start! Go straight into the kitchen. There's milk and biscuits on the table. Chop, chop.

The two girls run off into the kitchen.

LÉA

Did you look round the house?

JULIETTE

Yes, I... I went into the library. There was an old man...

LÉA

Of course, silly me, I should have warned you. That's Luc's father.

LILI (O.S.)

(yells)

Papy Paul! His brain's gone all mushy and he lost his tongue!

LÉA

Lili! He had a bad stroke three years ago. He hasn't spoken a word since. He

spends all day reading. You'll see,
he's a lovely man.

6. INT. KITCHEN - EVENING

Dinner time. The whole family is round the table: Léa, the two girls, Juliette, Papy Paul - smiling dumbly - and Luc, Léa's husband, also in his early-mid 30s.

The two young girls are very excited.
Léa makes a big effort to seem relaxed.
Juliette still seems a little strange, as if everything is new to her.

And Luc just seems a bit uptight.

LUC

Have you ever been to the Lorraine region before?

JULIETTE

No, this is the first time.

LUC

Everybody thinks it's just like being in Germany, that it's freezing cold all the time...

LILI

It is!

LUC

Not all the time.

LÉA

Just eat your dinner!

JULIETTE

Were you born here?

LUC

Yes, but my Dad comes from Poland. He arrived after the war. Isn't that right, Dad?

The old man merely smiles a little more insistently than usual.

LÉA

Luc's Mum was Russian. He married a girl who's half-French, half-English. And our two daughters are Viet. It's all the colors of Benetton in this house.

LILI

You've lost your accent, Mummy, but Auntie Juliette still has one.

LÉA

Well, she grew up in England.

LUC

Anybody see the water jug?

LÉA

Katrina broke it and I haven't had time to buy another.

(to Juliette)

Katrina's the cleaner. She comes every Thursday. Hide anything fragile. She's always breaking things. That's why we call her Katrina. Because she leaves a trail of devastation behind her! Her real name's Marie-Paule.

JULIETTE

(to Luc)

Léa said you do research at the university?

LÉA

(jokily)

You two sound like we're at a party full of strangers.

LILI

Daddy's a lexicographer.

LUC

Lexicographer's good enough for me. Our unit is working on an interactive, intuitive dictionary that can be reactivated in real time.

LÉA

It's you guys that need to reactivate. In seven years, they've only got to 'C'. Even the Académie Française goes faster than that.

LUC

There's no comparison. That reminds me, there was a message on the machine from one of your students, a guy called Bamaké or Bakamé, something like that. A problem with his marks, I think.

LÉA

Bamakalé? I don't believe it! He won't give up.

LILI

Why didn't we ever meet you before,
Auntie?

Everyone falls silent.

Juliette doesn't know what to say. Luc glances anxiously at Léa.

The two girls don't seem to notice. Papy Paul keeps on eating,
smiling away.

JULIETTE

I was... away. For a very long time.

Léa changes the subject. A little too quickly.
She hands Juliette a dish.

LÉA

Do you want some more?

JULIETTE

No, thanks.

LÉA

Don't you like it?

JULIETTE

It's very good, but...

LILI

Where were you away?

LUC

(snaps)

Is this some kind of interrogation!
Leave your aunt in peace! Eat!

7. INT. LÉA & LUC'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Léa and Luc are ready for bed.

LUC

How long does she plan on staying?

LÉA

How should I know? As long as she
needs. A few weeks, a few months... Is
it a problem?

LUC

To be honest, yes. Okay, she's your
sister, but...

LÉA

But what?

LUC

You heard Lili. She wanted to know.

LÉA

So?

LUC

Her being "away" won't work for long.

LÉA

It'll work as long as it works, we'll see.

LUC

"We'll see! We'll see!" You make me laugh. What are you going to say to her? The truth?

LÉA

Luc, don't give me a hard time. This is our first evening. I've just got my sister back. I don't know if you realize what that means. I've just got her back.

LUC

You hardly know her. Just because you went to see her a couple of times for a few hours in the last few months doesn't... You were only a teenager when she -

LÉA

Be quiet!

LUC

Okay, I'll be quiet. Quiet as a mouse.
(beat)
But think of us a little, too.

8. INT. JULIETTE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Juliette stands by the window. We can vaguely make out the garden below.

Juliette is still wearing Léa's clothes Léa. She goes over to the bed. Sits on the edge, as if she plans to spend the whole night like that.

FADE TO BLACK:

9. INT. KITCHEN - DAY

It's total, happy, bubbly chaos in the kitchen.

The girls are finishing their breakfast. Léa is a whirl of fevered activity.

Still in his pyjamas, Papy Paul slurps coffee from a bowl, smiling as always.

Juliette observes the scene, leaning against the wall with a mug of tea in one hand.

LÉA

C'mon, kids! Chop, chop, we're gonna be late!

LILI

Aren't we always?

LÉA

Emelia, what are you doing? What are you doing? I don't believe it!

Emelia has smeared yoghurt all over her dress.

LÉA

I'll have to change your dress now. Lili, finish up quickly.

Léa dashes out with Emelia in her arms.

Papy Paul leaves also.

Juliette and Little Lili are alone.

LILI

Don't you eat breakfast?

JULIETTE

It depends.

LILI

I'm never hungry in the morning. Ever since I was a little girl. Mummy gets so angry! Did you ever see me when I was little, when Mummy and Daddy brought me back from Vietnam?

JULIETTE

Sure.

LILI

I don't believe you. Your nose is getting longer.

(beat)

Daddy!

Luc has just entered. Little Lili throws her arms round him.

LUC

(awkwardly)

Morning, Juliette. Did you sleep well?

10. EXT. SCHOOL GATES - DAY

Léa and Little Lili get out of the car and join the flow of mothers and children.

Léa turns and leans towards the passenger side window.

LÉA

You're not coming?

JULIETTE

I'll wait here.

LILI

'Bye, Auntie!

Juliette looks overwhelmed by it all. She doesn't answer.
Little Lili and Léa walk toward the gates.

LÉA

I put some more canteen tickets in
your bag.

LILI

I noticed.

LÉA

Your gym stuff is in there, too. Try
not to lose anything this time.

LILI

Mummy?

LÉA

What?

LILI

Auntie's a bit weird, isn't she?

LÉA

What makes you say that?

LILI

I don't know. She doesn't say much.

LÉA

Give her time to adapt, eh? Go on, go!

A kiss and Little Lili walks into school.

LÉA

Ask Madame Rouyer if she found your
pink beret!

11. INT. LÉA'S CAR - DAY

Juliette is in the passenger seat.

Léa's face looms up at the window.

Juliette stares straight ahead, breathing heavily.

Léa walks round and gets in behind the wheel.

LÉA

Are you okay?

Juliette nods several times, her breath rasping slightly.

LÉA

Sure?

JULIETTE

Yes.

Léa pulls out and drives in silence for a moment.

LÉA

The police station is close to the university. I'm teaching for two hours, but we can meet up after, if you want? There's a nice café just opposite the campus gates.

JULIETTE

Okay.

LÉA

You know what they want to see you for?

JULIETTE

I have to sign in at regular times.

Beat.

LÉA

Didn't you ever see anyone? I mean, did anyone come to see you?

JULIETTE

The visitors.

LÉA

(beat)

Do you hate me?

JULIETTE

What for?

LÉA

For never coming to see you.

Juliette shrugs.

LÉA

I wrote at first.

JULIETTE

I never received any letters.

LÉA

One evening, Dad saw me. Mummy and him gave me a real roasting. They banned me from writing. They said you... you

didn't exist. I was a kid then you know.

JULIETTE

I meant to tell you...

LÉA

What?

JULIETTE

It was the social services who came up with the idea to call you just before I got out, not me.

LÉA

I'm glad they did.

Beat.

LÉA

I'm glad they did.

12. INT. WAITING ROOM, POLICE STATION - DAY

Juliette sits on a bench with an OLD LADY beside her. The old lady glances at Juliette. Smiles. Juliette smiles back.

Beat.

The old lady glances at her again.

OLD LADY

Are you reporting a crime, too?

JULIETTE

No.

Just then, an INSPECTOR appears. Plain clothes, same age as Juliette.

INSPECTOR

Juliette Fontaine?

JULIETTE

Yes.

INSPECTOR

Follow me, please.

13. INT. INSPECTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Juliette sits opposite the Inspector.

He flicks through a file, pores over a couple of pages, goes back a few pages and re-reads, frowning, but not hostile or judgmental - friendly almost.

He closes the file.

INSPECTOR

I see you're a doctor.

JULIETTE

Was. I was struck off the medical register.

INSPECTOR

Makes no difference. Once a doctor, always a doctor. It's like me. I'll always be a cop.

(suddenly)

You have a pretty name. I don't like my name, but *Fontaine* is very pretty. It brings to mind gurgling water, streams, rivers... The Orinoco. You know the Orinoco? No?

He uses his pen to point to a poster on the wall behind him, which shows a broad swathe of an unidentifiable river.

INSPECTOR

There'll be no more fountains soon. Municipalities are closing them down - even in tiny villages. They're filled with earth and made into flower beds. Stupid geraniums, usually.

(switches topic again)

I won't hassle you. The law says we have to see each other, so we see each other, but I won't give you any bother. Do you have a job?

JULIETTE

Not yet.

INSPECTOR

A place to stay.

LÉA

With my sister.

INSPECTOR

That's nice. Family's important. You're lucky. I live alone. Divorced. Small apartment. Small bed. Anyway, you don't want to hear all that.

He gets up, goes to the door.

INSPECTOR

See you in two weeks?

JULIETTE

Goodbye.

INSPECTOR

Goodbye.

14. INT/EXT. UNIVERSITY CAMPUS - DAY

Léa walks down a hallway. Groups of students hang out, shooting the breeze.

Léa nods to a colleague going the other way. She enters the staff room, checks through the mail in her box, throws some stuff away.

She opens and scans one letter.

Then another that makes her roll her eyes.

LÉA

Not him again! He's a real pain!

Another colleague (MICHEL) approaches and whispers into Léa's ear.

MICHEL

One of your many lovers writing to you?

Léa doesn't look round, just keeps reading.

LÉA

If only! Bamakalé!

MICHEL

Ah ha! Prosper Napoleon Bamakalé, descendant of ancient Togolese royalty, son of a prince of royal blood, repeating his first year for the third time.

LÉA

I'm getting fond of him, actually. I keep telling him it's not a mistake, but he doesn't get it.

MICHEL

Tell me about it! I had him all last year. Are you off?

LÉA

I'm done for the day.

MICHEL

I'll walk you to your car.

They step outside without a break in their conversation.

MICHEL

Have you finished marking your mid-terms?

LÉA

Almost. I have ten or so left to do.

MICHEL

Lucky you! I haven't even started.
Every time I look at the pile on my
desk, I feel so exhausted.

LÉA

Get a move on though, the Dean wants
all the marks in by the 18th.

MICHEL

The Dean!
(changes subject)
What did you decide for that
conference I told you about?

LÉA

We'll see.

Léa sees Juliette waiting by the car.

LÉA

You're already here? I thought we were
meeting in the café.

JULIETTE

It didn't take very long.

LÉA

Michel, this is Juliette, my sister.
Juliette, this is Michel, a colleague.

MICHEL

Hello...
(to Léa)
You never told me you had a sister,
and a very pretty one at that.

LÉA

Don't listen to him. Michel's a
specialist on love letters from the
16th century to the present day. And it
rubs off on him.

(to Michel)

Friday of next week, are you free?

MICHEL

Why?

LÉA

Dinner at our house, with Samir and
Kaisha.

MICHEL

I should be able to make it. Can I let
you know next week?

LÉA

Sure. Don't forget your marking.

MICHEL

Goodbye, Juliette.

JULIETTE

Goodbye.

LÉA

C'mon, let's go shopping.

15. INT. TEA ROOMS - DAY

Juliette and Léa are sitting at a table with a cup of tea each and a plate of cakes.

On the chair next to them and at their feet are shopping bags from various stores.

LÉA

Good?

JULIETTE

(nods)

You remember Bouchard's in Rouen?

LÉA

No.

JULIETTE

It was a bit like this. I used to take you there on a Wednesday after your ballet lesson.

LÉA

With Old Mother Stabush?

JULIETTE

Fat Old Mother Stabush!

LÉA

She couldn't even do points anymore. I remember she had a moustache, too. We were all scared of her.

JULIETTE

I was at uni and I always picked you up and took you to Bouchard's. You had a cream puff every time.

LÉA

(tremulously)

I don't remember.

JULIETTE

You were only seven or eight. There were always stacks of old ladies in there...

LÉA

(like it's a real drama)
Why don't I remember?

JULIETTE

You sat there so proud. A proper little lady with your cream cake.

LÉA

(tears up)
I don't even remember it.

Juliette suddenly realizes that Léa is distraught.

JULIETTE

Don't worry, you were only little.

16. INT. LITTLE LILI'S BEDROOM - EVENING

The door opens.
Little Lili and Juliette enter the bedroom, followed by Emelia.

LILI

(to Emelia)
No, you're not coming in! Out! It's my room! You can show her yours later.
(closes the door)
Kid sisters are so annoying! Was Mummy like that when she was little?

JULIETTE

She wasn't too bad.

LILI

Is she your real sister?

JULIETTE

Yes.

LILI

You're Granny Lizbeth's daughter, too?

JULIETTE

That's right.

LILI

Okay, this is the doll graveyard.
She opens a suitcase filled with a dozen dolls.

LILI

I don't like dolls, so when someone gives me one, I bury it in here right

away. That's my computer. I watch DVDs on it mostly and type up my schoolwork. That's what I made for Mother's Day, but Katrina broke it. She says it wasn't her, but she's a liar! Those are my books...

LÉA (O.S.)

Dinner time!

JULIETTE

Do you read a lot?

Juliette runs her fingers along the spines of the books. Lingers over one she apparently remembers from her childhood, called *Model Little Ladies*.

LILI

Less than Papy Paul, but quite a lot, yes. This is my secret diary - well, it's not so secret seeing as I leave it out and everybody can read it. I write poems in it. Do you want me to read you one?

JULIETTE

(recoils)

No.

LILI

Please, Auntie! Just a little one.

JULIETTE

(snaps)

No. I said no!

Little Lili looks at her in amazement. Juliette scurries out of the room.

17. INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Juliette is with a plump, smiling young woman (the SOCIAL WORKER). They each sit on a couch facing each other across a coffee table.

SOCIAL WORKER

You're lucky to have your sister, her family and a home.

JULIETTE

So I've been told.

SOCIAL WORKER

It's true, though. Most people, when they get out, don't know where to go. Nobody wants them. Their spouses almost always file for divorce.

JULIETTE

I got that out of the way before I went in.

SOCIAL WORKER

Yes, it's in your file. Right, well, the courses you did at Centrale will be very useful. People always need secretaries. Are your IT skills up to speed?

JULIETTE

I did all the updates whenever I got the chance.

SOCIAL WORKER

That's good. I got you an interview at this company...

(hands Juliette a card)

They're looking for someone. You have an appointment with a Monsieur Dupuis. We'll be meeting regularly, but if you have any questions or anything, don't hesitate to call me at the office...

JULIETTE

Right.

SOCIAL WORKER

I have to go now. You have people you can talk to, and there's only two of us in the department.

(beat)

I like the house.

They get up. Juliette walks her to the door. They say goodbye.

Outside, Léa parks her car and gets out. She meets the Social Worker by the gate.

They nod.

Léa enters.

LÉA

Was that the social worker?

JULIETTE

Yes.

LÉA

She seems sweet enough.

JULIETTE

People whose role is to rummage through your life often seem sweet enough.

Léa glances curiously at her sister. Puts her bag down. Thinks...

LÉA

I guess you're right. We had that, too - Luc and me - when we adopted. Visits for this, visits for that, social workers, shrinks, and even an idiot doctor who had Luc walking up and down in his underpants in his office with his arms stretched out! I thought Luc was going to strangle him. He really resented all the questions and prying... Tea?

18. INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Léa is making tea. Juliette stands close by.

LÉA

It took nearly two years for Little Lili and a bit less for Emelia. The first time we spent three months in Vietnam. We fell in love with the place and would have happily stayed longer. We had Little Lili with us almost the whole time, at the hotel, but the bureaucracy and all the formalities took forever.

KATRINA (O.S.)

Léa?

LEA

Yes, Marie-Paule?

KATRINA (O.S.)

Shall I do the crystal, too?

LÉA

No, don't worry, leave it! I'll do it! Do the cupboard doors, will you?

JULIETTE

How old was Little Lili?

LÉA

Two. But she looked half that.

JULIETTE

You met her mother?

LÉA

No. But I have her address if ever she wants to contact her. That was very important for us. We didn't want her to run into a brick wall later if she tried to find her. Emelia, on the other hand... Well, we got absolutely no information. She'll never know...

JULIETTE

How old was she?

LÉA

She was tiny! Barely three weeks old.

Beat.

JULIETTE

Was it Luc or you who couldn't have kids?

LÉA

Neither of us. We're both fertile.

(beat)

I didn't want a child of my own.

JULIETTE

Because of me?

No answer.

JULIETTE

Because of what I did?

Beat.

LÉA

I never tried to work out why.

19. INT. DUPUIS' OFFICE - DAY

MONSIEUR DUPUIS, early 50s, smug, sits behind his desk, talking on the phone.

Juliette sits opposite him.

DUPUIS

Yes, well... So what?... That's not my problem. We pay you to deliver our order, so you deliver it, period! Goodbye!

He hangs up. Gazes at Juliette.

DUPUIS

Right, where were we... I won't beat around the bush. I'm not a charity. I want skilled, hard-working staff. The rest is not my problem. Mrs... what's her name again? Balboukian?

JULIETTE

That's right.

DUPUIS

... said that you are up to speed with Excel, DTP and the whole shebang. Right?

JULIETTE

I passed all the tests.

DUPUIS

And you speak English?

JULIETTE

And Spanish.

DUPUIS

I don't give a shit about Spanish but we have a lot of clients across the Channel. There's stacks of stuff that needs translating... How long were you in jail?

JULIETTE

Fifteen years.

DUPUIS

(whistles)

Jeez! You knock off the President or something?

No answer.

DUPUIS

What did you do?

Still no answer.

DUPUIS

I want to know. What did you do to get so long? Kill someone? Did you?

JULIETTE

Yes.

DUPUIS

Who? Your husband? Lover? Another woman?

No answer.

DUPUIS

I'm talking to you. Who did you kill?

JULIETTE

My son. My six-year-old son.

The blood seeps out of Dupuis' face. He drops the pencil he was fiddling with and pushes back in his chair.

Beat.

He gets slowly to his feet.

DUPUIS

(rasps)
Get out! Get the hell out of my
office!

20. INT. CAFÉ - DAY

Juliette is in a small bar, near the window, watching events outside and in.

At the bar a GUY, who's good-looking and knows it, talks animatedly with another guy and the waitress.

Nothing of their conversation filters over, except the occasional burst of laughter.

Juliette glances over a couple of times, when they laugh particularly loudly.

Eventually, the guy notices Juliette, and watches her while continuing his conversation with the others.

After a while, he comes over. Without asking, he takes a seat at Juliette's table.

GUY

You want my photo?

Juliette doesn't answer.

GUY

Have we met?

JULIETTE

I don't think so.

GUY

Why were you staring at me then? What do you want?

JULIETTE

Nothing. I wasn't staring at you.

GUY

Bullshit! You keep eying me up. You looking for a man?

Juliette smiles, amused by his question.
Then, she eyes him up and down.

21. INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Juliette lies pensively in bed, the sheets pulled up to her chin.
The guy comes out of the bathroom and finishes dressing.

GUY

Was it good?

Juliette gazes at him before answering.

JULIETTE

No. Not at all. But it's okay.

The guy looks furious.
He mumbles something, grabs his jacket and storms out.

The camera holds on Juliette, who hasn't moved an inch.

22. EXT. PARK - DAY

Léa and Juliette walk side by side, chatting.
The two little girls run ahead.

Wide shot.

Then the CAMERA is right behind them.
The children are already standing at some animal cages.

LILI

Auntie, look! They're monkeys.
Sometimes they spit at people.

They all stop by the monkey cages.
Little Lili and Emelia pulls faces.

LILI

It's not fair locking them up. They
haven't done anything. Prisons are for
bad people, not animals? Isn't that
so, Mummy? Eh, Auntie?

Léa grabs Little Lili by the shoulder.

LÉA

We're going!

LILI

What did I do?

LÉA

Nothing, get your sister. We'll go and
buy you some waffles.

The two girls race ahead once more.

JULIETTE

Don't be silly.

Léa doesn't answer.
They walk along in silence.

JULIETTE

Do you think you can erase fifteen
years of your life like that? Just by
not talking about it? Do you think I
was asleep the whole time, like in
some kind of fairy tale? Then, one
morning, the good fairy Léa came to
wake me up?

23. INT. LÉA & LUC'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Léa is in bed, reading a book.

Léa sits on the edge of the bed, listening to the soccer results on a transistor radio.

RADIO ANNOUNCER (O.C.)

Auxerre beat Sochaux 3-2. Lens and Lille drew 2-2 in the big northern derby. Monaco lost to Bordeaux 2-1. Saint-Etienne defeated Marseille 3-0. PSG lost to Nancy at home by 3 goals to 1...

LUC

Yes! PSG lost! Ha ha! They can stick it up their asses!

He flicks off his radio.

LUC

What are you doing?

LÉA

Can't you see? I'm peeling potatoes.

LUC

Very funny. Jeez, 3-1!
(rubs his hands together)
Michel's gonna be in such a bad mood.

Luc lies back and gazes at the ceiling.

LUC

Are the chicklets asleep?

LÉA

After all the running they did, they were flat out at seven.

LUC

What about your sister?

LÉA

What about her? Is she asleep, do you mean?

LUC

No... What did... I don't know... Do you talk?

LÉA

Yes. We talk.

LUC

Did you ask her...

LÉA

What?

LUC

You know... Why? Why she did it?

LÉA

(wide-eyed)

What the hell is wrong with you?

LUC

Well, what do you talk about then?

LÉA

Sister things.

LUC

You're shitting me!

LÉA

What do you expect me to say? It all takes time. It's not easy. My parents banished any thought of my sister from my head. Now, I've got her back. It's like a re-birth. What happened before is... Oh, just let me sleep!

She puts her book down, turns off her light and rolls over.

24. INT. DINING ROOM - EVENING

Desserts has been served.

Around the table are Léa, Luc, Papy Paul, Michel, Juliette and another couple - Samir and his younger, pregnant wife, Kaisha.

Through the partition doors, we see Little Lili and Emelia asleep on the couches, fully dressed.

At table, the atmosphere is upbeat with all the guests laughing and joking happily.

Sitting next to Michel, Juliette seems quite relaxed, too, but still a little reserved.

Just like Luc, who occasionally glances apprehensively at her.

The conversation opens O.S., the time it takes for the camera to track past the two kids into the dining room.

MICHEL (O.S.)

And you know your father backs me 100% on this one. Don't you, Papy Paul?

LUC (O.S.)

You must be joking! Dad's the most loyal supporter Nancy have ever had. Aren't you, Dad?

He reaches for the salad bowl.

LÉA

Watch out! I glued it back together but I'm not promising anything.

MICHEL

Katrina?

Léa nods.

SAMIR

Michel, it's outrageous that you've lived in Lorraine for years and you still support a team that's mostly made up of Brazilians.

MICHEL

Mostly? Only two Brazilians play for PSG! You don't know what you're talking about! Anyway, you'll bore Juliette!

JULIETTE

Unlikely! I love football. I played a lot when I was a teenager.

LÉA

Seriously?

JULIETTE

You were too small to remember.

MICHEL

The perfect woman! Beautiful, intelligent and loves football.

JULIETTE

Except for the supporters.

SAMIR

Take that!

MICHEL

Please, Samir, I won't let an Afghan surgeon paid by al-Qaida to run amok in French hospitals beat me in an argument about football.

LUC

Can you play on Sunday?

KAISHA

Forget it. He was saying earlier that he has a zillion exams to mark.

SAMIR

That's the third week running you've bailed on us.

MICHEL

Yeah, it's been three weeks that two hundred papers have been sitting on my desk, waiting for me to mark them.

JULIETTE

You play football together?

The camera closes in on Michel and Juliette. OS, the buzz of the others' conversation.

MICHEL

We try. Some days, there's only ten of us and some days forty people turn up to play, which gets a bit crazy. You should come watch us one day.

JULIETTE

Why not.

MICHEL

Do you like it here?

Juliette nods.

MICHEL

Léa said you lived down south for a long time.

JULIETTE

That's right.

MICHEL

Where?

JULIETTE

Carcassonne.

MICHEL

Right, it's pretty down there. The Black Mountain and all that. Toulouse not far away...

JULIETTE

Do you come from Paris?

MICHEL

Yes, but I got bored of it. I go back as infrequently as possible. Life's good here. If you can put up with lunkheads like these guys!

They smile at each other.

25. INT. LIBRARY, LÉA AND LUC'S HOUSE - DAY

Juliette quietly enters Papy Paul's room. He sits in his usual chair, reading.

He looks up and smiles at Juliette.

JULIETTE

Can I sit with you a while?

She sits in the chair opposite him.

Papy Paul goes back to his book.

Beat.

Juliette begins to talk. Papy Paul smiles at her.

JULIETTE

Where I was until recently, I always kept a few books near my pillow. I sensed their presence at night when I turned over. It reassured me.

She leans forward to see the title of the book he's reading: *Sylvie* by Nerval.

JULIETTE

I read and re-read that one. Not so much as a means of escape but like a dream.

26. INT. INSPECTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Juliette is sitting opposite the Inspector as in the previous scene.

INSPECTOR

During the week, I eat canned food mostly - lentils and sausages or beef stew. Those are my favourites. I eat in front of the TV onSometimes, I don't even heat them up. I can't cook to save my life and I can't be bothered to learn. I have some green vegetables at the weekend. Doctor's orders. Do you agree with him?

JULIETTE

Definitely. You can't just eat tinned food.

INSPECTOR

I guess... What about eggs?

JULIETTE

They're okay, but not every day.

INSPECTOR

No, I usually boil or fry one up on a Sunday and eat it in front of the TV. Do you watch TV?

JULIETTE

No.

INSPECTOR

Not even when you were in prison?

JULIETTE

No.

INSPECTOR

I see. I thought everybody in prison watched TV. I force myself. It's a kind of punishment. There's something totally ugly about it. Like a pile of rubbish that's delivered to your door. Every evening, I feel like the heap's bigger and uglier than the day before. And it smacks me in the face.

(beat)

How about you? Everything okay?

27. INT. FACULTY BUILDINGS - DAY

Juliette waits in a hallway.
A door opens and students file out.

Juliette ventures in.
Léa stands on a raised dais, gathering her things together, while talking to a black student dressed in suit and tie.

LÉA

We'll check as soon as we can, Mr. Bamakalé, but I can't see why the computer would have made a mistake.

BAMAKALÉ

It made two last year alone, Miss. And every time, I'm the aggrieved party.

LÉA

In any case, the server is down right now, so be patient and stop sending me notes every other day.

(sees Juliette)

You'll have to excuse me, I have an appointment.

Léa goes over to Juliette.

LÉA

Am I glad to see you! Let's get out of here. I thought you were going straight home.

JULIETTE

I wanted to talk.

28. INT. CAFÉ - DAY

Juliette and Léa sit at a table.

LÉA

It was a minor intestinal haemorrhage, but they kept him in for tests. He was riddled with cancer. He died two months later.

JULIETTE

When exactly?

LÉA

March 4, 1999. When we found out he had no chance of pulling through, I wanted to tell you. I had a huge fight with Mummy, and she went and told him. He made me promise never to contact you. He was crying. His voice came out in a feeble rasp. He was hooked up to dozens of tubes. He weighed barely more than fifty kilos. I cried, too. And I promised him. I'm sorry.

Silence.

LÉA

Did you ever think of us, when you were down there?

JULIETTE

Down there? That makes it sound so pretty and nice. "Down there" was a prison.

She shows anger for the first time.

JULIETTE

Do you know what a prison is? Hours and days in prison? Years in prison? The outside world leaving you behind. Life leaving you behind. Everything leaving you behind.

Awkward silence.

JULIETTE

(calmer)

Is she still living at Beaufans?

LÉA

Mummy? No. I had to find a home for her. She lived with us, at first, then two years after Dad died, she began to lose her memory. Now, she doesn't recognize anyone. When I go to see her, she thinks I'm a nurse or a neighbour or something.

JULIETTE

They never spoke about me?

Léa shakes her head.

JULIETTE

What did they tell other people?

LÉA

Anybody who knew the family knew better than to mention it. Anybody else thought I was their only daughter.

JULIETTE

They thought that or they were told that?

LÉA

They were told that?

JULIETTE

Who told them? Mum and Dad?

LÉA

Yes.

JULIETTE

And you?

Léa doesn't answer. Tears well in her eyes.

LÉA

They filled my head with it.

Beat.

Juliette glances round the bar. Changes the subject.

JULIETTE

(lighter)

I slept with a guy last week.

LÉA

You did what?

JULIETTE

(smiles)

I slept with a guy.

Léa stops crying. Begins to laugh.

LÉA

Who? Where?

JULIETTE

A guy I met in a café. We got a room in a hotel.

LÉA

Just like that?

JULIETTE

Just like that.

They both burst out laughing.

29. INT. SPARE ROOM - DAY

In a spare room, piled high with boxes, Juliette and Little Lili sit side by side at an old piano. Emelia sits on the floor.

Juliette teaches Little Lili a song (*A la Claire Fontaine*). The piano needs tuning.

JULIETTE

No, look! G, G, B, B, A, B, G, G, G,
B, B, A, B... Try again.

Little Lili plunks out the tune.

JULIETTE

That's better! Spread your fingers
more, like that... Good. And hit the
keys harder.

LILI

It's not easy, Auntie!

JULIETTE

Stop! G, G, B, B, A! You have to
change note.

LILI

I'll never get it right.

JULIETTE

Of course, you will! I used to play
this with your Mummy, you know.

LILI

With Mummy?

JULIETTE

Sure.

LILI

Mummy played the piano? I don't
believe you.

JULIETTE

She used to be very good. This tune
was one of our favourites.

LILI

Because it's called *Fontaine* like you?

Juliette smiles and nods.

LILI

I never saw Mummy play! She won't let me play piano. She wants me to learn the flute. If she sees us in here, she'll be so angry!

JULIETTE

No, she won't. Don't worry.

30. INT. OFFICE, HOSPITAL - DAY

A WOMAN sits behind a desk.
Juliette sits opposite her.

The Woman finishes reading a file and closes it.

WOMAN

You have all the qualifications for the job. But in this instance, even if it's just a secretary's job, I have to refer it to the director of the hospital who will make the final decision. If he approves it, nobody here must ever know that you were a doctor. And especially that you... You know what I mean.

Juliette is about to say something.

WOMAN

Don't thank me, I'm not doing it for you.

31. INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Reclining on the couch, with books and notes all around her, Léa prepares a lecture.

Luc enters with a mug of tea and puts it on the coffee table.
Léa thanks him without looking up.

Luc goes over to the window. Outside, Juliette walks in the garden. Little Lili is also out there, running all over the place, but Juliette doesn't pay her any attention.

LUC

You wouldn't guess, looking at her.

LÉA

(miles away)

What?

LUC

She looks totally normal.

Léa perks up suddenly, glances out the window, then at Luc.

LÉA

Stop it!

LUC

What? Maybe you'd prefer to forget what she did, but I can't!

LÉA

Leave her alone!

32. INT. SWIMMING POOL - DAY

A big, oval swimming pool.

Juliette and Léa float next to each other, arms and legs outstretched.

JULIETTE

What did you want to do?

LÉA

Me? I couldn't have become a doctor like you. They would have freaked, but there was never any chance of that. I was always more attracted to literature and languages. The day I told them, I could see the relief on their faces.

(beat)

The water's great, isn't it?

Juliette smiles and nods.

MONSIEUR LUCIEN (O.S.)

Hello there, Léa!

The camera pulls back to reveal MONSIEUR LUCIEN, a paunchy 65-year-old, with a Clark Gable moustache, gold chain and signet rings, and a spray-on tan.

LÉA

Hi, Monsieur Lucien. How are you?

MONSIEUR LUCIEN

Very well. Aren't you going to introduce me?

LÉA

Of course. This is my sister, Juliette.

(to Juliette)

Monsieur Lucien's a regular here.

MONSIEUR LUCIEN

Your sister? I see. Hello!

LÉA

That's right, my sister. She's off limits, Monsieur Lucien!

He chuckles and walks on.

LÉA

He comes down here to try to chat up women. He'll hit on anyone, young or old.

JULIETTE

Does he ever get anywhere?

LÉA

You'd be surprised!

Léa glances at Juliette as she floats in the water, eyes closed.

She reaches out her hand and brushes her fingers over a small scar on Juliette's thigh.

LÉA

I was running to you for a hug. I jumped up and you tripped over a branch. I can still see the blood pouring from the wound and your face going deathly white... I thought you were going to die, all because of me.

33. INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Luc sits with his two daughters. He hands Emelia a yoghurt, then goes back to reading the sports pages of the paper.

Little Lili is on Papy Paul's lap, also eating yoghurt.

LILI

When's Mummy coming home?

LUC

I don't know. Soon.

LILI

And Auntie?

LUC

I've no idea.

LILI

Are they together?

LILI

I haven't a clue. Eat up!

Beat.

LILI

Doesn't Auntie Juliette have a job?

LUC

Why'd you ask?

LILI

No reason. I just thought she must have a job because she's pretty old now.

Luc has his nose in the paper.

LILI

Well? What's her job?

LUC

You ask her, smarty-pants. Can't you see I'm trying to do some work?

34. INT. JULIETTE'S ROOM - EVENING

In the darkness, Juliette watches the rain falling on the back garden.

There are papers scattered on her bed, and what looks to be a photograph.

35. INT. SOCIAL WORKER'S OFFICE - DAY

SOCIAL WORKER

Well, that just about covers everything. Come back and see me in a few weeks. Meanwhile, I'll call the hospital to see what's happening. It would be the perfect job for you. I'll be in touch.

She walks to the door with Juliette.

Takes out a cigarette. Offers one to Juliette as they go out into the hallway.

JULIETTE

No, thanks.

SOCIAL WORKER

I was wondering... I read your file and the notes on your trial... You never said a word throughout the investigation and the trial. Why?

No answer.

SOCIAL WORKER

You even refused to talk to the psychologists. Their report runs to two lines. Something about a lethal injection "foreshadowing the choice of silence". I don't really get that.

JULIETTE

(furious)

And you think I'm going to talk to you now?

She storms off.

36. EXT. STREET - EVENING

Léa and Luc walk arm in arm down the road.

LUC

It's been ages since you dropped by the lab to pick me up.

LÉA

Did you miss it?

LUC

Yeah, I like it when you surprise me.

LÉA

How about a movie and then dinner?

LUC

Sure.

LÉA

Is there anything you really want to see? There's a Kurosawa retrospective at the Cameo.

LUC

No way! Japanese films always put me to sleep.

LÉA

Well, they're probably still showing *The Shop Around The Corner*.

LUC

Good idea. I haven't seen that in so long! But that means we'll be back really late, if you want to go for dinner afterwards.

LÉA

It'll be fine.

Beat.

LUC

Are you sure Katrina doesn't mind?

LÉA

What's Katrina got to do with anything?

LUC

She's looking after the girls, isn't she?

LÉA

No, I asked Juliette.

LUC

You asked your sister to look after our daughters? Have you lost your mind? She killed her kid, remember! That's insane!

37. EXT/INT. LUC & LÉA'S HOUSE - EVENING

Luc screeches to a halt outside the house.
He leaps out of the car, races up the path and into the house.

LUC

(heart pounding)

Lili? Emelia? Lili!!!

Juliette rushes out of the living room with a book in her hand.

LUC

(barks)

Where are my daughters? Where are they?

JULIETTE

Upstairs. They're asleep. We had dinner early and they were tired, so...

Before she can finish, Luc dashes upstairs.

Juliette is stunned.
Léa arrives.

JULIETTE

You're back already? What's wrong with Luc?

Léa looks awkwardly at her sister.

38. INT. FINE ARTS MUSEUM - DAY

Juliette strolls through the empty museum.

She stops in her tracks when she comes to a large ultra-realistic painting of a woman in mourning about to throw herself into a grave at the bottom of which lies a coffin.

Other women hold her back.

Men in dark suits and top hats stand in the background.

MICHEL (O.S.)

It's called Grief.

Juliette is startled.

JULIETTE

You startled me.

MICHEL

Hi.

(beat)

Impressive, isn't it?

JULIETTE

Who painted it?

MICHEL

Emile Friant. Famous when he was alive, totally forgotten since his death in the 1930s. I'll show you another of his that is my favourite. Come on...

They walk into the next room.

Michel stops at a small painting showing a young woman's face against a snowy landscape.

MICHEL

The first time, I saw it, it blew me away. She looks exactly like a girl I was in love with in my early 20s. I was crazy about her. She didn't even see me, though. This is my revenge. She's imprisoned in a frame and I can look at her whenever I want. She can't say a thing.

39. EXT. SIDEWALK CAFÉ - DAY

Juliette and Michel are having lunch.

MICHEL

Léa is amazing. She's one of the best specialists in France in her field. But she doesn't have the killer instinct. In our work, you have to trample over people to get ahead.

JULIETTE

Do you have that killer instinct?

MICHEL

Do I look like I do?

JULIETTE

I don't know you well enough.

MICHEL

No. I'm not into that anymore.

JULIETTE

You were? What changed?

MICHEL

Nothing. Everything. Life. Life changes us. Léa told me you're looking for a job.

JULIETTE

Yes, I had an interview for a secretary's job at the hospital.

MICHEL

Secretary? That's what you do?

JULIETTE

Yes. I mean, no. It's complicated.

MICHEL

(smiles)

In that case, I'll shut up.

(raises his glass)

To you!

JULIETTE

To the girl in the museum!

MICHEL

Christ, no!

They laugh.

40. INT/EXT. CAR/RETIREMENT HOME - DAY

Léa parks her car.

LÉA

Well?

JULIETTE

No, I'd rather not. I'll wait here for you.

Léa grabs a bouquet of flowers off the backseat.

LÉA

I won't be long.

She gets out.

Sitting in the car, Juliette glances up at the windows of the building that Léa entered.

Eventually, she gets out of the car, paces up and down the pavement, stops, leans against the car.

In the garden of the retirement home, old people sit quietly on benches.

Suddenly, Léa appears at one of the windows, opening the curtains. An old lady is standing next to her with her back to the window.

ANGLE on Juliette. Her eyes fill with tears.

41. INT. CAFÉ - DAY

Juliette enters. Glances round the café.

The Inspector gets up and waves to her.

Juliette goes over. They sit down.

INSPECTOR

You don't mind that I suggested we meet here? I'm sick of my office.

JULIETTE

No, I like cafés. It's one of the things I missed most when I was in prison. The noise, the atmosphere, the smoke and the buzz of conversations.

The Inspector notices she has wet hair.

INSPECTOR

Is it raining?

JULIETTE

No, I've been swimming.

INSPECTOR

You swim? Me, too, but not in swimming pools. I told you about the Orinoco, didn't I?

JULIETTE

Yes, the first time we met.

INSPECTOR

It's a huge, huge river. Over 1,500 miles long. It never ends. And it's powerful. Rapids, waterfalls, flood plains...

JULIETTE

You've seen it for real?

INSPECTOR

Not yet. It's a project of mine. We'll see. It's not easy. I have a young daughter. She lives with her mother and I don't see her often. Her mother moved away. And my daughter has moved away from me, too. You know, the Orinoco is a real mystery. Several expeditions have set

out to find its source and none of them has ever really succeeded. They found little streams, but not the real source. It's fascinating, isn't it? We know everything nowadays, but we can't find the source of a river.

(beat)

I signed and approved the papers.

JULIETTE

Sorry?

INSPECTOR

For the job at the hospital. They asked for my opinion.

JULIETTE

Thanks.

INSPECTOR

No problem.

(the waiter arrives)

What will you have?

42. INT. KITCHEN - EVENING

The family dinner is over.
Papy Paul leaves the table.
Juliette begins washing up.
Little Lili is finishing her dessert.
Léa isn't there.

LUC

Lili, when you finish, brush your teeth and straight to bed. Don't wake your sister.

LILI

When's Mummy coming home?

LUC

After her meeting.

LILI

Late?

LUC

I expect so. Go on, I'll come up and give you a kiss.

Little Lili hurries out. Luc and Juliette are alone.
Luc seems ill at ease.
Juliette keeps on washing up.

LUC

How did it go at the bank?

JULIETTE

They let me open an account, but they won't give me a chequebook until I get a job.

LUC

Any news from the hospital?

JULIETTE

Not a word.

Beat.

JULIETTE

Don't worry, Luc, I won't bother you much longer. I'll find something else.

LUC

(feebly)

I never meant for you to think -

LILI (O.S.)

I want a story!

LUC

(gratefully)

Coming right up, sweetheart.

He exits.

Juliette wipes the table.

Luc reappears, displeased.

LUC

She wants you to read her a story.

43. INT. LITTLE LILI'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Juliette sits on the bed, reading.

Little Lili is fast asleep.

JULIETTE

"The old man smiled and for a Moment, it seemed to Baji that his host was a boy of his own age, or a young girl, or an infant. In the sky, the silver stars twinkled and the moon rose, as full as a woman's tummy..."

Juliette realizes that Little Lili is asleep.

She quietly closes the book.

And gazes at the child. Impassively. Eerily.

Eventually, she leans forward and kisses Little Lili with real emotion for the first time.

In the doorway, Léa watches.
Juliette turns round and sees her.
Léa smiles at her sister.

44. EXT. OUTSIDE LÉA'S HOUSE - DAY

Luc loads up the car. The kids are already strapped in the backseat.

Léa brings out sleeping bags, food and plates.

Juliette helps them.

They all seem excited to be going away.

LÉA

Did you bring a sweater? It can get cold out there.

JULIETTE

Right, thanks.

45. INT. HOUSE - DAY

Juliette comes downstairs with a sweater in one hand.

Before leaving, she stops by Papy Paul's room.
He is sitting in a chair, reading as ever.

JULIETTE

Will you be okay? You have everything you need?

(beat)

We'll be back tomorrow. Goodbye!

46. INT. CAR - DAY

The family sings happily as they drive along.

47. EXT/INT. FARMHOUSE - DAY

MONTAGE.

The car pulls up outside a rundown farmhouse.

The duck pond.

Adults and children playing.

More friends arrive. In all, there are over fifteen adults, including Michel, and Samir and his wife.

Children bouncing around in the bedrooms.

Women busy in the kitchen.

Men opening bottles of wine. Playing soccer.

The table set for dinner.

MONTAGE ends.

48. INT. FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

An open fire blazes in the hearth.
Children are fast asleep, curled up on the floor or in chairs.
In one corner, the older children play a game.

Around the table, the adults have flushed faces.
Empty bottles litter the table.
A joint goes round.
Everybody's laughing and joking.

One guy (GERARD) looks particularly drunk.

LÉA

I don't have to like Rohmer! It's a
free country.

GERARD

I don't see how you can teach
literature and not understand Rohmer's
movies.

SAMIR

Léa didn't say she doesn't understand
them. She said she doesn't like them.
There's a subtle difference.

GERARD

I can't believe what I'm hearing! I
can't help wondering how you explain
Racine to your students!

LÉA

That's irrelevant. What's Racine got
to do with anything?

GERARD

Rohmer is the Racine of the 20th
century, but if you guys are too
stupid to see it...

WOMAN #1

That's totally unfair.

MICHEL

(hands Gerard the joint)
Here, have some of this and chill out.
Next, you'll be telling us that
Stallone is Shakespeare.

GERARD

Screw you! You don't care about
anything except soccer. What about
you, Juliette? What do you think?

Her face cupped in her hands, Juliette smiles and shrugs.

GERARD

Juliette doesn't think anything. Juliette watches and judges. But who is Juliette? A woman of mystery. A sprite, a goblin... Having been hidden from us all this time, Juliette -

LUC

Cut it out! You're a pain in the ass. Go get some fresh air!

Gerard raps his knife against his glass.

GERARD

Ladies and gentlemen, pray silence! I would humbly like to suggest we play a little game. The winner will receive my deepest consideration...

MAN #1

You can shove your consideration!

GERARD

And a kiss from Juliette.

LÉA

Gerard, you can be such an asshole!

GERARD

The game is to find the reason why Léa hid her delightful sister from us for the last two hundred years. Where was Juliette? What was Juliette doing?

SAMIR

Knock it off!

GERARD

Was Juliette on the other side of the world? Was she not speaking to Léa? Was Juliette...

MICHEL

Cut it out, Gerard.

GERARD

...hidden somewhere in Switzerland? In a convent? Was Juliette...

LUC

You're getting on everybody's nerves!

GERARD

... a lion tamer in a circus, a Mossad spy, an amnesic? Answer us, Juliette! Answer us!

LÉA

Shut the fuck up, Gerard!

LUC

Be quiet, or I'll belt you!

GERARD

Let Juliette speak! For once, I have a heroine from a novel in front of me, I want to hear her tell me...

MICHEL

That you're an asshole!

GERARD

The truth! Juliette disappears.
Juliette reappears. Juliette?
Juliette?

MAN #1

Go to bed!

GERARD

Not before I know where Juliette has been. The beautiful Juliette!
Juliette! Juliette!

He gazes at her.
Gradually, everybody else falls silent.

JULIETTE

(deadpan)

I was in prison. Fifteen years. I killed my son.

Silence.

Suddenly, Gerard bursts out laughing.
Everybody else joins in, except Léa, Luc and Michel.

MAN #2

That'll teach you, Gerard!

WOMAN #1

Well done, Juliette!

SAMIR

What do you have to say now,
loudmouth?

GERARD

Okay, she wins. I give up.

The atmosphere lightens again.
Juliette discreetly ups and leaves.
Léa and Luc glance at each other.

49. EXT. LAKESIDE - NIGHT

Juliette stands by the lake. It's a very dark night.
O.S., laughter filters from the farmhouse.

Then, footsteps.

Michel draws level with Juliette. Puts a hand on her shoulder.
She shrugs it off.

MICHEL

Sorry about him. He's an ass when he's
drunk, but he's a good guy.

Beat.

MICHEL

They all think you were joking. I...
(pause)

I'm sure you weren't. Before I got my
job at the university, I taught in
prisons for ten years. I rarely talk
about it... I used to go in three
times a week. And I'd come out three
times a week. That changed my whole
life, my whole way of looking at
things, people, the sky, passing time,
coming and going, being in the street,
everything. I stopped being so certain
of things, making judgments the way
people always do. Everybody I met
behind bars, it seemed like they were
just like me. They could have been me
and I could have been them. It's a
fine line sometimes.

50. EXT. OUTSIDE LÉA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Michel parks outside the house.
Juliette is in the passenger seat.

MICHEL

Will you be okay?

JULIETTE

Yes. Thanks for the ride.

They gaze at each other.
Michel reaches out to caress her cheek.

JULIETTE

Don't... Please... I'm still... a long
way away.

She gets out of the car.

51. INT. FACULTY BUILDINGS - DAY

Léa leads a discussion with a dozen students.
She's tense, irritable.

The STUDENT she is debating with is very calm and measured. As their argument develops, the other students glance at each other with raised eyebrows.

LÉA

That's only true of Raskolnikov! You can't extend the notion of redemptive guilt to humanity in general and suggest that each murder contains its own redemption.

STUDENT

Yet the aim of the novelist is to reconstitute the world. Dostoyevsky is no exception.

LÉA

In the case of this novel, you know full well that the narration is impersonal and, moreover, incomplete, as if the author refused to put forward a single worldview because he knows that there are numerous interpretations and motivations. And numerous shades of truth.

STUDENT

But the first draft is in the first person. One can deduce, therefore, that the initial project was indeed to portray a single soul that might give the reader an intimate yet universal insight into murder and murderers.

Léa is really wound up.
Her students are shocked.

LÉA

You don't know what you're talking about! What do you know about murder and murderers!

STUDENT

I...

LÉA

And what did Dostoyevsky know about it deep down? Well? Nothing! Nada! Zilch! Even masterpieces are no more than hypotheses, simplistic extrapolations that are nothing compared to true life. Nothing. Got that? If you stopped thinking a book is the last word on something, you wouldn't spout so much bullshit!

Stunned silence.
Léa pulls herself together.

LÉA

I... I am terribly sorry. I apologize.
I don't know what...

She grabs her notes and hurries out.

52. INT. FACULTY BUILDING - DAY

Léa rushes down a hallway.

When she reaches her office, she finds Bamakalé sitting on a bench outside.

He is impeccably dressed as always.

As soon as he sees her, he jumps to his feet.

BAMAKALÉ

Good morning, I wondered if I -

LÉA

Not now! This is not the time!

She rushes into her office and slams the door.

Bamakalé stares at it in dismay.

53. INT. LÉA'S OFFICE - DAY

Holding her head in her hands, Léa sobs.

54. INT. TYPING POOL, HOSPITAL - DAY

Juliette follows the woman who interviewed her for the job earlier.

She introduces Juliette to a couple of other secretaries, typing away at their computers.

They come to an empty desk.

WOMAN

This is your desk. Your job is essentially to type up medical reports and perhaps help out your colleagues from time to time. The trial period is three weeks. At the end of that period, the director will inform you of his decision. I'll let you get settled in.

She walks away, stops and backtracks.

WOMAN

I rely on you to be discreet, of course.

55. INT. LÉA'S HOUSE - DAY

Léa arrives home. Dumps grocery bags in the hall. Listens.

O.S., on the piano, the tune Juliette taught Little Lili in an earlier scene.

It clearly perturbs Léa.

She hurries upstairs to the spare room where Little Lili is playing with Juliette next to her.

Emelia sits on the floor. Papy Paul is in one corner, smiling.

Little Lili stops and runs over to hug her mother.

LILI

Mummy! Come and play! Play, Mummy!
Auntie said you used to be very good!

Léa hesitates.

Juliette shuffles over on the piano stool, and nods to her to sit down.

Léa still hesitates. Then goes over and sits at the piano. Each movement seems deeply thought-out.

She gazes at the piano like a long-lost friend. Then her sister.

They begin playing together. Juliette starts to sing.

JULIETTE

*A la claire fontaine m'en allant
promener
J'ai trouvé l'eau si claire
Que je m'y suis baignée...
(At the fountain as I was walking by
The water was so clear
That I want for a swim...)*

Léa joins in.

JULIETTE & LEA

*Il y a longtemps que je t'aime
jamais je ne t'oublierai...
(I've loved you so long
I can never forget you...)*

*J'ai trouvé l'eau si claire
Que je m'y suis baignée...
A la feuille d'un chêne
Je me suis essuyée
(The water was so clear
That I want for a swim
I found an oak leaf
to use to dry myself)*

*Il y a longtemps que je t'aime
jamais je ne t'oublierai...
(I've loved you so long
I can never forget you...)*

Lalala lalala lalalalalala
Lalala lalalala
Lalala lalala lalalalalala..

The children applaud. Papy Paul looks delighted.
The girls hug their mother and kiss her.
Léa and Juliette glance at each other, deeply moved.
Juliette runs her hand down Léa's arm.

56. INT. TYPING POOL, HOSPITAL - DAY

A headset in her ears, Juliette types up a report.

Three young male DOCTORS walk over.
One of them lobs a tape onto Juliette's desk.

DOCTOR

Type that and send it over to
Cardiology.

Juliette removes her headset.

JULIETTE

Sorry?

DOCTOR

(irritably)
I said, type that now and send it over
to Cardio.

JULIETTE

The report I'm typing is urgent, as
well.

DOCTOR

Who the hell do you think you are?
You're just a secretary. Do what I
say. I want that over there in fifteen
minutes. Got it?

JULIETTE

Fine.

They walk away.

DOCTOR

(mutters to his colleagues)
They're hiring them older than before
and more stupid than ever!

57. INT. CAFÉ - DAY

The Inspector and Juliette sit at a table.

INSPECTOR

At my age, it's not easy meeting someone new. I don't like going out. And being a cop scares people off. But I could be at Social Services, it'd be the same. I sit at a desk all day and process paperwork. I'd be no use trying to catch a thief!

(beat)

This is where I met my wife. They've redecorated, but it's basically still the same. Where did you meet your husband?

JULIETTE

At college.

INSPECTOR

He was a doctor, too?

JULIETTE

No, he dropped out after two years. He got a job supervising a team of health visitors.

INSPECTOR

When did you last see him?

JULIETTE

At the trial. He testified against me.

INSPECTOR

Like my wife. Ever since, she's never... She sends my daughter here by plane or train with a label round her neck like a parcel.

(beat)

I could still describe exactly how she was dressed the first time we met.

(beat)

How's work?

JULIETTE

Fine.

INSPECTOR

Nobody giving you any trouble?

JULIETTE

No...

INSPECTOR

By the way, I think I'll soon be... You remember my Orinoco project... After all this time, it's much clearer in my mind now. Deep down, there's

nothing and nobody to make it worth me staying here.

58. INT. KITCHEN - EVENING

Juliette sits with Emelia on her lap, flicking through a picture book, pointing to a picture and saying the word out loud several times.

Emelia tries to repeat the words.

Suddenly, there's a loud crash upstairs, followed by screams.

59. INT. LÉA & LUC'S BEDROOM - EVENING

Luc writhes in pain on the floor, clutching his shoulder.

Nearby, scattered tools and a stepladder lying on its side.

LÉA

You idiot!

LUC

Will you shut up? It hurts.

Little Lili pokes her head round the door.

LILI

Daddy! What happened?

Juliette rushes in, with Emelia in her arms. She puts Emelia down and kneels next to Luc. All her doctor's reflexes come flooding back.

JULIETTE

Where does it hurt?

LUC

My shoulder.

Juliette begins examining him.

Papy Paul peeks in.

LÉA

I told you to leave it! You're no good with a hammer.

JULIETTE

It's okay. Dislocated, that's all. I'll put it back. It'll hurt but once it's in, that's it.

Juliette manipulates his shoulder with great assurance. Little Lili watches, wide-eyed.

LUC

Ouch!

LILI

Daddy!

JULIETTE

Feel better?

Luc flexes his shoulder.

LUC

Yes... Yes... lots. Thanks, Juliette.

Papy Paul ducks out of the room.

LÉA

Next time, remember you're useless at DIY.

LILI

Where'd you learn to do that, Auntie?

Juliette, Léa and Luc glance at each other.

JULIETTE

On TV! You learn all kinds of useful things watching TV!

LILI

See, Mummy, the TV's not "inane", like you always say it is.

60. INT. SWIMMING POOL - DAY

Juliette and Léa hold onto the side, kicking their legs.

LÉA

With the kids, it's hard to keep up my research. I go to less conferences, I publish less... But I like working here. I get on with my colleagues. Michel, for example, is the kind of guy who'll never let you down.

JULIETTE

Has he always been single?

LÉA

No... I don't think so. Actually, I don't know. He's actually pretty secretive.

(beat)

I don't believe it! Check that out! Look who Monsieur Lucien has on his arm.

Paunchy Monsieur Lucien struts along in the company of a beautiful 25-year-old.

He winks at Juliette and Léa.

LÉA

That's wild! There's always hope when you're a guy.

JULIETTE

Had you forgotten me?

LÉA

What's that?

JULIETTE

You forgot me all those years, didn't you?

Léa gazes intensely at her sister.

61. INT. LÉA'S HOME OFFICE - DAY

Léa places a heavy box on the desk, under Juliette's nose.

LÉA

Open it.

Juliette hesitates, then opens the box.
It's full of diaries.

LÉA

Take one out. It doesn't matter which.

Juliette reaches in and pulls out a diary.

LÉA

Open it at any page.

Juliette opens the diary.

Under each date, Juliette's name is handwritten, followed by a number: Juliette 918, Juliette 919...

Juliette takes out another diary. Same thing: Juliette 3127, Juliette 3128...

LÉA

That was the first thing I did every morning. Write your name and the number of days you'd been gone.

(beat)

I suppose you could say it only took a second and it was just a few letters and figures, but I thought about you so hard in those few moments every day. Every morning, we were reunited.

62. INT. TYPING POOL, HOSPITAL - DAY

Juliette sits at her computer.
The phone rings. She picks up.

JULIETTE

Yes... Good morning, sir... Yes...
I'll be right there.

63. INT. DIRECTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

The DIRECTOR stands glancing out the window, as if to avoid meeting Juliette's eyes. She sits facing him.

On his desk, framed photos of his wife, four children, three dogs, two horses...

DIRECTOR

It's called teamwork. Even if you each have your individual tasks to do, there has to be unity, team spirit. We're not machines. Several of your co-workers say you are cold and distant. You never talk to anyone apparently. It's disappointing. Very disappointing.

JULIETTE

Does that mean I'm out of a job?

DIRECTOR

Of course not! I didn't say that, did I? Just don't forget you're on trial. Make an effort. That's all I'm saying. Try to be less... withdrawn. Open up a bit.

(beat)

Of course, I understand that it's not... I mean, I understand but...

JULIETTE

What do you understand?

The Director has no answer.

64. INT. EMELIA & LITTLE LILI'S ROOMS - NIGHT

Léa tucks Emelia in. She is already asleep.

Léa kisses her, turns on a nightlight and slips out.

She goes into Little Lili's room and finds her daughter reading.

LÉA

Okay, Little Lili, lights out now.

Léa closes the book, puts it on the nightstand, kisses her daughter and is about to turn out the light...

LILI

No, please! Leave it on!

LÉA

Alright, sweetheart. Goodnight.

LILI

Mummy, I want to ask you something.

Léa stops and turns round.

LILI

When you and Auntie Juliette were little, did you spend a lot of time together?

LÉA

Quite a lot, yes.

LILI

But Auntie Juliette was much older than you.

Léa nods.

LILI

So she protected you?

LÉA

Against absolutely everything.

LILI

So why did she stop one day?

LÉA

What do you mean?

LILI

Why'd she go away for so long and leave you all alone?

LÉA

Because I wasn't a little girl anymore. Sleep now.

She kisses Little Lili and turns to leave.

LILI

We all need protecting, don't we, though? Even when we're grown up.

LÉA

(laughs)

That's what your Dad's for.

LILI

(laughs too)

I didn't think of that.

LÉA

Goodnight.

LILI

You know, Mummy, I really like Auntie Juliette.

LÉA

Me, too, sweetheart.

LILI

You can tell she's your sister because she's really kind, like you. It's a shame she never had children, though.

LÉA

What makes you say that?

LILI

I'd have liked to have some cousins.

LÉA

Go to sleep.

65. EXT. STREETS - NIGHT

Juliette and Michel come out of a cinema.

MICHEL

Do you want to go for a drink?

JULIETTE

It's a warm night. Let's walk.

They walk along in silence, apparently happy together, here, now.

JULIETTE

For two years, the only walking I got to do was in a tiny triangular courtyard with big, high walls... I counted my steps, every step I took. And kept on counting later when I was at Centrale. The guards called me The Walker. But the other inmates called me Nobody.

Michel looks quizzically.

JULIETTE

Short for Nobody's Home.

MICHEL

There's a Giono novel - I'm pretty sure it's his last - that has a great female character, who's withdrawn into silence. She calls herself Nobody. The main character falls madly in love with her...

JULIETTE

Do you see the world through books you've read?

MICHEL

Books have been a big help to me. Sometimes, they are better friends than people, don't you find?

He glances at her as they walk along.
Eventually, she turns to look at him, too.

66. INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Breakfast.
Everybody's in the kitchen.

Luc is about to leave for work.
He steals a slice of toast from Little Lili's plate.

LILI

Hey! That's mine!

LUC

I know but I'm terribly late. I gotta run. Bye, everybody! And don't wait up for me, I have a meeting that will finish late.

LÉA

You have a meeting? So do I. I won't be home either. I told you about it.

LILI

What about us?

LUC

Katrina will look after you. Mummy's going to call her.

LÉA

You're out of luck, sunshine.
Katrina's away wreaking destruction and havoc at her mother-in-law's.

LILI

Papy Paul can look after us. Can't you, Papy!

Luc and Léa share a glance.
He hesitates.
Léa leaves him on his own.

LUC

Maybe... Juliette could look after you. If she doesn't mind, of course.
(to Juliette)
But maybe you have other plans?

JULIETTE

No, it'd be a pleasure.

LILI & EMELIA

Yes! Thank you, Auntie!

67. INT. MICHEL'S OFFICE, FACULTY BLDG - DAY

Michel types his students' marks out of twenty. Léa dictates.

LEA

Laure Sourdillon, 10. Eric Suffren, 3.
Anne Sulkovic, 8. Laurent Taskon, 11.
Frédéric Taskon, 6. Cécile Tramelle,
18. No way! Did she bribe you?

MICHEL

I'm using a new system of bonus
points. Female? Plus 3. Belly showing?
Plus 2. Thong showing? Plus 5. No bra?
Plus 4. Belly button pierced? Plus 1.

LÉA

You slimeball! I'll tell Juliette on
you. She was beginning to like you.

MICHEL

She told you that?

LÉA

Perhaps.

MICHEL

Seriously, what did she say?

LÉA

Look at you! You're like you're 15
years old! You are just so cute at
times!

(beat)

Frédéric Trousseau, 8. Ludivine
Trussi, 5. Christian-Edmé Ulrich, 9.

MICHEL

C'mon, Léa, tell me!

LÉA

(shakes her head, smiles)

Sophie Uzes, 3. Dogun Uzbek, 14. Louis
Valdenaire, 7. Ludovic Vogel, 11...

68. INT. LÉA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Juliette tiptoes out of Little Lili's room.
Closes the door and puts a book of fairy tales down on a chair.

She goes downstairs.
Sees a light under Papy Paul's door. Knocks gently and enters.

JULIETTE

May I?

Papy Paul smiles at her.
Juliette sits opposite him and smiles back.
Clearly, she finds his presence soothing.

Papy Paul goes back to his book.
Juliette sits, saying nothing.
From time to time, he looks up and smiles at her.

O.S., a key in the front door.

Juliette gets up and says goodnight.

In the hall, Léa is home.
The two sisters talk in whispers.

LÉA

How did it go? Are they asleep?

JULIETTE

Like logs.

LÉA

I'm going to go to bed, too. I'm
exhausted. Is Luc home?

JULIETTE

Not yet.

LÉA

You're still coming tomorrow?

Beat.

Juliette nods.

69. INT. RETIREMENT HOME - DAY

Juliette and Léa walk down a hallway, past old folks in blue
towelling robes.
Léa carries a bouquet of flowers.

They reach a door. Léa knocks and enters.
Juliette hovers on the threshold.

In the room, their MOTHER spins round when she hears the door open.

LÉA

Hi, Mummy!

MOTHER

(strong English accent)

I already told you I don't need
anything!

LÉA

It's me, Mum.

MOTHER

Who are you? I don't know you. If you
don't leave this minute, I'll call for
help!

LEA

Mum, it's me, Léa. Your daughter.

MOTHER

Oh, I know who you are. I told you before, I don't need anything. I have at least three vacuum cleaners already, why would I need another one? At my age.

LÉA

I brought you some flowers.

MOTHER

Don't think you'll get round me like that!

Juliette has ventured a few feet inside the door.

MOTHER

(re. Juliette)

Is she with you?

LÉA

Mum...

MOTHER

Stop calling me that! It's very annoying! Don't just stand there, fetch a vase! Everything I have gets stolen here.

Léa glances at Juliette, then leaves the room. Their mother sits in a chair.

MOTHER

It's a funny job you do. Pestering people all day. Can't you take your junk somewhere else?

She leans forward, takes her head in both hands and shakes it. Stops. Looks up and stares straight at Juliette.

Her face is unrecognizable. Her lips quiver.

MOTHER

(gently, in English)

My darling Juliette... Are you back from school already? Come and give me a big kiss! Come and kiss your Mummy!

Juliette freezes.

MOTHER

Come on, sweetie. What's wrong? Come on... I am so happy to see you! I am so happy!

The old lady holds her hand out.
Juliette eventually takes hold of it.

Her mother pulls her towards her.
Juliette is caught between astonishment, the urge to run and great emotion.

MOTHER

I'm all alone here, you know. They
locked me up! I'm all, all alone. Take
me home with you. Take me home,
please.

She sobs.
Juliette strokes her hair and forehead.

Just then, Léa returns.
She stops in her tracks.

Eventually, her mother looks up.
She is transformed again.

MOTHER

(in French)

That's quite enough!

(notices Juliette standing beside her)

What are you doing, pressing up
against me? You've got a nerve! Get
out of here now, both of you! Go on!
Out!

70. EXT. HOSPITAL/STREETS - DAY

MONTAGE.

Juliette comes out of the hospital.
She catches a bus into town. Stands the whole way. It's full.
She walks down a busy street in the town centre.
She dials a number on a public phone.

MONTAGE ends.

JULIETTE

Michel? Hi, it's Juliette.

MICHEL (O.S.)

Hi, there! How are you doing?

JULIETTE

Fine. I'm in town. I thought maybe we
could meet up?

MICHEL (O.S.)

I'm really sorry. I have a meeting
starting in half an hour and...

JULIETTE

After your meeting maybe... I can go for a walk in the meantime.

MICHEL (O.S.)

It'll probably drag on. And I promised a friend I'd meet him afterwards. Another time, okay?

JULIETTE

(colder)

Okay. Sorry to bother you. Goodbye.

MICHEL (O.S.)

Goodbye, Juliette.

She hangs up, her disappointment accentuated by the fact that Michel was clearly not telling her something.

71. INT. BAR - EVENING

A fairly cramped space. Juliette stands at the bar, a glass of red wine in front of her. Sips at it.

Lined up at the bar, other customers sip their beer or Ricard in much the same way, lost in their drink or their thoughts.

Nobody talks. Nobody pays any attention to anyone else. In the background, the radio plays. The Bar Owner does his accounts.

A banal, but odd glimpse of daily human existence.

72. EXT/INT. LÉA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Juliette pushes the gate open and walks up to the house.

Inside the house, silence. No lights are on.

JULIETTE

Hello? Anyone home?

She knocks on Papy Paul's door. No answer. She glances in: his chair is empty.

Back in the hallway, Juliette calls out again. No answer.

She heads into the living room.

Léa, Luc, the girls, Papy Paul, Samir, his (very pregnant) wife and Michel leap up and start singing.

ALL

(except Papy Paul)

Happy birthday to you! Happy birthday to you! Happy birthday, dear Juliette! Happy birthday to you!

They cheer and applaud.
The two girls carry over a huge gift-wrapped present.

Juliette tries to say something, but the words catch in her throat.
Her eyes fill with tears.

She laughs.

73. INT. MICHEL'S APARTMENT - DAY

Michel is stretched out on the couch.
Juliette sits on the floor, her head resting on Michel's thigh.

JULIETTE

The worst thing, maybe, was the end,
the last few weeks before it was over
and after they told me I was being
released. I started having nightmares.
Always the same one, in fact. I had my
case packed. I stepped outside and
found myself in the middle of nowhere.
There was nothing and nobody there.
Just emptiness.

One day, they told me I had a visitor.
I thought it was a mistake. It was the
first time ever. There was a young
woman waiting to see me. She smiled.
It was Léa.

I listened to her without saying a
word. She promised she'd come again.
That night, I promised myself I'd
refuse to see her. She belonged to a
part of my life that had died. Then,
just before I went to sleep, I thought
back to when she was little. Lala, we
used to call her. The gaps in her
teeth, her smile, her fringe that
would never stay in the same place...
And her hand in mine. It was that
little girl that made me decide to
come back.

74. INT. LOCKER ROOM, SWIMMING POOL - DAY

Léa and Juliette stand side by side, drying their hair in the
mirror.

LÉA

Luc wants to take a trip to the
mountains. "Top up the red blood
cells," as he puts it. Being fit for
his stupid soccer games is all that
matters to him.

Léa pauses and gazes at Juliette's face in the mirror.
They stare at each other's reflection as if seeking the answer to a
much deeper mystery.

LÉA

When I was little, I so wanted to be like you.

JULIETTE

And now?

Beat.

They go back to drying their hair.

LÉA

You know what I thought about last night? The Green House at Hossegor. When was the last time we were there? The year I broke my wrist?

JULIETTE

I went back once more after that.

Léa glances quizzically at her sister, but a bunch of women passing noisily by, O.S., stop her pressing the issue.

The women's voices and laughter eventually fade.

LÉA

I thought it had been knocked down.

JULIETTE

Fifteen years ago, it was still standing.

Léa is intrigued now.

JULIETTE

I took Pierre there.

Léa gazes at Juliette's reflection, but doesn't dare ask.

75. INT. LÉA'S HOUSE - EVENING

Little Lili watches admiringly as Juliette does her make-up in her room.

Léa peeks round the door. She looks a million dollars.

They all go downstairs where Luc has Emelia in his arms.

LILI

You look very beautiful, Auntie!

JULIETTE

Do you think so?

She picks up two pairs of earrings.

JULIETTE

These ones or these ones?

LILI

Mmmmm... The red ones! After the restaurant, which nightclub are you going to?

LÉA

That's for us to know and you to find out.

(to Juliette)

Are you ready?

JULIETTE

Absolutely!

LILI

Can you dance, Auntie?

JULIETTE

Of course. I'll teach you if you want.

LILI

Yes! I'd love to come with you.

LUC

You're still a bit on the young side, cupcake.

LILI

I'm not a cupcake and I'm eight years old!

LÉA

(chants)

Eight years old! Eight years old!
Eight years old!

Papy Paul pokes his head out of his room, smiling.

LÉA

(to the girls)

See you, chickadees! Be good. Don't give your father a hard time. He looks exhausted already.

She gives them each a kiss.
Luc whispers in her ear.

LUC

Don't come home too late, will you?

LÉA

You can bank on it, sweetie!

She gives him one last kiss and a sly wink.

76. INT. NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

Juliette and Léa are caught in the throng in the club entrance.

Chatter. Laughter. Throbbing music.

Léa can't stop grinning as they shuffle towards the dance floor. Behind her, as the music gets louder, Juliette looks increasingly uncomfortable.

Léa doesn't notice a thing. The camera closes in on her.

After a few seconds, she glances round.

Juliette has disappeared.

77. EXT. PARKING LOT, NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

Léa rushes out of the club, calling out Juliette's name. Finally, she hears sobbing coming from around a corner.

Juliette is squatting on the ground, crying her eyes out. Léa hunkers down and takes her in her arms.

Juliette clings to Léa like a life buoy.

78. INT. CAR - NIGHT

Léa drives.

Juliette sits in a ball in the passenger seat. Haggard, tear-streaked cheeks.

Léa eventually breaks the silence.

LÉA

You can tell me anything. You can talk to me...

No reaction.

LÉA

I'm not other people.

Juliette glances at her sister.

LÉA

Juliette, I'm not other people.

79. INT. POLICE STATION - DAY

Juliette sits on the same bench in the waiting room as in a previous scene.

Two people sit nearby.

A YOUNG INSPECTOR arrives.

YOUNG INSPECTOR

(reads from a card)

Juliette Fontaine?

JULIETTE

Yes.

YOUNG INSPECTOR

Follow me.

She follows him down the hallway.

He doesn't say a word.

He shows her into the same office as before.

But it doesn't look the same.

The Orinoco poster has been replaced by an official National Police Force poster.

The young Inspector sits at the desk and opens a file.

Juliette hesitates and decides to stay standing.

He talks without taking his eyes off the file.

YOUNG INSPECTOR

My name is Segral. I'm your new probation officer, replacing Inspector Fauré.

JULIETTE

(brightly)

So he finally did it? He went to see the Orinoco?

The Inspector tears his eyes from the file and stares at Juliette as if she's totally nuts.

YOUNG INSPECTOR

If going to see the Orinoco means blowing your brains out, yes, he finally did it. Ten days ago.

Juliette gasps and grabs the back of the chair in front of her.

80. EXT. OUTSIDE LÉA'S HOUSE - DAY

Juliette walks home.

Outside the house, Léa is about to get into the car.

The girls and Luc are already in their seats.

LÉA

Juliette! Hurry! We're going to the clinic! Kaisha gave birth last night. A little girl. We're going to see her.

Juliette shakes her head.

LÉA

Come on, you can have a nap later if you're tired. The girls are so excited!

JULIETTE

Forget it.

Juliette heads up the path to the house.

Léa gazes at her blankly.

81. INT. JULIETTE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Juliette lies on her bed, clasping a photo and a sheet of paper to her chest.

82. INT. TYPING POOL - DAY

Juliette is hard at work.

SECRETARY (O.S.)

The Director wants to see you. He asked me to tell you.

Juliette glances up anxiously.

JULIETTE

Thanks... I'll be right there.

83. EXT. GARDEN, LÉA'S HOUSE - DAY

On a table in the garden, Léa, Juliette and the two girls are making acacia blossom fritters. They all seem in good spirits.

Papy Paul reclines in a deck chair, reading and smiling.

JULIETTE

No, Little Lili, not like that! That's too much sugar. Two spoonfuls is enough, I said!

LÉA

Emelia, you're getting flour everywhere!

LILI

Is that okay, Auntie?

JULIETTE

That's perfect. Now, pour in the milk.

LILI

Do you think we'll have enough flowers?

JULIETTE

Sure, and if we don't, we can pick some more.

Luc arrives home from work.

LUC

(surprised)

Good grief, it's a party!

(kisses Léa)

What are we celebrating?

Juliette and Léa glance at each other and smile.

LÉA

You tell him.

JULIETTE

The hospital has given me a full-time contract.

LUC

Wow, that's great! That calls for a drink!

MICHEL (O.S.)

My impeccable sense of timing...

He comes round the corner, carrying four bottles of champagne.

MICHEL

Hello, everybody! Look who I brought with me - a whole tribe of starving Afghanis!

Everybody looks past him to see Samir, Kaisha and their new baby arriving.

More cheers.

84. INT. KITCHEN - DAY

An apron tied round her waist, Juliette puts the last fritter on the serving dish that Little Lili is ready to take out.

O.S., laughter and banter from the garden.

JULIETTE

Careful you don't burn yourself. And don't drop it either.

Little Lili walks out as if the platter were a royal crown. Juliette watches her affectionately. Wipes her hands.

Léa arrives.

The sisters glance at each other with love and great affection.

Juliette opens her mouth to speak but bites her tongue.

LÉA

What?

Juliette smiles and shakes her head. She gazes at Léa once more.

JULIETTE

Thank you.

85. INT. FINE ARTS MUSEUM - DAY

Juliette wanders round the museum, tightly framed by the camera. We see her face in close-up, with a blur of paintings behind her as she looks round.

She stops at a painting of the Annunciation.
The camera closes in on the face of the Angel Gabriel telling Mary
the good news.
Juliette seems to be in key with the painting.

MICHEL (O.S.)

Here, look at this one.

We pull back to see that Michel has been walking along with
Juliette all this time, his arm round her waist.

He points to another painting.
Juliette looks, then averts her eyes rapidly.
Michel doesn't notice.

The camera pulls back still further, until we lose them in the
vastness of the museum.

An ordinary couple. Just like any other.

86. INT. JULIETTE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Juliette puts away her freshly laundered clothes in the cupboard.
The photo and sheet of paper are tucked between two sweaters.
Juliette takes them out and kisses them.

LUC (O.S.)

(from downstairs)

Juliette? It's 8:30 already! If you
want me to give you a lift, it's right
now!

JULIETTE

Coming!

She is about to tuck the photo out of sight again, but thinks
twice.

She gazes at the cupboard, frowns, then turns round and gently puts
the photo and sheet of paper down on the bed, in full view.

At the door, Juliette glances round at the bed and heaves a sigh of
relief, as if a huge weight has been lifted from her shoulders.

87. INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Léa has pushed back the furniture to clean.

LÉA

(loudly)

What was it this time, Marie-Paule? A
cat? The wind? The holy spirit?

KATRINA (O.S.)

I never said that at all, Léa. What I
said was that Papy Paul stumbled and
the lamp fell off. You can't blame me
for that!

LÉA

(to herself)

Papy Paul! Sure. I believe you.

(louder)

When you've finished in the kitchen,
come and give me a hand moving the
table. I know I can't do it on my own.

KATRINA (O.S.)

Okay!

Emelia skitters into the living room, gurgling happily.
She has something in her hand that we can't make out.

LÉA

You've made a quick recovery, you
little terror! If I'd known, I'd have
taken you to crèche.

EMELIA

Mummy! Mummy!

She holds out her hand.

LÉA

What have you got there?

Léa reaches out and takes it. Freezes.

It's a photo. Of a little boy, laughing.

Léa immediately recognizes Pierre, Juliette's son.

Emelia gurgles some more.

Léa snaps out of her trance.

LÉA

Where did you get this?

EMELIA

Auntie! Auntie!

LÉA

Emelia, it's wrong to take other
people's things. It's wrong! I forbid
it! I forbid it!

Emelia bursts into tears.

88. INT. JULIETTE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Léa enters her sister's bedroom and sees the cupboard door is open.
A sheet of paper lies on the bed.

A child's handwriting and hearts drawn on the page draw her eye.

Léa picks up the paper.

O.S., Emelia is still crying and calling for her "Mummy! Mummy!"

Léa holds the photo in one hand and the sheet of paper in the

other.

The camera scans the handwriting as she reads:

*A garden in the rain
Is peaceful and sad too
Mummy, I feel the same
When I'm far from you*

*Your smile lights up the sky
And makes me so happy
If one day you must die
Make sure it's after me*

Your loving son, Pierre

Léa stares at the page, deeply moved.
She flips it over and her emotion gives way to surprise.

The camera just gives us time to make out lines of figures and columns that look like the results of a number of tests.

Léa is intrigued.

She isn't sure what to do.

Then, she leaves the room and goes to her study, where she scans the document.

89. INT. CAFÉ - DAY

From the outside looking in, we see Juliette sitting in the café.
She looks out. Watches people passing by.
She seems at peace with herself.

90. INT. SPARE ROOM - NIGHT

Little Lili and Juliette play the piano and sing happily.

JULIETTE & LILI

*Sur la plus haute branche
Le rossignol chantait
Chante, rossignol, chante
Toi, tu as le cœur gai
(On the highest branch
A nightingale sang
Sing, nightingale, sing
Your heart is full of joy)*

Juliette gets up.

JULIETTE

I have to go.

LILI

(keeps playing)

No!

Juliette goes out into the hallway.

LILI (O.S.)

Mummy! Can you come and play with me?

Juliette joins Léa, who is tidying away clothes in Little Lili's dresser.

JULIETTE

Is something wrong?

LÉA

No, I'm fine.

JULIETTE

Are you sure?

Léa stops what she's doing and gazes at her sister.

O.S., Little Lili keeps playing.

91. INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

In a white coat, stethoscope round his neck, Samir sits reading the scanned document.

Léa sits anxiously opposite him.

Beat.

Samir looks up and frowns.

SAMIR

Why did you tear the name off the top of the page?

No answer.

SAMIR

It's Lili, isn't it?

LÉA

(taken aback)

No, not at all.

SAMIR

Do you swear?

LÉA

I swear it isn't Little Lili, Samir. Honestly! You don't know the little... It's somebody who died. A long time ago.

SAMIR

So why all the mystery?

LÉA

I can't explain now. Please, no questions. This is just very important for me. Very, very important. Please...

Samir glances over the document again.

Léa observes him closely, then looks away. Sees a framed photo on the desk.

It shows Samir when he was younger with a young woman and two children aged about four and six. They are all smiling.

SAMIR

I'll have to consult a colleague whose field this is. I don't want to mislead you. All I can say for the moment is that it doesn't look very good. Not good at all. I'll call you as soon as I have more.

Léa smiles gratefully and gets up to go. Samir comes round to get the door for her.

Suddenly, Léa gives him a big hug. She glances at the photo on the desk again.

Samir seems surprised by this show of affection. Then, he notices what she's looking at.

SAMIR

(puts his hand over his heart)
They're still here, you know. In the end, war is pretty weak. It can't destroy everything.

92. EXT. STREET - DAY

Juliette waits outside an apartment building.

Léa runs to meet her.

They kiss on the cheeks.

LÉA

Sorry...

JULIETTE

The woman from the agency gave me the keys. She'll meet us there.

93. INT. EMPTY APARTMENT - DAY

Juliette and Léa look round a charming old apartment.

From separate rooms, they talk without being able to see each other.

JULIETTE

Well?

LÉA

What?

JULIETTE

What do you think?

LÉA

(distractedly)
It's not bad.

JULIETTE

You don't sound convinced.

LÉA

No, it is. It gets plenty of light.
Juliette joins Léa in the next room.
Beat.

LÉA

I liked having you at home with us.

JULIETTE

You've been acting strange for the last couple of days. What's wrong?
They look straight at each other.
Léa is about to say something, when the front door opens.

ESTATE AGENT (O.S.)

Madame Fontaine?

JULIETTE

Yes!

94. INT. LÉA'S OFFICE, FACULTY BLDG - DAY

Léa sits at her desk facing Bamakalé, elegantly dressed as always.
Léa seems weary and bored by his story.

BAMAKALÉ

You have to understand, I feel like I have been passed from pillar to post for the last few months. I have been the victim of a terrible mistake. I can't sleep. I don't know where to turn...

The phone rings.
Léa picks up and motions to Bamakalé to give her a minute.

LÉA

Yes, Charly? ... Right, put him through. Thanks.

(beat)

Samir? ... No, it's fine. Go ahead.

Léa listens, brow furrowed.
Gradually, her expression changes as if she has made an astonishing realization.

When Samir has finished, she simply thanks him and hangs up.

She seems to have completely forgotten about Bamakalé.

Eventually, he breaks the silence.

BAMAKALÉ

As I was saying, I have been treated very unfairly. This isn't the first time, the people of Africa have suffered an injustice. You are well aware...

Léa looks up, as if only just noticing his presence.

BAMAKALÉ

... that my people have been oppressed for centuries -

LÉA

Mr. Bamakalé, you really are beginning to piss me off with your complaints about your marks! You know that? You're pissing me off!

FADE TO BLACK:

Juliette's voice fades in while the screen is still black.

JULIETTE (O.S.)

I knew as soon as the first symptoms appeared. I hardly even read the results of the tests. Pierrot grabbed the letter and started writing a poem on it. When he gave it back, he was beaming with pride. My little boy...

(beat)

I saw him looking at me, so happy, so beautiful. He was my Pierrot. Then, I pictured the little corpse he was going to become.

95. INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

FADE UP.

Juliette stands by the window, looking out at the garden. A few paces behind her, Léa gazes at her sister.

(As the scene develops, Léa will get closer to Juliette until she is pressed up against her sister.)

We sense they have cried a lot already. They are beyond tears. Their eyes are puffy and red-rimmed.

They are reaching the conclusion of a long, painful discussion.)

JULIETTE

I could picture him at every stage of the disease. I knew exactly how it would develop. The worst thing was that I knew he wouldn't just fall asleep and never wake up, like in a kiddies' story. Soon, he wouldn't be

able to move. He would suffer and gradually the life would be squeezed out of him. And there was no cure. Nothing to relieve his suffering.

(beat)

I went away with him. People said I abducted him. I suppose I did. I ran away with him. I fled with him and I fed him and I showed him all the places I loved best... Saint-Hippolyte, Beaulian, the Palioure coast... I had to increase the dose of painkillers almost every day. He was so brave. He used to say to me, "I'm your little husband..."

(beat)

One evening, we had a little party, just the two of us. It was in the Green House. We sang, we laughed and I read him all his favourite stories. Then, I put him to bed. I told him I loved him, that he was running a fever and I had to give him a jab. He gave me a hug and held me as tight as his little arms could. He recited his poem and I held him in my arms until morning.

(beat)

Afterwards, nothing seemed important anymore.

LÉA

Why didn't you say...

JULIETTE

I felt so alone. So alone. Anyway, there was nothing to say. Trying to explain it would be trying to excuse it. Death has no excuses. One way or another, I was guilty. I had brought a child into the world only to sentence him to death.

(beat)

You know, the most horrible prison... The worst prison is the death of your child. There is never any release from that prison.

Léa holds Juliette in her arms.
Juliette clings to her sister.

Léa gives her a kiss.

Silence.

LÉA

Look...

Outside, in the garden, the sun comes out, even though it's still raining.

LÉA

Isn't it beautiful?

O.S., the front door opens.

MICHEL (O.S.)

It's Michel! Is anyone home?

The sisters say nothing.

MICHEL (O.S.)

Léa? Juliette?

Juliette turns away from the garden, glances at Léa, smiles.

MICHEL (O.S.)

Juliette?

Beat.

JULIETTE

I'm here!