

Jarosław
Iwaszkiewicz

Chopin & Sand Summer in Nohant

1955 ∞ 1937

@

2022

Translated by
MJ Kazmierski

I offer this book to my daughters Maria and Teresa,

J.I.

Born 20 February 1894 Kalnyk, Kiev Governorate, Russian Empire (now in Illintsi Raion, Vinnytsia Oblast, Ukraine), Jarosław Leon Iwaszkiewicz died 2 March 1980 (aged 86) in Warsaw, Poland. He was nominated for the Nobel Prize in Literature four times and in 1988 he was recognized as a Righteous Among the Nations for his role in sheltering Jews from Nazi persecution during World War II.

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Translator Note

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As well as writing a seminal 1955 biography of Poland's most famous son, just before the outbreak of World War II he also wrote *Summer in Nohant*, his 1937 play about the time Chopin spent living together with George Sand and her family in her rural estate in France... All this along with numerous works of his own poetry, prose and drama not connected with Chopin at all.

For the first of this year's Chopin birthday celebrations (22 02 2022), I decided to translate and publish online free of charge the foreword and opening chapter from Iwaszkiewicz's biography of Chopin (which has never been translated into English), followed by a complete new translation of his play about Chopin's parting from Sand set in her rural estate in Nohant, France – I worked with a 1983 edition of this book published during the Cold War by PWM in Poland. *Summer in Nohant* was previously published in Celina Wieniewska's English translation by Minerva Publishing Company in 1942, and staged in post-WWII England, which has since gone out of print...

Marek Jacek Kazmierski

Warsaw, Poland

22 02 2022

CHOPIN

AUTHOR FOREWORD

My new book about Chopin, the third I have penned, makes no pretence to be a work of academic authorship. It shares with readers all that I know about Chopin – along with some of my suspicions about him – in a purely literary format. This book turns such educated guesswork into flights of novelistic fancy in only a handful of places, such as the opening and the very end of the book.

Other than that, it is purely based on facts. Although I read a great deal before writing this work, I did my best to forget them while writing. What I did my utmost to do was to decipher what Chopin's own words, contained in his letters, tried to tell us all.

I was also aided by the writings left behind by those who were his contemporaries and wrote to as well as about Chopin. The years which have gone by since the passing of our great artist have created a dire residue of legends and misunderstandings to do with his biography and the way his works are judged. I tried to cleanse both his life and his works of this sediment, being of the same opinion as Teofil Kwiatkowski, that "Chopin was as pure as a tear".

From beneath all this mould and overgrowth, what emerges is a portrait of an artist with a very clearly defined profile: the nobility of his person, its remarkable intransigence and awareness of his own life and mission – have very few equals. What I tried to do was once more remind Polish readers of the remarkable qualities of this man's character, while pondering the ongoing fates of his legacy.

I will admit that it was no small temptation for me in deciding to write this book to think that it would allow me to spend much time surrounded by Chopin, my desire to converse and answer the questions he would have to ask of me. In this way – by mixing together objective and personal motivations – this book came to be, having no aspirations to be a definitive, academic sort of work on its subject. It emerges from a love for the art created by Chopin and for his person, driven by a desire to share this overwhelming feeling with my readers.

(Foreword to the 1955 First Edition of this book)

CHOPIN

CHAPTER I

At times in human history, the smallest of events can cause an outpouring of whole seas of ink... When the vicar of Holy Brochów, Sochaczew Parish returned to his church on the second day of Easter from a christening which had taken place in Żelazowa Wola, and began jotting down the birth details of the newly christened child, he could not possibly know the consequences his absentmindedness would one day come to have...

“So when was this babe born to the world?” he asked the organ player, who had already had one too many that very day... This seeing as the father of the newborn child, a true Frenchman by birth, clearly knew his wines.

“How would I know?” the musician answered. “They said the child was two months old already.”

“Precisely... Two months? That would mean it was born on the 23rd of February... Write down 23rd of February...”

“Well, I don't know, maybe he wasn't quite two months old to the day...”

“So write ye the 22nd.”

“Right you are...” the organist confirmed, reading aloud what he was writing in the birth ledger. “I, the above signed [Józef Morawski, curate of Brochów] did my duty as bid over the infant [...] born [...] from Esquire Nicolas [...]... How do we spell his surname?”

“God only knows. It's some sort of ordinary, ignoble monicker. Write it how you want.”

“Son of Mr Choppen... a Frenchman, and Justyna, née Krzyżanowska, a married couple. Godparents: the Respectable Franciszek Grembecki of Ci[e]pliny with the Respectable Miss Anna Skarbek, countess's daughter of Żelazowa Wola.”

It is ever so easy to imagine this scene taking place in the vestry of the gothic, fortified church in Brochów, and suppose this is how it actually played out. Yet, how much has the date in question been debated and disputed since... How was that vicar to know he had just baptised Poland's soon to be greatest, most renowned musician and the day day of his birth would for years to come to represent a very important date for all his fellow Poles?

In actual fact, Fryderyk Franciszek Szopen was most likely born on the first of March 1810, something Chopin himself stated on several occasions; the same date is listed in a letter sent by his mother who must have know best... What may be decisive in this matter is mention made by Jane Stirling in a letter she sent to Ludwika Jedrzejewiczowa, dated 1 March 1851. Miss Stirling, saying she had that very day visited the cemetery on Pere-Lachaise, remarks: “We took some flowers. Today's anniversary unknown to anyone, which pleases me... HE told me one day: 'Only my mother, I mean my family... and you Miss know the day of my birth...’”.

Mistakes such as these occurred in birth registers on a regular basis. One of the reasons was that the christenings took place in private homes, and it was only later that organists would record the necessary information in church ledgers, leading to frequent omissions and errors. The author of these words is also victim to such a mistake, one he has been unable to untangle himself from all of his life and which to this very day happens to be the cause of unexpected difficulties. It was only a decree introduced in the 1920s which forced Polish parents to christen their children on church grounds and nowhere else. Let us hope that any future Chopin – may there be many more of him to come – shall not have such troubles to contend with, sparing their biographers countless and highly unnecessary disputes which take place over the birth dates of the likes of Chopin and Beethoven.

And yet, it makes absolutely no difference whether Chopin was born on 22nd of February or the 1st of March. It is the year of his birth which happens to fall upon a very telling epoch. This is the moment when Napoleon's rising star burns brightest, foretelling of an era of great disappointments yet to come. During this time, a great generation of Polish Romantics was being born, the second Romantic generation which would be disappointed by their struggles during the years 1830 and 1848. This was the time the likes of Schumann, List, Wagner, Słowacki and

Krasiński were coming into the world. A truly unexpected constellation of geniuses. This was the epoch which came so firmly to impact on Chopin's personality, forging his character – bestowing upon him that singular sound, a sound filled with power and sorrow, which so clearly defines every one of his works.

Chopin's childhood and youth are typically associated with Żelazowa Wola and its Mazovian landscapes... With the meandering flow of the river Utrata (English trans. "Loss") which runs through here, with the willows which line the road to Sochaczew, with the plains which are home to the round turrets of the church in Brochów. We tend to forget that Chopin, not yet six months of age, moved to Warsaw and ever since then, until he turned twenty one, his fates have been essentially tied to those of the Polish capital. When it comes to his connection with the lands of his birth, we note more of them lead us in the direction of Kujawy and even Pomerania. Kujawy play a particularly important role in the life of our dearest musician. This is where his mother came from and it was certainly her lips that he first heard rendering Kujawiaki, those most Polish of melodies, imbued with sweet inner power and inherent sadness, serenading the miserable fates of peasants upon the impoverished, treeless flatlands in the very heart of our homeland. He would holiday in Kujawy, trips he cherished for he always came home filled with good cheer and vital energies, as well as what must have been stores of new songs. He also visited Mazovia, Lowickie and the Lublin region. He was a guest at the Marylsy estate in Pęcice, the very same manor house which today can be seen from the electric train line which runs between Reguły and Tworki, set in what appears to be a bouquet of ancient trees. He visited Mme Pruszkowa in the wonderfully upkept Sanniki estate, beyond Sochaczew, beyond Bzura, as far as the home of Tytus Woyciechowski in Poturzyn where he was enchanted by a birch tree set outside the villa windows. Chopin knew all of Poland.

Yet, above all – ever since his parents left Żelazowa Wola until the very last moment of his departure from his motherland – he was a resident of Warsaw. And if he does refer to himself as a "blind Mazur" then he is thinking of Warsaw as the capital city of Mazovia. I would go even further in this sort of thinking – until the very end of his days, Chopin not only remained a Pole, but also a Warsovian, as the great Romantic Poet Norwid recorded in his musical genius friend's obituary. Chopin was bestowed with all the additional characteristics typical of the residents of Warsaw. Not many of them negative. It is widely known that Warsovians are not popular with Poles born in all other regions of this nation, and are often referred to as "blagier warszawski" (Warsaw "blaggers" or "blarneys"). Chopin did not blag about himself or his art – his works were perfectly pure, with no false emphasis to be heard in any tacts – in his private life, in his letters, in the way he presented himself and his music – Chopin never strays into false sounding hyperbole.

And yet, his sense of humour is typically Warsovian, as is his penchant for seeing good and humorous aspects to everything everywhere he went. His attitude towards people was no different. Neither Thalberg nor any other puffed up buffoons could take him in – he was not one to be taken in by hollow musical flourishes or gaudy adornments. Now way to con, no, no son of Warsaw, as the old Warsaw song goes*, and in this Chopin was a true Warsovian.

Yet not just in these aspects. In much greater and more serious contexts too. Warsaw raised him between the first and third decades of the 19th century, in the age of "storms and pressures", during an era when revolutionary and democratic tendencies were arising, at a time when patriotic feelings and the desire to liberate Poland from foreign oppression were on the increase, hand in hand with a global struggle for social and political justice. He was raised by a Warsaw humming with coffee shop chatter and the rattling of arms belonging to underground factions. He was raised by a Warsaw which was provincial, humbled, filled with barbaric contrasts, yet always vivid, always ready to respond to grand events and current affairs, a city with opinions of its own when it came to the turmoils of our world. Chopin was no politician and had little idea what was actually happening all around him. But his heart, that of a sensitive Polish artist, absorbed this tension, something his nerves resonated with, his artistic intuition deciphering in a way.

In the same way, he could sense the mood shifting in Europe, thus his Romantic works are also a reflection of general, European currents which flowed through the baffling early decades of this great century. The pressure this mood created meant Chopin naturally began expressing it in his art – mixing themes of the present with eternal, universal human concerns. Warsaw was the

intermediary between Chopin and the wider world – his family home the intermediary between Chopin and Warsaw. It would make perfect sense to now ponder the essence of that home, considering how influential it would come to be in determining the fates of Chopin and his music in the years to come.

Up until now, biographical works relating to Chopin made little effort to try and understand the broader forces which shaped the character, mind and feelings of this remarkable person. All too often, Chopin appears in books about him like a Minerva emerging from Zeus mind, perfectly formed and ready to go. His was indeed a genius which matured remarkably early, and yet he was shaped by his home environment, his school and the people he met in and around Warsaw. His style also was not totally unique to him and even though from early on he was driven – as he stated in his letters to Elsner – by “thoughts of creating a whole new world”, in order to create this brand new reality he would come to use resources already known to him and borrowed from the works of others. He drew a great deal from the works of Hummel, Field and Maria Szymanowska. In the same fashion, his inner world, his way of thinking and feeling, was composed of elements formed within him by his surroundings and the society which occupied this environment.

I referred to Chopin's family home as rather odd – this is one of the few examples of a family environment where individual members of the household were bound by ties of incredibly powerful togetherness and integration. Where Beethoven had to battle his alcoholic father, while Bach the early orphan was left to his brother's devices, Chopin in his domestic nest was wrapped in a warm cocoon of genuine love by his mother, father and sisters. Although all Chopinologists know of this full well, I believe the attention paid thus far to Frederic's family has been somewhat insufficient. We are lacking, for example, in any extensive writing on the subject of his sisters. And yet Frederic's attitude towards Ludwika Jedrzejewiczowa, his youthful confidante, witness to his love affair with George Sand and to his eventual death, should encourage us to take a closer look at her legacy. If so much has been written about the wives and lovers of the great men of history, about their mothers too, why is so little said about their sisters? And yet, it was the sisters which were largely responsible for the atmosphere the likes of Chopin or Szymanowski actually grew up in.

Very little attention has also been paid to Chopin's parents. Most recently, thanks to the discovery of a youthful letter penned by Nicolas Chopin we know a little bit more about Frederic's father, though still decidedly not enough. And yet just studying the letters he sent to his son provides us with a rich source of material through which to define his personality. Until recently, we knew almost nothing at all about Chopin's mother – a little light upon her life has recently been cast by the discovery of her birth records, allowing us to once and for all confirm her date of birth.

For all of the recently unearthed documents on the subject, we still know little about the details of Nicolas Chopin's life. We do know he was born in a village called Marainville-sur-Madon, a commune in what was then called Lorraine and today is the Vosges department of Grand Est in northeastern France. His father was called Francis and his mother Margaret nee Deflin. We also know Marainville was one of the estates owned by Michel Pac, a Polish magnate who must have moved to Lorraine thanks to the connections between Poland and this region of France caused by King Leszczyński. As a result, young Nicolas Chopin found himself interested in Polish affairs from early childhood. Travelling with one Adam Weydlich, an estate administrator working for Michel Pac, he first visits Poland as a young lad. He comes to work on Pac's affairs, evidently managing their properties. In a letter he sent from Warsaw to his parents in 1790, Nicolas writes that he was recently due to visit Strasbourg, in order to conclude some business affairs on behalf of Mr Weydlich, but that he was interrupted in this enterprise by the outbreak of the French Revolution. It is clear that by the age of 19, Frederic's future father was already wholly trusted by his superiors, seeing as he was entrusted with settling matters involving money transactions abroad.

! Quote taken from the classic pre-WWII Warsaw anthem *Nie Masz Cwaniaka Nad Warszawiaka* by Stanislaw Grzesiuk

Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz

Summer in Nohant

A 1937 Comedy In
THREE ACTS

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

FREDERIC CHOPIN

BARONESS AURORA DUDEVANT (George Sand)

MAURYCY

SOLANGE

ANTONI WODZINSKI Chopin's friend

MME DE ROSIERES – Chopin's student

AUGUSTYNA, Mme Sand's cousin, chaperoned by Sand

THEODOR ROUSSEAU, young painter

CLESINGER, sculptor

FERNAND, son to wealthy neighbours

JAN, Chopin's manservant

MADELEINE, country maid

The action takes place at Mme Sand's estate in Nohant in the summer of 184...

ACT I

(Summer afternoon. Mme Sand's salon in Nohant, at the time Chopin was composing his b-moll sonata / Sonata no. 3 in B minor. The air is filled with music. From the room next door, belonging to the composer, parts of this sonata can be heard being played and worked on. Everything – apart from the central larga section. The salon is sparsely furnished, in the style of Louis XV). In the center, a large table crafted by a local carpenter, used to play family games and for work. Off to the side, a sideboard desk which is where Mme Sand writes. An empty space has been left to one side by the removal of a piano which is now Chopin's room. Noise and movement can be heard off stage, typical sounds of a busy household filled with young people. Doors to the interior (poret-fenetre) open out to a garden where tall trees can be seen – linden trees, chestnuts, roses in bloom. The space is airy and bright. Actors enter either from the garden or the interior of the house. Music playing throughout most of the act).

JAN *(showing Madeleine, who is starting her first day of service, how to dust the objects in the salon. She is not very able, Jan is fuming)*

Pa komsa, pa komsa, just komsa, komsa! *(piano playing audible from Chopin's room, Jan then nods and pokes his forehead in a gesture suggesting madness, Madeleine laughing out loud):* Psst, and what is this behaviour? What a cheeky young dame... no laughing now... shush!

GEORGE SAND *(enters from garden, wearing horse-riding outfit, tired but animated)*

Good morning! *(strokes Madeleine on the tip of the chin)* So, old Ursula sent you? That is fine, most fine... You're a pretty thing, little darling. Your whole family are pretty, I must say. The prettiest in all of Nohant, perhaps all of Berry too. I do hope you will be happy working here. Listen and learn... *(to Jan)* Where is miss Solange?

JAN

She went a walking upon the fields.

GEORGE SAND

Monsieur Maurice?

JAN

In the garden with miss Augustine.

GEORGE SAND

Ahh... And the youngsters?

JAN

Rousseau took his easels into the park... Mr Clesinger is upstairs... Fernand hasn't arrived yet.

GEORGE SAND

I am not asking about Fernand.. Mr Wodzinski?

JAN

The count rose a moment ago. It appears he has ordered for a horse to be saddled...

GEORGE SAND

He's off somewhere again... Very well, Jan can go now. *(As Jan walks off)* Jan, bouillon for Monsieur Chopin?

JAN

I shall bring it shortly, baroness ma'am.

GEORGE SAND

Jan, a light (Jan lights a wooden stick from the fireplace and lights Sand's cigarillo. Jan and Madeleine exit. Sand sits in an armchair, deep in thought, apparently dozing off).

WODZINSKI (enters from Chopin's room, putting his wallet away in a coat pocket)

Oh, you, madame. So early!

GEORGE SAND

And where might you be off to? Chateauroux, perchance?

WODZINSKI

Chateauroux would be too far in this outfit. I become too heavy for riding horseback.

GEORGE SAND

At your age, dearest god! So you must be off to see the vicar for a game of lomberman? This early in the morning! Your pleasures do puzzle me, sir. Spending hours on end with folks so uncouth...

WODZINSKI

Come now, baroness dear...

GEORGE SAND

Well... We all find pleasures where we might, which is best all round. The day is most pretty and a little horse ride will do you a world of good, I am sure... For you have put on weight.

WODZINSKI

Did your ride take you far?

GEORGE SAND

Yes, I had to rest a little after work... I wrote until six today, then three hours of riding and a swim in the Indra. The waters as cold as ice. You see, this is how mornings in the country are best enjoyed, if you do wish to truly see nature as you work. And now I must change and busy myself with proofreading, that Buloz won't let me rest with his Review.

WODZINSKI

I do admire your work ethic...

GEORGE SAND

It is a truly French quality. NOT inherited from one of my ancestors, some Polish king, I am told...

WODZINSKI

Who was a pure blooded German anyway.

GEORGE SAND

Work helps tear me away from reality.

WODZINSKI

Methinks your reality, maam, is not as awful as you might think... You live in a land that's free, famed and adored, respected, loved even...

GEORGE SAND

It would seem real freedom is not attained unless one lives in some sort of idealised republic, one we shall not see any time soon upon the Earth... Now, on top of that, you would not believe how disappointing these things truly are (*sighing*). Fame, respect, love!

WODZINSKI

Well, you do have this delightful estate, this old house, this park, this village, where everyone is ever so fond of you, the "kind lady of Nohant"...

GEORGE SAND

True enough, too true... Nohant is always true to my needs. Like a lioness, I've had to fight to keep this estate twice in my life. Knowing full well why I do so. At first, following the death of my grandmother, who spent most of her life strolling these grounds...

WODZINSKI

The one who was daughter to Saxon Maurice?

GEORGE SAND

Yes, now there was a grand dame... The second time was when I had to save it from my husband. Nohant was the cause of our divorce.

WODZINSKI

Was it now?

GEORGE SAND

His boorish ways caused me endless suffering. But when he began cutting down the trees around the house, I declared – non! That was worse than all the debts he'd accumulated. Get thee gone, I said, gone from MY estate! We agreed as to the rent he would pay and dear sir baron kindly departed from here, not that he moved all that far... God be praised there is anything left of this whole park...

WODZINSKI

Left, you say? It looks magnificent to me! These wondrous trees, these roses, this lawn...

GEORGE SAND (animated)

Is that not true indeed! And the surroundings? All these gorges, fallow fields, and those plains. Do they not to your mind, sir, resemble the Polish steppes?

WODZINSKI

Polish steppes? Indeed, quite, possibly... It's just that I originate from the Poznan provinces. We cultivate the lands in more refined ways there.

GEORGE SAND

Is that so? One can spend hours riding across these fields. It is ever so enchanting...

WODZINSKI

I do however happen to think they are under utilised in the way they are exploited. If I were you, I would plant asparagus and cultivate early vegetable plots. Absolutely essential... In addition...

GEORGE SAND (hurt)

And your estates?

WODZINSKI

Me? Mine? Oh, I rent all mine out.... Less bother, leaving me freer...

GEORGE SAND

Such a shame you did not plant asparagus there... I have been doing so for a century in Nohant. Did you not spot this? (changing her tone) Oh, that Jan, what misfortune, what a terrible

creature he is! (rings and calls through the door) Jan, Jan, bullion for Monsieur Chopin! I told him once already...

JAN (off stage)

Zuzanna hasn't made the bouillon yet...

GEORGE SAND (to Wodzinski)

I have to do everything myself round this place...

WODZINSKI

To add to all your troubles, now this...

GEORGE SAND

Chopin is my third child. Did you not know this?

WODZINSKI

We all know, alas... Even Chopin's family is filled with admiration for all you do.

GEORGE SAND (bitterly)

Yes, the family may very well be... Yes, I happen to have this mothering instinct when it comes to my friends, something they do not always appreciate. Now, I really must change. Adieu and do remember about dinner. Zuzanna is preparing a fabulous cheese soufflet!

(SAND exits)

WODZINSKI (kindly)

Poor Zuzanna... (He wants to leave, but comes upon ROUSSEAU in the doorway as the painter returns with canvases stretched upon a wooden frame) All our artists at work so early on in the day.

ROUSSEAU

Early on? We're well into the afternoon now! This is when the light is best by the ponds...

WODZINSKI

Do you paint in the outdoors?

ROUSSEAU

Is there a master to better nature in all the world?

WODZINSKI

Yes, such is the fashion at present... Do you perchance happen to dabble in cards, sir?

ROUSSEAU

No, I do not, monsieur...

WODZINSKI

You said that with slight disdain... Do wait, sir, until you are my age. A shame, we need a fourth player for a game of whist, for if we do not find one, the gambling shall once more begin anew...

ROUSSEAU

It is best to avoid playing in the first place.

WODZINSKI

Which is just as much use as if I were to advise you to avoid being in love with Miss

Augustine...

ROUSSEAU

What juxtaposition, sir... Her and your card playing.

WODZINSKI

Oh, well, do forgive me. No comparison, certainly. Though perhaps they do have something in common... Both in love and at cards we are likely to lose... (exits laughing, Rousseau sets his canvas up on the fireplace and studies it, Clesinger enters)

CLESINGER

This constant music is insufferable, it's wholly impossible to get any work round here. You are all fine and well painting outside. No way for me to take my clay outdoors.

ROUSSEAU

How are you getting on with Solange's portrait?

CLESINGER

Quite well... Certainly, nothing like with her mother's portrait...

ROUSSEAU

I should expect not. (laughing)

CLESINGER

Why this unwise laughter? (wants to box Rousseau)

ROUSSEAU

Go, go on... with your sergeant manners.

CLESINGER

They won't let this sergeant business be forgotten. Nobody jests about me being a sculptor....

ROUSSEAU

That must mean you are a fine sculptor.

CLESINGER

I wish I were... it's just ever so hard.

ROUSSEAU

How about painting? That must be easy?

CLESINGER

No point disputing that... But just think of the difference in how much the materials cost.

ROUSSEAU

Well, certainly. But that is not what matters most.

CLESINGER

I order to buy a piece of marble, I must borrow so much money. I already have plenty of debts incurred...

ROUSSEAU

Marry then.

CLESINGER

This is why I have come here.

ROUSSEAU (laughing gaily)

Forget it. Madame Sand won't have you.

CLESINGER

You're stupider than any old boot. I've had enough of that wench. As cold, god damn, as ice. I am thinking of Solange...

ROUSSEAU

Solange? You? Is she not sort of engaged to Fernand?

CLESINGER

Engaged or not. I have my ways.

ROUSSEAU

Swine.

CLESINGER

What, do you think I shall wander round just gazing upon her the way you do Augustine?

ROUSSEAU

And you want everyone to forget your sergeant charge? You're the one who keeps reminding us of your battles of yore any chance you get.

CLESINGER

Victories or what not – Solange will be mine.

ROUSSEAU

I wish you luck, sir.

CLESINGER

Quite... Where has she got to now?

ROUSSEAU

She's taking a stroll. Towards Fernand's estate.

CLESINGER

The devil take such neighbours.

ROUSSEAU

Well, quite, indeed... Do remember that for women it is always a question of their nearest neighbour.

CLESINGER

Pretty perspectives.. Where are you off to?

ROUSSEAU

I left my easels by the pond. Come, help me gather up my paints...

CLESINGER

Easels or Augustine?

ROUSSEAU

Unfortunately, I have not seen her yet... I really do not know what to make of all this now. Everyone appears to be on my side... everyone apart from her. Maurice already considers me to be her betrothed.

CLESINGER

He said so?

ROUSSEAU

No, but I got the impression... She is such an odd one.

CLESINGER

A word to the wise. If you have any doubts what so ever, best let the matter lie straight away.

ROUSSEAU

Let it go, let it lie... If only one could just quite loving and be done with it. You and your nature can talk. I am not like that.

CLESINGER

You're a frail hag... Well, let's go get those easels. Pack them up and depart for home. That's my advice.

ROUSSEAU

I am not yet done with one painting.

CLESINGER (studying the picture)

Quite a pretty scene. You can finish it in Paris... The sighs of longing really have a mighty fine effect upon landscape painting.

ROUSSEAU

You're a philosopher... come then... (they exit)

(Madeleine brings in a tray with a cup of bouillon for Chopin on it, Jan by her side who takes the tray from her by Chopin's door and knocks on it, then enters and comes back out again holding the tray)

JAN (handing the tray to Madeleine)

Mosie Szope – Madeleine tuzur aporte – tuzur Madeleine... szak żur (shrugs, goes out to the kitchen. Madeleine enters Chopin's room, only now does the music stop. Madeleine comes out a moment later, no longer holding the tray, leaving Chopin's door open, returns to the kitchen. Music begins playing anew, this time more audibly through the open door. The doors to the park are also open, green shades of light playing outside).

(Maurice and Augustine enter via the garden doors)

MAURICE

That music again... I can't bear it any longer. (gently slams the door to Chopin's room): If this carries on, my nerves will give out.

AUGUSTINE (busy with her own thoughts, she fails to respond to Maurice's words and actions while being totally absorbed by him) Maurice... Why do you not answer my question?

MAURICE

Why, did you ask something?

AUGUSTINE

Ddi you not hear? Not a word? Can you hear my voice no more?

MAURICE

Please, no scenes, I beseech you...

AUGUSTINE

No scenes... Sure, I can do that.

MAURICE

Have you noticed the new servant girl? She's most pretty, is that not so?

AUGUSTINE (taking him by the hand)

Listen to me and do not change the subject. Tell me now, say it true: what is to become of me?

MAURICE

You must speak to my mother. She shall advise, I do not know.

AUGUSTINE

Maurice!

MAURICE

Well, yes my beloved, no need to make a scene. Since Rousseau loves you so very much.

AUGUSTINE

What should I care about this Rousseau? You brought him here, did you not.

MAURICE

Perish the thought! I've never met his like before. It's all my mother's doing, her ideas. She dug them up together, that Clesinger and him. If you want to marry him, fine. If not, fine too.

AUGUSTINE

Maurice, but what will become of us?

MAURICE

What will become, what will happen... meh. It all sounds so odd in French. Anyway, what were you expecting? Nothing lasts into eternity, don't you know...

AUGUSTINE

Solange always says you are not a good person.

MAURICE

And she is, is she now? And where are we getting these definitions from? I am not a romantic like dear maman. Not that she's romantic in real life... only in her books. I am not some protagonist straight out of the pages of Lélia. Good, decent, good people... No one is ever just plain old good in life.

AUGUSTINE (whispering off to the side)

You promised to marry me...

MAURICE

Promises? Promises. Why, certainly. If you desperately wish it so, I shall marry you. I am simply advising you against it. What sort of a marriage would that be? You have no money, and the same is true of me.

AUGUSTINE

Yes, you are right, I now see this would not be... wise. I was just under the impression that you loved me.

MAURICE (with sudden passion)

Augustine, darling! What's this? You doubt my feelings for you? Have I not proven myself to you a thousandfold and more?

AUGUSTINE (smiling suddenly)

Yes, alas... my Maurice. Yet, you still do not wish to marry me.

MAURICE

I don't wish to marry? What do you mean? I cannot is what you mean to say. You are so unwise. You simply do not understand what marriages involve. Marriage, my dear, is no joking matter.

AUGUSTINE

For those who truly love one another...

MAURICE

Beloved Augustine, love all by itself is simply not enough. You know how that is. There's no way on Earth mama would agree to our union.

AUGUSTINE (excited)

Maman!? And yet there was a time I thought she wished for us to be together.

MAURICE

You were deluding yourself, I suspect. Yes, she was always ever so good to you.

AUGUSTINE

Yees... And then she changed. Changed ever so much.

MAURICE

That's how it might seem to you. And when it comes to Mr Rousseau, you ought to confide in her. She will provide you with the best, most heartfelt advice.

AUGUSTINE (in tears)

Maurice, Maurice, I am so unhappy. You are abandoning me.

MAURICE

Nothing of the sort. Darling, dearest, I only wish for you to be happy.

AUGUSTINE (embracing him)

Oh, my darling, my sweetest boy.

MAURICE

Do not despair, do not weep. You will marry monsieur Rousseau (they kiss).

ROUSSEAU (enters holding his easels, overhearing the last line of dialogue)

Apologies, I do hope I am not interrupting.

MAURICE

Not at all.

ROUSSEAU

Augustine, miss, you appear to have mislead me.

AUGUSTINE

I am sorry, sir. Not that I ever told you anything firm in terms of...

ROUSSEAU

Meanwhile, your little cousin is having his way with you, aha... I am warning you to be wary of him, as a man who is truly in love...

MAURICE

I demand you do not speak to me in such fashion.

ROUSSEAU

You have seduced this girl, and now you want to marry her off... (Mme Sand enters unnoticed)

MAURICE

Rousseau, you do speak out turn.

ROUSSEAU

... in cahoots with your maman.

MAURICE

You needn't have said that twice. (slaps Rousseau in the face)

SAND

Maurice, that is our guest! (slaps Maurice in the face)

ROUSSEAU

What a charming family, I say... (perfectly calmly takes his canvas down from the fireplace and exits)

SAND

Maurice, go after Mr Rousseau right this minute and apologise for what you have done. You stood up for my good name, agreed, but you really did go too far. Go now... (Maurice kisses Sand on the hand and exits)

AUGUSTINE

Poor Rousseau.

SAND

He seemed like such a simple, painter boy, yet here he was talking in such fashion.

AUGUSTINE

He got carried away. Maurice should not have been so valiant in defending my honour. That little painter boy should not be taken so seriously.

SAND

And yet I should like you to take him more seriously. Why did you not wish to listen to his pleas?

AUGUSTINE

I do not love the man.

SAND

Very well, dear child. For six years, I was your chaperone, and you my third child. I know your nature rather well, and yet I am concerned that you shall not find another suitor to match him in a long, long while.

AUGUSTINE

I am in no hurry to wed.

SAND

Which I also do understand, knowing how independent you are, a quality I always tried to nurture in you. Yet, I think something else is afoot. You wish to marry Maurice.

AUGUSTINE (brazenly)

Yes, I do not intend to deny it.

SAND

I understand you all too well, my dear. I assume you too wish to see my point of view, when I tell you I will not allow this marriage to go ahead.

AUGUSTINE

And so auntie was happy to look on as we flirted with one another, yet now we are thinking of marriage, it's basta, non, and so forth...

SAND

Love and marriage, Augustine dear, are two very different things.

AUGUSTINE

I don't see how that could be.

SAND

You'll understand in good time. Maurice needs a totally different sort of wife.

AUGUSTINE

Rich above all else.

SAND

It may be that I was thinking of that too.

AUGUSTINE

An odd sort of romantic outlook.

SAND

Romance works in books, sometimes in life, but not as a general rule. Besides, you know Maurice as well as I do. You know how unromantic he really is. Bereft of poesy. Not feelings, non, considering how much affections he bestows upon me.

AUGUSTINE

Affections you would do best to question.

SAND

Now, that is something those who are biased can know nothing about. He loves me dearly.

AUGUSTINE

We are keen to see in the hearts of others that which we hold dear in our own.

SAND

Dear god, what philosophies, Augustine dear, do not adopt these profound postures, intelligence does not become you.

AUGUSTINE

In this way, Auntie sees nothing but attributes in Maurice's character.

SAND

No, not just attributes...

AUGUSTINE

Auntie thinks he's a genius painter.

SAND

I bet that Rousseau told you he has not an ounce of talent. Do allow me to doubt that opinion.

AUGUSTINE

Auntie is likely to experience a great number of disappointments yet.

SAND

One more, two more, what difference does the odd disappointment make? It's just that now the whole Rousseau affair is no longer to my liking. We must impeach him to remain in Nohant as long as possible and to forgive Maurice's conduct, for he is still little more than a pup, with no idea of what he is doing in fact. And yet I fear if you do not intercede, Augustine, a duel is sure to follow.

AUGUSTINE

A duel? Dear god!

SAND

It is all now up to you.

AUGUSTINE

What should I do?

SAND

Go find our little painter and ask him to stay in Nohant. Be polite to him. Most of all, you must explain to him just how infantile Maurice can be, a tempestuous as any child, incapable of being held responsible for his actions. Your very own heart will tell you what to say.

AUGUSTINE

Dear Auntie, this truly terrifying. (runs off)

(Sand left alone instantly forgets all which has transpired, busying herself with proofreading as if absorbed by a drug. She sits at her desk, picking through her papers, then looks at the clock, grabs her quill and begins scribbling feverishly. Chopin keeps on playing the same music over and over again. Clock chimes. A moment's silence. Finally Sand abandons her work and pauses to think, her head resting on her hand)

MISS DE ROSIERS (entering rapidly, looking around, dressed pretentiously in loudly swishing silks)

Good day. Have you not seen Anthony anywhere?

SAND

I have indeed. An hour ago, he slipped out to play cards with the vicar.

MISS DE ROSIERS (collapsing on a couch)

To play cards with the vicar... The cad, keeping such secrets from me. Did you lend him money?

SAND

I have no money to waste as such. I believe he borrowed some from Chopin.

MISS DE ROSIERS

From Chopin? Impossible.

SAND

Why not?

MISS DE ROSIERS

Chopin is penniless. It's been ages since Fontana got any money out of his publishers.

SAND

Poor Fontana. I do not envy him having to run around after Chopin's errands and affairs all the time. As to Chopin himself, he may be penniless, but he'll always scrape something together to help a fellow Pole.

MISS DE ROSIER

An odd brand of patriotism.

SAND

I agree. The smartest sort of Frenchmen fathered him. Yet he always has time and a smile for his own lot, even if it is the most boorish barbarian, or even that hapless Laura Czosnowska, who bored us ever so much when she came here.

MISS DE ROSIER

Poor Maurice made it clear to her how we all felt.

SAND

While she had nothing better to do than go running to Chopin to complain. You've no idea the arguments that led to.

MISS DE ROSIER

Arguments?

SAND

Oh yes, arguments – why of course. Without a word being said, as only he can manage, with his damned aristocratic coolness. I would rather he smashed crockery right over my head!

MISS DE ROSIER (giggling)

I can just see Chopin tossing pots and pans about! What's setting you so on edge today?

SAND

I am merely tired. I cannot focus on my work for one minute, just as I have so much writing to be done for the autumn, corrections, edits and so on. Revue des Deux Mondes is lagging behind, while I am running up debts here. You've no idea how much living in such grand manner costs.

MISS DE ROSIER

Indeed, I can imagine, the house full of guests, then our guests invite their own guests...

SAND

No, Chopin is not a guest of mine. Over the past nine years, I have managed to grow used to him and his ways. Even the music, (pointing at the door) which really is insufferable. Can you hear how he repeats every line fifteen times over? What good is any of that to me?

MISS DE ROSIER

You worry me. I've never seen you this upset before.

SAND

I do not believe I have ever felt this rotten. Do you know what happened just a moment ago? Maurice slapped Rousseau!

MISS DE ROSIER

Dear god, why on Earth?

SAND (proudly)

In defence of my honour and good name.

MISS DE ROSIER

You're not saying that Rousseau was picking on you?

SAND

That pup? He insulted me with insouciances!

MISS DE ROSIER

So whatever next? A duel for certain.

SAND

I raised my son to despise this sort of conflict resolution. Besides, Augustine will not allow it to happen. Though it is now certain he will not marry her.

MISS DE ROSIER

Dearest god, what will you do with her now? You cannot marry her off with Maurice. You now see what your famous mothering instincts have led you to. Why did you have to take her under your wing?

SAND

All my pains and poverties emerge from my treating these people as if they were my children. But Maurice will not marry her. You know him full well. You understand that he is a remarkable person, you've told me so often enough. The way things are now his potential may very well be wasted, but once the political scene changes he may very well yet become a renowned statesman. Now, he simply has to settle for painting.

MISS DE ROSIER

Accomplished painting.

SAND (faking humility)

Ah, he's merely dabbling at first, without pleasing either Rousseau or Augustine. Chopin too is not taken with his efforts.

MISS DE ROSIER

You forget Chopin is not taken with anything, not even the works of Delacroix.

SAND

All the while demanding we worship him. And so, my dear, how can I limit Maurice's perspectives to those of life with Augustine? She is a decent girl, certainly, but as stupid as a goose.

MISS DE ROSIER

Do you think so dearest? Yes, of course, she is a stupid goose, and cannot marry Maurice.

SAND

Maurice has certain obligations to her, but these are trifles. Maurice cannot marry someone without capital. He must receive a sizeable dowry, no, please, do not smile. For they shall receive ever so little from me, and nothing from their father, after all.

MISS DE ROSIER

Solange is said to be a wealthy young dame.

SAND

For Fernand and nobody else, I suspect. Someone like Maurice cannot live like that. He must have enough for all his needs...

MISS DE ROSIER

Yes, indeed, for all his needs... Life, a palace, cards and women...

SAND

What women?

MISS DE ROSIER

You know it is hard for men to refuse...

SAND (laughing)

Ah, you know, I do have this humorous issue to contend with... Chopin asked me to allow that little Madeleine to become our room servant. You know the pretty thing, you know... she started working today.

MISS DE ROSIER

I admire you, George. How can you keep from being jealous?

SAND

You really don't know the half of it... Besides, I have never been the jealous type. Any time I had cause to be jealous, I was already gone.

MISS DE ROSIER

Chopin surprises me. What a man...

SAND

No need to exalt him. Anthony will be upset.

MISS DE ROSIER

Ant knows my attitude towards Chopin! Besides, that is a whole other thing. Anthony is just your old human story. Chopin, on the other hand, he is no ordinary mortal – he is a genius!

SAND (laughing gaily!)

In spite of his genius, he's still just a man, my darling. It's only in all those Parisian salons that they assign to him all these superhuman talents and invent all these legends. Can there be anything more basely human than the request to employ little young Madeleine? He knows full well

I know what he is up to and have no illusions about any of it... While he makes out that he is only interested in helping Ursula's poor family. I would not call myself the dame of Nohant if I did not know all the goings on in my village.

MISS DE ROSIER

Yes, and yet he is an extraordinary man. I have this feeling that all of Nohant is now filled with his spirit.

SAND (bitterly)

Perhaps. He uses all these pungent aromas. I detest all these his coats of lavender perfume. Like some worldly doll, he is always emanating aromas...

MISS DE ROSIER

My dear, it is not about the perfumes. You do not use them – you smell of cigars if anything – and yet in you there is even more of this air of his.

SAND

I suppose you may be right. I just do not know if you can truly sense it. For you see, I believe the literary arts are more soulful than music. We authors have more to do with the intellect. We are closer to nature, which is an inexhaustible source of spirituality. There are among us such Poles as this Mickiewicz of his. People who are inspired, prophets and national leaders, while your musicians... (pausing, for ironic effect)

MISS DE ROSIER (hiding her great surprise)

Yes, of course, you are utterly correct. And yet around Chopin one can sense a certain spiritual air, the same as with you and Mickiewicz, or some other inspired writers...

SAND

Musicians have it all the easier. They speak in a language understood by all nations, by crowds even. They are appreciated instantly, in the heat of passion, which helps explain all the famous names – List, Chopin – while authors are only appreciated and admired in posterity.

MISS DE ROSIER (honestly)

You of all people cannot complain of a lack of renown. You are currently the most famous author on both hemispheres. And what a triumph this is for you, for a woman – this fame.

SAND

Yes, but that is not it, not quite it... (we hear Chopin playing)

MISS DE ROSIER

But do you believe that what is now appreciated in Chopin is the key aspect of his genius? Do you think it is this very public to which as you say he speaks are the ones who value in him that which is superficial, that which is temporary? Even us musicians do not appreciate or understand in them that which may be most important...

SAND

I sometimes have this impression that all of what they receive, musicians as a whole, or perhaps Chopin alone, is something inherently unearned, that it comes to them too easily, that they simply sing like Ariele. That they know not the pains of true creation.

MISS DE ROSIER

But you, do you not write ream after ream of paper without any editing? While he, is he not struggling in there? You can hear him working on a single sonata – is that not anguished?

SAND

For we all believe that the process of writing is sitting at a desk and waving a quill about. I admit, that comes to me with ease. I have a certain fondness for the process of placing all those black marks upon white sheets of paper. But this is the outcome of a great deal of work beforehand. Pained doubts. This morning, I spent three hours riding horseback, strolling, bathing, recovering. Yet for all those three hours the thought of prince Charles did not leave me alone for a second.

MISS DE ROSIER

Who is he?

SAND

The protagonist of my newest novel. The book is titled Lucrezia Floriani. I transposed upon it my relations with Chopin.

MISS DE ROSIER

Oh, really? Most interesting!

SAND

In ways of course which are only possible in novels. In it, Chopin is called Prince Charles...

MISS DE ROSIER

Are you not concerned that this love affair will do you harm?

SAND (shrugging)

What is one to do? At times, our loves exist only to then become an excuse to create new works of art...

MISS DE ROSIER

Do tell me, my dear... I have been meaning to ask you this indiscreet question for some time now. Are you still in love with Chopin?

SAND

Moi? Chopin? You best first ask what the word love might mean... What love? It comes in so many forms...

MISS DE ROSIER

I just mean in an ordinary, classic way. The way I do my Ant.

SAND

The way you... Anthony... I suppose I may never have loved like that. I was always after something greater and definite, a thing I never did find. Each and every time left bitterly disappointed. There is in me a mix of the male tracker instinct and of mothering concern. Like a Don Juan in a dress, or not even in a dress – for you know how I favour dressing in men's clothing – I seek and from time to time find I have discovered the very ideal... And then, once the inner Don Juan is disappointed, instead of abandoning the prey I tracked down – I begin nursing it – like a mother. And this is my life in a nutshell. Maybe things were a trifle different with Musset... But with Chopin...

MISS DE ROSIER

Yes... With Chopin?

SAND

Naturally, it was a wildly passionate affair. At the time when at Mme's Marliani's through her shiny wall of the piano between us I passed him a note with the words "On vous adore", I loved him, without a doubt... Yet this is eight or ten years ago. Then different things came along, the trip

to Majorca, where he was hysteric and really at death's door, a true dead man walking. No romantic love can survive such trials.

MISS DE ROSIER
Poor thing!

SAND

I thought love would be different. They say that I loved too much too early on. The local vicar treats me with pious fear, as if I was the world's greatest harlot! And yet I believed and believe still that each one of my loves to have been the greatest truth. The greatest gift in life, which right here and now is so beautiful, to then... who knows what it will be like on the other side? Unfortunately, this sick man did not fit the beautiful world my life was about. He endures as if he were my second son – and I must admit he causes me much more trouble than Maurice.

MISS DE ROSIER
I was just thinking that very same thing. Your task is truly monumental.

SAND

And in a certain sort of significant sense, I should say I love him still. So many years of living together, here, in Paris. And always the same chill, the same discretion from his end. Always that elated indifference, one he hides behind as if it were some sort of shield...

MISS DE ROSIER
What is the matter, George? Are you crying?

SAND

I don't know what is wrong with me... Must be a storm coming on. I feel so weak sometimes. I have so much to do and so much to overcome, and now it seems to me that it has all been for nought... the children...

MISS DE ROSIER
Be assured that all great geniuses suffer their moments of defeat. Then the stream of your creativity will flow more smoothly, broadly.

SAND

Genius and motherhood – those two are burdens beyond what my shoulders can bear.

SOLANGE (runs in from the garden – she is wearing a hat, clearly back from a walk)

Oh, god... that Fernand will always cross my path, no matter where I go... I told him to wait for me in the gorge, while I ran off via the village. I went to see old Ursula (looking tellingly at her mother). I talked to her... (Sand does not fathom Solange's meaning).

MISS DE ROSIER
You are wearing your suitors out, Solange.

SAND

I do agree, perhaps you should not be so spiteful towards Fernand...

FERNAND (runs in from the garden)

You did not fool me at all, miss. I was not waiting in the gorge. Instead, I headed straight for Nohant across the fields (greeting Mme Sand and Miss De Rosier). I could see your hat from afar all along!

SOLANGE
You are spying on me, sir, such impudence!

SAND

Solange!

SOLANGE

Well, mommy dearest, how else should I call it? Is this simply not utterly unbelievable conduct?! To follow someone and spy upon them all along from some concealed position? What if I were to have a soiree with someone else? And he rushes in here now, that I was about to say the vilest things about him, a whole host of damnable things. Do you think it is untrue, if so then best ask miss Rosieres what it is I always say about you?

SAND

I am pleased to see you Fernand, it's been a while since you paid us a visit. How is your father's health?

FERNAND

Thank you... (looking at Solange) Miss Solange is not giving me any reasons why I ought to come over to Nohant more often – she is so displeased any time I do come over.

MISS DE ROSIER (to Solange)

Child, darling child...

FERNAND

Oh, how delightful she is...

MISS DE ROSIER

Please, young man, do not impose yourself upon her. I am honestly advising you... I do believe it could damage your health (they chat quietly for a while, while Solange takes Sand aside and speaks in a hurried whisper)

SOLANGE

Mommy, mommy dearest, do you know what Ursula said to me? She told me the new servant girl, Madeleine, has become Chopin's lover!

SAND

Do calm down, and lower your voice...

SOLANGE

You must let her go this instant. Instantly, do you hear, this very instant. If you do not, I shall... I am going to... leave home.

SAND

Solange...

MISS DE ROSIER (to Fernand)

Have you seen the new roses? Blossoming for the first time this year. The very ones your father sent our baroness last fall. You will see them and tell your father what they look like... (they go into the garden, we see them strolling in the distance. They are joined by Clesinger and then Augustine).

SAND

Your behaviour is scandalous. Look, Miss De Rosier had to take Fernand out of here using some stupid excuse. Why do you act in this fashion? I consider Fernand to almost be your betrothed.

SOLANGE

I really do not mind what mommy thinks he might be. You can even consider him to be my lover. Old lobsters cannot be angry at young lobsters for the way they walk backwards... only one thing is certain – maman will right now remove that servant girl from here. I do not want nor do I need to be living under one roof with Chopin's lover.

SAND

Solange...

SOLANGE

I wanted to say with that SORT of Chopin's lover. Nor do I understand what it is all meant to mean. How can you possibly agree to such an affair? What is this rural rival to mean, maman?

SAND

Solange, you are a stupid and haughty lass, your tongue as filthy as that of a market trader.

SOLANGE

I inherited it from my grandma...

SAND

Don't you dare say such things about my mother. You know nothing of her, nowt.

SOLANGE

Which makes no difference to how I feel about your attitude towards Chopin...

SAND (emotional)

You understand none of it. I am not Chopin's lover...

SOLANGE

Really? (suddenly amused) Really, mommy dearest, is that so? No, no, no... This is not possible... (takes Sand by the hand and twirls her in a dance) Mommy, maman is not Chopin's lover, my mommy, mommy dearest is not jealous about him...

SAND

What are you doing, stop this right now... Quiet, dear god, do you not understand I spoke to you in confidence?

SOLANGE

Dear god, what times we are living in. In the olden days, it would have been a secret to say maman is someone's lover...

SAND

Shameless child. How did you turn out this way?!

SOLANGE

Whole generations came before me. Don't you know? Should I name them all?

SAND

Silence!

SOLANGE (falls upon the sofa)

But I really understand none of it.

SAND

I will explain it to you one of these days.

SOLANGE

Wait now, hold on, tell me now please maman. I just can't understand any of it.

SAND

You see, now is not the time. The house full of guests, all the young people milling about and causing... hmm...

SOLANGE

I really don't know what to do with Fernand. I really don't want him, mommy. I would prefer Clesinger.

SAND

What are you on about?

WODZINSKI (creeping in)

Shhhh....

SAND

You're back from seeing the priest?

WODZINSKI

Still I plan to return there in due course.

SOLANGE

He played you all out!

WODZINSKI

Baroness, dear, please come to my rescue.

SAND

Not a hope in... home, you best stay now home.

WODZINSKI

Solange, miss, please implore your maman to help me out.

SOLANGE

Not a chance... I will find a way (calling through the open door) Miss Rosieres, Miss Rosieres, come now, quickly, quickly, Anthony is back...

ROSIERES (rushing in)

Where? Where is he?

SAND

Here is the sinner, do watch him squirm and hide.

WODZINSKI (hiding behind an armchair and trying to sneak away)

I'm not here, I am not here... (Rosieres chases after him as he runs off into the garden, a silly chase ensues. Fernand and Clesinger drag Wodzinski back in, Rosieres screaming)

ROSIERES (pretending to blow a trumpet)

Hunting, happy hunting... We bagged a deer, it's ours, he's ours.

WODZINSKI

I did actually promise my friends to return as soon as I...

SOLANGE

As soon as you could get more money. Now, seeing as you got no more money, nor shall you... You have to stay put in Nohant.

SAND

We've so many young people round here now, while you, Mr Wodzinski, keep bothering all those old reactionaries. What good will that do you? (Augustine and Rousseau enter via the garden, Sand glares at Augustine, she nods assuringly) So, are you now no longer painting, Mr Rousseau?

ROUSSEAU

Certainly, I started on a landscape which seemed ever so pleasing. Meanwhile, it seems there is a storm brewing.

CLESSINGER

Indeed, the summer this year is most stormy.

MAURICE

But who is thinking of stormy weathers? (extends a hand towards Rousseau) The weather is lovely. We were about to ask you to show us your sketches after lunch today? Shall we?

ROUSSEAU

Alas, I have already packed them away.

SAND (dominant)

You cannot be leaving yet, Monsieur Rousseau.

CLESSINGER

Do not trust this weather, Theodore.

FERNAND (looking at him intensely)

You think not, Clessinger? (sound of gong beating offstage)

SAND (leaps up in her seat)

That damned Jan. How many times do I have to tell him... (Jan enters banging a gong) Jan, how many times have I told you not to bang that thing so hard! It's enough to deafen one and all. (Jan keeps banging the gong)

MAURICE

Jan, what on Earth? Did you not hear what maman said? Stop banging that thing!

JAN

The food is there, piping hot, and no one is there to eat, no one listening!

MAURICE

And no one shall if they are not in the mood for food (shoves Jan out the door)

SAND

I am not in the least hungry yet. Maurice, is it not true that it is not yet one p.m.?

MAURICE

Far from it, maman. These Poles have no idea how to keep good time. Why was he banging that thing?

CLESSINGER

I do believe the church bell just rang one. Did you not hear it, Rousseau?

ROUSSEAU

My watch says it's ten past one.

MAURICE

Mine says half past twelve... If you don't believe me, see for yourselves... Any which way.

ROSIERES

Why it is obvious nobody is hungry.

MAURICE

It cannot be one yet, for Chopin hasn't yet appeared. You have no idea how punctual he is when it comes to food. He must have starved as a child growing up in that Poland of his, to have such an appetite now.

SOLANGE

Maurice!

SAND

Children, no more arguing. We still have half an hour until lunch. After lunch, we shall play charades. Now let us think of what we shall present.

AUGUSTINE

I suggest "railways".

CLESSINGER

Yes, but how to represent that?

FERNAND

No, something else, "grape picking", an excellent word for charades.

SOLANGE

I suggest "model family".

ROSIERES

We should all write our ideas down on pieces of paper and then draw lots.

SOLANGE

Wonderful indeed. Mommy, let us have some paper... (takes some pages from her mother's bureau, scattering her work, then tears them up and hands them out)

SAND

I hope those were not pages of Lucrezia Floriani.

SOLANGE

No, no. We have finally found some use for all that paper you hoard.

(everyone takes the pages and some pencils and for a moment the otherwise bickering and disruptive company sit in silence, writing down ideas for charades)

SOLANGE

But where is Chopin? I cannot imagine any game of charades without him.

SAND

Leave him be, Solange, he's working.

SOLANGE

There is no working while charades are being played. He must accompany us (opens the door to Chopin's room which went silent a while ago): Chopin, Chopin come quick, we are playing charades, charades! (waits a moment, then returns to the center of the salon). He is sure to come in a moment. Then we'll be having fun!

JAN (sticking his head through the door, whispering to Sand)

Madame, madame, please. The soufflé!

SAND

Why yes, I completely forgot. Children, children dear, come and sit to eat, today we have cheese soufflé!

WODZINSKI

Dear god, I bet the soufflé is long gone (all leave laughing in a hurry).

FERNAND (holding Solange back)

Miss Solange, would you spare me just a moment for a brief chat?

SOLANGE (sneaking glances at Chopin's room)

Oh, you are insufferable...

FERNAND

I beg you, Solange dear.

SOLANGE

Fine, I shall, yes, fine now.

SAND

Will you stay for lunch, Fernand?

(Fernand bows in silence. Sand chases everyone into the dining room, remaining behind alone. She quickly tidies her papers, reads some pages, unwilling to tear herself away from her writing... Music from Chopin's room now loud and clear, a wild scherzo. Sand approaches his door and stands there for a moment).

SAND

Frederic! Frederic! (music stops) Lunch! I do hope they have not forgotten your bouillon. You were coughing again last night. (She comes to the front of the stage, Chopin still practicing a line of music) Come now, will you! Oh, that music! When he's at it, nothing else exists. Not even food! (Aside) Not even Solange's charades...

CURTAIN

ACT II

(Summer afternoon, sweltering just before a storm. Chopin's playing unchanged, largo and scherzo can be heard, closing sections. Frequent breaks in playing fill with the sound of thunder. The hot, stuffy air of the day must be stressed in this scene.)

Solange crosses the room, wearing a hat, heading for the garden. She hears Chopin playing, stops and listens without smiling, turns towards his room, tiptoes towards the door and smiles. Listens a while longer. Then she shuts the door tight, the music quieter. When she turns from the door, she comes face to face with Fernand who has just come in via the garden)

FERNAND

Good day, madam!

SOLANGE

You frightened me. I did not expect to see you.

FERNAND

But we agreed to meet today. You promised to hear me out.

SOLANGE

I am afraid this conversation is now redundant.

FERNAND

I do not agree. We had to straighten everything out once and for all.

SOLANGE

We have nothing to talk about.

FERNAND

I have long considered you to be my fiancée. My father...

SOLANGE

Childish games. It's silly to even mention such arrangements. We are not, thank God, living in medieval times when parents married off their children while they were still in their cribs. My mother, although she raised me a lot less liberally than she acts herself, will not force me to live with such a choice.

FERNAND

Who said anything about force?

SOLANGE

Fernand. Let us be on first name terms once more, as in the days when you called me your bride. Agreed?

FERNAND

That you must ask...

SOLANGE

This will make our conversation less strained. For I must tell you a great number of things.

FERNAND

So many? I think you only wish to say one thing. Why won't you marry me?

SOLANGE

Because I do not love you, Fernand!

FERNAND

Oh, why do you say that?!

SOLANGE

How can I conceal my feelings? I do not love you, Fernand, and I respect you too much to lead you on.

FERNAND

Very well. Let us speak wisely however. You know very well that I love you beyond measure. Why do you not therefore wish to surrender to such love, which is so great that it is enough for everything, both my love and yours...

SOLANGE

Ah...

FERNAND

Believe me when I say we are destined for one another. Do not shake your head. Really, this is so, else I would not be feeling the feelings I am feeling. And so I say to thee, once again! Trust in me, just believe, please. I am a simple, ordinary man, raised in the countryside, half my life has been spent here. Outside of my very own Berry I only know the monastery where I was raised by monks. I am no artist, no Parisian dandy – and I love you, so very much, that is all...

SOLANGE

Oh, no, not that...

FERNAND

What do you mean by this “that”?

SOLANGE

This is not what drives me from your door. I know you are a decent, loving lad.

FERNAND

Well then? What more could you need? I would like to have you not just for a wife, but to pluck you from this house, where your innocence... your purest soul...

SOLANGE (bursts out laughing)

Go on, do say it, at last, that my innocent soul here is at risk of being besmirched... Is that what you were wanting to say? Remember, I am the daughter of George Sand, granddaughter of a market trader, great granddaughter of a royal courtesan. This house, which might seem bourgeois, has witnessed scenes... oh yes. My innocent soul is not as pure as the one you fantasied about in your austere monastery, watched over by those pious monks. If I were to begin telling you what I know and what is going on here, your hair would turn white... You are ridiculous, going on about this innocence...

FERNAND

You see, Solange, you too feel oppressed by the air in this house.

SOLANGE

But I do not wish to see you in it. You'd be wasted upon us.

FERNAND

If you loved me, you would not take pity on me and everything would be so, so very different in charming little Nohant following our wedding.

SOLANGE

Yes, you would totally alter my mother's character, then Maurice, then me... What a miracle man you are.

FERNAND

No, no, you've gone off topic. You're talking about something else altogether. I simply asked why you do not wish to try being happy based solely on my love.

SOLANGE

I see no potential for happiness in that... Nothing could be plainer.

FERNAND (after a pause)

If you say you love me not, am I to conclude you love another?

SOLANGE

What are you saying now?

FERNAND

I cannot fathom it all otherwise. If you simply did not love me, I would try to explain and you would fall in love with me ever so soon, I would make you so, so happy. But if you are invested elsewhere...

SOLANGE

Invested, you say. You speak in the style of mme Genlis.

FERNAND

Not everyone is as stylish as your mother.

SOLANGE

Invested elsewhere, you say... And what if I were?

FERNAND

I would be even more forthright in my impudence and enquire as to the identity of the one you do love.

SOLANGE

Fernand!

FERNAND (falls to his knees before Solange)

Sol... Sol... in honour of our friendship, of all the years we've spent together, for the sake of my father who loves you so, tell me who it is you do love!

SOLANGE

Rise, rise right now (lifts him up). How hot headed you truly are... Beat the dust from your trouser legs now, before someone comes around and sees us. To much merriment, I am sure...

FERNAND

I am a laughing stock anyway and will remain so... But tell me, I am terrified, sensing a great risk hanging over you. You are becoming lost...

SOLANGE

Will you give it a rest, I am most cool headed. It is for good reason they call me "Sir Baron" around here. I am the boy, not Maurice. Do not fear, I shall do nothing unwise...

FERNAND

So you say. Women are always unpredictable in their actions.

SOLANGE

And if I did finally decide to marry, I would not do so in a way which would harm or hurt you and your honest, of which I have no doubt, love.

FERNAND (kissing her hand)

Yes, most honest...

SOLANGE

And I wish to pay you back for all this kindness and dear intentions towards me. To tell you: I really do not know who it is I am in love with...

FERNAND

I do not understand.

SOLANGE

I do not quite know myself if I am in love at all. That is all, I have nothing else to tell you.

FERNAND

I do not understand. Can you not speak more plainly?

SOLANGE

Plainly? No, I have already said far too much. I said too much to my own self. Go, go now, Fernand.

FERNAND

Will you give me nothing to go on? Not a glimmer of hope?

SOLANGE

Go, go now, dear pupil of Madame de Genlis...

FERNAND

Adieu, Solange!

SOLANGE

Adieu, adieu... Regards to your dear father... and... thank you.

FERNAND

You bear me no ill feelings?

SOLANGE

No, no, go now, at last... silly boy.

FERNAND

'Till we meet again. Will you allow me to visit from time to time?

SOLANGE

What for? Best not. But if you wish... go... (Fernand exits)

MAURICE (entering)

Solange, you appear quite transformed.

SOLANGE

It's this heat, you see...

MAURICE

Fernand shot out of here as if fired from a cannon. Almost ran across the park... Almost ran dear maman over... What transpired here?

SOLANGE

Why do you care?

MAURICE

I am your older brother... .

SOLANGE

Now he remembers.

MAURICE

It really is hard to stand this house, all these disturbances all the time.

SOLANGE

It really is... Either people are falling head over heels in love or slapping each other's faces.

MAURICE

Please, no silly jokes.

SOLANGE

But I am not jesting! I speak plainly – you are insufferably irresponsible!

MAURICE

And why so?!

SOLANGE

Why so? (Laughing) That you have to ask. You best answer your own self. Who is getting rid of hired help? Who has been so awful to neighbours, none want to visit or invite you to go hunting? Who is romancing a cousin sent here to be “properly brought up”? Who is picking on mother's guests so much it is impossible to endure?

MAURICE

Let them endure or not...

SOLANGE (drawing closer to Maurice, whispering)

And who could it be now trying it on with the new maid?

MAURICE (uneasy)

How do you know about that?

SOLANGE

I know what I know, but I am no mediator here. You know all too well whom that belongs to.

MAURICE

Dear god, what a house...

SOLANGE

If you choose to leave here, all will sigh with relief.

MAURICE

You wish to be rid of me.

SOLANGE

What difference are you to me? Stay if you like.

MAURICE

Nohant is mine anyhow.

SOLANGE

I know, sure, you needn't keep on repeating that. You've secured your position as best you could. Do not worry, mommy dearest will not see you harmed... (with ire) Apple of her eye...

MAURICE

You have your dowry from grandma. And a fabulous palace.

SOLANGE

A horrid ruin in some provincial town...

MAURICE

Do not fear. Clesinger is still mighty impressed.

SOLANGE

Please, do not be mean.

MAURICE

You've sent Fernand packing, of course. Because he is wealthy, kind and chooses to ignore all of your misdemeanours.

SOLANGE

What is all that to you, I ask again? You were never interested in my education, nor my upbringing. You were never a true older brother to me, always fighting for top spot round here – even in mother's heart – and now you're coming across as some caring, cute older brother. No, this really is beyond all reason.

MAURICE

These matters are so important to our family, I must be mindful. I am not at all indifferent to the sort of brother in law I shall end up with. Fernand was very much to my liking.

SOLANGE

He was not to mine and that is that. The decisive factor.

MAURICE

And Clesinger?

SOLANGE

I do not know. He is too brutish.

MAURICE

Brutish?

SOLANGE

Yes... No, no, nothing to be said on the matter...

MAURICE

Please, do avoid causing any sort of scandal.

SOLANGE

Oh, dearest Baron sir! God forbid... I am sure the walls of our familial palace would collapse should anything improper occur (laughing). Somehow this family, for generation after generation, has managed to do without fathers being around. Allow me also to add to this tradition of virtuous matrons and mothers...

MAURICE

You are impudent. Jestng about that which should be wept over.

SOLANGE

I weep, I do... But this will not change a thing. We are a familia, so do sit down, from the Polish king to Napoleon, or at least his generals, who marched in force through our grandma's bedroom... This will not change the fact that our mother went through lovers like socks and gloves...

MAURICE

How do you know?

SOLANGE

How do I know?! Me, such a poor, innocent girl, how could I know such things? I know more than that, for I know who is NOT my mother's lover.

MAURICE

Who might that be?

SOLANGE

A Persian shah...

MAURICE

Are you... thinking of... (pointing at Chopin's door)

SOLANGE

Yeah...

MAURICE

Yes, everyone thinks he may be... Besides, he was. Remember Majorca?

SOLANGE

I was too small.

MAURICE

Praise be. Alas, I was not too small. You think I don't mind whenever I see someone like that by her side?

SOLANGE

What do you care? Why do you worry over it all?

MAURICE

It is our mother after all. No, one day I will stand up proud and say: enough, basta! Then chase the lot of them out of our home.

SOLANGE

Ho, ho, ho, ho, ho, ho, ho... I can see it now. You standing there, screaming as maman caves into your preferences and waves goodbye to all her friends, abandoning Nohant. You want to be a textbook hero, meanwhile she's got you wrapped round her little finger. All you ever

manage to do is pick on Chopin. I've seen displays of greater courage than that...

MAURICE

You will see.

SOLANGE

And when your mood improves, we will discuss the money you borrowed from me.

MAURICE

Are you going hunting with us?

SOLANGE

No, I'm staying put.

MAURICE

Weren't you planning to come?

SOLANGE

I had no idea you were taking Clesinger, besides, what a hunt that will be... What are you aiming for? No young Nohant deer I do hope.

AUGUSTINE (entering)

The garden is stuffy and airless today.

MAURICE

Well, coming? (Exits)

AUGUSTINE

Where are you going? Maurice, wait! He's gone...

SOLANGE

He'd rather shoot sparrows than wagtails.

ROUSSEAU (entering)

I was looking for you, madame. I wanted to say goodbye.

AUGUSTINE

Goodbye once again? Each and every day you leave and then each day you remain.

ROUSSEAU

This time I am leaving for good. Just not until tomorrow. I do not know if we shall get the chance to say these few words to each other without witnesses present.

AUGUSTINE

I would merely like to ask you...

ROUSSEAU

I bear no ill feelings towards you, madame. I was easy to talk round. I allowed myself to be slapped in the face (smiling). For you, lady.

AUGUSTINE

Please do not take it personally. Maurice is still such a child. He has no idea what real life is all about.

ROUSSEAU

My dearest Augustine. I do really understand your affection. Maurice is charming. I completely agree. Please do not not misunderstand my reaction. I am only sorry for you, as I think you are being taken advantage of.

AUGUSTINE

Theodore, sir...

ROUSSEAU

Because I love you dearly, dear lady...

AUGUSTINE

Poor you... (reaches out to him)

ROUSSEAU

Please do not bear ill feelings towards me (kisses her hand)

AUGUSTINE

Oh and I am so unhappy.

ROUSSEAU

I know.

AUGUSTINE

Yes, but none of it is any help (strokes his head). Poor you.

ROUSSEAU

It really is a challenging situation...

AUGUSTINE

I have a small favour to ask of you. A wish... Please do not depart just yet. I need someone by my side right now. Your plan was to stay a little longer. Please do this for me.

ROUSSEAU

Miss Augustine...

AUGUSTINE

We could depart together.

ROUSSEAU (delighted)

Oh, Augustine, dear...

AUGUSTINE

I have made no declarations to you, sir. I may simply be in need of your assistance. During the first few days. In Paris.... I hardly know this vast city (she muses on the move and shivers in fear)

ROUSSEAU

I am always at your feet.

AUGUSTINE

It is best they do not see us together here, goodbye...

ROUSSEAU

Good bye! (they go in opposing directions)

(The stage remains empty for a while. An approaching storm can be heard. Distant, even rolls of thunder. Then the sound of an argument somewhere far off can be heard. This is Jan bickering with the cook. The argument ends. A little wind hits a window).

WODZINSKI (entering)

How I detest storms. (Closes windows and doors to the garden, opens the door to Chopin's room and calls out) Freddie! Fred! Close your windows, a storm is coming in. (The music carries on being played). He won't listen. Storms outside, in the kitchen another... (Jan enters and walks towards Chopin's room). Where to now, Jan? Best not interrupt Monsieur Chopin. What is it you want?

JAN

Because you see, baron sir, I have no patience for any of it.

WODZINSKI

Madame told me, yes. Jan keeps on battling that poor cook.

JAN

Me battling the cook? Me, I am an angel compared to that harpy.

WODZINSKI

You've made up all sorts of insane things about that poor woman.

JAN

What could I have said? I know what I know. Laide comme cochon, bouche comme derriere. What more could I possibly say?

WODZINSKI

Please do not forget Mr Chopin is not here the owner of the house. Where Jan keeps causing all sorts of commotion. How is this possible?

JAN

His house or someone else's, how does she dare, that damned wench, take my knife from the table. It is a Polish knife in all, you see Sir. So I say to her: leave that knife be, you so and so..

(the music stops suddenly and Chopin slams shut the doors Wodzinski just opened)

WODZINSKI

See now, you've angered Mr Chopin. You must simply get used to Zuzanna or get on out of here. The Baroness will not let Zuzanna go.

JAN

Chopin will not let me go either. What else would I do with my old self? I would not find another such a good master anywhere in the world.

WODZINSKI

"Chopin will not let me go either..." He surely will if you keep on causing all this commotion. If not Chopin, then the Baroness shall.

JAN

I abide by Mr Chopin alone. What is that Frenchwoman to me?

WODZINSKI

As if you did not know all too well. If you keep on getting in the way, you will be sent packing and to hell with you. Madame Sand will not allow herself to be troubled. Go now to the

kitchen and be on his best behaviour, else this might all come to a sorry end.

JAN (haughty and arrogant)

You baron sir too best be on guard – here comes miss Rosieres.

WODZINSKI (infuriated)

Get out right now! (Jan leaves) The impudence!

ROSIERES (rushes in)

I have been looking for you all over the house. Where have you been? A storm is brewing. A deluge is about to begin. I was worried you might be somewhere outside. That you went hunting with Maurice.

WODZINSKI

I'm not made of sugar, you know.

ROSIERES

Yes, but... Oh, can you hear that thunder! Don't look out the window. Something might happen to you! Close the window as soon as you can. Oh... More thunder.

WODZINSKI

Looking out, it appears nothing will come of this storm.

ROSIERES

Nothing, how? Just see the lightning beyond the garden, more thunder, it must have struck nearby. Close to Chateauroux.

WODZINSKI

You have no idea. Chateauroux is in the other direction. The skies over there are completely clear.

ROSIERES

So you think. The storm is raging out there.

WODZINSKI

It is most certainly passing us by. Look over the park, there over the chestnut trees the sky is perfectly blue. A lovely day out.

ROSIERES

Indeed (we hear a carriage drawing up outside). What is that? Chopin's carriage? Why? How? Is Chopin leaving? For how long? Why are you turning away? No? What does it all mean? Oh, God, that is why you said the weather would improve! You'll head off to Chateauroux to play cards... In your own comfy carriage... borrowed from Chopin. That vehicle is legendary! A Parisian model, the likes of which none round here have ever seen. Meant only for him and madame Sand. Don't you dare damage it. Once more, off you go to your little club...

WODZINSKI

Yes, I am off, big deal. Am I not allowed to pay my club a visit? One can expire from sheer boredom round here. Chopin banging away all day long, the lady of the house up all night working. This place goes through more ink than it does wine!

ROSIERES

But the company we get to keep! Nothing but geniuses!

WODZINSKI

I would rather keep company with a genius chef.

ROSIERES

Sure enough, this is a far cry from Paris. But why have you stayed here for so long?

WODZINSKI

Where else should I go? You know I am waiting for some money to come in.

ROSIERES

What are you taking with you to Chateauroux?

WODZINSKI

I had a little saved up.

ROSIERES

And yet you told me you were down to your last penny. What does all of this mean, I ask?

WODZINSKI

I borrowed a little from Chopin.

ROSIERES

Once again? Substantial sums these shall be by now...

WODZINSKI

He is most pleased to be able to assist me in this humble fashion...

ROSIERES

I doubt it... Nor am I letting you go alone at a time like this.

WODZINSKI

You do not believe when I say I am going to the club. You can come with me if you wish.

ROSIERES

Will you take me along?

WODZINSKI

If you wish most certainly. But there is a storm coming. Are you not scared of lightning?

ROSIERES

Give me a second, please, to change.

WODZINSKI

You're dressed as if you were off to a ball! It's starting to rain. Your hat will be soaked.

ROSIERES

The clouds went on by. You said yourself the sky over Chateauroux was clear...

WODZINSKI

Listen, it's thundering again.

ROSIERES

In your ears methinks. I will go and change. Let me grab a shawl and comb my hair (exits).

(Soft thunder can be heard, then rain comes down hard. Rain slams into windows, sounds of windows being slammed shut all over the house audible, Sand calling out: "Solange, Solange!")

Come home else you'll be drenched!" Solange rushes into the salon from the garden, followed by wind and rain)

SOLANGE

Dear God...

WODZINSKI

Solange! You're soaked to the very skin. You must change your dress.

SOLANGE

No, no. It's just on the surface. I flew here so fast, the rain could not manage to soak my clothes. It's just my hair. I will warm myself by the fireplace.

WODZINSKI

We must get the fire going. Here is some kindling.

SOLANGE

The wood is ready. (They light the fire together)

WODZINSKI

You do look lovely.

SOLANGE

You're best off leaving your compliments for the people of Chateauroux.

WODZINSKI

My trip there today is not happening.

SOLANGE (giggling)

I understand. Mme Rosieres decided to join you.

WODZINSKI

She's getting changed upstairs (laughing). The club is off limits now, of course.

SOLANGE

While we will grow very bored here. Maman writing of course.

WODZINSKI

You are not lacking for company, methinks.

SOLANGE

In some ways, yes... Although there are a lot of people in the house.

WODZINSKI

It would appear there will be fewer of them soon.

SOLANGE

Well, yes. I gave poor Fernand his marching papers.

WODZINSKI

Rousseau is leaving tomorrow...

SOLANGE

He's been doing so for a week now.

WODZINSKI

Give it a few more days and Clesinger will follow his trail.

SOLANGE

That would be absolutely ideal.

WODZINSKI

Yet your maman is most troubled by all this.

SOLANGE

Too bad.

WODZINSKI

Are you sending me into exile also?

SOLANGE

You? No.

WODZINSKI

All of Nohant is in love with you, miss.

SOLANGE

Not quite all of it, alas. I heard there was commotion in the kitchen.

WODZINSKI

Yes, a real battle. Zuzanna took Jan's knife, from the times of some Polish uprising, and he gave her hell for it. I do think Maurice will have his way now.

SOLANGE

Poor Jan.

WODZINSKI

What is it with him and the house help?

SOLANGE

Jan hates anything which comes into contact with Chopin.

WODZINSKI

They'll be staffing changes once again.

SOLANGE

Have you seen that new room maid?

WODZINSKI

Of course... She's been running around for some days now.

SOLANGE

Do you really consider her to be that lovely?

WODZINSKI

She appears to be pretty.

SOLANGE

You are most improper, and think every woman is fanciable. I am cute and so is Madeleine. You're gross.

WODZINSKI (surprised)

Solange dear, I've done nothing to deserve such spite.

SOLANGE

No, indeed, I am the one at fault. You sir are most kind, it's just that you lack fine taste. Madeleine is not at all pretty. It is the conversation with Fernand which has put me in this mood. Maurice too was upset with me. And this storm...

WODZINSKI

Outside it's stormy, and in here so too...

SOLANGE

Please don't be angry, but I'm having such a hard time...

ROSIERES (enters)

I'm ready, I'm here.

WODZINSKI

Finally.

ROSIERES

And yet you complain. I am quicker than lightning. Farewell, Solange. We are off.

WODZINSKI

Goodbye, Solange. Such a shame you've chosen not to join us. I think we will find you in a better mood. It is already growing lighter outside.

SOLANGE

Goodbye, goodbye now.

(Wodzinski and Rosieres exit, Solange alone by the fireplace, sighing deeply. Looking in the mirror, she adjusts her hair and stares at her own reflection. Humming a motif from a sonata. She approaches the room where Chopin is practicing, opening the door a trifle. Chopin working on a largo sequence. George Sand enters).

SAND

Solange!!

SOLANGE

Mommy (quickly closes the door)

SAND

You were spying on Chopin again. You have not the slightest respect for his work. You know how he detests that.

SOLANGE

He was playing something wonderful.

SAND

But you know he won't let anyone listen in when he's composing.

SOLANGE

No one but me. He will show me his new composition soon enough anyhow. Or else stop and ask me to play with him.

SAND

He only allows you to play along out of politeness... For your or for mine sake. Your playing is mediocre.

SOLANGE

Not everyone can be a Chopin, or even a Kalkbrenner... And yet Chopin enjoys when I play along with him. That's a fact. Schubert's march... that one we play very well (hums the jolly opening bars).

SAND

Stop that. What are you behaving like?!

SOLANGE

Oh, I forgot you suddenly want me to be a perfectly raised little madam. Mother's foul moods are nothing to do with me.

SAND

And yet perhaps they are.

SOLANGE

Just because I told Fernand to go... You wanted to marry me off.

SAND

Yes, and I also had my reasons. (touching Solange's dress) You're still soaking wet. Why did you not change?

SOLANGE

I was drying by the fireplace. Wodzinski lit the fire. He's now gone to Chateauroux to play cards.

SAND

Having borrowed money and a carriage from Chopin... Oh, these Polacks...

SOLANGE

He's bored here.

SAND

And where is Clesinger?

SOLANGE

Gone hunting with Maurice.

SAND

Why did you not join them? You were intending to go.

SOLANGE

I would just get even more soaked through.

SAND

They must have taken shelter at the inn.

SOLANGE

I am in no mood for drinking sour wine in an inn accompanied by Maurice and Clessinger. Admit this is no fine way to kill time.

SAND

"A fine way to kill time..." You sound like Chopin.

SOLANGE

I do, do I? Fine, for I like the way Chopin expresses himself.

SAND

But he can barely speak French.

SOLANGE

Not everyone has to speak French... like you (pause). Mommy, will you not get rid of that servant girl?

SAND

No. Why do you constantly keep coming back to this subject?

SOLANGE

I just do. Is it not demeaning to you?

SAND

Solange!

SOLANGE

No? Really?! You're totally indifferent?

SAND

What business is it of yours?

SOLANGE

Everything which happens under this roof is of great interest to me. Besides, you always do what you think is best. There's nothing to be said to either you or Chopin. I am not like Maurice. He thinks he's acting like the man of the house when he is impertinent towards Chopin.

SAND

You're being ridiculous, Solange.

SOLANGE

You refuse to see it, more convenient for you that way. You refuse to see anything amiss in what Maurice is and does. Not a word about Maurice and Augustine.

SAND

Silence... Do not forget I am your mother. You shameless child.

SOLANGE

Yes, I am your daughter and not unlike you in many ways. Hence, I am amused by the different standards you apply to yourself and then me. You want to marry me off in some pious fashion. No chance of that, say I. I have just spurned one of the two suitors you have been nurturing around me, making me think you want to get rid of me too.

SAND

You are unfair, Solange. I most certainly do not wish to marry you off to just any old body. I only have your happiness in mind. I met Fernand in the park and he recounted your conversation. I am ever so sorry you spurned him so rapidly. He is an ambitious lad and will not be back for you any more. I would rather the same did not happen with Clesinger (pause). I have always raised you

to have a close connection with the natural world. I never hid from you any of the dark nor the beautiful aspects of life. You know what our destiny is as women, ordinary women. I am somewhat different, an unusual woman. You mustn't judge me too severely. I love humanity, yet out of all the people I have always loved one person, and more than that one person I love my family...

SOLANGE

Family... or just Maurice?

SAND (displeased)

Family, I say... you, my children.

SOLANGE

I understand, but it seems to me these are just your delusions.

SAND

Now, listen to me carefully. I live as I chose to do, and it is true – I have always been honest. Love, my child, is a great treasure, given to us by nature and it should not be disabused. I have always lived according to my conscience, which is why I am certain you will forgive me. I always put my duties as a mother above all other duties. I was a model mother, Solange (pause). Yes, I was a mother just the way I imagined I ought to be and how many philosophers imagined we should. I was a person myself and wanted to see you all grow up to be human beings too.

SOLANGE

You do not see us as people, maman. You only see your ambitions or your theories confirmed. As to what happens in our hearts – this matters not a jot to you. I do not know about Maurice – as for me I have only ever seen this despot, turning my life into what she wanted out of it, beginning with the decision to dress me up as a boy. But now I've said to myself: Non – absolutely not. This time it will not work. This time I know what my life is to be like. Far from bourgeois ideals, the ones you always longed for, unable to attain them in real life. My life must be different... I know who to surrender it to and sacrifice it for.

SAND

But what if no one needs your sacrifices? Besides, I am not forcing you into any marriages. I wanted you to wed Fernand. Now we're left with Clesinger. The second, potentially just as good candidate...

SOLANGE

I shall not marry Clesinger.

SAND

Why not?

SOLANGE

It's really quite simple. He does not appeal.

SAND (calmly)

Is he not to your liking? Perhaps there is someone else who is?

SOLANGE

What now? Not Fernand, surely!

SAND

No, I am not now thinking of Fernand. I see you are besotted with Chopin.

SOLANGE

Mother!

SAND

I have for some time now respected the secret of your childish heart.

SOLANGE (covering her face)

Oh, maman, for god's sake...

SAND

Do not fear, I shall go on protecting it. No one suspects a thing. But if this carries on any longer, it is sure to come to light. Which may very well have some very painful consequences... For you. Yes, now I can speak plainly – I do wish to have you leave this house.

SOLANGE

But why? You no longer love him, surely?

SAND

Indeed, for the past seven years I have not been his lover. Only appearances remain. For both Chopin and I these appearances are unimportant. He has his pains, I have my own troubles. We are friends. I am his guardian, his second mother. Seven years have just gone by. When he was sick in Marseille following our return from Majorca, I came to him and said: "My dearest Chopin, you need something altogether different, something completely different. You must live freely. Your music is your lover. You should have none other. Basta, it is done. We are as of today mere friends. Is this what you want?" But what was he to say? He was absorbed then in having his preludes published. He never tells me anything – especially not when it comes to such matters. He was only ever interested in one thing... Anthony's sister.

SOLANGE

Wodzinska?

SAND

Yes, Maria Wodzinska. But then...

SOLANGE

Do you think him heartless?

SAND

The heart of an artist is a very unique sort of organ. Yet I do think he has something in the way of a heart. I have heard it often racing at a heightened tempo. Galloping along to the rhythm of his compositions.

SOLANGE

How could such a man live without a heart?

SAND

This may be the essence of his greatness. We walk past him, living side by side for years on end and do not notice he simply hasn't got a heart. They are all the very same... Musset, Chopin... They never truly love any of us.

SOLANGE (Trembling)

What is it you are saying?

SAND

They never love the way they ought to. Always somehow different.

SOLANGE

You say yourself Chopin recalls Wodzinska to this very day.

SAND

He does because she was denied him. But can you imagine him being the head of a family, surrounded by children, as a brother in law to that oddball Anthony?

SOLANGE

No, no...

SAND

And so you see yourself, your laughter is your sentence.

SOLANGE

But that is something altogether different. My love does not dream of marriage, of a house, of servitude... Not even of children, perhaps...

SAND

Is that so?! What does your love dream of then?

SOLANGE

I do not know... I so would like to look upon him, listen as he plays...

SAND (shrugging)

Solange, you are ever so young still, and know not at all what passion is. As your mother, I say you ought to suppress all of your love deep down within you. You must marry and do so as soon as possible. Clesinger is to hand, a simple man.. God, how pleased should I feel if I could retain such a simple, undemanding man close to me...

SOLANGE

I do not know if we can refer to him as undemanding. I hear he has amassed awful debts.

SAND

Eighty thousand.

SOLANGE

This is the sum he admits to. There is sure to be more. Furthermore, he too is an artist.

SAND

A sculptor is never an artist in the full sense of the word. His work demands he has mighty muscles.

SOLANGE

Wonderful. I shall now summarise your thinking. And so you, a liberated, free spirited lady, the very epitome of a modern woman, you who are a model for women of the future, you who were the first to dare dress like a man and smoke cigars, you, a great writer, famous across both the world's hemispheres, yes you George Sand are advising me to run from love and fall into the arms of the first available sculptor just because he has finely honed muscles...

SAND

My dear, depend on my experience. A pair of strong, masculine arms are not a thing to dismiss lightly.

SOLANGE

(exploding) No, no and no (changing her tone): Very well, I submit. I shall marry Clesinger. Do you think it will all end once I am not home any longer? You say Chopin cannot love, though

this may only apply in your case. Maybe this is what you are bitter about to this very day. He is all over this place, always by your side and doesn't declare his love from morning till night. And then you have to hire such pretty girls to work in the kitchen...

SAND

Stop it. You've lost your mind under the influence of this poor man. This music of his, what is it worth? Banging away at the piano, a passing fad, a temporary fancy? Nothing ages as badly as music. Who today can stand listening to Bach or Handel? Now literature, that is eternal. He will be forgotten soon enough, while my books will be read in every tiny cottage all across the land.

SOLANGE

Now envy as well as jealousy poisons your tongue. I know you never ever really understood his art. You have the musical sensitivity of a wooden chair. I am not sufficiently gifted enough to truly grasp the significance of his music. At times, his playing grates, for I simply wish he would sit next to me and take my hand and speak to me about something, about anything. And yet I feel how terribly incredible it is. And you see what moves me so, shakes me each and every time he plays a new piece – to think it was here, in Nohant, in this commonplace environment, surrounded by sounds of domestic bickering and noises from the kitchens, beneath your very own roof a genius of his incredible stature is at work. Creating something this shattering! While you remain so very far from this sort of immortality!

SAND

Why, thank you.

SOLANGE

Don't be angry. You're ever so gifted. Yet can you not feel the sort of man we are dealing with here?

SAND (deep in thought)

Yes, you're right. I can feel the sort of man he is, it's just that I may never have expressed it fully. Perhaps you are right... But if it is so, this is all the more reason why you should not think of your love for him. This love can only complicate matters – distancing him from that which is the essence of his life – from his art. Did you never think of this, Solange?

SOLANGE

Indeed I do, mother.

SAND

And would you not agree with me?

SOLANGE (smiling)

I am not given to making sacrifices. I am too reasonable for that sort of thing.

SAND

It is reason which leads to the notion of sacrifice in this particular case. Reason shows the right way to go.

SOLANGE

Yet in life we must at times stand up for what we believe.

SAND

Do you recall our trip to Majorca?

SOLANGE

Not very well.

SAND

You've no idea what that holiday meant for me. Instead of rest and creative inspirations, I was met with ice – forced to move from residence to residence, constantly chased off by mean souls casting stones at me... With no one to lean on for support. In fact, I also had to nurse our travelling companion. He was tempestuous, complaining all the time, crying, suffering from attacks. I became a nurse for this terrible, miserable man. Our oh so romantic adventure, the one I had so naively invented in my imagination, all for nothing. And so now, if you were to journey with him once more – now that he is so much older and sicker – on another romantic adventure, it too would likely end in a fiasco. When you lack my strength and my endurance, all necessary to defeat the harpy that is his illness, to be stronger than his muse.

SOLANGE

Yes, but he returned from Majorca with his preludes.

SAND

Thank you for all that. He could have composed them without me. Your love will alter nothing. In your embraces, he will still be thinking of his sonata.

SOLANGE (sighing)

Or about Wodzinska, who has turned into some sort of spirit haunting that strange, non-existent homeland of his...

SAND

You do understand he is a foreigner. The hardest thing of all is to love a foreigner.

SOLANGE

Oh, he is no foreigner... He is an angel... (Madeleine enters timidly, carrying a cup on a tray towards Chopin's room). What is that? What are you taking him?

MADELEINE

Hot chocolate for monsieur Chopin.

SOLANGE

Give me that. I will take it to Chopin.

MADELEINE (moving aside)

I am sorry, but Monsieur Chopin asked me to deliver it personally (she goes into his room and then comes out after a pause, her tray empty, walking towards the dining room, Solange following her with furious eyes)

SOLANGE

Is that so? Personally? Personally... fine. (tugs at the bell rope)

SAND

Solange, what are you up to?

JAN (enters)

Yes, madame, how can I help?

SOLANGE

Have our gentlemen returned from hunting yet?

JAN

Monsieur Maurice hasn't returned yet, but Monsieur Clesinger is in his room upstairs.

SOLANGE

Ask him to come down this instant.

SAND

Solange, pause to think... (embracing her)

SOLANGE

Maman, please leave us.... Please leave us alone... (pushes Sand outside, returns fuming to the salon, stops in front of the mirror to wipe her tears dry)

CLESINGER (enters timidly)

Madame...

SOLANGE

How was the hunt?

CLESINGER

Nothing much. The storm had us fleeing. Did you want to pose?

SOLANGE

No, no... I am too unnerved today. It also seems to me that the portrait is now so advanced, you needn't torture me with it any longer.

CLESINGER

The torture is mostly mine.

SOLANGE

I wanted to speak with you, sir.

CLESINGER

I am listening.

SOLANGE

I told Fernand today to cease coming around. Just as you had asked me to... (silence)
Does this not tell you anything?

CLESINGER

Solange, dear! I daren't leap to conclusions.

SOLANGE

Please take me as far from this house as soon as is possible. I cannot stand the mood any longer. Do you not sense it yourself, sir?

CLESINGER

I like it well enough. But if you wish – we can depart straight away.

SOLANGE

We'll get engaged, go visit my father and then marry right after, right after that.

(Chopin enters, though his entrance is not grand. He sneaks in quietly, holding a quill and piece of paper for annotating music which his gaze is fixed on. He walks over to Sand's desk and looks for something there, then grabs the inkwell and returns to his room. Only then does he notice Solange and Clesinger, smiling at them like a child caught doing something naughty)

SOLANGE

Hey, Chopin, mom will be furious again when she finds her inkwell is not where she left it.

CHOPIN

My ink has dried up, I cannot write... (wants to leave for his own room)

SOLANGE (stopping him)

Congratulate us, Chopin, we are engaged...

CHOPIN (tears himself away from his sheet music and stares at Solange – want to blurt something out, but restrains himself, then turns to look at his work and speaks very coolly)

Oh, indeed... Congratulations to you both... (bows slightly before Clesinger and leaves)

SOLANGE (despairing)

He said nothing...

CLESINGER (indifferent)

It does seem he was not impressed by the news.

SOLANGE

Are you not pleased?

CLESINGER

Me, Solange? How can you ask me that? (Yet he appears distracted now)

SOLANGE (embraces Clesinger)

Take me, take me away from here right this instant...

CLESINGER

Come, come... First, to your father, and then Paris. We shall never return to Nohant.

SOLANGE

Never ever? What if Nohant becomes mine?

CLESINGER

This is no place for happy people.

SOLANGE

And yet we two must be happy. What should we care about Chopin and his Poland? Or any of his other lovers? He's had us all duped.

CLESINGER

Come, come... I will take you this instant, far from here, seal my love (becoming passionate). Come, come, do not bother with this Chopin... Come to my studio...

SOLANGE

Right now, yes, right now. I want to do everything right this instant, so there can be no turning back...

CLESINGER

Dear God, how happy have I become...

(Lifts Solange up in the air, she appears to be a weak and helpless girl in the arms of this giant: he carries her away, covering her in kisses)

CURTAIN

ACT III

(The same room come early evening. Cooler, the fireplace going. The stage is empty, sounds of a dinner party from the room next door audible. Jolly chat turns into a heated dispute. A moment later, Chopin appears, followed by Wodzinski)

CHOPIN

No, no, no. This is far too much for me to bear, I shall not stand for being made into a clown.

WODZINSKI

Dear Freddie, you're exaggerating. You mustn't cause riots over such silly trifles.

CHOPIN

Maurice always, always comes first... Everything round here is done with that impertinent child in mind. It was because of his ill health that we ended up going to that god awful Majorca. I shall never forget that journey!

WODZINSKI

Yes, but this time Madame Sand did it... without thinking.

CHOPIN

Absolutely not... This time I am leaving for certain. (calling out) Jan, Jan!

WODZINSKI

Fred, please, hold your horses and wait before making your mind up. Cool a little. You've gotten so worked up over that fowl.

CHOPIN

She knows full well I can't stand eating the legs. I only eat white meat.

WODZINSKI

But for the sake of a stupid hen you shall not be breaking up a decade long friendship.

CHOPIN

That was the last straw. The breast of course was for Maurice.

WODZINSKI

Mrs Sand simply got the plates mixed up.

CHOPIN

Not at all. She too only ever touches white meat. From now on it is either me or him. Where is that Jan got to?! (calling through the door into the garden) Jan, Jan!

JAN (enters through the side door) How can I be of service, sir?

CHOPIN

Please move the piano from my room here, the way it was placed before, right here... And then instantly bring all my trunks down from the attic and pack. Everything is to be packed for a journey to Paris. The hat box too... The horses are to be ready right now. We will send them back from Chateauroux. Jan will come with me.

JAN (crosses himself)

I am listening.

CHOPIN

And don't you crease my pants! The way Jan packs my garments they're impossible to press afterwards! Terrible... (sits in an armchair) Instantly, Jan, in an instant. Everything right this minute.

WODZINSKI (calmly)

Really, Freddie, please let that fowl go... No need to make such a scene over it.

CHOPIN

I will finally, finally leave this house. My dear, what a place it is, the things that are allowed to occur in it... That little Rousseau was beaten about the face... Though with these Frenchmen it is no great offence... And then they talked him into believing it was for his own good. They pushed Fernand aside, for being such a nice boy. That girl chases after Maurice and the mother watches on as if nothing was the matter. And now the young one is being married off to Clesinger. All of them stewing in their furies. Ageing away in all these toxins.

WODZINSKI

In actual fact, what are you worried about... Augustine is debasing herself with that moron. The young one is sold off to Clesinger. What does it matter to you?

CHOPIN

This marriage to Clesinger is a crime! A vicious crime. Such an ordinary soldier, with no learning, no schooling. No, my dear, I am done with the manners of this place.

WODZINSKI

You've suffered it for so long and stood it somehow...

CHOPIN

Naturally. But you can only push me so far – I can be patient for a good long while and then a no becomes a no.

WODZINSKI

Reconsider, will you? Don't leave yet.

CHOPIN

Anthony dear. Over on that piano so much of my music has been scattered by the help, lost perhaps. Help me put it all in order now. Check if it is all there, gather everything up. If they scatter those early works, what then? I must prepare a new sonata for my Jews.

WODZINSKI (shrugging)

As you wish! (wants to leave)

CHOPIN

As to your Rosieres, what a dried up old branch... She is the one who drags all these gossip scraps right before the highest altar. Ready to kill and maim over that cutie Madeleine. She may be a pretty little thing, but what do I now care about these women... What is worse is that she has talked all this much about Solange... and me too. I do of course like Solange a great deal. A fine girl she is. Hence these sudden changes of humour.

WODZINSKI

I think you may be wrong there.

CHOPIN

No, do not be upset, but that is how it is.

WODZINSKI

You know well enough that I am under no illusions when it comes to the Rosieres woman. Yet I am attached to her. When she learnt of my illness, she came to Poznan. Just think of what it means for a Frenchwoman to come to Poznan. That has to be appreciated.

CHOPIN

You were to going to put my music in order, darling.

WODZINSKI

I shall, and soon... (exits).

(As soon as he is left alone, Chopin is transformed – collapsing in a chair, he looks broken and aged. All of his inner strength fails him. And yet we see he is taken with some new idea, occupied with deep thoughts)

(Jan and Madeleine bring the piano in from Chopin's room and set it against a wall in the salon. Chopin instantly approaches the instrument and plays a few bars. Shaking his head disapprovingly)

CHOPIN

No, no, not this at all.

(During this scene, Jan and Madeleine move a great number of large travelling trunks into Chopin's room. Their number and size should explain why the piano had to be moved. This includes hat boxes, shoe boxes, bundles with canes and umbrellas. Chopin returns to his armchair. Sand enters).

SAND

You're leaving.

CHOPIN

Yes, I am leaving.

SAND

You've finally made your mind up.

CHOPIN

As you can see.

SAND

After ten years of intimacy you could have come up with a better excuse for your departure than that unfortunate fowl. I distributed it without due diligence (silence). This house provided you with real maternal care and attention.

CHOPIN

Thank you. In actual fact.

SAND

Do not think this comes easily to me. You are not the easiest person to get along with. You gave me plenty of challenges to content with. I had to make a great number of sacrifices in your name.

CHOPIN

Would these be lovers or literatures?

SAND

Those I did not sacrifice! Though there were motherly feelings. You became my third child and I loved you a trifle less than I did my real children. Hence this jealousy between you and Maurice. You are and were envious of my son (silence, as Sand sits in another armchair). Do you think that the children did not feel the falseness in this whole arrangement? No one has ever restricted my world as much as you ever before... Do not forget our friendship dates back nine whole years.

CHOPIN

I remember.

SAND

You ought not be surprised Maurice bears you a little ill feeling.

CHOPIN (coldly)

I should have become used to it, seeing as you want to raise him into a Saint-Simonist. Regarding his future fans, nothing at all should frighten him.

SAND

Do not chide me for my ideals! I think the way I wish and they way I like to. These are my fancies and that is it. I never blame anyone for anything. The best proof of this is in the way my daughter seems to share in your aristocratic tastes.

CHOPIN

Oh!

SAND

Do you not think my heart weeps when I see you weak and deathly pale forced to visit three or four aristocratic salons in any single evening? I know nothing will come of it except sickness. And yet I've kept silent, now and then. I dreamed of a different sort of career for you. I thought that in time your music would shift without the slightest effort into the tones of grand orchestras and become the music of a new sort of humanity. I thought in time you would come to play for all the world, and not just the wealthy few.

CHOPIN

For the time being, I had to play for the sake of my own people.

SAND

The way you and I see the role of the artist in the fates of our nations are ever so different. It took all of my delicacy, Chopin, for me not to let you know how differently I imagined it all. Just like Mickiewicz, I imagined you creating a great national opera in the style of Meyerbeer...

CHOPIN

Mickiewicz knows nothing about music.

SAND

And yet he and I worried together about the way you live, the way you scatter yourself across salons, how frivolous you can be at times... Do you remember that night he told you about the challenges facing your art? He begged you, with tears in his eyes, for you to change your ways and live life differently.

CHOPIN

I know, I remember, you talked him into it! This was most impertinent of him.

SAND

But it came from deep down in the very heart of that remarkable man.

CHOPIN (sighing)

Poor Mickiewicz.

SAND

Did your friends not find my home open to them as if they too were family? Mickiewicz, Zaleski, Witwicki – were they not my brothers? Did I not give them the greatest gift any wandering soul can receive – the gift of communion?

CHOPIN

They will sooner stop being able to tell the difference between major and minor chords than the French will learn to understand Poles.

SAND

You finally said out loud what I have been wanting to talk about for some time. We do not understand you. You're oversensitive ghosts, floating like Ariel over the Caliban folks of your barbaric lands. While we, we proudly French folks cannot understand what you are feeling or thinking! Yes, this is so – we do not think alike. Our society has evolved differently to yours. As is our literature.

CHOPIN (calmly)

How about the music?

SAND

The differences here are not as sizeable as, for an example, between you sir and your manservant Jan.

CHOPIN

Indeed there are differences. For example between you madame and your maid... Madeleine.

SAND

Chopin!

CHOPIN

I am sorry. You yourself came up with this sort of comparison. And now you feel slighted.

SAND

These are differences in temperament, not culture. All your nation's barbaric essence is concentrated and contained in your manservant.

CHOPIN

Maurice is not fond of him. Though he has failed to get rid of the problem by gossiping, as he did with old Françoise and the gardener. Now he will be happy. I am taking Jan with me. He has suffered enough on my behalf in all of this charming Nohant.

SAND

You're all always suffering. The new Polish martyrology.

CHOPIN

This is not a subject to jest about.

SAND

Well, well, another thing the French do not comprehend. All of these subtleties and secrecies. For we after all are boorish and nowhere near as romantic as you lot. I am a poetic midget and cannot comprehend all of your remarkable gibberish. As with your very own Mickiewicz, I am unable to understand your muses, Chopin.

CHOPIN

I never asked you to comprehend my art. I knew it was impossible.

SAND

I do admit your music contains too much blood and melancholy for my liking, too many grinding, humming noises, skeletons and iron chains.

CHOPIN

You're wrong – these are mere passages, chords and modulations...

SAND

And you, did you ever understand me? Did you ever utter a single word of approval, interest, emotional involvement in my art?

CHOPIN

Indeed, I praised you continuously.

SAND

Profound praise...

CHOPIN

What else could I do?

SAND

We do not understand one another.

CHOPIN

So much separates us. At first, the chasm between two nations which tragically misunderstand each other. Then the chasm between a musician and (slightly ridiculing) a novelist. Then the greatest chasm of all... that between a woman and a man.

SAND (understanding this to be an allusion to her age)

I was like a mother to you.

CHOPIN

And that was probably your greatest error.

SAND

So now you prefer Solange.

CHOPIN

You are marrying her off to that grenadier. That's a crime.

SAND

A greater crime would be to marry her off to you.

CHOPIN (shaken, becoming thoughtful)

Maybe so...

SAND

They didn't want Wodzinska to marry you because you're a valetudinarian.

CHOPIN

Perhaps...

SAND

The two of you living under one roof could have ended very badly for her. Do you know what might have happened if that girl had fallen for you? For she did not love you, isn't that so?

CHOPIN

Maybe not...

SAND

Maybe, perhaps, maybe not... Do you not realise how awful it is to never actually know what you are thinking? What you are really feeling? Chopin? Chopin? (tugs at his arm angrily) Nothing? (Despairingly) You close yourself off totally, from me also. Everything in your head, your every thought, buried so deep down inside it is impossible to even dream of touching your heart.

CHOPIN

When what you wish to do is not just touch it, but also hurt it as deeply as possible.

SAND

Your pride is terrifying to me. No, I do not wish to cause you pain, but I do want to know I am of some use to you. That I can take your heart in my hands and rub some balsam into it...

CHOPIN

(laughing theatrically)

SAND

How can I possibly be a friend to you, when I know nothing about you Chopin? Where are you, Chopin? Where is that heart of yours? (crying)

CHOPIN (indifferent)

So, did Ant gather up my music? Nothing left upon that piano? (comes closer to the instrument and rifles through the papers on it) What's this?! The most important pages left behind! I always have to do everything myself...

SAND

Well, I see... If your mind is made up, let us at least part as friends.

CHOPIN (by his scores)

Sonata... part one... second. (To Sand now) Imagine, I cannot come up with this largo part. I'm missing the middle... Do you see?

SAND

Did you really never feel my care for you was essential? (approaching piano) That I care for your wellbeing? That maybe you recover because of my influence? (takes a cigar from a box and snips the tip off) Was I always merely a foreigner, a novelist, as you call me... no more than some author? Was I as a woman always alien to you?

CHOPIN (going through the papers)

No, not at all. Not always. (Now the two of them stand on either side of the fireplace)

SAND

Frederic! Light please!

CHOPIN (automatically responding to an order for a light from the fire bends towards the fireplace, lights the firestick and uses it to light Sand's cigar).

There you go!

SAND

Thank you (inhaling smoke). Do you recall the first time you came to Perpignan. If we had met on the way to Majorca. You were so jolly then, fresh, revived. Do you remember dinner in that inn, Mediterranean wines you were drinking... Do you recall the laughing world of the south? The almost perfectly Spanish music playing in the evenings... Remember ? Can you remember any of it?

CHOPIN

I do...

SAND

And do you recall that concert in Paris? The first one you ever played just for me? Remember?

CHOPIN

I do...

SAND

You loved me then?

CHOPIN

I did.

SAND

Remember?

CHOPIN

George!

SAND (deeply moved)

Chopinetto!

JAN

Your carriage has arrived, sir.

SAND

What do you mean his carriage? Chopin, are you taking it away? You're taking your delicate little carriage all the way to Paris?

CHOPIN

I am. It came all the way from Paris to get here in the first place.

SAND

You know I cannot stand any other vehicle. Mine is totally wrecked and the postal carriage is unusable. Will you send it back to me from Paris?

CHOPIN

I will send the horses back from Chateauroux, where they also have good carriages.

SAND

But I am so used to yours.

CHOPIN

You can buy a new one with the proceeds from your latest novel.

SAND

Are you taking all the travel trunks too?

CHOPIN

All of them...

SAND

Can you not leave me the little green shoe case?

CHOPIN

Why of course. Order Madeleine to set that one aside.

JAN

That one is still in the attic.

SAND

Madeleine, Madeleine, please bring me the little green shoe trunk. (exits)

CHOPIN

Are all my things packed?

JAN

Nowhere near done yet, dear sir.

CHOPIN

So what good is a carriage ready to go when nothing is ready to be loaded on?

JAN

They will be in a moment, sir... (exits)

CHOPIN (trying something on the piano again)

Then indeed...

WODZINSKI (enters)

I put all your things in order and packed them away in a folder.

CHOPIN (showing him)

Yes, but you left behind the most important parts.

WODZINSKI

Fred, don't fume. I will take that too. You know, I am so happy, we've just received word that money has been deposited for me in town. I will lead you along on horseback, take the money and then be able to pay you back what I borrowed.

CHOPIN

You're a decent lad.

WODZINSKI

I also got a letter from home.

CHOPIN (curious)
And what do they say of home?

WODZINSKI (carefully)
Not much... Seems they are travelling to Warsaw.

CHOPIN
To Warsaw? Dear god...

WODZINSKI
To seek medical advice. Marynia is sick.

CHOPIN
Marynia will be in Warsaw?

WODZINSKI
Perhaps you would like for her to visit your mother?

CHOPIN
You know yourself that is impossible. People's tongues would start wagging all over again. What's the good of that? It's all been and gone. No good trying to wrestle with it again. I passed... I can almost see it now. How long since you've been to Warsaw?

WODZINSKI
A good couple of years...

CHOPIN
I do wonder how the place has changed... the house my parents live in now, I can imagine it as if I had been there before. You know the building, I went past it without ever going inside ever so often. You know, the low fronted place, close to Warecka itself, with small columns... Columns on the first floor... My beloved Ludwika told me all about it... So Miss Marynia will now be visiting it too. Warsaw streets, carts rolling past. And Marynia ever so... elegant... mom looking down from the window... father returning to Lours'... Dear god, my good god... How tiny our world is, how cute and how darling...

WODZINSKI
You would never go back there, surely?

CHOPIN
I could have gone back, and if I had, what then? What would I do there? Give lessons to Elsner's old students? Coasting about their salons? Have pity on us god...

WODZINSKI
Yet it's always home...

CHOPIN
Home, too true. Yet how one would like to see it in a whole new light. Warsaw so great, a free city... Great concert halls, its orchestras better than those in Paris, parks, beautiful gardens, in Wola where they said goodbye to me, buildings, palaces... The theatre where Konstancja sang, transformed...

WODZINSKI
In one corner of one of these parks a beautiful Chopin monument...

CHOPIN

How very amusing... (forces a laugh through his tears) I can just see the monstrosity they would erect... A bronze thing... Am I wrong?

WODZINSKI

What can you do, a hundred, a hundred and fifty years from now... It will be a pretty city. Free...

CHOPIN

Forget it... I don't believe in anything any more. (hunched over, falls into thought sitting by the fireplace) Such an unfortunate land... All of them so ill fated... (mumbling inaudibly to himself)

WODZINSKI

Go see if they are packing everything as you wish...

CHOPIN

Marynia herself, did she write to you directly?

WODZINSKI

Yes indeed, it was from her.

CHOPIN

Let me see.

WODZINSKI (handing him the letter)

Only a couple of sentences.

CHOPIN

Come on, let me look... You're right, not much here. That is her handwriting sure enough. Changed a little perhaps. Has she aged at all?

WODZINSKI

I do not know, most likely she has...

CHOPIN

I too received letters from her. Though I have hidden them away, far from prying eyes (hands the letter back). Thank you. I feel a little warmer seeing a letter like that from home. This place is so cold. Can you not feel how cold it is? This is the last time I come to Nohant... (to himself) My misfortune.

WODZINSKI

Come on, give me all that music. Then let's inspect what the servants are doing, else you will be upset all over again.

CHOPIN

Why should I get upset... Apart from that one thing (moves towards the door to his room). Jan, Jan, for god's sake (turns round). You see, I told you, what chaos. He's packed the silk waistcoats along with the satin. Then I'll have to untangle this whole mess myself (they both exit).

SAND (enters holding the small green shoe box)

A very nice little box... (calling to the dining room) Maurice... Maurice, be done now with your coffees... Maurice...

MAURICE (enters)

I must say the fowl was to my liking today... a la polonaise.

SAND

Look, Chopin gave me this lovely shoe box, the one I always admired. Look, as good as new.

MAURICE

Give it to me, mommy.

SAND

How is that? You chase him out of home and now you want to take his things? You should be ashamed.

MAURICE

But that box belongs to you.

SAND

Chopin only left it with me. We will have to return it to him in time.

MAURICE

Give it me (takes the box from Sand's hands, begins examining it). It will come in most useful on my journey to Paris.

SAND

You're leaving for Paris?

MAURICE

Did you think I would spend all of eternity languishing in this sorry hole?

SAND

You can work in Nohant, the landscapes are lovely. And you shall be by my side. Don't abandon me now that Solange is getting married. Chopin is leaving, I shall be left feeling utterly alone.

MAURICE

You know, maman, I am not in the mood to spend all that long hanging around Nohant this year. Augustine is leaving any moment now to visit her parents, what will I do here with nobody around?

SAND

Is my company not enough for you?

MAURICE

I was just about tell you maman that I've had rather enough of all this Nohant. Especially all of your friends, of which there are far too many.

SAND

They are my close friends.

MAURICE

Did you never consider we might be overwhelmed and in time sickened by all these crowds?

SAND

You've often made it all too plainly clear that you do not wish to see all these people in our home, yes. You are inconsiderate and expect far too much. Do remember I was always a model

mother when it came to you all...

MAURICE

You keep on repeating the same old mantras, maman. Any time I mention this. I've had enough. You understand. I demand you instantly pay me my share of capital and I am leaving for Paris.

SAND

Your share of capital? This isn't something which is done overnight. I don't have your money or what you call "your share of capital" just at the drop of a hat.

MAURICE

I have scattered the little birdie and so now I too will have my way.

SAND

Do you have any idea what you've done? You've set me at odds with an extraordinary human being, my friend for the past seven or nine years, just to satisfy your own egocentric fancies. I know why you hated him. Because he was against Augustine staying with us. And he was right – your conduct around that girl was improper.

MAURICE

My conduct? How was that any different from what you were up to? You always knew best – better than Chopin that Augustine should not be a permanent guest in our home. But for you this arrangement was most convenient.

SAND

Convenient? For moi? You unkind little man...

MAURICE

How much money is in your desk?

SAND

You're getting nothing, not a penny. You know full well I always meant the best for you all.

MAURICE (taking the keys to the desk)

Wait, which key was it?

SAND (taking the keys back)

How many times did I wish for Augustine to depart. How often did I ask you for that. You refused to listen. You always sacrifice everything on the altar of your own egoism and tricked everyone into giving you everything to keep for yourself... (Maurice wants to rip the keys from her). I will not give you a dime.

MAURICE

If you do not, I shall depart for Paris right this instant and join the army.

SAND

You shall not, for you have nothing to pay your way with.

MAURICE

Wodzinski today received funds.

SAND

You shan't borrow it from him. That would be indecent.

MAURICE

As mommy wishes, but I am leaving with Chopin.

SAND

How much will you need?

MAURICE

I have to pay Solange back three thousand, and then... and then... How much can maman spare?

SAND (opening her desk)

There's not a lot here.

MAURICE (bending over her)

Oh well... that much will be plenty... (takes a bundle of banknotes and wants to leave)

SAND

But you're leaving me without a penny. Have mercy, Maurice, I have a house to look after.

MAURICE

Solange might be in need of a much larger sum any time soon.

SAND

Why is that?

MAURICE

I suspect after all which has transpired here she will not be able to remain in Nohant.

SAND

What's transpired?

MAURICE

You do not know?

SAND

What is it now?

MAURICE

About Solange and Clesinger? You've not heard?

SAND

They got engaged. Everybody knows.

MAURICE

A fine engagement. You have an oddly bourgeois way of referring to these things.

SAND

You're lying.

MAURICE

You'd best ask Solange. Or the servants. Everybody knows Solange is no longer sleeping in her own room.

SAND

Lies.

MAURICE

What dramatic scenes... Is mommy jealous perchance? (Laughing cynically) So will maman not now chase them out of home? Solange claims Nohant is hers and her fiancée's.

SAND

I gave everything up for you two, made so many sacrifices... Now you want to rob me of everything.

MAURICE

Everything... meaning what? What did maman give up? I dislike such empty talk. This bundle of banknotes.

SAND

Solange! Solange!

MAURICE

And so it begins... (leaves hurriedly)

CLESINGER (enters hurriedly)

Solange has gone out for a while. Did you wish...

SAND

Clesinger, own up.

CLESINGER

To what?

SAND

What have you done with Solange?

CLESINGER

How do you mean "what"?

SAND (enraged)

What have you done to my child? You've only just gotten engaged to the girl... and already... how dare you? Not that long ago, you were my lover.

CLESINGER

And today I am your son in law. What an odd world we live in, isn't it so? Why, should I have waited for the Baroness to dismiss me offhand the way you did Fernand? Now there is nothing further to discuss – we must marry in a hurry to avoid a scandal.

SAND

You crook.

CLESINGER

Last winter in Paris you spoke to me in a very different fashion...

SAND

Get out... get the hell out of my house.

SOLANGE (enters out of breath)

Did maman call me?

SAND

Remove yourself this instant from my home. Clesinger, do claim your prize. Solange, you cannot remain in Nohant a second longer.

CLESINGER

I had no idea it would offend you this much.

SAND

God, what children, what children have I raised...

CLESINGER

We shall take leave... I only wanted to ask about the marriage contract.

SAND

You will draft that with Solange's father (leaves weeping). Dear god, what people...

SOLANGE (firmly)

Go upstairs and pack now, I will not take much with me. We must ensure Chopin takes us with him. We can go as far as the postoffice and manage from there.

CLESINGER

I'll be down in a moment, wait for me... (exits)

SOLANGE (left alone, composes herself and then goes over to Chopin's room and knocks on the door)

Chopin...

CHOPIN

Don't go in there, the place is chaos... Wait a minute...

SOLANGE

Chopin, you must take us with you, Clesinger and I. We will ride with you to Chateauroux.

CHOPIN

What is happening?

SOLANGE

Mother is chasing us out of the house. She never wants to see me or my betrothed again.

CHOPIN

Another one of Maurice's intrigues?

SOLANGE

I suspect so, I have no way of explaining any of it otherwise. For she cannot be upset that Clesinger and I...

CHOPIN (pained)

Solange...

SOLANGE

What do you care?

CHOPIN

I've known you since you were a child. I am sorry for you.

SOLANGE

Seeing as you agreed so readily to my becoming his wife.

CHOPIN

None of you asked for my opinion.

SOLANGE

And had we done, what would you have said?

CHOPIN (walks back indifferent)

Well, nothing much...

SOLANGE

You wouldn't have told maman that you're in love with me and will not let me marry Clesinger...

CHOPIN

I would not, no...

SOLANGE (weeping)

So now you see, you see, and then you act all surprised.

CHOPIN

Now, nothing which happens in this house is surprising to me.

SOLANGE

You're never coming back to Nohant?

CHOPIN

Probably not (approaches the piano and begins playing around. Tries a few bars of the prelude from Wohltemperiertes Klavier by Bach, then modifies them, walking away displeased). Nothing is going right for me.

SOLANGE

What was that?

CHOPIN

I had this idea pop into my head. I cannot quite grasp it, which is exhausting.

SOLANGE

Farewell, Chopin.

CHOPIN

Farewell, Solange. I am deeply moved.

SOLANGE

Chopin, beloved... Why did I do all that? (embraces him, burying her face in his arms, crying).

CHOPIN

Calm down, now, Solange. Not everything in this world can be the way we would wish it to. You will live in Paris. You will have children, a husband. You will be happy.

SOLANGE

Happy.. (moving away now) It seems to me I only ever knew happiness here in Nohant.

Any time you came to visit... Think of all the years you've spent here. You were always so eagerly awaited... we always had to move the piano.

CHOPIN (not listening, drumming on the lid of the piano, captivated by some thought)
Indeed... yes.

SOLANGE
When your sister came to stay with us, you were giddy with happiness.

CHOPIN
Well, yes...

SOLANGE
We had it so good here. Maman wrote, you played... you spoke of Warsaw.

CHOPIN
Of Warsaw? Yes, yes, of Warsaw...

SOLANGE
Send my love to Ludwika. I would love her dearly.

CHOPIN
I will... I now have to write this down, right now (grabs a piece of paper from Sand's desk and goes with it to his room)

SOLANGE
Oh, how stupid am I (begins laughing). How silly, stupid... (Begins crying).

FERNAND (sneaks in from the garden)
Are you weeping, Solange?

SOLANGE
How did you get in here?

FERNAND
I'm in the park now most of the time.

SOLANGE
You're following me.

FERNAND
Are you leaving us, miss?

SOLANGE
How did you know?

FERNAND
I know about everything which is going on around here.

SOLANGE
Everything?

FERNAND
You are departing. Are you happy, Solange? Are you crying?

SOLANGE

Yes, I am very happy. These are tears of joy.

FERNAND

For god's sake, Solange, do not weep. Do stop to think about what you are planning to do. Do change your mind, miss, do change it. Do not abandon yourself, and me... and everyone. One word from you and only I shall remain. No Clesinger, no Chopin, because I do know, miss... about your Chopin. A loving heart can tell, can forgive everything.

SOLANGE

What do you have to forgive me for? What are these romantic pretensions you come here with? Even if you did want to undo anything, it is now too late. Though there is nothing to undo (proudly). You take me for some sort of doll, a fool who knows not what she is doing. All I have decided to do was thought through. Adieu, Monsieur Fernand (exits).

*) FERNAND

Well, well, what a... and yet how pretty still.

MADELEINE (listening in)

Is not enough for you to sneak around the park all day long, you now actually had to come in here?

FERNAND

Hush, now, Madeleine. You did not come to the woods yesterday, as promised.

MADELEINE

Nothing but work, work round here. You have no idea what sort of house this is.

FERNAND

You will come today?

MADELEINE

Take me away from here...

FERNAND

Where would I take you to?

MADELEINE

I don't mind... Chateauroux... Paris.

FERNAND

You're stupid. Paris on her mind now.

MADELEINE

Careful, else you'll be sorry.

FERNAND

Sorry? What about?

MADELEINE

What was it you said to the little one just now?

FERNAND

What business is it of yours?

MADELEINE

I feel sorry for the girl... You said the same sort of sweet things to me as you did to her, she just saw right through it.

FERNAND

Silence. Do not compare yourself to Miss Solange.

MADELEINE

Ahh... She's such a saint. I told you she is seeing that... sculptor...

FERNAND

And why is Chopin leaving?

MADELEINE

How would I know? They've been fighting all day long.

FERNAND

Now that he is leaving, you will be allowed to return to the house.

MADELEINE

Who knows? Maybe I will remain here awhile.

FERNAND

Why? What for? (wants to kiss her)

MADELEINE

You are, dear god in heavens... Shush, someone is coming (shoves Fernand out the door)

MAURICE (walks in rapidly)

Who was here?

MADELEINE

No one... you're imagining things.

MAURICE

You're up to something.

MADELEINE

Me? Me?! I'm heading home... Mr Chopin is leaving.

MAURICE

Stay.

MADELEINE

Lady baroness does not want to retain me.

MAURICE

I shall say so and she will. Stay.

MADELEINE

Yet you wish to go to Paris.

MAURICE (pleading)

Stay, Madeleine. If you stay – I will not go to Paris.

MADELEINE

You'd best take me to Paris with you.

MAURICE

Maybe later... for now, stay.

MADELEINE

If you ask me nicely.

MAURICE (presses a banknote into her hand)

There you go...

MADELEINE (giggling)

Mummy paid out...

(Augustine comes in via the garden, Madeleine pretending to be dusting the piano. Augustine studies her suspiciously, Maurice now sitting by the fireplace, pretending to be absorbed in a book, whistling lightly. After a moment's silence, Madeleine exits, Maurice also heads for the garden).

AUGUSTINE

Are you running away from me, Maurice?

MAURICE

All this commotion in the house.

AUGUSTINE

Indeed, what a total mess. But would you not like to chat with me awhile?

MAURICE

If you insist. I would rather talk after Chopin and Solange leave.

AUGUSTINE

This will not take long. I would just like to announce I am leaving too.

MAURICE

Where to?

AUGUSTINE

To my parents.

MAURICE

Your parents? Why so suddenly? If you wish to see them... (falsely) we could visit them together.

AUGUSTINE

You're not speaking your mind, Maurice.

MAURICE

So what is it I am thinking?

AUGUSTINE

You're thinking – he's finally gone!

MAURICE

Such drama from the off...

AUGUSTINE

You've all hurt me, Maurice.

MAURICE

All who?

AUGUSTINE

You and your mother.

MAURICE

You exaggerate.

AUGUSTINE

You know that is not true in the least. I loved you and love still, in spite of everything. All of your awful character. And your mother knew I love you. And now when I tell her I am leaving, she will be at peace and happy. She has no idea what people are and what feelings we all have. She lives like a tree, like a flower, like a viper. You're both bad people, Maurice.

MAURICE

Never speak like that of my mother. You mustn't judge her. This is a woman bred better than the rest of us. Say what you like about me. All you women are vipers, but don't you dare come close to my maman. Hear me?! (exits)

AUGUSTINE

Well, well, well, what a shining knight. Your rage becomes you!

ROUSSEAU (dressed for a journey)

Augustine miss, oh dear, they're all departing. Do allow me to also go with Chopin.

AUGUSTINE

We're going together.

ROUSSEAU

Miss Augustine!

AUGUSTINE

Bring me my coat and hat.

(Wodzinski and Rosieres lead Sand in by the elbow)

ROSIERES

You see, George, we are true friends and do not abandon each other in our hours of need. In such circumstances.

WODZINSKI

Even though I have received funds.

SAND

You've received money? Well, then you won't last long.

ROSIERES

He will flee like a bird.

SAND

You envy him. Everyone is running from Nohant, as if the place was suffocating. Will you spend the rest of the summer in Nohant?

ROSIERES

I will stay here a few weeks, and then maybe we can go somewhere... Ant?

WODZINSKI

Anywhere you wish...

ROSIERES (with some regret)

Just not to an altar. (Maurice walks in, very pleased, whistling) Maurice, how about your mind, is it made up? Are you leaving?

MAURICE

No, I am staying. For a long while.

SAND (kissing him on the forehead)

Thank you. I knew you would do that for your old mother.

MAURICE (kissing her hand)

Mummy dearest!

JAN (enters and goes to Chopin's room)

Sir, all the things are tied down now.

CHOPIN (enters)

All? Everything? How?

JAN

As you asked for it to be.

CHOPIN

So fast? Well, then we must go... Where is Solange?

SOLANGE (enters with her fiancée – dressed for the journey)

Here, here! Goodbye, maman.

ROUSSEAU (adjusting Augustine's clothing and bringing their luggage in)

Time to go...

SAND (sees Augustine dressed up)

Augustine, what is the meaning of this? Where are you off to?

AUGUSTINE

I am going with Chopin... And Mr Rousseau. I wanted to visit my parents. I should have done it a long time ago, but I was too weakened.

SAND

Dear child of mine...

CHOPIN (to Wodzinski)

It's getting cramped in my carriage. (puts on the coat and hat Jan hands him)

WODZINSKI

Well, you see... Free travel...

SOLANGE (saying goodbye to her mother)

Now you should be pleased. You will stay in Nohant alone with Maurice... like two real life lovers.

WODZINSKI

I shall ride alongside you to Chateauroux.

ROSIERES

God, he will take his money and stay in the club there.

WODZINSKI

No, no, no... Adieu, adieu....

ALL

Adieu....

CHOPIN (to Sand) Adieu...

SAND (she unpins a bouquet of summer violets from her dress and hands it to him) Adieu...

(Everyone says goodbye, then exit, the stage empty, lights go down, sounds of goodbyes on the porch. Long pause).

(CHOPIN enters after a while wearing his hat and travelling coat, dragging Wodzinski by the arm).

CHOPIN

Imagine, darling, dear, I have it, the idea I have been after. As I was climbing into the carriage, it came to me! You know, just like Bach's expanded chords... just a little E major. Do you get it? (casts off his hat and sits down to the piano). See, Bach goes like this (plays the start of prelude in C major, then E major). Mine will sound a little like this... (sketches out the first bars of the middle section of largo from sonata in B flat minor). More or less like so... (begins playing the middle largo section from bar 29 until the end).

(as he plays in the darkened room, all actors return to the stage. Sand brings in a lit candle and places it on the piano – then draws back to listen, standing in the doorway, head resting on the door frame. Wodzinski by Chopin, Rosieres next to him. Then Augustine and Maurice. Rousseau covers his eyes with his hand. Solange on the sofa holding Clesinger by the hand, crying quietly. Madeleine paused in the door, listening in wonder. Jan enters after a while).

JAN

Sir, if you will...

SAND

Shush... (waves Jan away, who freezes)

CHOPIN (paying no mind to the others, playing with his eyes closed)

CURTAIN SLOWLY FALLS