

Chocolat

A Screenplay by Robert Nelson Jacobs

EXT. FRENCH TOWN (WINTER, 1959)- ESTABLISHING - DAY

We are looking down at a village of cobblestone streets and ancient timber-framed walls.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - DAY

In the doorway of the CHURCH,, we see the COMTE DE REYNAUD, 40's, the town's resident nobleman, pale and austere handsomeness in a dark vested suit - greeting TOWNSPEOPLE entering church.

When all the parishioners are inside, the Comte steps inside and closes the door behind him. The Town Square is empty and quiet.

STORYTELLER (V.O.)

(woman's voice, quiet and sly)

Once upon a time there was a poor little village in the French countryside, whose people believed in "tranquillité." Tranquility.

INT. CHURCH - LATER

The CONGREGATION singing a hymn, dutifully.

STORYTELLER

If you lived here, you knew your place in the scheme of things.

Sitting in a pew together are THREE OLD WIDOWS (MADAME POUGET, MADAME RIVET, and MADAME AUDEL), sober white-haired women who always wear the traditional black dress of the country widow.

STORYTELLER (CONT'D)

You understood what was expected of you.

CAROLINE CLAIRMONT, playing the church organ, is a primly dressed woman in her late 30's who sings with great conviction. She glances over at:

LUC CLAIRMONT, Caroline's 14-year-old son - a freckled, tense, frail boy who is silently staring down at his hymnal.

STORYTELLER (CONT'D)

If you had anxieties, you learned to hide them.

ANOTHER ANGLE REVEALS Luc is hiding a SMALL SKETCH PAD in his hymnal and is skillfully drawing a SKETCH OF THE CRUCIFIXION - EXCEPT THAT CHRIST'S FACE LOOKS LIKE LUC'S OWN FRECKLED FACE.

Luc notices his mother looking scoldingly at him - so he awkwardly joins in singing, his adolescent voice cracking.

Across the aisle from Luc is YVETTE MARCEAU, a robust, buxom woman whose singing is loud, lusty, off-key. Yvette's 10-year-old son, BAPTISTE, squirms with boredom; Yvette's husband ALPHONSE MARCEAU, is asleep.

STORYTELLER (cont'd)

And if, by chance, your hopes had been disappointed...

Yvette glances over at her bald pudgy husband Alphonse, who is drooling slightly as he sleeps open-mouthed...

STORYTELLER (cont'd)
... you learned to sing a brave song.

Yvette forcefully sings a HIGH NOTE aimed towards Alphonse's ear - and her shrill off-key voice STARTLES ALPHONSE AWAKE.

The HYMN ENDS.

Up on the pulpit, PÈRE HENRI, 22, a baby-faced priest, nervously begins his sermon:

PÈRE HENRI
Good morning.
(clears his throat)
The season of Lent is upon us. This is, of course, a time of abstinence.
Hopefully also a time of reflection...

Suddenly we hear WIND whistling through cracks in the windows. This slightly unnerves Père Henri. He glances at: the COMTE DE REYNAUD in the front pew. The Comte GIVES PÈRE HENRI A SUBTLE NOD OF REASSURANCE - and the priest continues:

PÈRE HENRI (CONT'D)
Above all, let this be for us a time a time of sincere penitence...

EXT. "LES MARAUDS" - DAY

The town's marshy slum by the RIVER TANNES.

With strange suddenness, the WIND is becoming shrill and forceful... and we discern, in the distance, TWO MYSTERIOUS FIGURES plodding along the riverbank - a Woman and Child - their faces totally hidden by the long hoods of their medieval-looking, blood-red capuchons.

(MUSIC OVER: "THE WIND THEME")

The Woman is burdened by an old suitcase and a big burlap sack; the Child carries a valise. They huddle together for warmth as they trudge through the wind-whipped snow...

AERIAL SHOT

of Lansquenet as we ride the wind towards the town square...

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - DAY

The WIND now whips through the village, making shutters flap wildly against ancient walls. The ripped awning of the abandoned Patisserie snaps in the wind like a tattered flag.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

The WIND is RATTLING THE ANCIENT STAINED-GLASS WINDOWS and WHISTLING through cracks in closed doors; it's so noisy that we hear only bits and pieces of Père Henri's sermon. The young priest appears quite flustered by all the racket.

STORYTELLER (V.O.)

To live in this village was to respect tradition...

In a rear pew we see DIDI and DÉDOU, 8-year-old fraternal twins in matching sailor suits (sitting with their parents FRANÇOISE DROU, a stiff, elaborately coiffed woman and JEAN-MARC DROU, a man with slicked-down hair, dapper suit and pocket watch). Didi is distracted by an odd noise: the WHINE of a dog? He glances back at:

GUILLAUME BLEROT, a shy sweet man of 70, who awkwardly smiles at Didi. The BLACK NOSE OF A SMALL SICKLY OLD DOG (CHARLY) - pokes out of Guillaume's overcoat and WHINES, upset by the howling wind. Didi's eyes go wide with surprise. Guillaume raises a finger to his lips - imploring Didi not to tattle - then nudges the dog back into his coat.

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

...to mind your business...

Didi's mother (Françoise) sharply raps the boy on the back of the head - and he turns back around.

This amuses a man across the aisle, SERGE MUSCAT, 50, a hale, ruddy-cheeked, barrel-chested man with a sporty mustache. Sitting next to him is his wife JOSÉPHINE MUSCAT - an unkempt woman in her 30's in an ill-fitting dress, and a drab scarf around her head.

Joséphine is glancing furtively at the OPEN HANDBAG of a Woman sitting next to her. With a silent, sudden movement, Joséphine snatches a GOLD-PLATED PILL BOX from the handbag... and shoves it deep into the pocket of her own coat. She glances over at her husband, to make sure he didn't see her do it. Like a child, Joséphine seems both proud and ashamed of this little victory.

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

...to know which problems could not be solved -

Suddenly the massive CHURCH DOOR is BLOWN OPEN BY THE WIND and BANGS AGAINST THE WALL - bringing Père Henri's sermon to a stammering halt.

ANGLE - LOOKING INTO THE CHURCH FROM OUTSIDE THE DOORWAY

as the Comte de Reynaud gets up and calmly walks towards us.

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

- and which ones could.

The Comte SLAMS the door on us.

EXT. "LES MARAUDS" - DAY

The harsh wind rattles the small, dilapidated houses of Les Marauds, as the shrouded WOMAN and CHILD continue trudging along.

EXT. AN OLD, RUNDOWN, SHUTTERED HOUSE - DAY

The Two Figures enter the fenced-in front yard; a few CHICKENS scamper out of their way. The Woman KNOCKS on the front door. No one answers.

THE SHROUDED CHILD
(shivering against the wind)
Poor Pantoufle... he's freezing, maman.

The Shrouded Woman tentatively tries the door... and finds that it's unlocked...

INT. LIVING ROOM IN THE HOUSE - DAY

ARMANDE VOIZIN, 69, in a faded housecoat and fallen stockings, dozes in her chair with a book of Rimbaud's poetry. A dead cigarette, with a half-inch of ash at its tip, dangles from her lips. A CAT laps up yogurt from a bowl.

Suddenly the Cat snarls in alarm. Armande is startled awake, and the ash falls from her cigarette. Armande fumbles to put on her THICK EYEGLASSES - and GASPS in alarm when she SEES:

THE TWO FIGURES (still fully shrouded by their red capuchons) warming their wind-coarsened hands at the fireplace.

THE SHROUDED WOMAN
(calmly)
Sorry to frighten you.

ARMANDE
Who the hell are you?!

The Shrouded Woman pulls back her hood: our first look at VIANNE ROCHER, a striking young woman with a wild dark mane of hair, a confident smile, and a startlingly direct gaze.

VIANNE
I'm here about the patisserie.

Armande glares skeptically at Vianne.

VIANNE (CONT'D)
I'd like to rent it. And the apartment above.

ARMANDE
Where are you from?

VIANNE
(matter-of-factly)
Well, we lived in Andalucia for awhile... and before that, Tübingen... and before that, let me see -

The Shrouded Child pulls back her hood: ANOUK, 8, is a flush-faced girl with the same strong, candid gaze as her mother.

ANOUK
- before that, Pavia. I detested it there. So did Pantoufle. Detested it.

VIANNE
(explaining to Armande)
Pantoufle is her kangaroo.

ANOUK
(to Armande)
Only he can't hop.

VIANNE
(confidentially to Armande)
Bad leg. War injury.

Armande is staring incredulously at Anouk and Vianne.

ANOUK
(to Armande)
Anyhow, he detested it, because the water made him sick.
(confidentially)
Tummy trouble. Diarrhea.

Armande keeps staring at them...

ANOUK (CONT'D)
So, how's the water around here?

INT. DOWNSTAIRS IN THE PATISSERIE - DAY

OPEN ON: intermittent spurts of BROWN-ORANGE WATER coming from a faucet.

WIDER ANGLE - THE PATISSERIE

Vianne shuts off the faucet. She surveys shelves full of cobwebs and rat droppings. Anouk writes her name in the dust on a glass display counter.

Armande finishes counting money that Vianne has just given her.

ARMANDE
(sternly)
I'll expect you to keep the place in good condition.

Vianne reacts with deadpan incredulity. Armande, walking with her cane, exits from the shop.

EXT. CHOCOLATERIE - DAY

Armande walks away from the shop, still with a stern look on her face... but now we detect a slight glimmer of amusement in her eyes.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Vianne unpacks her big suitcase; in addition to clothes, she takes out an array of ancient GUATEMALAN ARTIFACTS:

- a DECORATIVE TILE of "El-chuah," the Mayan Patron Saint of Cacao, grinding cacao beans with a primitive tool

- a WOODCUTTING showing a Mayan King drinking chocolate from a hollowed-out gourd

- a BOWL depicting the four Maya Wind Gods tilting their heads over cacao pods

- the "WHEEL/PLATE" OBJECT

And, with particular care, Vianne takes out a CLAY URN with a cacao tree design. Vianne gazes reverently at the urn and sets it on the bedside table.

Anouk emerges from a CRAWL SPACE UNDER THE STAIRS - a dark, cramped recess that goes back several feet - and proceeds to "furnish" it, bringing in a cherished, ratty old blanket and a battered little framed picture of a pirate ship.

Vianne casually lays out THE DRIED, MOLTEN SKIN OF A SNAKE on the window sill, hangs a SACHET OF DRIED HERBS over the doorway, and places sticks of SANDALWOOD under the pillows of the bed.

ANOUK

(re: crawl space)

Needs a door.

Vianne unpacks a large woven TAPESTRY with a colorful Mayan design and begins to hang it as a curtain over the crawl space.

Anouk glances out the window at the town square...

ANOUK (CONT'D)

What a nice town this is.

(fishing for reassurance)

Don't you think so, maman?

VIANNE

Yes it's lovely. It's a lovely town.

Anouk is anxiously CHEWING ON STRANDS OF HER OWN HAIR, a nervous habit.

ANOUK

Maman? Pantoufle wants to know how long we can stay.

VIANNE

(breezily)

Oh, tell Pantoufle not to worry.

(a BEAT)

Time for bed.

Vianne sits down on the bed, and pats the pillow next to her:

VIANNE (CONT'D)

Come on.

Anouk hops up into bed, snuggling up next to her mother.

VIANNE (CONT'D)

What story tonight?

ANOUK

Pantoufle wants to hear about grandmère and grandpère.

VIANNE

Not tonight.

ANOUK

You always say that.

VIANNE

How about the Tale of the Yellow Dwarf -

ANOUK

*Pantoufle detests made-up stories.
Tell about grandmère and grandpère.*

Vianne uneasily eyes the Mayan Urn on the table.

VIANNE

Not tonight, sweetie.

INT. PATISSERIE - DAY

Vianne, on her knees scrubbing, looks tired and disheveled. Anouk also has a scrub-brush, but she's pretending it's a ship, and using a hair barrette as the ship's "cannon":

ANOUK

*Prepare to fire!
(doing a different voice:)
Aye-aye, mon capitaine! All hands astern!
(whispers, aside to Vianne)
That's you, maman.*

Vianne smiles tiredly and continues scrubbing the floor.

ANOUK (cont'd)

Ready, aim - FIRE!

Anouk launches the barrette across the room, and it lands on:

A MAN'S SHINY BLACK SHOE

And now REVEAL that the shoe is on the foot of the COMTE DE REYNAUD; Vianne and Anouk are startled to see him in the open doorway, a somber figure in his dark overcoat.

COMTE DE REYNAUD

Forgive the intrusion.

VIANNE

Please come in.

The Comte steps inside.

ANOUK

(re: his shoe)

Sorry, monsieur. Pirate attack.

COMTE DE REYNAUD

(gently)

Of course. What's your name?

ANOUK

Anouk. What's yours.

The Comte kneels down beside Anouk and hands her the barrette with a courtly flourish.

COMTE DE REYNAUD

The Comte de Reynaud, at your service.

ANOUK

(excitedly)

A real one? Like the Comte de Monte Cristo?

COMTE DE REYNAUD

(thin smile)

He was not a real one.

VIANNE

(amused)

To what do we owe the honor of your visit?

COMTE DE REYNAUD

As Mayor of Lansquenet, I want to welcome you to our community and invite you to worship at Mass this Sunday.

VIANNE

That's very kind of you. But actually we don't attend.

The Comte is thrown off by this.

VIANNE (cont'd)

(amiably)

We're glad to be so near the church, though. We'll enjoy singing with the bells - won't we, Nou-Nou?

ANOUK

(to the Comte)

Would you like me to sing "Sur le Pont D'Avignon" -

COMTE DE REYNAUD

(to Vianne)

The bells are not intended to entertain, madame. They are a solemn call to -

VIANNE

Mademoiselle.

COMTE DE REYNAUD

Pardon?

VIANNE

(cheerful, unapologetic)

Mademoiselle. I've never been married.

He is taken aback. His disapproving gaze flicks back and forth between Vianne and her illegitimate daughter.

VIANNE (cont'd)

But feel free to call me Vianne. I do hope you'll stop by when I open for business next week.

The Comte studies Vianne as if measuring an opponent. Anouk, sensing tension, idly starts chewing on strands of her hair.

COMTE DE REYNAUD

Opening a patisserie during the Holy Lenten Fast... One could imagine better timing.

VIANNE

(smiles)

Oh but Monsieur le Comte - it's not going to be a patisserie.

COMTE DE REYNAUD

Then may I ask -

VIANNE

It's a surprise.

Vianne extends her WET GRIMY HAND to the Comte. He hesitates... then shakes it gingerly.

VIANNE (cont'd)

It was sweet of you to drop by.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - DAY

The Comte walks with a dignified air, tipping his hat to TOWNSPEOPLE who respectfully greet him with "bonjour, Monsieur le Comte." (His dark suit and fedora hat contrast with the workday clothes and casquettes of the Townspeople.)

In front of the TOWN HALL is a STATUE OF A 17TH CENTURY NOBLE. The Comte is about to enter Town Hall - but notices the Statue has ICICLES HANGING FROM ITS NOSE. The Comte reaches up to gently flick the icicles off the Statue's nose.

INT. TOWN HALL - MAYOR'S OFFICE - LATER

The Comte sits in his second-story office, among musty historical tomes, maps, documents; and a PHOTO of THE COMTESSE DE REYNAUD, a dignified, handsome woman of 40.

The Comte is writing in an antique manuscript book, labeled: "LANSQUENET HISTORICAL PROJECT." (Through the door we hear an o.s. TYPEWRITER.)

An UNEATEN CROISSANT WITH MARMALADE sits on his desk, spotlighted by a lamp. The Comte glances at the glistening croissant, regarding it with yearning - but he does not eat. Instead he forces himself to write.

INT. TOWN HALL - AN ADJOINING OFFICE - SAME

CAROLINE (the woman who played the church organ) is TYPING, referring to a handwritten page. On her desk is a PHOTO of her son Luc, smiling forlornly. As she works, Caroline's eyes fill with tears - but she purses her lips bravely and keeps typing.

The Comte emerges from his office, manuscript book in hand:

COMTE DE REYNAUD
I have completed the 18th Century.

He starts to hand her the manuscript - and notices her tears.

COMTE DE REYNAUD (cont'd)
Madame Clairmont...?

Reynaud stands there awkwardly, not knowing how to deal with this display of emotion.

CAROLINE
Your letter to the editor, Monsieur le Comte. This paragraph about family and tradition...
(indicates handwritten page from which she's been typing)
It's beautiful.

COMTE DE REYNAUD
(surprised, flattered)
Oh... well...

Reynaud starts to sit down on the desk - but that feels too informal to him, so he stiffly stands up again.

CAROLINE
(dabs her tears, smiles)
Forgive me. I must be getting old.

COMTE DE REYNAUD
No no. I... value your...

Caroline, looking a bit embarrassed, resumes typing.

The Comte glances out the window and SEES: two NORTH AFRICAN MEN unloading crates. VIANNE comes out of the patisserie and greets the North Africans with a hug. She makes some wisecrack, and they share a laugh.

COMTE DE REYNAUD (CONT'D)

(to Caroline)

May I ask... if you have had any contact with your mother lately?

CAROLINE

(surprised, wary)

Why?

COMTE DE REYNAUD

It seems she has rented out the patisserie.

CAROLINE

Oh. Well, I haven't talked to my mother in quite awhile -

COMTE DE REYNAUD

I'm sorry, I didn't mean to pry -

CAROLINE

Don't be silly. I have no secrets from you.

She smiles. He smiles too: nervously, a bit thrown off by the flicker of warmth between them. They hold each other's gaze for just a split-second too long...

CAROLINE (cont'd)

(clears her throat)

How is the Comtesse enjoying Venice?

COMTE DE REYNAUD

The Comtesse. Fine, thank you. She is, yes. Enjoying it. Venice, I mean. I got a letter just yesterday - excellent letter, very descriptive. I miss her. Her sister has the flu, actually.

CAROLINE

Oh that's a shame -

COMTE DE REYNAUD

- yes, mm-hm, so they've not been to the museums yet, actually.

He fumbles with the book in his hands, puts it on her desk:

COMTE DE REYNAUD (CONT'D)

If you could have this done by next week, please?

CAROLINE

Certainly.

He turns and hurries back into his office. After a moment, Caroline dutifully resumes typing.

MONTAGE:

EXT. PATISSERIE - AFTERNOON

GUILLAUME (the shy, sweet old man) walks his dog CHARLY. The sickly old dog stops to sniff around the edges of the patisserie's door. Guillaume gently tugs Charly's leash, pulling him away from the door.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - DAY

TWO WOMEN PUSHING BABY CARRIAGES glance across the Square and see Anouk steadying a stepladder on which Vianne is standing; Vianne is taking down the patisserie's old, broken sign. Anouk notices the two women looking her way - and they avert their eyes.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - EVENING

BOYS in their early teens are playing Roulette de Vélo: rolling an old bicycle tire up and down the street, each team trying to push the tire past the opposite goal-line. As the tire goes past Vianne's shop, a couple of the Boys pause to glance in through a little rip in the newspaper covering Vianne's shop window:

THE BOYS' P.O.V.:

VIANNE AND ANOUK INSIDE, scrubbing copper pots.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - NIGHT

Vianne steps out of the Patisserie and throws a pail of sudsy water out into the street.

Across the Square, curtains in a window part slightly, and a black-clad old widow (whom we'll come to know as MADAME POUGET) peers out at Vianne with dubious curiosity.

When Vianne glances up in her direction, the curtains instantly close.

EXT. PATISSERIE - DAY

DIDI AND DÉDOU (the twins) walk home from school with their bookbags. The twins peek into the shop through the edge of the newspaper-covered window:

THE TWINS' P.O.V.:

Vianne cleaning a ANCIENT-LOOKING STONE BAR in the kitchen.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - DAY

A group of ELDERLY TOWNSPEOPLE are standing close together on the street, talking among themselves and trying to peer into the patisserie.

The COMTE DE REYNAUD happens by - and the group disperses.

EXT. PATISSERIE - NIGHT

JOSÉPHINE (the unkempt, mistrustful-looking woman with the scarf around her head) hurries down the street with a baguette. Seeing the patisserie's door slightly ajar, she peers in with wary curiosity -- and sees Vianne grinding a huge dried chili pepper in an old-fashioned Mortar-and-Pestle.

Vianne, sensing someone watching her, turns toward the door - and Joséphine quickly hurries away.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - MORNING

The COMTE DE REYNAUD is heading across the Square toward the Town Hall - when he notices movement inside Vianne's shop. He steps over towards her shop and squints in through the newspaper-covered window:

REYNAUD'S P.O.V.:

The drab walls have been repainted bright coral; VIANNE is dipping a PASTRY BRUSH into a red-brown liquid in the Mortar-and-Pestle, then using the brush to paint a DECORATIVE DESIGN on the wall - a repeated pattern with the primitive simplicity of a cave painting.

EXT. PATISSERIE - NIGHT

SERGE MUSCAT (the hale, barrel-chested man) and JEAN-MARC DROU (the dapper man), both DRUNK, swagger down the street SINGING "Chevaliers de la Table Ronde" - and stop to glance at the patisserie with bleary curiosity.

SERGE

I heard she was some kind of radical.

JEAN-MARC

I heard she might have a criminal record.

SERGE

I heard she's got the "Marseillaise" tattooed on her ass.

Jean-Marc, stupefied, looks at Serge... then they both burst out laughing.

END MONTAGE.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - DAY

The BOYS are playing their usual game of Roulette de Vélo.

EXT. CHOCOLATERIE - DAY

For the first time, VIANNE REMOVES THE COVERING from the inside of her shop window.

YVETTE (the robust, buxom woman) is riding by on a Motor Scooter - but COMES TO AN ABRUPT STOP, awestruck by the DAZZLING DISPLAY OF CHIC CONFECTIONS in the window: pralines, Venus' nipples, truffles, marzipan rolls, mendiants, candied rose-petals, sugared violets... A SIGN reads:

CHOCOLATERIE "MAYA"

Now CAROLINE and LUC (Caroline's tense, frail 14-year-old son) walk by - and stop to look at the amazing display.

Now the shop door OPENS, revealing VIANNE and ANOUK in bright red smocks (in contrast to the drab-colored clothes of the townspeople). Some Boys from the Roulette de Vélo game come running by, and their attention is caught by the dazzling candy display - causing them to momentarily forget about the bicycle wheel, which now ROLLS SMACK INTO CAROLINE, knocking her off balance.

BOY #1 rushes to retrieve the bicycle wheel.

VIANNE
(comes outside; to Caroline:)
Are you alright?

CAROLINE
(to Boy #1)
You should be more careful!

BOY #1
(trying to hide his amusement)
Sorry.

They watch the smirking Boy run off with the wheel.

VIANNE
Why don't you come in and sit down for a minute?

CAROLINE
(firmly, to Vianne)
Please don't trouble yourself -

VIANNE
No trouble at all. I'm Vianne Rocher.

Caroline shakes Vianne's hand in the formal French fashion:

CAROLINE
Caroline Clairmont. The daughter of your landlady. This is my son Luc.

Luc shyly shakes Vianne's hand, not looking her in the eye.

VIANNE
And this is my Anouk.
(then, seeing that Caroline is unsteady)
Please - come in where it is warm.

Caroline reluctantly allows Vianne to lead Luc into the shop. Yvette also follows the others in ...

INT. PATISSERIE - A SHORT TIME LATER

OPEN CLOSE: A STEAMING POT OF HOT CHOCOLATE

which Vianne is preparing.

WIDER SHOT - IN THE PATISSERIE

The walls are painted CORAL AND RED, and decorated with Vianne's PRIMITIVE HAND-DRAWN DESIGNS. Vianne's MAYAN ARTIFACTS are prominently displayed: the Maya King drinking chocolate... the Wind Gods... "El-chuah"

grinding cacao... and the "WHEEL/PLATE OBJECT." There are bar stools at the counter, and a little sign in florid calligraphy: "Gâteau au chocolat 10F (la tranche)."

Luc sits at the counter, on one of several bar stools, with Caroline standing next to him. Vianne is preparing the hot chocolate. Yvette is marvelling the strange decor.

VIANNE

(to Caroline)

Is she planning on dropping in?

CAROLINE

Who?

VIANNE

Your mother.

CAROLINE

I wouldn't know. We never speak.

VIANNE

How sad.

CAROLINE

Only for her.

VIANNE

(setting cup in front of Caroline)

Try this. It'll help prevent a bruise. I bet you've never had hot chocolate made from undiluted cocoa liquor. A two-thousand-year-old recipe.

YVETTE

(indicating something o.s.)

What's this?

Vianne turns and SEES that Yvette is pointing to : the "WHEEL/PLATE OBJECT."

(Caroline pushes the hot chocolate away from her, without tasting it.)

Anouk gives the "Wheel/Plate Object" a playful spin.

ANOUK

(to Yvette)

What do you see, madame?

YVETTE

Pardon?

VIANNE

What does it look like to you? Just say the first thing that comes into your mind.

YVETTE

I don't know. A... woman riding a wild horse?

Vianne whistles as if to say: aren't you a hot number.

YVETTE (CONT'D)

(embarrassed)

Silly answer?

VIANNE

There are no silly answers.

Vianne offers a triangular chocolate to Yvette:

VIANNE (CONT'D)

The pepper triangle, that's for you.

A recipe little-known in this hemisphere - a tiny hint of chili pepper to play against the sweetness. Tangy, adventurous.

YVETTE

I really shouldn't...

VIANNE

(a wry whisper)

I think you should.

Yvette glances awkwardly at Caroline... then takes a taste of the pepper triangle, which surprises and delights her.

YVETTE

(to Vianne, a compliment:)

You are an evil woman.

Anouk spins the Wheel/Plate Object again:

ANOUK

(to Luc)

What do you see?

LUC

Me?

(studies the Object)

A glob of tar. Like you see on the beach at Marseilles.

Vianne considers this.

VIANNE

Very dark, very bitter chocolate - that's your favorite.

Luc is surprised: how does she know?

Vianne starts to hand Luc a piece of very dark chocolate - but Caroline stops her:

CAROLINE

- which will have to wait five weeks more, thank you. Lent.

VIANNE

(shrugs)

Suit yourself.

Caroline takes Luc's hand, as if he were a small child, and starts leading him to the door.

CAROLINE

We must run along.

(formally, to Vianne)

Nice to have met you.

Caroline pauses at the door to wrap Luc's long wool scarf more securely around his neck.

VIANNE

(watching Caroline fuss with Luc's scarf)

Mm-hm. My pleasure.

Caroline leads Luc outside by the hand.

ANOUK

(to thin air:)

Come on, Pantoufle. Let's play pirates.

Anouk runs upstairs, barking out NAUTICAL COMMANDS.

YVETTE

How much are the chili thingies?

VIANNE

Four-fifty a box.

YVETTE

Could you put a ribbon on it?

(a rueful laugh)

Then at least I can pretend my husband gave it to me.

As Vianne puts the candy in a box with a red ribbon, she notices outside: JOSÉPHINE gazing darkly through the window.

YVETTE (cont'd)

(to Vianne, a warning:)

Joséphine Muscat.

Vianne smiles at Joséphine - who averts her eyes and hurries away.

YVETTE (cont'd)

She waltzes to her own tune.

Vianne hands Yvette her boxed candy - and also a clear packet of CACAO BEAN NIBS:

VIANNE

And these are for your husband.

YVETTE

(puzzled)

What?

VIANNE

Unrefined cocoa nibs from Guatemala.

(significantly)

To awaken the passions.

YVETTE

Pff! You've obviously never met my husband.

VIANNE

You've obviously never tried these.

Yvette, intrigued in spite of herself, looks at the packet.

INT. CAFÉ DE LA RÉPUBLIQUE - DAY

SERGE MUSCAT is wiping off tables in this empty rundown café. The door opens, and in walks the COMTE DE REYNAUD. Serge nervously straightens up, suddenly on best behavior:

SERGE

Monsieur le Comte - what a nice surprise. Would you care for a -

COMTE DE REYNAUD

Nothing, thank you. How is Joséphine enjoying the vacuum cleaner?

SERGE

Oh yes, Monsieur le Comte, she likes it very very much. Just yesterday she said how kind you were to remember our anniversary.

A BEAT of silence. The Comte flicks a speck of lint from his vest. Serge fidgets apprehensively, smoothing down his cafetier's apron. Then:

SERGE (CONT'D)

(blurting it out)

Look, I know I'm two months behind - but I'm sure business will pick up in the Spring -

COMTE DE REYNAUD

Tell me, Serge, are you working to the best of your ability?

Serge looks at him warily. Then:

SERGE

Yes.

The Comte gives Serge a charitable, paternal smile.

COMTE DE REYNAUD

My father always looked after your father, did he not? Just as I look after you. You'll make up the rent when you're able, won't you Serge.

Serge's eyes grow moist with gratitude:

SERGE

On my honor, Monsieur le Comte -

COMTE DE REYNAUD

Live righteously, and you have nothing to fear from me. That is a promise.

SERGE

God bless you, Monsieur le Comte! God bless you!!!

Serge impulsively embraces the Comte and vehemently kisses him on both cheeks. The Comte pulls back.

SERGE (CONT'D)

Sorry, I... Sorry.

(embarrassed, clears his throat)

Is the Comtesse having a pleasant journey with her mother?

COMTE DE REYNAUD

Her sister.

SERGE

Oh. I thought you said -

COMTE DE REYNAUD

(irritated with Serge)

Her sister. She is with her sister. In Venice. Viewing sacred art.

SERGE

(chastened)

Of course, Monsieur le Comte.

The Comte exits. Serge wipes a bead of sweat from his brow.

EXT. CHOCOLATERIE - LATE AFTERNOON

The shop is closed; Vianne is outside cranking up the awning. (Through the window we SEE ANOUK inside, running up and down the stairs, racing against the imaginary Pantoufle.)

Suddenly Vianne is startled by the REFLECTION of the COMTE DE REYNAUD on the window. She turns and sees him standing right behind her.

COMTE DE REYNAUD

You told me you would not be selling sweets.

VIANNE

(smiles coolly)

I told you it would not be a patisserie. It's not.

He peers into the window at the large Mayan bowl, which casts an eerie shadow in the darkened shop.

COMTE DE REYNAUD

What is that?

VIANNE

Interesting piece, isn't it? It's all about the sacredness of chocolate. See these four Wind Gods? They're infusing cocoa pods with their divine blood -

The Comte reacts with obvious disapproval.

VIANNE (CONT'D)

I should think you'd be fascinated. The Maya drank cocoa in their ceremonies - same as the wine in your Holy Communion -

COMTE DE REYNAUD

This pagan idolatry has nothing to do with the Sacrament of Holy Communion! Madame, you -

VIANNE

Mademoiselle. But I do wish you'd call me Vianne -

COMTE DE REYNAUD

Enough!

Vianne is a bit startled by his vehemence.

Through the window, we SEE Anouk stop running on the stairs. Sensing trouble, she watches Vianne and the Comte through the glass.

VIANNE

(quiet, conciliatory)

I mean no disrespect. Honestly I don't.

(re: Mayan bowl)

I'm just showing you that maybe we have something in common.

The Comte turns on his heels and strides off, leaving Vianne a bit unsettled.

INT. APARTMENT ABOVE THE CHOCOLATERIE - MINUTES LATER

We are with ANOUK, inside her cramped CRAWL SPACE. Now the partially-open curtain stirs slightly as VIANNE enters the bedroom and stoically busies herself with tidying up the room.

ANOUK

Are we going to have to move again, maman?

WITH VIANNE

who turns and sees ANOUK'S FACE, PARTIALLY OBSCURED BY THE CURTAIN. It pains Vianne to see Anouk's anxiety. Vianne goes to the curtain and kneels down; she tries to think of something to say, something wise and comforting... but instead she just reaches through the curtain and caresses Anouk's cheek.

OMITTED

INT. MARCEAU BARN - DUSK

YVETTE and her 10-year-old son BAPTISTE milk cows in silence. Yvette looks moody and distracted. After a moment:

BAPTISTE
Getting too old. Drying up.

YVETTE
(looks up, troubled)
What did you say?

BAPTISTE
(re: cow)
Sophie - she's not giving much milk.
(yawns, gets up)
'Night.

Baptiste leaves the barn.

EXT. MARCEAU FARM - OUTSIDE THE BARN - DUSK

Baptiste walks with a pail of milk towards the farmhouse.

INT. FARMHOUSE KITCHEN - DUSK

ALPHONSE sits DOZING OPEN-MOUTHED by the RADIO (which plays Charles Trenet's "Que Reste-t-il De Nos Amours.") Baptiste ENTERS and puts down the milk pail on a counter. He walks past Alphonse - and mischievously TURNS THE RADIO UP FULL BLAST and hurries upstairs. Alphonse wakes up just enough to TURN DOWN THE RADIO... then drifts back to stupid, open-mouthed sleep.

INT. FARMHOUSE KITCHEN - DUSK

Yvette enters, alone and miserable. She sees Alphonse sleeping open-mouthed by the radio. On the counter she sees the clear packet of CACAO BEAN NIBS that Vianne gave her. Yvette stares at the nibs, wondering... then shakes her head, murmuring to herself:

YVETTE
Don't be pathetic.

She tosses the packet towards the trash can as she leaves the kitchen. But we SEE what she doesn't: the packet bounces off the lip of the trash can and lands on the kitchen floor...

EXT. CAROLINE'S HOUSE - DUSK

In the cobblestone street in front of the house, BOYS are playing football (soccer).

INT. THE HOUSE - LUC'S BEDROOM - DUSK

The walls display Luc's MORBID DRAWINGS: goat carcasses, graveyards, decapitated soldiers, etc. At the moment, LUC is drawing a study based on a magazine photo: a terrified Algerian being prodded at rifle-point by a French soldier.

From outside comes the sound of BOYS SHOUTING. Luc peers out his window, and forlornly watches the boys at play.

CAROLINE steps into his room, holding a MATH WORKBOOK.

CAROLINE

You've got a tiny error in Problem Six -

She stops short, seeing him gazing out at the playing boys. He turns to face her, his eyes sparkling with frustration.

A very small amount of BLOOD begins TRICKLING FROM HIS NOSE. Annoyed, he wipes at it with his hand.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)

(anxious)

Oh!

Caroline rushes to him and compresses a handkerchief against his nose.

LUC

(a bit embarrassed)

It's nothing.

(takes away handkerchief)

I think it's already stopped.

But she worriedly presses the handkerchief back against his nose.

He sighs and glances at the math workbook:

LUC (CONT'D)

(uncomfortably)

Mother? The new teacher wants us to correct our own mistakes -

CAROLINE

I didn't tell you how to correct the mistake, dear. I just told you that you made one.

Caroline notices that one of the buttons on Luc's sweater is undone; she buttons it and gives it a motherly little pat.

From outside comes a RAUCOUS CHEER from the boys.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE THE HOUSE - DUSK

Across the street from Caroline's house, apart from the playing Boys, a solitary figure stands in the shadows: it's ARMANDE, holding herself upright with her cane, her eyes tired and sad as she silently stares up at Luc's window...

INT. FARMHOUSE KITCHEN - DUSK

ALPHONSE, sitting by the radio, now stirs awake. His STOMACH GROWLS. He rubs his gut hungrily. He gets up and looks in the cupboard, but nothing interests him. Then he spots the packet of CACAO BEAN NIBS on the floor... Curious, he picks it up. He pops a nib in his mouth - and is surprised by its bitterness:

ALPHONSE

Merde!

But he keeps chewing, intrigued. He pops another in his mouth. And another...

INT. FARMHOUSE - UPSTAIRS BATHROOM - LATER

Yvette is on her hands and knees scrubbing the toilet, her face tired and grim.

ANOTHER ANGLE REVEALS ALPHONSE standing in the doorway, unseen by Yvette, his gaze riveted on her slightly swaying ass as she scrubs.

ALPHONSE

Yvette.

She wearily glances back at him... and is astonished to see the look of smoldering desire in his eyes.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - DUSK

We are looking up at the bathroom window, where we see Yvette and Alphonse by the window, in the throes of passion.

Yvette fumbles with the shutter and manages to pull it closed - abruptly cutting off our view of her and Alphonse.

INT. APARTMENT ABOVE THE CHOCOLATERIE - NIGHT

The CAMERA is PANNING past various objects in the bedroom.

VIANNE

(a strange, agitated murmur)

Good. Likes it. She likes it here. Why shouldn't she?

CAMERA keeps slowly PANNING.

VIANNE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

It's good here. He doesn't scare me, why should he?

CAMERA now PANS PAST ANOUK - who is fast asleep in the bed.

VIANNE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
I should be flattered: a nobleman this time! Right?

We hear Vianne laugh - but her tone is thin and mirthless.

VIANNE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Seen his type. Many times.

PANNING CAMERA now FINDS AND HOLDS ON VIANNE - and we see that she's talking to the ancient MAYAN URN.

VIANNE (CONT'D)
Many times. Many towns. Many times. Right? So I'm ready. This time I'm ready.

We see the anxiety in Vianne's eyes.

VIANNE (CONT'D)
So it's good. It's good here. It's good.

EXT. CHATEAU DE REYNAUD - SUNRISE

A SMALL 17TH CENTURY CHATEAU out of a fairy tale: russet-tiled roof, Renaissance tower, fanciful sculpted details. But the walls are rust-stained, the sculpting weathered.

INT. THE COMTE DE REYNAUD'S LIBRARY - SAME

The Comte (in an old velvet robe) sits at a desk, penning revisions on a typed MANUSCRIPT. On the table is a FORMAL WEDDING PHOTO of him and the Comtesse de Reynaud.

The housekeeper MADAME RIVET (one of the black-clad widows) enters and sets down a tray in front of the Comte: coffee and baguette with jam. His eyes momentarily wander to the food... then he resumes writing.

MADAME RIVET
Not hungry, Monsieur le Comte?

COMTE DE REYNAUD
The Lenten Fast, Madame Rivet.

MADAME RIVET
(deferential)
But... well... are you not supposed to eat something?

He gives her an irritable glance. Madame Rivet obediently picks up the tray.

COMTE DE REYNAUD

No, it's alright, leave it.

Madame Rivet, very confused, puts the tray back down, curtsies and hurriedly leaves the room.

Reynaud puts down his fountain pen and stares intensely at the glistening jam. He leans forward and inhales its scent - it makes him dizzy with desire - but he does not eat. He picks up his pen and starts writing again.

INT. CHOCOLATERIE - MORNING

JOSÉPHINE MUSCAT warily enters. The shop seems to be empty. She eyes the candies... then furtively SNATCHES A SILVER CANDY PACKET and slips it into her coat.

VIANNE emerges from the kitchen with a tray of candies.

VIANNE

(warmly)

May I help you, madame?

Joséphine pretends to be surveying the displayed prices.

JOSÉPHINE

(muttering, barely audible)

Expensive. I don't waste money.

VIANNE

I have a knack for guessing people's favorites.

Vianne reaches under the counter and brings out a silver candy packet - identical to the one Joséphine shoplifted. Joséphine looks at it with veiled panic.

VIANNE (cont'd)

These are your favorites, am I right?

Joséphine eyes her suspiciously: what kind of trick is this? Vianne pushes the packet across the counter to Joséphine:

VIANNE (cont'd)

On the house.

Joséphine doesn't take the packet; she abruptly turns and shuffles out of the shop, muttering to herself.

EXT. CHOCOLATERIE - DAY

as Joséphine exits, avoiding eye contact with the THREE OLD BLACK-CLAD WIDOWS who are passing by Vianne's window. The Widows stop to look at the surprising window display.

MADAME POUGET
(disapprovingly)
Well, this certainly is different.

MADAME AUDEL
(intrigued by the display, but trying not to show it)
It... certainly is.

MADAME RIVET
Out of business in six months.

Madame Pouget and Madame Rivet share a knowing nod.

Now GUILLAUME happens by with his sickly old dog CHARLY, who suddenly hops up to greet Madame Audel, licking the back of her shoe (or putting his paws up on her skirt?).

GUILLAUME
I'm so sorry -

Madame Audel, caught off-guard, turns and re-adjusts her drab black skirt - and we catch a glimpse of a BRIGHT PINK SLIP underneath. She's flustered to see Guillaume:

MADAME AUDEL
Oh.
(shyly)
Bonjour, Monsieur Blerot.

GUILLAUME
(equally shy)
Bonjour Madame Audel.

They make momentary eye contact - then both look away.

The other two Widows take Madame Audel's arms and, with an air of solidarity, escort her off down the street.

Guillaume, a little wistfully, watches Madame Audel go off... then he hesitantly turns toward the doorway of the shop.

INT. CHOCOLATERIE - DAY

Vianne sees GUILLAUME, with CHARLY, hovering uncertainly in the doorway.

VIANNE
Come in, monsieur, come in.

Guillaume is ambivalent. He's about to turn away - when Vianne gets a "Chat Croquant" (a wafer shaped like a cat) from under the counter and kneels down to entice the dog.

VIANNE (CONT'D)
Come on, boy. Got something for you.

The old dog, sniffing the air, pulls weakly on his leash. Guillaume reluctantly allows the dog to lead him inside.

Vianne feeds the Chat Croquant to Charly:

VIANNE (CONT'D)

What's your name?

GUILLAUME

Charly. He's 14. That's 98 in people years.

VIANNE

I meant your name.

GUILLAUME

Oh. Guillaume Blerot.

Guillaume watches his dog enjoy the wafer.

GUILLAUME (CONT'D)

(to Vianne)

You're very kind. He has so few pleasures left.

VIANNE

Would you care to buy something special for your lady friend?

GUILLAUME

(confused)

Lady friend...?

VIANNE

The lovely woman your dog was so fond of.

(confidentially)

Her favorite is chocolate seashells - that's my guess.

GUILLAUME

(awkwardly)

Oh... I... mustn't. You see... Madame Audel is in mourning for her husband.

VIANNE

Oh I'm sorry. When did he pass away?

GUILLAUME

The War. German grenade.

VIANNE

But... it's been 15 years since the War. Surely by now -

GUILLAUME

Not that war. Monsieur Audel was killed on January 12th, 1917.

(earnestly)

It was quite a blow to Madame Audel.

VIANNE

(a BEAT)
Apparently so.

INT. BEAUTY SHOP - DAY

FRANÇOISE DROU (wife of Jean-Marc, mother of Didi and Dédou) cuts MADAME AUDEL's hair. The TWO WOMEN WITH BABY CARRIAGES sit under HAIR DRYERS (gently pushing their carriages back and forth, even as they sit having their hair dried.)

THE COMTE enters, doffing his fedora. He speaks loudly to be heard over the din of the hair dryers:

COMTE DE REYNAUD
Bonjour, mesdames.

FRANÇOISE AND MADAME AUDEL
Bonjour, Monsieur le Comte.

Françoise promptly hands the Comte an ENVELOPE OF MONEY.

COMTE DE REYNAUD
I wish all my tenants were as reliable as you, Madame Drou.

FRANÇOISE
How is the Comtesse enjoying Italy?

COMTE DE REYNAUD
She... may be extending the trip.

FRANÇOISE
(a bit awkwardly)
Ah. How nice.

As the Comte turns to leave, Françoise and Madame Audel exchange an ever-so-slight, raised-eyebrow glance.

Then the Comte turns towards them again, with an afterthought:

COMTE DE REYNAUD
By the way, has either of you seen the new shop across the square?

Just now Madame Audel glimpses GUILLAUME (walking Charly) walking past the window. He gives her a shy, polite smile.

MADAME AUDEL
(smiles; distractedly)
The chocolaterie? Why, yes -

COMTE DE REYNAUD
Shameless, isn't it?

Madame Audel's smile turns awkward:

MADAME AUDEL

(to the Comte)

What?

Outside, Guillaume continues his stroll, walking out of view.

COMTE DE REYNAUD

The sheer nerve of the woman -

The two Women with Baby Carriages, sensing a bit of gossip in the offing, TURN OFF THEIR HAIRDRYERS so they can listen in.

COMTE DE REYNAUD (CONT'D)

(lowers his voice, now that hairdryers are off)

The sheer nerve of the woman - opening a chocolaterie just in time for Lent.
And good lord, those pagan idols all over the place...

The Women with Carriages exchange a look of pious indignation.

MADAME AUDEL

Pagan idols.

(uncertainly)

Yes. Yes, it does seem inappropriate -

COMTE DE REYNAUD

The woman is brazen.

(confidentially)

My heart goes out to that illegitimate child of hers.

Madame Audel is surprised by this information. The Comte nods gravely, as if to say: "Yes, it's true."

The Women with Carriages share a look of offended propriety.

EXT. CHURCH - DAY

PÈRE HENRI, the baby-faced priest, is using a broom to sweep snow off the church steps, SINGING while he works:

PÈRE HENRI

"...You ain't nothin' but a hound dog, cryin' all the time. You
ain't nothin' but a hound dog and you ain't no friend of mine."

The COMTE DE REYNAUD approaches - not yet seen by Père Henri. The Comte gravely watches the young priest.

PÈRE HENRI (cont'd)

"You said you was high class, but that was just a lie,
Yeah you said you was high class, but that was just a lie.

Père Henri swivels his hips slightly - a very tame Elvis - and sings into the broom as if it were a microphone:

PÈRE HENRI (cont'd)

You ain't nothin' but a hound dog and you ain't no friend of mine..."

The Comte loudly clears his throat - and Père Henri, alarmed to see him, instantly falls silent.

COMTE DE REYNAUD
A new addition to the liturgy?

PÈRE HENRI
(embarrassed)
I have a weakness for American music, Monsieur le Comte.

COMTE DE REYNAUD
A weakness.

The young priest doesn't know what to say.

COMTE DE REYNAUD (cont'd)
How long have you been with us now, PÈre Henri?

PÈRE HENRI
It'll be five weeks -

COMTE DE REYNAUD
Père Michel served this village for five decades...

PÈRE HENRI
(uneasily)
Yes, well, I only pray that I can live up to Père Michel's example of -

COMTE DE REYNAUD
My prayer exactly.

Père Henri swallows hard.

COMTE DE REYNAUD (cont'd)
I glanced at your sermon, as you requested.

The Comte pulls out the MANUSCRIPT we saw him working on.

COMTE DE REYNAUD (cont'd)
I had some suggestions.

Père Henri takes the manuscript - and is mortified to see that it's ABSOLUTELY COVERED WITH HANDWRITTEN REVISIONS.

PÈRE HENRI
You're... very kind.

COMTE DE REYNAUD
Happy to help, mon Père.
(turns to go, but then:)
Oh and one other thing.

Père Henri looks at him with thinly-veiled dread.

COMTE DE REYNAUD (cont'd)

If you've not seen the new chocolaterie, I suggest you take a look. You'd best know your enemy.

Père Henri reacts with surprise and confusion.

INT. CHOCOLATERIE - DAY

Anouk, freshly groomed and holding her school bookbag, is allowing Vianne to straighten the collar of her blouse.

Through the window Anouk SEES DIDI AND DÉDOU on their way to school - and she impulsively heads for the door:

ANOUK

'Bye, maman!

VIANNE

Where's my kiss?!

Anouk hurries back to Vianne, who lowers her cheek into position for a kiss - and Anouk playfully LICKS her mother's cheek. Vianne is suprised and amused.

Anouk races back to the door -

- and almost runs into ARMANDE, who is now entering (walking with her cane.)

ARMANDE

Watch where you're -

ANOUK

Bonjour, Madame Voizin!

In a flash Anouk is gone. Armande walks inside, sees Vianne behind the counter.

ARMANDE

(looking around)

What's the decor - early Mexican brothel?

Armande tries to sit down on one of the high stools at the counter; it's a struggle for her. Vianne hurries over to help - but Armande swats Vianne away.

ARMANDE (cont'd)

If I need help I ask for it!

With difficulty Armande gets onto the stool by herself. Vianne gives the "Wheel/Plate Object" a spin:

VIANNE

What do you see in it?

ARMANDE

Not a damn thing.

VIANNE

Come on, it's a game - what do you see?

ARMANDE

I see a cranky old woman too tired to play games.

Vianne considers this.

VIANNE

I've got just the thing for you.

Vianne pours a cup of hot chocolate. Armande glances back at the door where Anouk almost ran into her.

ARMANDE

That little girl of yours... does she mind it?

VIANNE

Mind what?

ARMANDE

("isn't it obvious?")

Well the way you move her from place to place.

VIANNE

(a bit uneasy)

Oh I... She's doing fine. I think it's good for her. Seeing new places, meeting new people...

Vianne adds a small amount of COARSE-LOOKING POWDER to the hot chocolate.

ARMANDE

Your cinnamon looks rancid.

VIANNE

It's not cinnamon. It's a special kind of chili pepper -

ARMANDE

Chili pepper?! In hot chocolate?

Vianne finishes off the concoction with crème chantilly, then slides it towards Armande.

VIANNE

It'll give you a lift.

Armande skeptically sniffs it. Intrigued, she takes a sip.

ARMANDE

*Tastes like... I don't know... something I must've tasted a long time ago.
(takes another sip)*

Yes... I think when I was a girl...

EXT. SCHOOLYARD - DAY

ANOUK is in a FIGHT with DIDI AND DÉDOU. She kicks and punches wildly - bewildering the two boys with her ferocity. Other kids are CHEERING, HISSING, etc. MADAME POUGET hurries over to break it up, BLOWING HER WHISTLE. She grabs Anouk by the ear.

MADAME POUGET

In this school we are civilized. We do not strike one another.

ANOUK

They insulted Pantoufle!

Madame Pouget is PULLING ANOUK BY THE EAR to the schoolhouse.

ANOUK (CONT'D)

Oww!

MADAME POUGET

Didi, Dédou - come along.

The twins sheepishly follow.

INT. CLASSROOM - A SHORT TIME LATER

In the empty classroom, Anouk, Didi and Dédou have been put "au piquet": kneeling in silence with foreheads pressed against the wall, hands on their heads. After a moment:

DÉDOU

(whispers)

My mother says you don't have a father.

ANOUK

(whispers)

Sure I do.

(matter of fact)

We just don't know who he is.

Dédou nods, as if that explained it perfectly.

ANOUK (CONT'D)

(with pride)

I'm unusual.

INT. CHOCOLATERIE - DAY

Armande, hot chocolate in hand, is gleefully reminiscing:

ARMANDE

I was out all night with him. We swam naked in the Tannes. At dawn, when I slipped back in the house, into my bed - my mother pokes her head in and says "wake up, sleepyhead!" She had no idea I'd been gone!

Armande bursts out laughing. Vianne laughs too, charmed by Armande's spirit.

Then Armande notices PÈRE HENRI outside, peering into the shop. Her laughter peters out; she gives him a defiant "what's-your-problem?" glare. He smiles awkwardly and nods hello, then continues on down the street.

ARMANDE (CONT'D)

(re: hot chocolate)

You sure you didn't put booze in here?

VIANNE

Something better.

ARMANDE

You ought to give some to my daughter. Melt that chilly disposition of hers.

VIANNE

You and Caroline have a problem?

Armande smiles bitterly.

ARMANDE

Do we have a problem? She won't let me see my grandson! I'm cut off from him.

VIANNE

Why -

ARMANDE

I'm a "bad influence." Because I don't like her treating him like a trained poodle. I swear that boy doesn't make piss without her permission.

Armande shakes her head disgustedly.

ARMANDE (cont'd)

Ever since her husband died, she's been so... The way she frets and fusses over that boy. If she'd just let him run, let him breathe - let him live! She's always so worried he'll "over-exert" himself.

(laughs harshly)

Not much danger of that. She won't even let the poor kid ride a bicycle!

VIANNE

(quietly)

Do you think he'd like to see you?

Armande falls silent, fighting the sudden impulse to cry.

Now YVETTE bustles into the shop, HUMMING CHEERFULLY.

YVETTE

More of those bean thingies, please?

VIANNE

How many do you want?

YVETTE

How many have you got?

INT. CAFÉ DE LA RÉPUBLIQUE - EVENING

A dozen MEN enjoy their evening drink. SERGE finishes serving a pastis to a patron, then quickly sits down at a table and picks up a hand of cards: he's in the middle of a game of Belote with ALPHONSE, GUILLAUME, and JEAN-MARC. (Jean-Marc is DRESSED FOR HUNTING; at his side are four dead THRUSH that he shot today.)

SERGE

(plays a card; to Jean-Marc:)

The jack of hearts is a craftier hunter than you, eh? He shoots the trump right out from under your nose!

Jean-Marc simmers with frustration.

Now VIANNE and ANOUK enter. Several men look askance at them: what are they doing here during the all-male drinking hour?

Serge takes his place behind the bar, greeting Vianne with a rogue's smile, checking out her body with his casual gaze.

VIANNE

Are you Monsieur Muscat?

SERGE

The one and only.

(flirtatious, "debonair")

What's your pleasure?

VIANNE

Is your wife here?

Serge's smile instantly fades.

SERGE

Joséphine? What do you want with Joséphine?

VIANNE

(holds up silver candy packet)

She left this at my shop.

SERGE

She's in bed. Hasn't gotten off her lazy rump all day.

(reaches for packet)

I'll give it to -

VIANNE

(pulls it out of his reach)

I'll give it to her myself, thanks.

Now Jean-Marc gets up from the Belote game:

JEAN-MARC

I'm late for supper.

SERGE

You lost two hands in a row - pay up!

JEAN-MARC

Tomorrow.

SERGE

Now.

Jean-Marc flippantly tosses TWO DEAD THRUSH on the table, then exits.

GUILLAUME

(complaining to Serge)

Now we've lost our fourth!

ANOUK

I'll play - I adore Belote.

All the men in the café look at the little girl incredulously. Several of them laugh with mild amusement.

INT. SUPPLY ROOM BEHIND THE BAR - SAME

Joséphine stands at a cluttered supply table, looking at various items that she has pulled from her pockets - including the GOLD-PLATED PILL BOX we saw her steal. She touches the objects, turning them over and over in her hands, as if they were talismans from which she's trying to draw comfort.

VIANNE (O.S.)

Joséphine. Hello.

Joséphine, taken by surprise, quickly stuffs the objects back into her pockets.

JOSEPHINE

What do you want!

VIANNE

(holds out candy packet)

You forgot this.

JOSEPHINE

I said, what do you want.

VIANNE

(a BEAT)

To be your friend?

JOS...PHINE

I don't have friends.

(then, apprehensively:)

Does Serge know you're here?

VIANNE

Does it matter? Do me a favor. Try one of these almond cremes, tell me if you think it's a little heavy on the Cointreau.

Joséphine eyes Vianne warily.

She takes one of the almond cremes, starts chewing... and her face starts to light up. (TRACK IN on her face with MUSIC CUE. The tracking and music are INTERRUPTED when we hear:)

SERGE (O.S.)

Joséphine!

Joséphine freezes, abruptly spits out the chocolate in her hand, wipes her hand quickly against her skirt; she turns to look for something to wipe her hand on, but can't find anything, so starts hurriedly licking her hand instead.

Vianne, surprised by the intensity of Joséphine's fear, studies her with sympathy.

JOSÉPHINE

You are trouble! He - he talks about you. He says - he says you're indecent, he says you're -

(as if it were an awful insult:)

- an influence, that's what you are, you're an influence!

VIANNE

Fortunately I don't have to listen to a word your husband has to say.

JOSÉPHINE

Not him. Reynaud. The mayor. He - he talks about you.

This stops Vianne. She just stares at Joséphine.

INT. CAFÉ DE LA RÉPUBLIQUE - BAR - MOMENTS LATER

Vianne retrieves Anouk from belote game:


VIANNE

Time to go.

ANOUK

May I collect my winnings?

Anouk takes a dead THRUSH from in front of Serge, who does a slow burn. The other men chuckle at his misfortune.




Vianne takes Anouk by the hand and heads out of the cafe. Joséphine stands in the back doorway, watching, half-hidden behind a curtain. She moves her hand to her mouth, smells it, gives it a gentle lick.

EXT. AVENUE DES FRANCS BOURGEOIS - EVENING

Vianne and Anouk (who is proudly carrying the dead thrush) walk away from the café.

EXT. CAROLINE'S HOUSE - EARLY MORNING

LUC, wearing a coat and a big furry hat, sits on the front stoop, DRAWING SOMETHING WE DON'T YET SEE on his sketchpad.



VIANNE is out for a stroll. She approaches him.

VIANNE

Mind if I take a peek?

Luc looks up, startled. His voice is hushed, nervous, polite:

LUC

Oh, it's not really...

Vianne looks at the drawing: a skillful rendering of a DEAD PIGEON lying on the cobblestones nearby, its head twisted at a disturbing angle.

LUC (cont'd)

(apologetic)

I know.

VIANNE

I didn't say anything.

LUC

Oh.

(anxiously)

I exaggerated the angle of the head just a bit, on purpose, you see?

VIANNE

You draw beautifully. What's your going rate?

LUC

(confused)

What?

VIANNE

To draw a portrait. How much would you charge?

LUC

Oh I couldn't - I'm not really a -

VIANNE

Does 50 francs sound reasonable?

Luc, amazed to be taken seriously as an artist, nods wordlessly.

VIANNE (cont'd)

When could you come by my shop?

This makes Luc uncomfortable...

LUC

Oh... your shop. I'm sorry but... the Comte forbids it.

This hits Vianne like a slap in the face.

LUC (cont'd)

He spoke to maman...
(quiet, apologetic)
... and a lot of others.

Vianne silently nods to herself, her eyes angry and pained.

LUC (CONT'D)

I wish I could come. I really do.

VIANNE

Whatever you say. Thanks for showing me your drawing.

Vianne resumes strolling down the street.

Luc, unsettled, watches her walk away. Just before she turns the corner, he impulsively calls after her:

LUC

Wait.

INT. TOWN HALL - MAYOR'S OFFICE - MORNING

The Comte sits writing. On a plate, spotlighted by the lamp, is an uneaten hunk of baguette with rillettes. His eyes wander to the food. He puts down his pen, gazes longingly at the rillettes - but does not eat. He resumes writing.

Now there's a KNOCK at the door. The Comte puts the plate of food in a desk drawer and closes it.

COMTE DE REYNAUD

Come in.

He's surprised to see VIANNE stride into his office.

VIANNE

(quiet, angry)
Am I breaking any laws? Tell me - am I hurting anyone?

COMTE DE REYNAUD

Are you asking my opinion?

VIANNE

What exactly have you been telling people about me?

COMTE DE REYNAUD

Only the truth - mademoiselle.

VIANNE

Well if you're expecting me to just shrivel up and blow away, you're going to be highly disappointed.

The Comte leans back in his chair, eying her coldly.

COMTE DE REYNAUD

*Let me put things in perspective for you. The very first Comte de Reynaud -
Auguste René Christophe - expelled the Huguenot radicals from this village.
He spent a quarter century pursuing that goal.*

(a casual shrug)

You and your truffles present a lesser challenge.

He resumes writing.

COMTE DE REYNAUD (cont'd)

(without looking up)

You'll be out of business by Easter, I promise you.

EXT. TOWN HALL - MOMENTS LATER

*as Vianne unhappily exits. Passing the STATUE (the one with the nose icicles), she notices the NAME ENGRAVED ON
ITS BASE:*

*Auguste René Christophe de Reynaud
1564-1637*

Vianne regards the statue, angrily -- then kicks it and strides across the square.

EXT. CHOCOLATERIE - MINUTES LATER

Vianne begins to open the door and is startled to see Joséphine peeking out at her from the garden doorway.

VIANNE

Joséphine! How long have you been standing there -

JOSEPHINE

I forgot to pay you for something... the other day. I'm sorry.

Joséphine opens her purse to look for money.

VIANNE

It was a gift -

JOSEPHINE

People talk. They lie about me. I don't steal. Not - on purpose. I didn't -

VIANNE

*It's okay. It's nice to see you, Joséphine. Would you like to come in for some
chocolate?*

Joséphine looks up from her purse.

INT. CHOCOLATERIE - LATER

Vianne places a cup in front of Joséphine, who is emptying her pockets of various objects that she puts on the counter: lipsticks, necklaces, rings, etc. Joséphine surveys the objects, then chooses the GOLD-PLATED PILL BOX (that we saw her steal) to give to Vianne:

JOSEPHINE

Here. For you.

VIANNE

(awkwardly)

That's sweet of you.

Vianne looks at the Pill Box, turns it over - and sees an ENGRAVED MONOGRAM: a stranger's initials.

Joséphine, suddenly seeing the monogram, panics slightly - but before she can say anything:

VIANNE (CONT'D)

Thank you, it's lovely.

Vianne puts the Pill Box in her pocket and pours Joséphine some hot chocolate. Joséphine takes a sip.

JOSEPHINE

I heard you don't go to church.

VIANNE

That's right.

JOS...PHINE

You won't last long here. People talk.

Joséphine tips her cup and spills a bit of chocolate.

JOSEPHINE (CONT'D)

Sorry. I'm behaving badly, aren't I?

Joséphine lets out an odd little laugh, and aggressively wipes the counter with the cuff of her sweater.

JOSEPHINE (CONT'D)

You don't misbehave here. It's just not done here. Did you know that? If you don't go to confession... if you don't dig your flowerbeds... if you don't pretend...

(very agitated)

...if you don't pretend you want nothing more than to serve your husband three meals a day and give him children and vacuum his chair so it'll be clean enough to receive his ass, then - then you're crazy! You're -

Joséphine stops herself, shaking her head, embarrassed...

Vianne puts a comforting hand on Joséphine's shoulder - but Joséphine angrily shoves her hand away.

JOSEPHINE (CONT'D)

You think I'm stupid. To stay with him.

VIANNE

No. I don't think you're stupid.

JOSÉPHINE

Well I am. And weak! I don't love my husband and I lie.

Vianne sighs, shakes her head.

VIANNE

Things could be different for you, Joséphine. Serge doesn't run the world.

JOSÉPHINE

He might as well.

Vianne studies her for a moment... deciding whether to press her further, or back off.

VIANNE

Is that what you believe?

JOSÉPHINE

I know it.

VIANNE

Then it must be true. My mistake.

Joséphine suddenly gives Vianne a sweet smile, picks up the chocolate cup, as if to warm her hands on it.

JOSÉPHINE

(sweetly)

You make the most wonderful chocolate!

Joséphine's smile is still warm and genuine. Vianne, a little perplexed, just looks at her...

INT. APARTMENT ABOVE THE CHOCOLATERIE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Vianne and Anouk snuggle together in their bed. Outside, the WIND is picking up.

ANOUK

(sleepily)

Pantoufle wants to hear the story of grandmère and grandpère.

Vianne glances uneasily at the Mayan Urn on the bedside table.

ANOUK (cont'd)

Don't say "not tonight." You always say "not tonight."

VIANNE

(sighs)

Alright...

(a BEAT)

Your grandfather, Georges Rocher, long before he made his fortune and shared it with us, was the young apothecary of the town of Aulus-les-Bains...

EXT. THE APARTMENT - NIGHT

We are looking in THROUGH THE WINDOW at Vianne and Anouk in their bed. Anouk, smiling with sweet anticipation, snuggles closer to Vianne. (The WIND is blowing harder; bare tree branches cast swaying shadows on the windowpane.)

MUSIC OVER: THE WIND THEME"

STORYTELLER (V.O.)

It was Anouk's favorite story, always told in the same words...

VIANNE (V.O.)

...Georges was honest, prosperous, and trusted by his customers...

STORYTELLER (V.O.)

...Georges was honest, prosperous, and trusted by his customers...

We DISSOLVE to a SERIES OF SEPIA-TONED VIGNETTES:

INT. A BACK ROOM - DAY

TIGHT SHOT: GEORGES ROCHER, a bespectacled young man wearing the traditional white coat of his profession, grinds some medicinal compound in a mortar and pestle.

STORYTELLER (V.O.)

But Georges was not content. He grew tired of dispensing iodine and liver pills. He sensed that the world held remedies more exotic, cures more potent.

Georges moodily puts aside his mortar and pestle.

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

So he joined an expedition to a land across the sea. To a place called Usumacinta.

EXT. TRIBAL FIRE - NIGHT

Sitting around the fire, GUATEMALAN INDIANS hand DARK STEAMING DRINKS in HOLLOWED-OUT GOURDS to a group of Frenchmen, including Georges.

STORYTELLER

One warm and moonless night, Georges was invited to drink unrefined cocoa with a pinch of chili. The very same drink the ancient Maya had used in their sacred ceremonies.

GEORGES takes a sip of cacao, squinting against its bitterness. Then something catches his eye: sitting outside a nearby tent is a BEAUTIFUL YOUNG WOMAN in Guatemalan Indian garb (CHITZA) opening a cacao pod and pulling out the beans from the glistening pulp. Georges stares at her, transfixed.

STORYTELLER (cont'd)

The Maya believed cacao held the power to unlock hidden yearnings. And reveal destinies.

Chitza glances up. Without a trace of surprise or modesty, she meets Georges' gaze. Her eyes are steady, calm, sparkling with reflected firelight.

INT. A DARK CONFINED SPACE - NIGHT

GEORGES and CHITZA, their bodies smeared with cacao and gleaming with sweat, fervidly make love.

STORYTELLER

The tribal elders tried to warn Georges about Chitza: She was one of the "Wanderers." Her people moved with the North Wind from village to village, dispensing ancient remedies, never ever settling down. Not a good choice for a bride.

INT. UNSPECIFIED LOCATION - DAY

CLOSE UP OF A PHOTOGRAPH: CHITZA (dressed in European clothing) and GEORGES stand arm-in-arm at the rail of a ship.

STORYTELLER

Georges did not heed their warning. And for awhile, it seemed that he and Chitza might lead a happy life together in France.

CLOSE UP OF ANOTHER PHOTOGRAPH: an informal snapshot of George and Chitza playing ring-around-the-rosie with a happy 2-YEAR-OLD GIRL (2-YEAR-OLD VIANNE).

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

Alas, the clever North Wind had other plans...

(The "WIND THEME" comes up to full volume.)

EXT. A SMALL HOUSE - DAWN

A FIERCE WIND is blowing, making shutters BANG against window.

INT. THE SMALL HOUSE - DAWN

George, in bed, is awakened by the BANGING shutters. He looks over and sees that Chitza's side of the bed is empty. In his eyes we see the beginning of a stunned realization...

STORYTELLER

One morning Georges awoke to discover that Chitza and the little girl, Vianne, had gone away.

EXT. A SNOW-COVERED, WINDSWEPT COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

CHITZA and 8-YEAR-OLD-VIANNE, wearing the same BLOOD-RED CAPUCHONS worn by Adult Vianne and Anouk early in our story, trudge through the French countryside with a harsh WIND at their backs.

STORYTELLER

Mother and daughter were fated to wander from village to village, dispensing the ancient cocoa remedies, traveling with the Wind...

EXT. THE SMALL HOUSE - DAY

Georges stands at a window, staring out with searching eyes.

STORYTELLER (V.O.)

...just as Chitza's people had done for a hundred generations.

VIANNE (V.O.)

...just as Chitza's people had done for a hundred generations.

REVERSE ANGLE (GEORGES' P.O.V.)

AN EMPTY RURAL ROAD stretching out to the horizon...

EXT. CHOCOLATERIE - NIGHT

GEORGES, in the pale moonlight, approaches the Chocolaterie... looks into the window, his eyes wan and searching... and then he DISAPPEARS...

(The "WIND THEME" fades away...)

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Anouk (snuggling next to Vianne) is almost asleep. Outside, the WIND HAS STOPPED.

ANOUK

(murmurs drowsily)

Will it just go on forever?

Vianne holds Anouk close... but doesn't answer.

Anouk drifts off to sleep.

Vianne, her eyes glistening, looks up at the ancient Mayan urn:

VIANNE

(barely audible)

'Night, maman.

INT. CONFESSIONAL BOOTH - DAY

PÈRE HENRI is hearing GUILLAUME's confession.

GUILLAUME

... and in a moment of weakness, I prayed to the Virgin Mother to soothe Charly's soul in his hour of suffering.

PÈRE HENRI

You understand an animal has no immortal soul.

GUILLAUME

I understand, mon Père.

Guillaume's eyes are glistening with sadness.

PÈRE HENRI

(gently)

Yet you flout God's Law.

GUILLAUME

I am weak and a sinner.

PÈRE HENRI

What else?

GUILLAUME

(awkwardly)

Impure thoughts... The woman who runs the chocolaterie -

PÈRE HENRI

Vianne Rocher?

GUILLAUME

Not towards her, mon Père. But she suggested I buy chocolate seashells for the Widow Audel. And well... I guess that got me to thinking about the Widow Audel...

PÈRE HENRI

(surprised)

At her age? At your age?

GUILLAUME

(ashamed)

Yes. And yes.

PÈRE HENRI

And just what were you doing in a chocolaterie during Lent?

GUILLAUME

(sheepish)

It was... for Charly.

PÈRE HENRI
Again you flout God's Law?

Guillaume considers this. Something is occurring to him:

GUILLAUME
(hesitantly)
Well but... if Charly has no soul, then there's no harm in him breaking Lent...
(hopefully)
Isn't that so, mon Père?

PÈRE HENRI
(unsettled)
Ten Hail Marys, twenty Our Fathers.

INT. CHOCOLATERIE - DAY

ARMANDE gets herself seated, with difficulty, on a stool. Vianne brings out a truffle torte from the kitchen.

ARMANDE
(irritably)
Alright, what's so important that I had to postpone my nap?

VIANNE
I appreciate your coming in, Armande. Would you like some chocolate cake?

But then Armande notices: LUC standing outside the shop (holding his sketchpad) looking at her with surprise and uncertainty. Armande is deeply stirred by the sight of her grandson.

Finally Luc opens the door and steps inside. Luc and Armande are nervous to see each other.

LUC
Grandmother... bonjour -

ARMANDE
May I - buy you a cup of -

LUC
No no - thank you, I - I'm just here to...
(looks questioningly at Vianne)
...draw a portrait.

ARMANDE
Whose?

VIANNE
(casually to Armande)
Yours, actually.

Armande and Luc are both taken aback.

VIANNE (CONT'D)

(to Luc)

Is the light okay where she's sitting?

Luc, caught off-guard, doesn't approach the counter. He's torn - not sure whether to go or stay. Then Armande seems to remember something:

ARMANDE

(crusty, awkward)

I got you something, boy.

Armande pulls a BOOK out of her handbag.

ARMANDE (cont'd)

Been carrying it around since your last birthday. Didn't know when I might see you.

Luc is touched. He walks over to her, but he avoids her eyes.

ARMANDE (cont'd)

Book of poetry.

This disappoints Luc. But he's polite as always:

LUC

Oh. Thank you.

ARMANDE

You don't like poetry?

LUC

(awkward, polite)

Of course - I do - yes.

ARMANDE

Neither do I.

Luc, puzzled, looks up at her.

ARMANDE (CONT'D)

(re: the book)

But it's not that kind of poetry.

EXT. LES MARAUDS - DAY

We're looking at a MAKESHIFT CHILDREN'S "FORT" fashioned around a group of trees with massive exposed roots.

ANOUK is among a small group of BOYS and GIRLS (including DIDI, DÉDOU, and BAPTISTE) playing a spirited game of "Jailbreak": the "Cops" try to capture the "Crooks" and put them in "jail cells" (tiny caverns formed by the tree roots); the "Crooks" try to free captured comrades while avoiding capture themselves.

Dédou captures Anouk (by tagging her) and places her in one of the little "cells".

ANGLE - IN THE "CELL" WITH ANOUK

It is dark and snug - visually similar to Anouk's Crawl Space at home. Anouk snuggles up against the thick, rough, soil-encrusted roots, making her feel cozy and protected.

The frenzied activity of the other children around her seems to recede; she's in her own snug, safe little world...

Then Baptiste reaches in to "free" Anouk, taking her hand to lead her out of the cell - but she resists.

BAPTISTE

Come on!

ANOUK

I like it here.

BAPTISTE

But you're free!

He yanks her arm - and she stubbornly refuses to budge.

ANOUK

Free someone else!

BAPTISTE

That's not how you play!

He tries to grab her foot to drag her out - and she angrily shoves him to the ground.

The other kids stop and stare at Anouk. She shrugs defiantly: she's not going to move.

INT. CHOCOLATERIE - DAY

Luc sits next to Armande, listening to her read from RIMBAUD.

ARMANDE

"Will she never have done, then, that ghoul queen of a million dead bodies... I see myself again, skin rotten with mud and pest, worms in my armpits and in my hair..."

Luc is utterly entranced. Armande looks up from the book.

ARMANDE (cont'd)

Perfectly wretched, isn't it?

LUC

(smiles)
Perfectly.

Vianne sets hot chocolate in front of Luc, but he demurs:

LUC (cont'd)
I'm not supposed to -

ARMANDE
Don't worry so much about "supposed to."

Luc smiles, embarrassed. Hesitantly, he takes a sip.

ARMANDE (cont'd)
Enhh? Live a little?

LUC
(glances up at the clock)
Her hair appointment's almost done. I have to go.

He immediately hops up and hurries to the door.

ARMANDE
Hey, what about the portrait?

LUC
Next time.

The words "next time" are sweet music to Armande. Luc exits.

Armande looks over at Vianne, who smiles gently.

ARMANDE
Oh don't look so damn pleased with yourself.

INT. APARTMENT ABOVE THE CHOCOLATERIE - NIGHT

Vianne and Anouk are peacefully asleep.

Suddenly they are awakened by o.s. POUNDING ON A DOOR downstairs.

JOSEPHINE (O.S.)
(a muffled cry)
I did it! I did it!

More urgent POUNDING ON THE DOOR downstairs.

ANOUK
(groggy, troubled)
Maman?

VIANNE
(worried, to Anouk)
Stay here.

INT. CHOCOLATERIE - MOMENTS LATER

Vianne hurries downstairs and sees JOSÉPHINE outside, astride a bicycle - her cheeks flushed, her lips twisted into a strange MANIC SMILE. (She's got a suitcase that was clearly packed in haste: clothing sticking out of it.) Vianne opens the door, and Joséphine rushes in.

JOSÉPHINE
(manic, chattery)
I did it! I did it! He was so drunk...oh, he woke up, saw me packing, he tried to come after me - but I'd already tied his feet with his belt! and -
(illustrates his fall with a gesture)
- boom - right on his face! His big beautiful red face!

Joséphine starts to cry.

JOSÉPHINE (CONT'D)
But - was it right? Did I - did I do the right thing?

As if to answer the question, Vianne steps towards Joséphine and very gently undoes the scarf covering Joséphine's forehead, REVEALING LACERATIONS AND BRUISES.

JOSÉPHINE (CONT'D)
God, it's stupid, isn't it. I never blame him. Sometimes I even forget... what really happened...

Vianne embraces Joséphine, comforting her.

VIANNE
(whispers)
Okay... okay...

ANGLE - THE STAIRS

ANOUK is watching, silently chewing on strands of her hair.

HOLD ON ANOUK'S WATCHFUL FACE, as we HEAR Joséphine's quiet o.s. WEEPING...

INT. THE SMALL KITCHEN IN VIANNE'S APARTMENT - LATER

Joséphine lies in a makeshift bed: quilts piled on the floor. She's silent now, exhausted... gazing up at Vianne, who strokes her hair.

Then Vianne gets up to head toward the bedroom.

JOSÉPHINE
(quiet, worried)
Vianne?

VIANNE
(gentle, reassuring)
I'll be right in the next room.

After a moment, Joséphine nods okay. Vianne goes into the bedroom.

Joséphine looks out the window, at moonlit branches dancing in the winter wind. Her eyes are fearful, disoriented, like the eyes of a child suddenly alone in an unfamiliar bed...

INT. CHATEAU DE REYNAUD - KITCHEN - MORNING

The Comte, wearing a gardener's apron, ENTERS holding fresh-cut flowers. He puts the flowers in a vase. There's a slight BREEZE from the open door... and a loose cupboard door slowly swings partway-open, right next to Reynaud. He sees a SMALL JAR OF SUGARED NUTS in the partly-opened cupboard.

Reynaud, pale and hungry as ever, nervously eyes the Sugared Nuts with temptation. He swallows hard... and forces himself to close the cupboard.

But once again the loose cupboard door blows partway-open in the breeze. He tries to look away, but his gaze is involuntarily drawn back to the Sugared Nuts.

Deeply torn, he slowly reaches out toward the jar with a tentative hand. He takes the jar, but his hand is trembling - and he accidentally drops it, and nuts SPILL on the floor.

Mortified, he bends down and hurriedly puts the nuts back into the jar, like a guilty child -

- and now CAROLINE ENTERS, carrying a sheaf of typed pages.

CAROLINE
Bonjour, Monsieur le Comte. I hope I'm not -

COMTE DE REYNAUD
(flustered)
Madame Clairmont!

The Comte stands up suddenly, putting the jar behind his back - and he's momentarily dizzy, clutching the counter for balance.

COMTE DE REYNAUD (CONT'D)
Has Madame Rivet offered you coffee?

CAROLINE
(concerned)
Monsieur le Comte?

COMTE DE REYNAUD
(pale, unsteady)
I'm fine... Fine...

CAROLINE
(re: the typed pages)

*I'm just dropping off the...
(eyes him worriedly)
Forgive me, Monsieur le Comte, but... have you been eating?*

With his foot, Reynaud furtively shoves a few telltale Sugared Nuts under the counter.

*COMTE DE REYNAUD
I'm uh, rather strict in my Fast this year. I cannot demand much of my townspeople if I don't demand more of myself.*

*CAROLINE
But... if the shepherd is weak from hunger, how can he guide the flock -*

*COMTE DE REYNAUD
I said I'm fine, didn't I?*

Caroline, stung, looks away.

The Comte sighs apologetically. He walks over to her.

*COMTE DE REYNAUD (cont'd)
You don't deserve that, Caroline.*

She's surprised and touched that he used her first name.

*COMTE DE REYNAUD (cont'd)
You're the best friend I...*

She's startled, flattered - but he corrects himself:

*COMTE DE REYNAUD (cont'd)
... the most loyal constituent I have.*

Caroline smiles slightly. She and the Comte are standing near each other, but avoiding each other's eyes.

*MADAME RIVET (O.S.)
Monsieur le Comte -*

MADAME RIVET ENTERS, and is thrown off to see Caroline there. The Comte and Caroline awkwardly step back from each other.

*MADAME RIVET (cont'd)
(uneasy, not looking at them directly)
Pardon me. Serge Muscat is here to see you.*

*COMTE DE REYNAUD
Muscat? What does he want?*

Madame Rivet shrugs meekly: I just work here.

CUT TO:

CLOSE SHOT: SERGE MUSCAT'S ANGRY, REDDENED FACE:

SERGE

She had nothing in 1943! Her mother was sleeping with a big fat German corporal just to put bread on the table. You remember - I saved her, I pulled her out of the gutter!

WIDER ANGLE reveals where we are:

INT. CHATEAU - THE DRAWING ROOM - DAY

The Comte sits listening to Muscat's tirade.

SERGE

And now she repays me - repays my kindness - by walking out on me?!

COMTE DE REYNAUD

It is natural that you're upset -

SERGE

Upset? I'll be the town joke!

COMTE DE REYNAUD

(sharply)

That is not your concern. Your concern is the Sacrament of Marriage.

SERGE

(a BEAT; mumbling)

Of course of course... the Sacrament.

COMTE DE REYNAUD

Are you prepared to re-dedicate yourself to your sacred vows?

SERGE

Me? I'm not the one who walked out!

The Comte gives Serge a sharp, chastising look.

SERGE (cont'd)

Re-dedicate. Of course. Yes.

(going for "sincerity")

Please, Monsieur le Comte - I'm begging for your help.

Serge glances up at a formal PORTRAIT on the wall: a Man in 1920's clothes who resembles the Comte.

SERGE (cont'd)

My family has always been able to turn to yours.

The Comte sighs irritably...

INT. KITCHEN OF THE CHOCOLATERIE - DAY

Vianne is teaching Joséphine how to make croquant wafers. (Anouk, standing next to them, is furtively dipping her finger into the almond nougat and sneaking a taste.)

VIANNE

(to Joséphine)

Okay, now cover the mixture with your other parchment sheet.

JOSÉPHINE

(nervous, eager)

Like this?

VIANNE

Now you want to roll it out quickly - the caramel sets fast.

Vianne hears the door open out in the shop.

VIANNE (cont'd)

You're doing great - I'll be right back.

INT. CHOCOLATERIE - SAME

The Comte, at the counter, tries to ignore the dizzying array of sweets, which are making him woozy with hunger.

Vianne emerges from the kitchen and strides over to him.

VIANNE

(dryly)

What brings you here today?

She holds up a candy platter right in front of his pale, hungry face.

VIANNE (cont'd)

Can I interest you in some Nipples of Venus?

He eyes the Nipples of Venus with suppressed panic. He unsteadily steps back - averting his nose from the candy.

COMTE DE REYNAUD

Rumor has it you're harboring Madame Muscat. Is that true?

VIANNE

You make her sound like a fugitive.

COMTE DE REYNAUD

A fugitive from her marriage vow, which God has sanctified.

VIANNE

You don't say.

(calls to the kitchen)

Joséphine, come out here a minute.

Joséphine comes out. The sight of the Comte makes her wary.

VIANNE (cont'd)
Let his Radiance have a look at you.

Joséphine reluctantly goes to the counter. She inclines her head, giving the Comte a close look at the BRUISES AND LACERATIONS on her forehead. He is utterly taken aback.

VIANNE (cont'd)
(to the Comte)
Is that sanctified enough for you?

COMTE DE REYNAUD
I had no idea...
(softly, to Joséphine)
How long has...?

Joséphine shakes her head: too painful to talk about.

COMTE DE REYNAUD (cont'd)
I am truly sorry. You should have come to me.

Joséphine says nothing. Her head is still bowed.

COMTE DE REYNAUD (cont'd)
(gentle, reassuring)
Your husband must be made to repent.

JOSÉPHINE
(quiet, tremulous)
Tell him to repent on someone else's head.

Joséphine turns and walks back into the kitchen. Vianne gives the Comte a look that says: "get the picture?"

EXT. AVENUE DES FRANCS BOURGEOIS - DAY

SERGE, JEAN-MARC, ALPHONSE, and GUILLAUME are playing Boules. Serge looks awful: ill-shaven, clothes disheveled. Guillaume, cradling his dog Charly with his right hand, rolls a boule with his left. It's a good shot: very close to the bouchon (the cork target). Now it's Serge's turn to bowl.

JEAN-MARC
(advising Serge)
Don't fire. Point.

SERGE
I'm going to fire.

Serge assumes the position to "fire" the boule.

JEAN-MARC
Too risky. Point.

WIDEN to include PÈRE HENRI looking on with mild alarm.

COMTE DE REYNAUD
(to Père Henri)
Go on in. He's ready.

PÈRE HENRI
Well - but - confession must be made in the spirit of contri-

COMTE DE REYNAUD
(sharply, to o.s. Serge)
Are you here in the spirit of contrition?

The Comte impatiently POUNDS the booth with his fist.

SERGE (O.S.)
(startled)
Yes yes - contrition. Yeah.

The Comte gives Père Henri a look: "there, you see?"

INT. CHURCH VESTRY - DAY

A CATECHISM CLASS for kids ages 8 through 10 (including DIDI, DÉDOU, and BAPTISTE) is being taught by Père Henri.

BAPTISTE
...licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, gluttony, and drunkenness.

PÈRE HENRI
Correct. And what are the three conditions for mortal sin. Serge?

ANGLE TO REVEAL SERGE MUSCAT sitting among the children.

SERGE
Mortal sin is sin whose object is uh... committed with... deliberate...

PÈRE HENRI
Incorrect. Didi?

DIDI
Mortal sin is sin whose object is grave matter and which is committed with full knowledge and deliberate consent.

PÈRE HENRI
Correct.

Serge closes his eyes in humiliation.

INT. KITCHEN OF THE CHOCOLATERIE - DAY

Vianne is teaching Joséphine how to temper couverture, melting the dark chocolate bricks in a large copper pan.

VIANNE

And how do you know if the couverture is properly tempered?

JOSÉPHINE

You dip the palette knife to see if the couverture hardens on it evenly.

VIANNE

Correct.

INT. BEAUTY SHOP - DAY

Serge sits slumped in the swivel chair while FRANÇOISE cuts his shaggy hair, with the Comte closely supervising:

COMTE DE REYNAUD

More off the sides, please.

Serge numbly regards his much shorter hair in the mirror.

EXT. STATUE OF AUGUSTE REN... CHRISTOPHE DE REYNAUD - DAY

There are the usual NOSE ICICLES on the statue.

STORYTELLER (V.O.)

In the little village, time passed...

DISSOLVE TO:

The NOSE ICICLES MELTING in warm sunshine - making it look like the ancient Comte has a runny nose.

STORYTELLER

... and the chocolaterie did not go out of business.

INT. CHOCOLATERIE - DAY

VIANNE sells cacao beans to YVETTE AND ALPHONSE (who hold hands like young lovers), while JOSÉPHINE gift-wraps a packet of CHOCOLATE SEASHELLS for GUILLAUME. LUC drinks hot chocolate while SKETCHING A PORTRAIT OF ARMANDE, who poses regally. And Guillaume's dog CHARLY furtively gobbles CACAO BEAN NIBS from an open packet on a low shelf...

STORYTELLER (V.O.)

The Comte de Reynaud felt himself being drawn into a strange crusade.

INT. CHURCH - SUNDAY MASS - DAY

PÈRE HENRI places a COMMUNION WAFER on SERGE'S OUTSTRETCHED TONGUE.

INT. CHOCOLATERIE - DAY

VIANNE looks on as ANOUK playfully places a CHOCOLATE CROQUANT WAFER on JOSÉPHINE'S OUTSTRETCHED TONGUE.

STORYTELLER (V.O.)

His struggle to transform Serge Muscat into a gentleman became more than an act of goodwill.

INT. THE COMTE'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

THE COMTE instructs SERGE on the proper way to lift a soup spoon.

STORYTELLER

It became a test. A holy war between Château and Chocolaterie.

MADAME RIVET ENTERS holding a selection of shirts and ties. The Comte quickly selects a few. She sets them down and leaves.

INT. KITCHEN OF THE CHOCOLATERIE - DAY

Vianne oversees JOSÉPHINE - who now works with skill and confidence, using a pastry bag to pipe out balls of chocolate mixture for Black Forest Truffles.

INT. APARTMENT ABOVE THE CHOCOLATERIE - NIGHT

Vianne watches ANOUK gently brush JOSÉPHINE'S hair. Joséphine's bruises are healing, her face becoming happy, luminous.

EXT. MADAME AUDEL'S MODEST HOUSE - DAY

MADAME AUDEL finds the gift-wrapped CHOCOLATE SEASHELLS on her doorstep. She clutches her hand to her breast in moral indignation - but her eyes show a hint of suppressed delight.

ANGLE - ACROSS THE STREET

GUILLAUME is secretly watching Madame Audel. But then Guillaume glances over at his dog Charly - and is startled to see the Charly (on the end of his leash) is gamely TRYING TO MOUNT A FEMALE DOG TWICE HIS SIZE.

INT. CONFESSIONAL BOOTH - DAY

Luc confessing, tortured:

LUC

Lying to my mother. Sneaking around behind her back. I feel so guilty. Each time, I tell myself it's the last time. But then I... I get a whiff of that hot chocolate... or those moon-shaped things - oh God - those dark chocolate moon things...

INT. CONFESSIONAL BOOTH - DAY

Madame Audel, ashamed, confessing:

MADAME AUDEL

Seashells. Chocolate seashells. So small, so plain, so... innocent. I thought, "Just one little taste - what's the harm?" But oh - they turned out to be filled with rich, sinful almond nougat, and...

(quiet, mortified)

... and I was lost, mon père. I was lost.

INT. CONFESSIONAL BOOTH - DAY

Yvette confessing:

YVETTE

I keep thinking I can control it. That I can quit anytime I want. But whenever she brings out something new, I...

(sighs guiltily)

Yesterday it was butter truffles with very rich, bitter, dark cocoa powder on outside...

CAMERA PANS RIGHT to PÈRE HENRI on the adjoining compartment - intrigued by Yvette's description, despite himself.

YVETTE (CONT'D)

...and then when you get to the inside, there's this sweet, soft, buttery filling...

CAMERA PANS LEFT, back past Yvette...

YVETTE (CONT'D)

...and it melts - God forgive me - it melts ever-so-slowly on your tongue and tortures you with pleasure.

PANNING CAMERA FINDS an appalled COMTE DE REYNAUD (eavesdropping) in the booth to Yvette's left.

YVETTE (CONT'D)

...until you feel like you're going to swoon...

INT. CHURCH - DAY

The Comte sits listening to Père Henri reading scripture from the pulpit... but then the Comte hears A CANDY WRAPPER NOISILY BEING OPENED by someone in the church. The Comte intensely scans the pews, trying to find the culprit.

INT. TOWN HALL - MAYOR'S OFFICE - NIGHT

THE COMTE sits gazing at the PHOTO OF HIS WIFE, the Comtesse.

In front of him sits an UNEATEN QUARTERED APPLE on a plate and a CUP OF HOT WATER WITH LEMON. The Comte, more pale than ever, lips dry and chapped, shifts his gaze to the apple, staring at it with longing and contempt; resisting it, as if it were the devil's own apple of temptation.

STORYTELLER (V.O.)

Now, the Comte was no fool. Though he hoped to redeem Muscat, he knew that this redemption alone would not be enough to regain control over the village.

He fiercely shoves away the plate; it SHATTERS on the floor.

STORYTELLER (cont'd)

He understood that some Larger Lesson needed to be taught. Some Greater Problem needed to be identified, and solved.

EXT. THE RIVER TANNES - DAY

ANOUK is playing pirates in the makeshift fort with the BOYS.

STORYTELLER (V.O.)

Little did the Comte suspect that his "Greater Problem" would arrive one quiet afternoon in the dull green waters of the River Tannes...

A FLICKER OF REFLECTED LIGHT PASSES across the children: something o.s. is passing by on the river...

The kids stop playing and look up: something on the river (which WE DON'T YET SEE) has captivated their attention...

EXT. AT THE RIVERBANK - SAME

Several LARGE RAMSHACKLE BOATS are arriving in Lansquenet, pulling up to the shore...

INT. CHOCOLATERIE - DAY

JOSÉPHINE clears the counter, humming contentedly. VIANNE is sitting next to ARMANDE at the counter; they're drinking hot chocolate in serene silence. Then:

VIANNE

You've never really told me what the problem is. Between you and Caroline.

ARMANDE

Because it's none of your goddamn business.

Vianne says nothing, smiles slightly. After a long moment, Armande sighs, relenting...

ARMANDE (cont'd)

I'm an embarrassment to her. I cuss, I read dirty books. I drink and eat what I like. And sin of sins, I refuse to go to Les Mimosas.

Vianne doesn't know what Armande is referring to.

JOSÉPHINE

(explaining to Vianne)

The nursing home down in Toulouse. When I was a kid we called it Le Mortoir.

ARMANDE

(snorts)

Caroline loves the idea of some nurse with a clipboard recording my bowel movements.

Suddenly ANOUK comes RACING INTO THE SHOP, breathless, her face flush with happy excitement.

ANOUK

Maman maman - come quick! They're here, they've come to Lansquenet -

VIANNE

Slow down, Nou-Nou. Who's here?

ANOUK

(filled with awe)

Pirates.

EXT. WALL AT THE EDGE OF TOWN - DAY

Anouk is eagerly pulling Vianne toward the river. But they pass DIDI and DÉDOU being pulled by their mother FRANÇOISE in the other direction.

DIDI

But maman, why can't we stay -

FRANÇOISE

None of your back-talk!

Françoise shoves the boys into her '51 Peugeot. Anouk gives Vianne a questioning glance: why is Françoise being so mean?

EXT. THE RIVER TANNES - DAY

RAMSHACKLE HOUSEBOATS are lined up at the riverbank. It's an extraordinary sight: the flat barges, the tall houseboats with corrugated roofs, the stovepipe chimneys, multicolored flags, graffiti, small barques, fishing lines, pots for crayfish, tattered umbrellas sheltering the decks. We hear a DOG BARK from one of the boats. On a barge, a rough-hewn, handsome, wind-burned young man(ROUX) sits playing a an old GUITAR.

And on the riverbank, RIVER GYPSIES are starting campfires in huge steel drums...

EXT. AT THE RIVER'S EDGE

Vianne and Anouk approach the river gypsies on the riverbank.

VIANNE

Hello.

Several river gypsies eye Vianne and Anouk with caution.

A THIN GRIZZLED MAN

(sotto, to a TEENAGE GIRL)

Better get Roux.

The Teenage Girl hurries off.

Anouk reaches into her pocket, pulls out a handful of PRALINES and offers them to a few RIVER GYPSY KIDS nearby:

ANOUK
Anybody got a sweet tooth?

The Kids study her warily... then GRAB THE CANDY AND RUN FOR COVER behind a steel drum, as if fleeing from danger.

Now Vianne sees the Teenage Girl approach Roux (the guy playing the guitar). Roux stops playing while the Girl talks to him. He casts an unworried glance over at Vianne... then simply resumes playing the guitar.

ANOUK (CONT'D)
(whispers to Vianne)
I bet he's the Captain.

As Vianne heads toward Roux's barge, Anouk scampers ahead and tries to clamber or leap onto the deck of the barge - making Vianne concerned for her safety:

VIANNE
(shouts at Anouk)
Be careful! Don't do that!

ROUX
(misunderstanding)
Heaven forbid. Might catch our germs.

Anouk stops trying to board the barge. Vianne reaches the barge.

ROUX (CONT'D)
(nonchalant)
We're sorry. All of us. Sincerely.

VIANNE
What for?

ROUX
(a wry shrug)
Whatever you're here to accuse us of.

VIANNE
And why would I do that?

ROUX
Well, because we river rats are the dregs of society. With terrible diseases and criminal impulses.

VIANNE
Sounds terrifying. Is it true?

ROUX

It's what you townspeople always seem to think.

VIANNE

Oh but this is not my town.

ROUX

Hm.

(casually)

Then what do you want? You're here to save us? Catholic Aid Society? French Family League? Communist Workers? Which idea are you selling?

ANOUK

(earnestly)

Chocolat.

Roux looks down at Anouk in mild puzzlement. She regards him with innocent curiosity:

ANOUK (CONT'D)

What's a river rat? Is it like a pirate?

Roux smiles slightly.

ROUX

You could say that.

He points to a large old bucket on the deck next to him:

ROUX (CONT'D)

(confidentially)

There's my treasure chest.

Anouk looks dubiously at the rust-stained old bucket... until Roux pulls from it a fistful of colorful, handcrafted NECKLACES.

Anouk gazes at the necklaces in fascination.

VIANNE

Let me guess. They're for sale.

ROUX

A mere 30 francs apiece.

Vianne furrows her brow.

ROUX (CONT'D)

(acting "hurt")

I can get 50 for them in Paris.

VIANNE

(shrugs)

Then go to Paris.

But now something O.S. catches Roux's eye. Vianne turns to see what Roux is looking at:

THE COMTE DE REYNAUD

is standing on a knoll above the river, peering down at the gypsy boats with stern disapproval.

He sees Vianne, locks eyes with her.

BACK WITH VIANNE, ANOUK, ROUX

Vianne, with a defiant gleam in her eye, turns to Roux:

VIANNE (CONT'D)

(brightly)

We'll take two, please.

Roux - sensing that Vianne is making some kind of point - looks at her, then back up at the Comte.

ROUX

You sure?

VIANNE

(hands him the money)

Absolutely.

Roux hands Vianne and Anouk each a necklace.

ANOUK

(putting on her necklace)

It's beautiful!

Vianne shoots another defiant glance up at the Comte -

- but SEES that he's now GONE.

ROUX

(to Vianne)

I... should probably warn you. You make friends with us, you'll probably make enemies of others.

VIANNE

That a promise?

Vianne turns and walks away with Anouk.

Roux, mildly intrigued, watches them go.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - EVENING

SERGE, dressed up in a blue suit, snazzy bowtie, and two-tone shoes, walks in a dignified manner through the Square, holding a bouquet of FLOWERS in the vase he got from the Comte.

Across the way, townspeople file into TOWN HALL. A hand-painted SIGN says: "EMERGENCY TOWN COUNCIL MEETING 7:30 - PUBLIC WELCOME." ALPHONSE, YVETTE, JEAN-MARC, and FRANÇOISE are on their way into the Hall when they notice Serge - and are amused by his foppish appearance.

ALPHONSE

(to Jean-Marc; re: Serge)

What's he up to?

JEAN-MARC

Maybe he's joining the circus.

Serge keeps walking with dignity, ignoring their stares.

INT. CHOCOLATERIE - EVENING

Joséphine, alone in the shop, is wiping down the counter. She hears someone KNOCKING SOFTLY on the door.

JOSÉPHINE

Sorry, we're cl -

Joséphine SEES that it's SERGE, with flowers, begging her with remorseful eyes to let him in.

She's very surprised by the tenderness in his face. She goes to the door, slowly opens it, and steps outside to face him.

SERGE

(softly, humbly)

Joséphine. You look... different.

Joséphine regards him warily. He's got the sorrowful, heavy-lidded expression of a guilty puppy dog.

JOSÉPHINE

You too.

SERGE

I want to say... I'm sorry.

(holds out flowers)

I've changed, Joséphine. God has made me a new man.

Joséphine accepts the flowers, but says nothing. This is a difficult moment for her.

SERGE (CONT'D)

I ask you... No, I beg you... to accept my apology?

She looks at the flowers... then at Serge's sad eyes. After a long moment:

*JOSÉPHINE
(barely audible)
Accepted.*

*SERGE
I promise things will be different now.*

*JOSÉPHINE
(a BEAT)
Things already are different, Serge.*

*SERGE
I mean... when you come home.*

*JOSÉPHINE
(mildly puzzled)
Home?*

She steps back into the shop.

*JOSÉPHINE (cont'd)
(sincerely)
Thanks for the apology. The flowers are lovely.*

She starts to close the door -

*SERGE
Joséphine, please. We are still married in the eyes of God.*

*JOSÉPHINE
(quietly)
Then He must be blind.*

She gently closes and locks the door, leaving him standing outside.

EXT. CHOCOLATERIE - SAME

Serge just stands there, locked out, stunned.

INT. CAFÉ DE LA RÉPUBLIQUE - LATER

SERGE sits in the empty, locked-up café - drinking himself into an angry stupor. He's playing an idle drunken game: LIGHTING MATCHES one after another, tossing the matches one-by-one into a glass of Pernod and watching the flame momentarily flare up.

He glances out the window and sees a MARRIED COUPLE walking hand-in-hand, laughing together, on their way to the town meeting. Serge sullenly GRUNTS to himself.

INT. TOWN HALL - NIGHT

The TOWN MEETING IS IN CHAOS: everyone arguing at once. In the front of the hall sits the five-member TOWN COUNCIL - whose chairman, JEAN-MARC, is frantically BANGING A GAVEL.

JEAN-MARC

Order! We must have order! Order!

The audience quiets down somewhat.

JEAN-MARC (cont'd)

The Council has no legal authority to force them to move. The riverbank is public land -

More commotion - some people in the crowd HISS...

... until finally the COMTE DE REYNAUD, sitting near the front, rises to speak. The crowd respectfully settles down.

JEAN-MARC (cont'd)

(hopefully)

The Mayor wishes to say a few words?

COMTE DE REYNAUD

If I may, gentlemen of the Council.

The Comte de Reynaud waits until the room is silent... then:

COMTE DE REYNAUD (CONT'D)

(softly)

They are rootless, godless drifters. Theirs is the way of slovenly pleasure, fornication, filth. They would contaminate the spirit of our quiet town... and the innocence of our children.

(almost a whisper)

They would destroy our tranquility.

The room is perfectly quiet.

COMTE DE REYNAUD (cont'd)

Our Council Chairman is right. We cannot force them to leave.

(a BEAT)

But we can help them to understand they're not welcome.

Every eye is focused on the Comte de Reynaud.

INT. APARTMENT ABOVE THE CHOCOLATERIE - NIGHT

In the kitchen, Joséphine is asleep. Through the open door to the bedroom, we see Vianne and Anouk asleep.

Suddenly there's the sound of GLASS SHATTERING downstairs. Joséphine is startled awake.

JOSÉPHINE

Oh my God...

SERGE (O.S.)

(yelling drunkenly from downstairs)

Who are you to ditch me?! Worthless cow! Can't even use a skillet! Can't even put a goddamn meal on the table after I put in a hard day's work!

Vianne and Anouk leap out of bed.

JOSÉPHINE

(horrified, to Vianne)

He's inside!

They hear HEAVY FOOTSTEPS CLOMPING UP THE STAIRS.

JOSÉPHINE (cont'd)

Oh God!

Vianne hurriedly starts pushing the kitchen table toward the stairway door, to barricade it.

VIANNE

(to Joséphine)

Come on - help me!

Joséphine, panic-stricken, unsteadily helps Vianne push the heavy table against the door.

ANOUK

(frightened)

Maman...

They hear a monstrous POUNDING on the door. Vianne and Joséphine lean against the table with all their weight; Anouk fearfully hugs Vianne's waist. But then:

SERGE (O.S.)

(suddenly, strangely gentle)

Joséphine? Sweetheart? It'll go easier for you if you open the door.

Joséphine is trembling with uncertainty: should she open the door? Vianne looks at Joséphine and shakes her head no.

SERGE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

(softly)

I don't want to have to hurt you. Open the door, alright dear?

Joséphine looks pleadingly at Vianne. But Vianne shakes her head no.

SERGE (O.S.) (cont'd)

I just want to talk to you.

VIANNE

Go sleep it off, Serge.

SERGE (O.S.)
(exploding)
Rocher, you meddling bitch! This is your fault!

ANOUK
Maman!

Vianne covers Anouk's ears, hugging her close. There's a forceful SLAMMING AGAINST THE DOOR, again and again.

INT. CHOCOLATERIE - ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE DOOR

Serge is repeatedly RAMMING HIMSELF AGAINST THE DOOR. The hinges are starting to give way.

SERGE
I'll teach you to mind your business!

He's RAMMING IT powerfully... the wood is splintering... until finally he RAMS THE DOOR OPEN, and drunkenly climbs over the door and the table/barricade into:

INT. THE KITCHEN OF THE CHOCOLATERIE - SAME

Where he LEAPS AT VIANNE, TACKLING HER TO THE GROUND -

- and Anouk SCREAMS as Serge clasps his hands around Vianne's throat.

Vianne struggles helplessly in Serge's ferocious grasp -

- and Anouk is SHRIEKING in horror, trying in vain to pull Serge away from her mother -

- and Serge shoves Anouk to the floor with his foot and continues to strangle helpless Vianne -

- until Joséphine WHACKS SERGE OVER THE HEAD with a huge CAST-IRON SKILLET -

- and he collapses unconscious on top of Vianne, like a spent lover. Vianne disgustedly pushes him off.

JOSÉPHINE
(to unconscious Serge)
Who says I can't use a skillet.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - MORNING

CHURCH BELLS ring for Mass. The Comte stands in the church doorway, greeting arriving parishioners. Though he's as pale as ever, the Comte exudes a new sense of purpose and resolve.

But then he notices: SERGE lying in the middle of the Square, out cold, still dressed in his foppish get-up. People riding bicycles have to navigate around motionless Serge.

COMTE DE REYNAUD
(disgustedly, to himself)
Wonderful.

INT. TOWN HALL - MAYOR'S OFFICE - LATER

Bleary-eyed Serge, with a cold compress on his head, sits across from the Comte - who glares sternly at him.

COMTE DE REYNAUD

You realize, of course, that you've ruined any chance you ever had of winning her back.

Serge shifts uncomfortably under the Comte's steady glare.

SERGE

Well... you know, she's kind of upset right now... but I think maybe if I give her a little more time...

The Comte, amazed, appalled, keeps staring at Serge...

EXT. CHOCOLATERIE - DAY

OPEN CLOSE ON VIANNE'S WINDOW, where we see a VILLAGE SCENE COMPOSED OF CHOCOLATE MINIATURES. A SIGN in the window reads:

GRAND FESTIVAL DU CHOCOLAT - Sunday, 29 March

A Spring Celebration of Fertility and Rebirth

Free Easter Egg Hunt!

WIDEN TO INCLUDE LUC

looking at the window display, impressed. Luc turns to go inside - and SEES that the glass in the door has been shattered, and is temporarily replaced by a wooden board.

INT. CHOCOLATERIE - SAME

Armande sits at the counter, visiting with Vianne and Joséphine.

VIANNE

(to Armande; re: Joséphine)

Oh you should've seen her! Like swatting a fly -
(mimes action of using skillet:)

THWACK! - goodnight Serge.

ARMANDE

His skull must not be as thick I thought!

Vianne and Armande laugh. Joséphine looks a bit uncomfortable.

Armande, seeing Joséphine's slight discomfort, reaches over and gives her arm a reassuring pat:

ARMANDE (CONT'D)

The worst is over. He found out what you're made of.

JOSÉPHINE
(smiles slightly)
So did I.

Now LUC ENTERS:

LUC
Am I interrupting something?

ARMANDE
Come on over and sit down!

Luc sits beside ARMANDE and kisses her cheeks.

LUC
It's beautiful, Vianne. Your window.

VIANNE
Couldn't have done it without Joséphine's help.

Joséphine smiles with pride.

ARMANDE
(to Luc)
How long have we got?

LUC
She's at the hair salon for an hour.

INT. HAIR SALON - DAY

FRANÇOISE brushes off the swivel seat, preparing for her next customer. In the back of the shop DIDI AND DÉDOU are playing.

CAROLINE ENTERS with a stack of MIMEOGRAPHED FLYERS.

CAROLINE
I'm so sorry, Françoise - I have to break the appointment.

FRANÇOISE
Something wrong?

CAROLINE
I volunteered to distribute these. I promised the Comte I'd get them all out by the end of the day.

Caroline hands her a FLYER, headlined: "BOYCOTT IMMORALITY!"

FRANÇOISE
Count me in.
(dryly)

Not that I expect many of them to stop by for hair styling.

In b.g. Didi and Dédou now SWORDFIGHT WITH HAIR BRUSHES.

CAROLINE

It's not just that. Sometimes they offer to do odd jobs for food. Sometimes they just beg. The Comte feels we have to stand firm -

FRANÇOISE

Like I said, count me in.

INT. CHOCOLATERIE - DAY

Luc, Armande, Joséphine, and Vianne are LAUGHING as Armande teaches Luc the trick of making a spoon stick to his nose.

ARMANDE

No no no - rub it hard!

Luc rubs the spoon hard against his nose...

INT./EXT. CHOCOLATERIE - SAME

Caroline, with the stack of flyers in her arm, passes by the shop. She glances inside - and is shocked by what she sees.

INT. CHOCOLATERIE - SAME

Armande keeps coaching Luc on making the spoon stick to his nose:

ARMANDE

Good - now keep your head still.

The SPOON DANGLES from his nose WITHOUT FALLING OFF. The three women APPLAUD.

Now CAROLINE ENTERS, glaring furiously at Luc. He's stunned to see her. The spoon falls off his nose and clatters to the floor.

ARMANDE (CONT'D)

Hello, Caroline.

Caroline just keeps staring at Luc. He guiltily looks away.

ARMANDE (cont'd)

You want to blame somebody, blame me. Corrupting him with cocoa.

CAROLINE

How dare you -

ARMANDE

Pff! He's happy, he's fine - look at him!

LUC

Maman, I...

CAROLINE

(to Armande)

And what about you, mother?! Are you fine?!

Armande says nothing. Vianne looks at her: what's this about?

CAROLINE (cont'd)

(to Vianne)

I'll bet Mother's conveniently forgotten to tell you.

ARMANDE

(to Caroline)

Come on, Caro, don't be a stick in the mud -

CAROLINE

(a dare)

Go ahead, Mother - show her. Unless you're afraid to.

Armande shrugs haughtily, as if this were a trivial matter, and rolls up her sleeve - revealing numerous NEEDLEMARKS.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)

(to Vianne)

Insulin shots. Diabetes. It's very advanced - she could be blind within a year.

ARMANDE

(casually, to Caroline)

Couldn't you say I'm a heroin addict? It'd sound a lot more glamorous.

CAROLINE

(to Vianne)

And you. You sit here feeding her sweets!

Vianne looks questioningly at Armande.

ARMANDE

I can think of worse ways to die.

CAROLINE

Why not rat poison, it'd be faster!

ARMANDE

(to Vianne)

Caro's always had a flair for drama.

CAROLINE

(to Vianne, re: Armande)

She belongs in a place where she'll be taken care of -

ARMANDE

Le Mortoir?! I'd rather be in hell.

CAROLINE

You may get there, mother.

(grabs Luc by the hand)

Come along, Luc.

LUC

But maman, I - I don't want -

Caroline's eyes narrow threateningly - and Luc falls silent.

JOSÉPHINE

(nervously to Caroline, trying to be helpful)

He's... been happy here. It's good for him here.

Caroline whirls on Joséphine with amazed contempt:

CAROLINE

I will decide what's good for my son, Madame Muscat.

Caroline yanks him off the stool and forcefully leads him to the door. Luc looks back in anguish at Armande.

At the door, Caroline wraps Luc's scarf securely around his neck, then leads him outside.

An uncomfortable silence. Then Armande taps her cup:

ARMANDE

I'll have another, please.

Vianne and Joséphine exchange a sober glance.

ARMANDE (cont'd)

Well come on! It's my life - can't I enjoy what's left of it? Fill 'er up!

VIANNE

Armande... why didn't you tell me?

ARMANDE

(angrily)

Is this a chocolaterie or a confessional?

Armande tries, with difficulty, to get off her stool. Joséphine hurries around the counter to help - but Armande swats her away:

ARMANDE (cont'd)
If I need help I ask for it!

Armande manages to get off the stool, picks up her cane and heads for the door.

VIANNE
Armande, I'm sorry -

ARMANDE
(looks back at Vianne;)
(low and hard:)
Don't you dare pity me.

Armande exits, slamming the door.

Joséphine notices something on the floor: a MIMEOGRAPHED FLYER that Caroline dropped. Joséphine picks it up, looks at it with concern...

EXT. CHOCOLATERIE - LATER

Joséphine is sweeping the sidewalk. She glances up and sees REYNAUD walking along the street, formally greeting passing Townspeople as usual.

For a moment Joséphine considers going back into the shop to avoid being seen by Reynaud as he passes... but she comes to a different decision: steeling herself, she looks up from her sweeping and looks directly at Reynaud as he approaches.

Reynaud is a bit surprised to see Joséphine meeting his eye.

COMTE DE REYNAUD
Bonjour, Joséphine.

Joséphine pulls the crumpled "Boycott Immorality" flyer from her pocket and holds it out to him:

JOSEPHINE
(nervous, but still meeting his eye)
We won't be needing this.

COMTE DE REYNAUD
(doesn't take flyer)
Why give it to me? It was issued by the entire town of Lansquenet -

Joséphine crumples the flyer, throws it on the ground, takes her broom and starts to sweep the crumpled flyer towards the Comte.

JOSEPHINE
(mumbling)
I see. The people of Lansquenet, of course, the people...

Joséphines sweeping becomes more and more aggressive, almost hitting the Comte with the broom. He grabs her arm.

COMTE DE REYNAUD

Joséphine. I know you have suffered. I know Serge has... not been a good husband. But it's time to go home. Remember the vow you made before God.

JOSÉPHINE

Ahh yes. And please remember me to your wife. Still away in Italy, is she?

Joséphine goes into the chocolaterie. A few passing TOWNSPEOPLE greet the Comte with the customary "Bonjour, Monsieur le Comte." The Comte quickly re-composes himself and greets his passing "subjects" with a dignified air.

EXT. CAFÉ DE LA RÉPUBLIQUE - DAY

One of the MIMEOGRAPHED FLYERS is posted in the window.

INT. CAFÉ DE LA RÉPUBLIQUE - DAY

SERGE, hung-over, sits playing his idle game with matches: this time he's lighting matches and tossing them into a cup of coffee, where they SIZZLE and go out. JEAN-MARC and several OTHER MEN are having mid-day drinks.

Into the café walks ROUX and GATI(a 4-year-old river gypsy girl). Serge looks up sharply at them.

ROUX

She'd like a soda water. How much is it?

Serge eyes Roux lazily. The cafe's patrons are all watching to see how Serge will respond.

SERGE

(flippant)

For you, 40 francs.

A few of the patrons chuckle. Roux is unperturbed.

SERGE (CONT'D)

("explaining" to Roux)

There's a soda water shortage. Very serious.

Some of the patrons laugh. Serge is pleased with himself.

Roux calmly takes 40 francs from his pocket and places it on the table in front of Serge. The patrons exchange glances.

ROUX

With a twist of lemon. If you've got any.

Serge eyes the money, considering whether to take it. Finally he gives an "oh-what-the-hell" shrug, and reaches for the money...

Jean-Marc whispers something to another Patron (disapproving of Serge), and the Patron nods in firm agreement...

But just then, Serge notices through the open doorway: the COMTE DE REYNAUD is happening by, greeting some passing townspeople.

SERGE

(to Roux, but suddenly shouting so Reynaud will hear:)
This is a respectable establishment! Take your filth somewhere else!

The Comte, hearing Serge, steps into the doorway - and his face hardens when he sees Roux.

At the sight of Reynaud, all the Patrons straighten their posture, extinguish cigarettes, begin reading newspapers, etc.

COMTE DE REYNAUD

(re: Roux)
Is there a problem, Serge?

SERGE

No, Monsieur le Comte.
(to Roux)
Go on - get out of here!

ROUX

(nonchalant)
Sure. Could I have my money back first?

Serge bleakly looks down at his own hand - suddenly realizing he's still holding Roux's cash. The Comte raises a disapproving eyebrow at Serge.

SERGE

(nervously throws money back at Roux)
I don't want your filthy money! Get out!

Roux leads Gati towards the doorway where the Comte is standing. But as Roux approaches, the Comte doesn't move, blocking Roux's exit.

The Comte is staring coldly at him, a silent challenge, their faces close together.

Then the Comte, with sudden nonchalance, turns and saunters off down the street - as if to imply that the point has been made and he's not going to waste any more time on Roux.

Roux stands there a moment... then wordlessly leads Gati out of the cafe.

INT./EXT. CHOCOLATERIE - DAY

Roux and Gati walk past one shop after another, each with a MIMEOGRAPHED FLYER in the window.

VIANNE (O.S.)

Bonjour.

They turn and see Vianne in the doorway of her shop.

VIANNE (cont'd)

I just made a fresh batch of mendiants - anybody interested?

GATI
(shakes her head no)
My tummy hurts.

VIANNE
I've got just the thing for that.

ROUX
What about "boycott immorality"?

VIANNE
What about it?

INT. CHOCOLATERIE - MINUTES LATER

Gati sits on a stool, contentedly chewing on DRIED LEAVES. Anouk stands by, watching Gati with the shy interest of a kid interested in making a new friend.

VIANNE
From a cocoa tree. An old remedy.

GATI
Tastes strange.

VIANNE
Maybe daddy would like a taste.

GATI
Oh, he's not my daddy.

Vianne looks at Roux. He nods and shrugs, acknowledging that what Gati says is true.

GATI (CONT'D)
(being silly)
He's my pony.

Anouk smiles. She hands Gati a fresh-baked mousse cup:

ANOUK
Here. It's a lot better than those leaves.

Gati plunges her finger into the mousse, then puts her finger in her mouth.

GATI
Good.

ANOUK
Want to see upstairs?

Anouk takes Gati's hand, Gati hops off the stool.

ANOUK (CONT'D)

Come on!

Anouk runs upstairs with Gati following.

VIANNE

Looks like her tummy feels better.

ROUX

*(sniffing cocoa leaf)
You should bottle this stuff.*

Vianne smiles.

INT. BEDROOM - ANOUK'S CRAWL SPACE - SAME

Anouk and Gati are squirming and giggling as they both try to squeeze into the cramped space at the same time.

INT. BACK DOWNSTAIRS IN THE CHOCOLATERIE - SAME

Roux is looking around at the Mayan artifacts decorating the shop. His gaze comes to rest on the Decorative Tile of "El-chuah". He seems particularly fascinated by it.

Vianne observes Roux appraisingly, as if deciding something about him. She gets a rum truffle and holds it out to him:

VIANNE

(confidently)

Go ahead. It's your favorite.

ROUX

What makes you so sure?

She gets a rum truffle, hands it to him:

VIANNE

Go on, taste it.

Intrigued, Roux eats the rum truffle. He nods in astonished appreciation:

ROUX

Amazing...

VIANNE

(pleased with herself)

Thanks. I have a knack for guessing.

ROUX

(apologetic)

...but it's not my favorite.

VIANNE
(thrown off)
What?

Gati comes running down the stairs with Anouk.

ROUX
(to Gati)
Ready to go?

Roux takes Gati's hand and leads her towards the door. Vianne watches them go, slightly annoyed with herself for failing to guess Roux's favorite.

On his way out, Roux hesitates to inspect the shattered, boarded-up front door:

ROUX (CONT'D)
I could fix this. Not with glass, but I could make you a good strong wooden door.

VIANNE
That's nice of you. But I'd insist on paying for your work.

ROUX
That makes two of us.

Roux exits with Gati.

EXT. TOWN GARDENS - DAY

PÈRE HENRI is SINGING as he works in the garden:

PÈRE HENRI
"Blue, blue, blue suede shoes, Blue blue blue suede shoes -"

Out of the corner of his eye, he now sees THE COMTE approaching - and Père Henri literally changes his tune in mid-sentence:

PÈRE HENRI (cont'd)
(SINGING reverently)
"- and let the earth be joyful, And the trees sing in exaltation..."
(turning to the Comte)
Oh - good evening, Monsieur le Comte. I didn't see you there.

The Comte regards Père Henri grimly.

COMTE DE REYNAUD
She's laughing at us.

PÈRE HENRI

Pardon?

COMTE DE REYNAUD

The Rocher woman. Laughing at our traditions. Now she's got one of the river gypsies working for her!

PÈRE HENRI

(a BEAT)

Is that a problem? After all, Christ teaches us to give succor even to -

COMTE DE REYNAUD

Succor is well and good, Père. But when it undermines the moral foundation of the community?!

(pointing to garden)

Do you not pull out weeds when they threaten your flowers?

PÈRE HENRI

Well, yes -

COMTE DE REYNAUD

And just look at this...

The Comte unfolds a NEWSPAPER, shows it to Père Henri:

COMTE DE REYNAUD (cont'd)

She is soliciting booths and street performers for a "Fertility Celebration" on Easter Sunday! I tell you, she's cackling at us! When are you going to do something?

Père Henri uneasily stares at the newspaper.

COMTE DE REYNAUD (cont'd)

The Monsignor assured me you were not one of these "New Catholics" one reads about in Le Monde - was he mistaken?

Père Henri swallows hard, regarding the Comte with a mixture of respect and foreboding...

INT. CHOCOLATERIE - LATE AFTERNOON

ROUX is rebuilding the door. ANOUK is hanging out with him. She has a BIG SLIMY EARTHWORM in her hand, studying it with casual interest.

ROUX

What part of Australia?

ANOUK

(with factual authority)

A small town outside of Sidney.

ROUX

What does he eat?

ANOUK

Leaves, bugs, bamboo shoots...
(displaying worm in her hand)
... and worms, of course.

ROUX

What about chocolate?

ANOUK

("don't be silly")
Kangaroos don't eat chocolate.

Vianne and Joséphine, cleaning up the shop at day's end, listen with amusement to Roux's conversation with Anouk.

ROUX

Well, but... has he ever tried it?

Anouk whispers to "Pantoufle", then "listens" for his answer. Then:

ANOUK

He's not interested.

ROUX

(playfully)
Not interested? Monsieur Pantoufle, you surprise me. A world traveler, not interested in new flavors?

JOSÉPHINE

I've got a nice truffle here he could try.

Roux and Joséphine exchange a wry glance. Anouk confers with Pantoufle, then:

ANOUK

No. But he thanks you for your kind offer.

JOSÉPHINE

(to Vianne)
Very proper for a kangaroo.

VIANNE

(nods)
His mother was British.

ROUX

Monsieur Pantoufle, I must protest. How do you know you don't like chocolate if you refuse to taste it?

ANOUK

(to Roux)

Do you like worms?

ROUX

What - ?

ANOUK

How do you know if you've never tasted one?

Roux considers this. He impulsively takes the worm from Anouk's hand - POPS IT IN HIS MOUTH, CHEWS AND SWALLOWS IT, maintaining a brave, gallant expression on his face, thinly veiling his inner queasiness.

Joséphine and Vianne are astonished. Anouk is staring at Roux with unabashed admiration. Finally:

ROUX

(a gourmet judgment:)

Subtle. Zesty. Disgusting.

Anouk laughs delightedly. She looks back at Vianne with glee, as if to say: "isn't this guy fabulous?"

Then Anouk turns to Roux again... and catches sight of him furtively SETTING THE WORM DOWN just outside the doorway. (He "palmed" the worm, like a magician).

ANOUK

(half-outraged; half-delighted)

You tricked me!

ROUX

(to worm)

Go, my little friend! Be free!

Anouk laughs.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

The church is packed for PALM SUNDAY. Parishioners hold the traditional Rameaux (ceremonial palm crosses). PÈRE HENRI nervously delivers his sermon, reading from a prepared text:

PÈRE HENRI

...Satan wears many guises. At times, Satan is the singer of a lurid song you hear on the radio. At times, the author of a salacious novel. At times the quiet man lurking in the schoolyard, asking your children if he might join their game.

THE COMTE DE REYNAUD watches Père Henri intently, like a parent watching his child recite lines in a school play.

PÈRE HENRI (cont'd)

And at times the maker of sweet things. Mere trifles. For what could seem more harmless, more innocent than... chocolat?

The Comte, his eyes bright with pride and satisfaction, glances down at his own copy of the sermon, making sure Père Henri is reading it exactly right.

EXT. THE MAKESHIFT FORT IN LES MARAUDS - THE NEXT DAY

DIDI, DÉDOU, and OTHER KIDS are playing La Chèvre (like "Tag", only the person who's "it" has to make a goat noise.) Didi is now the goat. ANOUK comes over to join the game, taunting Didi:

ANOUK

Bet you can't get me!

But Didi ignores her and pursues another child.

ANOUK (cont'd)

(running in front of Didi)

Come on, Didi, I dare you.

But Didi actually goes out of his way not to tag Anouk - leaving her confused. Then Dédou sidles over to her:

DÉDOU

We can't play with you anymore.

Your mother is Satan's helper.

Before Anouk can answer, Dédou gets tagged; making a goat noise, he runs off in pursuit of other children... leaving Anouk standing there, perplexed, alone.

INT. CHOCOLATERIE - AFTERNOON

Roux is at work on the new door, which is almost done. Vianne, in the doorway, sees GUILLAUME up the street, walking his dog Charly.

VIANNE

Hey Guillaume!

Guillaume stops in his tracks, flustered.

VIANNE (cont'd)

I've got something new Charly's going to love.

Guillaume nervously glances at the Church... gives Vianne an apologetic shrug, and heads away from her. (Charly tries to keep going toward the chocolaterie - but Guillaume is forcefully pulling his leash.) Vianne is stunned.

ROUX

(softly)

It's me. I should go.

VIANNE

No. It's not you. It's...

Just then, Vianne sees ANOUK striding towards the shop:

VIANNE (CONT'D)

(chagrined)

Where have you been? I was worried -

Anouk flounces right past Vianne and Roux into the shop.

VIANNE (cont'd)

I'm talking to you -

ANOUK

It's just like all the other towns!

Anouk runs upstairs. Vianne hurries after her.

Roux and Joséphine (who is behind the counter) share a troubled look.

INT. BEDROOM - SAME

Anouk races into her CRAWL SPACE and disappears behind the Mayan cloth curtain. Vianne hurries into the bedroom - and sees that Anouk has burrowed into the crawl space.

VIANNE

Anouk...

Vianne sits down on the floor next to the cloth curtain.

VIANNE (CONT'D)

Just tell me what happened.

ANOUK

Are you Satan's helper?

Vianne sighs.

VIANNE

(softly)

It's not easy, Nou-Nou. Being different.

ANOUK

Why can't we go to church?!

VIANNE

(shrugs)

You can if you want. But it won't make things easier.

ANOUK

Why can't you wear black shoes like the other mothers?!

Vianne is thrown off by this strange remark; she doesn't quite know what to say.

OMITTED

INT. ARMANDE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Vianne sits by the fire sipping cognac. Armande stands at the fireplace, steadying herself with her cane while she uses an iron poker in her other hand to rearrange burning logs.

ARMANDE

It was just a matter of time before he got to the new priest. See, the Comte thinks of the church as one of his holdings. Which makes Père Henri one of his tenants.

Armande pokes at a large log. But her muscles are weak; the log won't budge.

ARMANDE (CONT'D)

He's a fine piece of work, our little nobleman. It's no wonder his wife goes gallivanting off. She's been in Italy for months, did you know that?

VIANNE

(troubled, quiet)

Armande... the whole town's against me... What can I do?

Armande, frustrated by the large log, pokes it absolutely as hard as she can - and the whole pile collapses with an explosion of embers. This makes Armande smile.

ARMANDE

(with a sly twinkle)

Throw me a party.

VIANNE

What?

ARMANDE

Wednesday's my 70th. Let's show the bastards we're ready to go down dancing.

VIANNE

But... a party...

(sighs)

You're not well. You have to face it -

ARMANDE

Okay okay okay. You do this for me, I check into Le Mortoir the very next morning, without a regret in the world!

Vianne is deeply struck to hear this... but shakes her head no.

VIANNE

If I threw a party in this town, no one would come.

Armande sits down, picks up her cognac.

ARMANDE

They don't need to know who's throwing it.

VIANNE

Armande, listen -

ARMANDE

No, you listen. This is what I need.

(a plea)

One last night to be myself. One last night to live.

Vianne doesn't know what to say...

ARMANDE (CONT'D)

(soft, beseeching)

When I need help... I ask for it.

EXT. CAROLINE AND LUC'S HOUSE - DAY

Luc finds a LINEN ENVELOPE in the mailbox, addressed to "Luc and Caro Clairmont." He pulls out the INVITATION, which is written in festive calligraphy:

Mme. Armande Voizin Requests the Favour of your Company

70th Birthday Feast

Wednesday, 25 March 5 p.m.

NO GIFTS, PLEASE

Luc stares at the invitation with distress and uncertainty...

EXT. ROUX'S BARGE - DAY

ROUX, sitting with his bare feet dangling over the side, plays a Folk Song (the "Wind Theme") on his GUITAR. His feet tap the water's surface in time with the music.

ANGLE TO REVEAL VIANNE quietly stepping onto the barge. She stands there watching Roux play his guitar. Then she begins HUMMING along with the melody. Roux sees her, and keeps playing.

Roux ends the song with an IMPROVISED JAZZY RIFF. Vianne is impressed.

VIANNE

Never heard that last part before.

ROUX

Me neither.

VIANNE

My mother used to sing that song. When I couldn't sleep.

ROUX

Did it help?

VIANNE

I still didn't sleep. But yes. It helped.

ROUX

How is the door?

VIANNE

(smiling)

It squeaks.

ROUX

How is Anouk?

VIANNE

She's better.

ROUX

And how are you?

She hands him a LINEN ENVELOPE like the one Luc got in the mail.

VIANNE

I'm throwing a party.

(betraying a touch of nerves)

If anyone shows up.

ROUX

Who's invited?

VIANNE

A bunch of townspeople.

Roux considers this.

ROUX

(genuinely curious)

Tell me. Why do you give a damn about pleasing these narrow-minded villagers?

Vianne, caught off-guard, doesn't know quite how to reply.

ROUX (CONT'D)

Because you're scared of them.

Vianne blinks at the truth in this, but immediately covers:

VIANNE

(scoffing)

I'm more afraid of my daughter's kangaroo. You coming to the party or not?

ROUX

I can't.

(off Vianne's look)

There's a boycott. Against immorality. I'm respecting it.

VIANNE

Ah. That is a problem. Well then, I will leave you with this test of your convictions.

She tosses him a packet of chocolate covered almonds. He catches them.

ROUX

What are these?

VIANNE

Highly immoral Almond-chocolate clusters.

(confidently)

Your favorite.

Roux tastes one: it's incredible. He bows his head as if slain.

ROUX

I am undone.

(a BEAT)

But it's not my favorite.

Vianne shakes her head in chagrin. She turns and starts to walk away.

ROUX (CONT'D)

I'll come by sometime and get that squeak out of your door.

VIANNE

(not looking back)

I know.

INT. CHOCOLATERIE KITCHEN - A SERIES OF SHOTS

VIANNE and JOSÉPHINE work feverishly to create an exotic feast of savory chocolate entrees like WILD HARE IN MOLE POBLANO SAUCE and TURKEY IN COCOA/BURGUNDY SAUCE... we see them skinning the hares; scoring chestnuts; frying chilies and bananas; melting dark couverture shavings into bubbling sauce...

A STRONG WIND blows through the open window, cooling their perspiring faces. Vianne wipes sweat from her neck, and her fingers brush against the NECKLACE she got from Roux...

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. ROUX'S BARGE - NIGHT

Another NECKLACE, unfinished, in Roux's hands. (THE WIND is blowing.) Roux is sitting at his workbench, crafting the necklace. He is relaxed, focused, doing the kind of manual work he enjoys -

- but the WIND GUSTS, and a hatch SLAMS - and Roux, startled, drops the necklace he's working on.

INT. CHOCOLATERIE KITCHEN - NIGHT

The WIND is still strong. Vianne and Joséphine, lavishly perspiring and giddy with fatigue after many hours of cooking, each take a gulp from the bottle of Burgundy they used for the sauce. Vianne lights a FLAME under a pot, and we:

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. CHURCH - NIGHT

Another FLAME, this time from a CANDLE that REYNAUD is lighting, in front of the statue of a severe-looking saint. He crosses himself, praying fervently for the restoration of morality.

The WIND gusts into the church, making the candle flicker. Reynaud worriedly shields the flame.

EXT. ARMANDE'S FRONT YARD - DAY

It's a warm afternoon. A dozen PARTY GUESTS sit at a long outdoor table, quietly talking; a subdued gathering. The dinner party is a combination of formal and funky: Fine linen tablecloth, antique china - and garish crepe paper festooning the chicken-wire fence. Among the guests are GUILLAUME (with CHARLY), YVETTE, ALPHONSE, BAPTISTE, the THREE WIDOWS IN BLACK. ARMANDE looks radiant in an old "flapper" dress, fur wrap, and cloche hat. JOSÉPHINE is filling wine glasses.

Now the door of Armande's house opens - and VIANNE and ROUX emerge, carrying platters heaped with Vianne's chocolate-laced entrees. ANOUK, still looking pouty, trails behind.

The Party Guests, stunned to see these "outsiders" at the party, fall into uncomfortable silence.

Vianne and Roux set down the platters.

*VIANNE
(with forced good cheer)*

(a bit anxious)
Do you think everyone had a good time? Seems like it all went pretty well -

ROUX
(gently)
Shhhh....

She gives him a look: "alright then." She holds him a little closer and lets herself be swayed by the music. Vianne and Roux are good dancers, swaying sensuously in each other's arms.

ANOUK (sitting in a corner with BAPTISTE and GATI) yawns happily as she watches her mom dance with Roux.

ARMANDE and LUC are sitting on a large crate. Armande, deeply exhausted, steadies herself against Luc.

LUC
(concerned)
Mémé?

Armande's eyelids are drooping. She looks shaky.

ARMANDE
It's nothing. I'm... tired.
(calls out:)
Vianne. Roux.

Vianne and Roux stop dancing and come over to Armande.

ARMANDE (cont'd)
Thanks. This was... thank you.

ROUX
You're leaving?

VIANNE
(protesting to Armande)
The night is young.

ARMANDE
Well I'm not. Help me up.

Vianne helps her up; Armande is a bit unsteady on her feet.

VIANNE
(worried)
Armande...

ARMANDE
Oh for godsake don't fuss. You'll ruin a perfectly decadent evening.
(shakes Vianne's hand)
I'm not partial to big sloppy goodbyes.

But Vianne embraces the old woman, tightly, for a long time.

EXT. ARMANDE'S HOUSE - LATER

LUC carefully helps Armande up the front steps. The dirty dishes from the party are still out.

LUC
(re: dishes)
I can take care of -

ARMANDE
(tiredly, weakly)
I'm... I'll sleep in my... chair tonight...

INT. ARMANDE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Luc helps Armande, fully clothed, into her easy chair. She is fondly, distractedly fingering the handcrafted necklace she's wearing. Luc gently removes her shoes and draws a quilt over her.

ARMANDE
Give your mother a message for me.
(yawning)
She can pick me up at noon.

LUC
(puzzled)
Pick you up?

ARMANDE
(exhaustedly)
Tell her I'm ready to go to Les Mimosas.

LUC
What?

ARMANDE
You heard me.

LUC
Mémé, are you sure -

ARMANDE
Go away now - shoo. Can't you see I'm busy?

Armande closes her eyes, putting an end to the discussion.

LUC
I'll just bring in a few dishes, okay?

Silence. Luc reluctantly goes outside.

EXT. ROUX'S BARGE - LATER

The party is over. Anouk and Joséphine are curled up asleep on a bench; Vianne and Roux gently cover them with an eiderdown. Then Vianne takes Roux's hand, and they wordlessly step into the "CABOOSE BOAT" that's tied to the back of the barge.

They drift downriver in the Caboose Boat, away from the barge...

INT. CABOOSE BOAT - A BIT LATER

The boat glides down the river. We hear the SONG OF CRICKETS from the riverbanks.

VIANNE

Do you like it? Taking your home with you wherever you go?

ROUX

It suits me.

(a BEAT)

Your way must be harder.

Vianne looks at him questioningly.

ROUX (CONT'D)

Wherever you go, making a new home from scratch.

VIANNE

(shrugs)

Maybe this time I'll get it right.

ROUX

What do you mean?

VIANNE

Maybe I'll stay.

Roux smiles knowingly: *who are you kidding?*

VIANNE (CONT'D)

(defensive)

What.

ROUX

You'll always be a wanderer.

Vianne shoots him an irritated look.

ROUX (CONT'D)

It's a compliment.

Vianne sighs, shakes her head. *To her it's no compliment. After a moment:*

VIANNE

Don't you ever think about... belonging somewhere?

ROUX

The price is too high. You end up caring what people expect of you.

VIANNE

Is that so terrible? Having people expect something of you?

Roux studies her for a long moment.

ROUX

(gently)

You worry about Anouk, is that it?

VIANNE

(caught off-guard)

What?

ROUX

You know, all the moving around -

VIANNE

Oh please, don't be silly. She's fine, she handles it beautifully, she makes friends so easily, she's such an unusual...

Vianne stops short - hearing her own bullshit.

VIANNE (cont'd)

(quietly)

She hates it.

It's a sad, vulnerable moment for Vianne. Roux is studying her with sympathetic understanding...

Gently, tentatively, he leans towards her and lightly kisses her lips.

And then their kiss begins to grow passionate... and Vianne and Roux sink down to the floor of the boat, starting to undo each other's clothes...

EXT. RIVERBANK NEAR ROUX'S BARGE - NIGHT

The barge is still strung with lanterns. All is quiet. Then we see A MAN furtively approaching the barge... lugging two LARGE METAL CONTAINERS...

REVEAL the man is SERGE MUSCAT, smiling a strange vehement smile.

INT. ARMANDE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Luc does the dishes, HUMMING a song that the gypsy musicians played...

INT. THE LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Luc enters the darkened room. Armande's Cat sits next to the chair where Armande sits motionless. Luc sees that Armande's quilt has fallen off her; he approaches the chair and picks up the quilt...

...and in the semi-darkness he SEES that Armande has a SERENE SMILE, and that HER EYES ARE OPEN, BUT LIFELESS...

LUC

Mémé...

Luc, stunned, touches her ashen cheek. Armande's eyes remain fixed, motionless.

Luc sees that Armande's lifeless hands are clutching something: Luc's PORTRAIT of her.

Luc smiles slightly, his eyes filling with tears...

INT. CABOOSE BOAT - NIGHT

Roux and Vianne finish putting their clothes back on, in tranquil silence. Vianne playfully SNAPS one of the suspenders that Roux wears over his T-shirt - he lets out a surprised SHRIEK. They both laugh...

... until Roux notices something low in the sky, around a bend in the river: an ominous FLICKERING RED-ORANGE GLOW against the darkness...

Roux's smile fades.

VIANNE

What?

Vianne turns and sees the FLICKERING GLOW in the sky... and as her joy gives way to concern, we:

CUT TO:

EXT. RIVERBANK - MINUTES LATER

Having guided the caboose boat onto the riverbank, Roux and Vianne now jump out onto land and run toward the FLICKERING GLOW.

EXT. FURTHER DOWN THE RIVERBANK - SAME

Vianne and Roux come racing around the bend - and now see the source of the flickering glow:

EXT. THE RIVER TANNES - SAME

- where several of the HOUSEBOATS are ON FIRE - the flames bright against the night sky. Some RIVER GYPSIES are still on their boats, desperately struggling to put out the flames; others are huddled on the riverbank, their faces covered with soot, CRYING OUT in anguish.

ROUX'S BARGE has been cut adrift and is floating further down the river, ENGULFED IN BRILLIANT FLAMES.

VIANNE

(realizing)

Anouk...

Vianne and Roux run down to the river -

- where Vianne frantically searches among the river gypsies on the riverbank - and sees that Anouk is not among them.

Vianne looks across the water at Roux's barge engulfed in flames.

VIANNE (CONT'D)

(with horror and guilt)

Oh no! Oh God!

Vianne frantically leaps into the water and swims towards Roux's burning barge.

ROUX

Vianne!

Roux hurries into the water and swims after her.

Vianne and Roux swim desperately towards the barge...

... and as they swim, the water all around them shimmers with the hellish radiance of reflected firelight...

... and on Roux's barge, the FLAMES REACH THE OIL DRUM - which EXPLODES - and THE BARGE COLLAPSES IN A SPECTACULAR EXHALATION OF FLAME.

There's nothing left to save...

Roux grabs Vianne, starts pulling her back to shore - but she fiercely shoves him away, and swims suicidally towards the flaming wreckage.

ROUX (cont'd)

Vianne, no!

He grabs her again - and Vianne, frenzied with anguish, flails at him. He locks his arm around her neck and forcefully pulls flailing Vianne back through the water toward the riverbank.

Finally he pulls her ashore. Vianne, crazed with grief and anger, pummels Roux with her fists:

VIANNE

Why did you stop me?!

ROUX

It was too late -

She pummels him repeatedly - and now he just stands there and takes it, no longer trying to restrain her.

VIANNE

Why did you stop me?! Why did you pull me away?!

ANOUK (O.S.)

Maman?

Vianne turns, and is astonished to see ANOUK and JOSÉPHINE approaching.

JOSÉPHINE

(quiet, shaken)

We were looking for you.

Vianne rushes to Anouk and desperately hugs her - Anouk is frightened by the fury of Vianne's embrace:

ANOUK

Maman, you're hurting me -

But Vianne hugs her even tighter.

Roux sees the THIN GRIZZLED GYPSY trying to put out flames nearby. Roux casts a quick glance back at Vianne and Anouk, then hurries over to assist the Thin Grizzled Gypsy.

EXT. FURTHER DOWN THE RIVER - SAME

SERGE stands in the shadows, watching the fires. He's no longer carrying the large metal containers. His perspiring face is smeared with soot. As he watches the boats burn, Serge begins playing the idle game we've seen him play before: lighting matches, tossing them into the river...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CHOCOLATERIE - NIGHT

Vianne sits alone at the counter, her face grim and shadowed. She runs her hand along the countertop, very slowly, as if she were trying to make sure that it physically exists, that it's not an illusion.

She looks up, sensing someone's presence... and SEES ROUX OUTSIDE, approaching the shop.

Roux is about to knock on the door - but then notices that Vianne is already looking at him.

She goes to the door and opens it.

ROUX

I just wanted to make sure -

VIANNE

Yes we're okay. You?

Roux nods: he's okay.

ROUX

And I... I came to -

VIANNE

- to say goodbye. Yes I know.

Roux doesn't deny it.

Vianne looks at him with a strange, sad sort of curiosity.

ROUX

What?

VIANNE

Your boat.

(a BEAT)

You've lost your home.

ROUX

No. It was just a way to get from place to place.

VIANNE

How will you -

ROUX

(a shrug)

My feet still work.

An awkward moment: nothing else to say.

ROUX (CONT'D)

Well.

VIANNE

Well.

Roux turns to go. Then he hesitates:

ROUX

Vianne. Listen. I -

VIANNE

I know. I'm sorry too.

Roux falls silent.

As he turns and walks away, Vianne softly closes the door.

INT. APARTMENT ABOVE THE CHOCOLATERIE - NIGHT

Anouk is asleep - but Vianne, huddled next to her, is wide awake.

VIANNE
(fervidly SINGING)
V'la l'bon vent, v'la l'joli vent,
V'la l'bon vent, ma mie m'appelle...

Vianne is fearful, trembling, clutching her sleeping daughter as if she'll never let her go...

INT./EXT. CAROLINE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Luc enters - but Caroline's not there. He hears a NOISE from outside... He looks out the window: CAROLINE is in the back yard fixing an OLD BICYCLE, oiling a squeaky wheel.

EXT. CAROLINE'S HOUSE - SAME

Caroline works on the bicycle with grim resolve. Luc emerges from the house.

CAROLINE
(working on bicycle; not looking up)
Your papa used to ride it 14 miles to work every single morning. He would've wanted you to have it.
(a BEAT)
I want you to have it.

Caroline tests the bicycle wheel; now it spins smoothly.

CAROLINE (cont'd)
Just don't ever run away again. Okay?

She looks up at him - and now sees that something is deeply troubling him:

CAROLINE (CONT'D)
What.

He can't bring himself to tell her. His eyes fill with tears.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)
Luc, what's wrong.

Luc silently embraces his mother...

EXT. KNOLL OVERLOOKING THE RIVER - THE NEXT MORNING

The Comte de Reynaud stands atop the knoll, gazing down at the river gypsies: they're inspecting the damaged boats and beginning whatever repairs are possible. From somewhere down among the river gypsies, we hear the sound of a BABY CRYING.

The Comte nods grimly.

COMTE DE REYNAUD

(softly to himself)

"And He will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity..."

Now The Comte catches sight of:

ROUX

helping another gypsy. Roux glances up and sees Reynaud looking at him. Roux and Reynaud lock eyes for a long moment... then Roux resumes helping the other gypsy.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

A HARSH WIND is blowing. ARMANDE'S FUNERAL is well-attended; most of the townspeople we know are here. LUC, CAROLINE, and THE COMTE sit together in the front row of mourners.

PÉRE HENRI

(reading a prepared text)

... Though we cannot know Armande Voizin's last thoughts, we can hope they were thoughts of penitence.

Caroline furrows her brow, puzzling over Père Henri's words - as if not sure whether she agrees.

PÉRE HENRI (cont'd)

We can hope she asked God to forgive the self-indulgence that aggravated her illness, and caused her death.

The Comte now notices: VIANNE (with ANOUK) somberly standing nearby, slightly apart from the funeral.

PÉRE HENRI (cont'd)

And we can pause to re-examine our own lives. We can resist those who would lead us into temptation.

The Comte gives Vianne a penetrating glare of accusation. Vianne, unnerved, looks away from him. She grabs Anouk's hand and hurries away...

INT. CHOCOLATERIE - DAY

LUC and CAROLINE sit drinking hot chocolate in sad, peaceful silence.

Sitting apart are Joséphine (who in her depressed state is morosely chomping on chocolates) and Vianne, who's reading a hand-written LETTER:

ARMANDE (V.O.)

...I have an odd feeling that I may not see you again. If I'm right, for godsake don't make a big fuss about it. Thank you for my party. I'm sorry I couldn't be at your Festival, but I've seen it so many times in my mind that it really doesn't matter. I send hugs to you and Anouk...

(grudgingly)

... oh, and I suppose to the kangaroo.

EXT. RIVERBANK - DAY

The WIND is blowing hard.

VIANNE stands gazing darkly at the river: the gypsy boats are GONE. The only remnants are pieces of charred wood and rusted metal. ANOUK plays by herself in the makeshift fort. (MUSIC OVER: THE "WIND THEME")

With grim resignation, Vianne turns and FACES DIRECTLY INTO THE HARSH, GUSTING WIND - as if receiving a bleak, expected message.

Anouk - seeing the ashen, defeated look on her mother's face - stops playing. She anxiously approaches Vianne.

ANOUK

Maman?

The wind tosses Vianne's hair and stings her eyes.

ANOUK (cont'd)

(worried)

May we go home now?

But Vianne doesn't answer. She just keeps facing straight into the wind, her eyes open wide.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - DAY

The WIND IS BLOWING EVEN HARDER now; SHUTTERS FLAP WILDLY against ancient walls (just like at the outset of our story).

OMITTED

INT. APARTMENT ABOVE THE CHOCOLATERIE - NIGHT

Joséphine, wearing her apron and wiping cocoa powder off her hands, wearily enters the apartment's kitchen and looks around.

JOSÉPHINE

Vianne?

IN THE BEDROOM:

VIANNE IS PACKING - stuffing clothes into suitcases. (Anouk is asleep on the bed.)

VIANNE

(mumbling to Mayan Urn)
Of course, maman. Of course of course of course...

There's a KNOCK on the bedroom door. Vianne falls silent.

JOSEPHINE (O.S.)
Vianne? Did you want me to start on the marzipan for the Festival?

Vianne doesn't answer. She resumes packing. Joséphine ENTERS - and is stunned to see Vianne packing.

JOSEPHINE (CONT'D)
What are you doing?

VIANNE
I'm leaving.

JOSEPHINE
(can't comprehend it)
What...?

VIANNE
First thing in the morning.

Vianne continues packing with grim resolve. Joséphine silently absorbs the reality of it...

JOSEPHINE
No. You can't. No.

VIANNE
Yes I can.

Joséphine throws her apron down, suddenly fierce:

JOSEPHINE
Good! Run away. But don't think I'm going to take care of your chocolates!

Vianne is startled by Joséphine's intensity. Then Vianne gently touches her shoulder, understanding her anxiety.

VIANNE
You've been a good friend.

But Vianne's gentleness only deepens Joséphine's agitation:

JOSEPHINE
Is it because of Armande?! Is that why you're going?

Vianne shakes her head no.

VIANNE
It's time, Joséphine. That's all.

JOSÉPHINE

*It's because of me, isn't it.
It's always my fault. If I hadn't shown up at your doorstep, you'd be fine,
everything would be fine -*

VIANNE

That's ridiculous.

Vianne resumes packing - until Joséphine grabs her arm and turns her around:

JOSÉPHINE

If you leave, everything here will go back to the way it always was!

VIANNE

*(yanks her arm free)
It is the way it always was.*

Joséphine sees the hard certainty in Vianne's eyes.

After a moment:

JOSÉPHINE

*(quiet now, plaintive)
But Vianne... you belong here.*

VIANNE

*Belong?
(shakes her head no)
This is who I am. This is what I have to do.*

Vianne turns away from Joséphine and resolutely resumes packing.

Joséphine, stricken, slowly backs out of the room...

INT. TOWN HALL - MAYOR'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Reynaud sits at his desk. He's ostensibly working late... but we see that he has been doodling with his pen (tightly coiled, anal, geometric designs) in the margins of a document; he's somberly staring at the PHOTO OF THE COMTESSE on his desk.

Caroline appears in the doorway, buttoning up her coat:

CAROLINE

I'll see you tomorrow.

Reynaud stares at the photo for a moment too long before he looks up at Caroline.

COMTE DE REYNAUD

Pardon?

CAROLINE
Just saying goodnight.

COMTE DE REYNAUD
Yes. Oh - goodnight.

She sees how distracted he is. She steps into his office.

CAROLINE
I suppose...
(indicating photo)
...it can't be easy. Having her gone.

The Comte's thoughts are far away...

COMTE DE REYNAUD
No. Not easy. House feels so empty. Can't seem to get used to it, no matter how much time...

Reynaud stops himself, suddenly self-conscious. He sees the way she's looking at him: with an odd mixture of skepticism and sympathy. Embarrassed, Reynaud clears his throat:

COMTE DE REYNAUD (CONT'D)
I'm... I look forward to it. Her return.

After a long moment:

CAROLINE
(softly)
I don't believe anyone would think less of you...

The Comte looks at her in mild puzzlement...

CAROLINE (CONT'D)
... if you were to say she's never coming back.

He is caught off-guard. He doesn't know how to respond.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)
(gently)
Goodnight, Paul.

She turns and walks out. He's disoriented... he almost calls out after her. But he doesn't.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - OUTSIDE TOWN HALL - NIGHT

Caroline walks away from Town Hall, folding her arms against the harsh wind. Suddenly JOSÉPHINE, breathless and upset, comes running up to her:

JOSÉPHINE
I need to talk to you... Please...

INT. CHATEAU DE REYNAUD - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

The Comte's dinner sits - untouched - on a plate. The Comte has moved a DINNER CANDLE so that it's right in front of him on the table - and he is slowly lowering his hand down towards the flame...

... until his hand is DIRECTLY OVER THE FLAME. He trembles from the searing pain of the fire against his hand - but he holds it there, smiling victoriously through gritted teeth.

Now MADAME RIVET leads SERGE into the doorway, then makes herself scarce.

SERGE

Forgive me, Monsieur le Comte. May I come in?

The Comte says nothing. Serge enters.

COMTE DE REYNAUD

You again.

SERGE

Sorry to bother you. I just...

(a BEAT)

It was the right thing to do. Wasn't it, Monsieur le Comte.

The Comte regards Serge with irritated puzzlement.

SERGE (CONT'D)

I know it was. I know. Of course. But I... it's been hard for me, Monsieur le Comte. At night. Dreams.

COMTE DE REYNAUD

(annoyed)

What are you talking about?

SERGE

The fire. The boats. In my dreams. I know it was the right thing to do, I know that. But still... The faces. The screams.

The Comte looks at Serge with confusion... and a dawning sense of dread.

COMTE DE REYNAUD

The fire... was an act of God...

SERGE

(swallows hard)

No. It wasn't.

COMTE DE REYNAUD

(not wanting to believe Serge)

...a just and avenging God!

SERGE

(sheepish)

Well, maybe Him too.

The Comte, horror-struck, glares at Serge. Serge's gaze flicks nervously between the Comte and the burning candle.

COMTE DE REYNAUD

How could you possibly -

SERGE

Because you wanted me to - you said something had to be done.

(a BEAT; uncertainly:)

Didn't you?

COMTE DE REYNAUD

I am the Comte de Reynaud! Mayor of Lansquenet!

SERGE

(confused, mortified)

Maybe I misunderstood...

COMTE DE REYNAUD

People could have died! Did you want their blood on your hands? On my hands?

The Comte stands up and glares at Serge. Their faces are close together; Serge sees the rage and disgust in the Comte's eyes.

SERGE

(nervously)

Yes - I see - of course. I should go to Père Henri. I should ask for forgiveness.

COMTE DE REYNAUD

(quiet; seething)

Listen closely, Serge. You are to leave my village. And never return.

SERGE

(incredulous)

But Monsieur le Comte - why would I leave my home - my café -

COMTE DE REYNAUD

I'm evicting you, that's why. Perhaps the next tenant will bother to pay the rent.

Serge is speechless.

COMTE DE REYNAUD (cont'd)

Go on - get out! Unless you'd rather I tell the police what you've done.

The Comte shoves Serge repeatedly, backing him up towards the door:

COMTE DE REYNAUD (CONT'D)

Get moving! Out! Would you rather go to jail?!

Serge backs away in bewilderment.

COMTE DE REYNAUD (cont'd)

Out! Out!

Serge awkwardly stumbles out; the Comte SLAMS the door after him.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - DAWN

The WIND is howling through the empty square.

INT. APARTMENT ABOVE THE CHOCOLATERIE - SAME

Vianne is getting Anouk dressed while Anouk sleeps. The wind rattles the windows.

Anouk stirs awake to find Vianne tugging her little boots on.

ANOUK

Wha...?

VIANNE

(gently)

Time to go.

Anouk sits up - and sees the packed suitcases.

ANOUK

Oh no.

Vianne puts on her own red capuchon - the same one she wore at the beginning of the story.

ANOUK (cont'd)

I'm not going.

VIANNE

It's hard for me too.

Vianne hands Anouk's little red capuchon to her.

ANOUK

(re: capuchon)

Pantoufle detests this.

VIANNE
Stop that. Please put it on.

ANOUK
I hate you.

VIANNE
You're entitled.

Anouk sits there, refusing to put on the capuchon.

VIANNE (cont'd)
I said put it on.

Anouk stubbornly folds her arms. Angrily Vianne grabs hold of Anouk, forcing the capuchon on her -

ANOUK
Ouch!

VIANNE
Then do it yourself!

ANOUK
I can't.

VIANNE
Get up.

ANOUK
(whiney, babyish)
I have a bad leg, like Pantoufle.

VIANNE
Stop that. Get up!

ANOUK
(whiney)
Pantoufle can't walk. I can't walk.

Vianne picks up two suitcases under one arm - then angrily GRABS ANOUK AND FORCIBLY PULLS HER TOWARD THE STAIRS -

- but Anouk is LITERALLY DRAGGING HER FEET.

VIANNE
Walk!

ANOUK
You're hurting me!

VIANNE

(pulling her)
Stop being a baby.

ANOUK
I want to stay home!

VIANNE
There is no such thing!

Vianne PICKS ANOUK UP and carries her kicking and flailing.

ANGLE - THE STAIRWAY

Vianne is struggling to hold onto the suitcases under one arm, while carrying squirming Anouk under the other arm.

ANOUK
Let me go!

INT. CHOCOLATERIE - SAME

They reach the bottom of the stairs, Vianne's angry face flushed with the effort of carrying Anouk and the suitcases -

ANOUK
Let me go let me go!

Anouk wrenches free of Vianne - and in the struggle, a suitcase is pulled open -

- and the Mayan Urn falls and SMASHES on the ground, scattering the ASHES that were inside it.

Vianne and Anouk both fall silent. Vianne stands there, stunned.

Anouk sees the helpless horror in her mother's eyes... and this makes Anouk afraid.

ANOUK (CONT'D)
(worriedly)
I'm sorry... I'm sorry...

Vianne says nothing. Just stares in shock at the ashes.

Anouk, very frightened by her mother's sudden vulnerability, suddenly gets down on her hands and knees, desperately scooping the ashes with her hands and putting them into a SUEDE POUCH that has fallen out of the suitcase.

ANOUK (CONT'D)
Don't worry, maman. Don't worry.

Vianne watches her little daughter pathetically struggling to put the ashes into the Suede Pouch.

ANOUK (CONT'D)
The next town will be better - won't it, maman?

Vianne is deeply shaken by the sight of Anouk desperately trying to gather the ash, getting it on her arms and bits of it in her hair.

ANOUK (CONT'D)

It will! It will be wonderful.

Anouk nervously holds up the pouch - which now contains most of the ashes:

ANOUK (CONT'D)

See? Everything's fine! We can go now.

(a fearful, desperate smile:)

Everything will be fine - right, maman?

Vianne stares at Anouk with a strange, sad clarity... as if seeing this fearful little girl for the first time.

Vianne wordlessly sits down at the bottom of the stairs, her gaze faraway, as if she were trying to figure out the answer to some horrible riddle...

ANOUK (CONT'D)

Maman? I'm ready to go now, okay?

Vianne says nothing. And then she notices:

A SHAFT OF LIGHT coming through the partly-open door of the chocolaterie's kitchen.

Vianne HEARS activity - the soft clanking of pots and steel utensils, people's hushed voices - coming from the kitchen.

Vianne is silent, confused...

Vianne cautiously approaches the kitchen door. She opens the door to REVEAL:

INT. CHOCOLATERIE KITCHEN - SAME

JOSEPHINE busily leading a platoon of kitchen volunteers - GUILLAUME, MADAME AUDEL, YVETTE, ALPHONSE, LUC, CAROLINE - all pitching in: mixing hot cream into melted couverture; chopping almonds; piping fondant into chocolate shells; rolling truffles in cocoa powder; sprinkling grated couverture onto coffee cream tongues...

VIANNE stands in the doorway, dumbfounded, staring in disbelief...

JOSEPHINE

(busily supervising)

Guillaume, don't be afraid to smother those truffles, we've got plenty of cocoa.

(to Vianne; casually)

Oh, hi.

The volunteers keep working. Vianne, deeply moved, gazes at them...

JOSEPHINE (CONT'D)

(to Yvette)

I think Baptiste needs a hand with the grater.

Anouk joins Vianne in the doorway... and is equally overwhelmed by the sight of the volunteers at work.

JOSÉPHINE

(gently, to Vianne)

How do these almonds look?

Vianne's eyes fill with tears. She is incapable of speech.

JOSÉPHINE (CONT'D)

Are they chopped fine enough?

Vianne stares tearfully, wordlessly, at Joséphine and the others.

JOSÉPHINE (CONT'D)

Are they okay, Vianne?

Still staring at the working volunteers, Vianne gently puts her arm around Anouk's shoulders. Finally, almost imperceptibly, Vianne nods yes.

INT. TOWN HALL - MAYOR'S OFFICE - LATE AFTERNOON

The COMTE DE REYNAUD, sitting at his desk, is coaching PÈRE HENRI on tomorrow's sermon. Père Henri stands reading:

PÈRE HENRI

... "Christ is risen" - and with him, all our hopes for self-renewal. My friends, let this Easter day be for us, too, a rebirth. Let us strive -

COMTE DE REYNAUD

No no no - don't bury the word "rebirth" - let it ring out. You're challenging your parishioners to resurrect their own moral awareness!

Père Henri uneasily looks at him. The Comte appears almost feverish: ashen-faced, perspiring, his hands tensely fidgeting with a cast-iron letter opener.

COMTE DE REYNAUD (cont'd)

Come come come, try it again.

PÈRE HENRI

I... think we've gone over it enough. Let's call it a day.

COMTE DE REYNAUD

What?

PÈRE HENRI

I'm -

COMTE DE REYNAUD

Fine fine fine. Why don't you leave the text with me, I may have a few more suggestions.

PÈRE HENRI

Thank you, Monsieur le Comte, but I'd just as soon -

COMTE DE REYNAUD

(anxious, insistent)

Just small suggestions - a slight revision here and there. We want it to be perfect for tomorrow, don't we?

PÈRE HENRI

(sighs)

Yes. Yes of course, Monsieur le Comte.

CUT TO:

INT. CHOCOLATERIE - EVENING

VIANNE AND HER HELPERS install an elaborate display in her shop window - far more lavish than anything she's ever done: CHOCOLATE FIGURES of DUCKS, LAMBS, RABBITS... and "EL-CHUAH," THE MAYAN PATRON SAINT OF CACAO.

INT. TOWN HALL - MAYOR'S OFFICE - EVENING

The Comte still in his office, fervently poring over the text of the sermon, making revisions.

COMTE DE REYNAUD

(reading)

...we must resist the shallow, worldly...

(pens a revision:)

"...must renounce the shallow, worldly temptations..."

The Comte looks even more pale and overwrought than before. He's having trouble concentrating. He gets up and begins pacing, his hands still fidgeting with the cast-iron letter opener. He idly glances out his window:

THE COMTE'S P.O.V.:

Vianne walks out of her shop to admire the window display.

BACK TO SCENE:

The Comte furrows his brow, then forces himself to resume working on the sermon:

COMTE DE REYNAUD

(mumbling to himself)

"...must renounce the shallow, worldly temptations of our mortal flesh..."

The Comte, still too agitated to concentrate, once again glances out his window:

THE COMTE'S P.O.V.

Vianne, admiring the window display, is now joined by her various helpers... including CAROLINE.

BACK TO SCENE:

The Comte involuntarily lets out a strangled whine, like a dog who's just been kicked.

COMTE DE REYNAUD
(a stunned whisper)
Caroline...

INT. CHURCH SANCTUARY - NIGHT

The Comte is alone in the empty sanctuary, kneeling at the altar with his eyes closed:

COMTE DE REYNAUD
(bitterly)
All my efforts have been nothing.

The Comte opens his eyes and looks pleadingly up at the FIGURE OF CRUCIFIED JESUS on the altar:

COMTE DE REYNAUD (cont'd)
Have I not suffered willingly?! Stale bread and water! I can't think, I can't sleep, I can't -

The Comte's voice is echoing through the empty church.

COMTE DE REYNAUD (cont'd)
(trying to calm himself)
I'm sorry. I'm sorry. My suffering is nothing.

The Comte is staring up at crucified Jesus, whose eyes gaze placidly heavenward.

COMTE DE REYNAUD (cont'd)
It's just that I'm lost. I don't know what to do.

Silence.

COMTE DE REYNAUD (cont'd)
What do you want me to do?

He is silent for a long moment, waiting for his answer.

And then... it seems to come to him. The Comte looks down at his own hand, which is still grasping the LETTER OPENER.

He gets up and heads out of the church.

EXT. THE TOWN SQUARE - OUTSIDE THE CHURCH - NIGHT

The church doors are flung open, and the Comte strides out...

INT. CHOCOLATERIE KITCHEN - SAME

Dark and quiet. Suddenly the back window is shoved open - and THE COMTE crawls in, FLASHLIGHT in one hand and the LETTER OPENER in the other. His eyes ablaze with holy purpose, he stealthily walks through the kitchen...

INT. CHOCOLATERIE - SAME

The Comte quietly hurries to the display window - where his flashlight illuminates the CHOCOLATE STATUARY OF ANIMALS gazing at him with innocent opaque chocolate eyes and "EL CHUAH" smiling an exaggerated thick-lipped smile. The Comte shudders.

Then his flashlight finds: a CHOCOLATE STATUE OF A WOMAN towering above the reliquary - her features vaguely Mesoamerican, her graceful milky-brown arms holding a sheaf of chocolate wheat, her rippling hair a darker, more lustrous grade of chocolate.

The Comte swallows hard. Wielding his letter opener like a dagger, he hacks off the Chocolate Woman's hand.

Smiling with strange, fervid rectitude, the Comte hacks off the Chocolate Woman's head and arms. He cackles like a naughty child, with a mixture of fear and triumph.

He hacks the statue repeatedly, savagely, reducing it to a rubble of brown shards.

He turns to a chocolate lamb and begins hacking it to pieces -

- but as he does, a PIECE OF DARK CHOCOLATE flies up and STICKS TO THE COMTE'S LIP. He unthinkingly licks the piece of chocolate - and it makes him GROAN with amazement and yearning:

COMTE DE REYNAUD

Mon Dieu...

He swallows the piece of chocolate - it makes him woozy with aroused hunger.

Without thinking, he puts another small piece of chocolate in his mouth...

COMTE DE REYNAUD (cont'd)

(to himself, trying to resist)

No no...

He eats another small piece... His eyes are moist with longing... On the floor, scattered among the chocolate animals, lies a treasure trove of loose candies.

COMTE DE REYNAUD (cont'd)

Mon Dieu, just one more...

He snatches a White Rum Truffle and stuffs it in his mouth...

He tries a Cerisette Russe, and then a kirsch roll... he closes his eyes, groaning with pure unthinking animal pleasure, overwhelmed by his terrible hunger, intoxicated by Vianne's seductive confections...

And then he's down on his knees, scavenging, shoving one luscious candy after another into his chomping mouth: a three-nut bittersweet cluster, a Manon blanc, an apricot marzipan, a grappa creme, a croquant peak...

...and soon he's rolling among the chocolates on the floor, losing himself in them, stuffing them into his mouth - his red-flushed face intermittently illuminated by the harsh beam of his fallen flashlight...

As he chomps ravenously on the candies, the Comte is weeping, he's moaning, he's whimpering, he's laughing... he's as free and oblivious as a suckling infant...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - DAWN

Père Henri arrives at the church.

INT. CHOCOLATERIE - DAY

THE COMTE lies CONTENTEDLY ASLEEP in the display window, surrounded by the chocolate shards of the two statues he smashed. (The other chocolate statues are intact.)

CLOSE ANGLE - THE SLEEPING COMTE

begins to sniff something. FIZZ is tickling his nose. His eyes flutter open, and:

ANGLE TO REVEAL VIANNE

kneeling beside him, holding a glass of carbonated water under his nose. Behind Vianne stand JOSÉPHINE and ANOUK - and PÈRE HENRI, who looks on in troubled astonishment.

The Comte's eyes widen with mortification as he realizes where he is...

VIANNE

(gently)

Drink this.

The Comte regards her with wordless fear and alarm.

VIANNE (cont'd)

It'll refresh you. There's no chocolate in it, I promise.

The Comte is utterly confused: why is Vianne helping him?

VIANNE (cont'd)

(softly)

Go ahead, drink.

The Comte takes a sip. It seems to help him a little.

Père Henri is intently watching Vianne help the Comte.

COMTE DE REYNAUD

(re: the mess he's made)

I... I'm sorry, I...

VIANNE

I won't tell anyone.

This perplexes the Comte even more: she's willing to protect him?

CLOSE ANGLE - PÈRE HENRI is deeply struck by Vianne's kindness towards the Comte.

VIANNE (CONT'D)

(gently, to the Comte)

Better get cleaned up.

(indicating the church)

Easter Sunday.

The Comte nods, dazed. With Vianne's help, he unsteadily gets to his feet.

The Comte gulps when he sees Père Henri standing there.

COMTE DE REYNAUD

(eyes glazed; to Père Henri)

The sermon... I didn't get a chance to... It's not finished.

Père Henri looks at the Comte for a long moment... then at Vianne. Finally:

PÈRE HENRI

I'll think of something.

INT. CHURCH - LATER

The congregation is silent, watchful, as young Père Henri steps forward to begin his Easter sermon.

Père Henri looks scared... but also determined.

PÈRE HENRI

(voice quavering)

I... wasn't sure... what the theme of my homily today ought to be.

(clears his throat)

Do I want to speak of, uh... the miracle of our Lord's divine transformation?

(a BEAT; very nervous:)

Not really. No.

Various members of the Congregation look puzzled, concerned.

PÈRE HENRI (cont'd)

I don't really... feel like talking about His divinity.

Some members of the Congregation give each other worried looks. Some shift uneasily in their pews.

PÈRE HENRI (cont'd)

I'd rather talk about His humanity.

MESDAMES RIVET AND POUGET, their curiosity piqued, are listening intently to Père Henri.

PÈRE HENRI (cont'd)

I mean, you know, how he lived his life here on Earth. His kindness. His tolerance.

(a BEAT)

Listen. Here's what I think.

YVETTE and ALPHONSE are holding hands in their pew, watching Père Henri.

PÈRE HENRI (cont'd)

I think we can't go around measuring our goodness by what we don't do. By what we deny ourselves. What we resist. And who we exclude.

MADAME AUDEL (who's no longer wearing all black) is sitting next to GUILLAUME... who smiles slightly as he listens to Père Henri.

PÈRE HENRI (cont'd)

I think we've got to measure goodness by what we embrace. What we create.

(a BEAT)

And who we include.

All the way in the back of the church sits the COMTE DE REYNAUD - disheveled, silent, looking up towards the pulpit with a sort of stunned humility in his eyes...

STORYTELLER (V.O.)

All who attended Mass that Easter Sunday still remember the Curé's homily. It was certainly not the most fiery sermon he would ever preach, nor the most elegant.

CAROLINE, listening to the sermon, gently puts her arm around LUC'S shoulder.

STORYTELLER (cont'd)

But the parishioners felt a new sensation that day. A lightening of the spirit...

EXT. THE TOWN SQUARE - HOURS LATER

The FESTIVAL DU CHOCOLAT is in full swing: Vianne has stocked outdoor tables with chocolate wonders; VENDORS in BOOTHS sell everything from chanterelles to carved dolls. A JUGGLER and a FIRE-EATER entertain an enthralled crowd.

STORYTELLER (V.O.)

A freedom from the old tranquillité.

VIANNE AND JOSÉPHINE sell confections to a throng of customers...

ANOUK eagerly hunts for Easter Eggs with DIDI, DÉDOU, BAPTISTE, and other children...

MADAME AUDEL stands hand-in-hand with GUILLAUME, excitedly watching the Juggler and the Fire-Eater...

CHARLY is chasing the FEMALE DOG TWICE HIS SIZE across the Square...

CAROLINE happily watches LUC play an energetic game of Roulette de Vélo with a group of boys...

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

Even the Comte de Reynaud felt strangely... released.

THE COMTE, carrying a fresh warm baguette, hesitantly approaches Caroline. He tears off a piece of bread and rather awkwardly offers it to her. She accepts it, and takes a bite.

Then the Comte eats a piece of bread himself: not guiltily, not ravenously - just eating like a normal person.

STORYTELLER (V.O.) (cont'd)

...although it would be another six months before he'd work up the nerve to ask Caroline out to dinner.

The Comte smiles, very tentatively, at Caroline... and she, very tentatively, smiles back.

INT. THE CAFÉ FORMERLY RUN BY SERGE MUSCAT - DAY

Joséphine, confident and in-charge, works the counter of the busy café - which has been beautifully REFURBISHED.

STORYTELLER

As for Joséphine, she took over the lease at the old café - and gave it a new name.

ANGLE TO REVEAL that the old sign behind the bar ("Café de la République") has been REPLACED by a NEW SIGN: "CAFÉ ARMANDE."

EXT. CHOCOLATERIE - NIGHT

Once again the WIND is blowing hard. Once again the shutters are BANGING against the wall. (MUSIC OVER: THE "WIND THEME")

STORYTELLER (V.O.)

But still, the clever North Wind was not satisfied...

INT. APARTMENT ABOVE THE CHOCOLATERIE - NIGHT

Anouk is asleep, but Vianne lies awake, stirred by the wind. Vianne gets up and OPENS THE WINDOW - so that the howl of the wind is VERY LOUD.

STORYTELLER (V.O.)

The Wind spoke to Vianne of towns yet to be visited...

Vianne glances at her RED CAPUCHON hanging on a closet hook, then at the SUEDE POUCH HOLDING HER MOTHER'S ASHES on the table.

STORYTELLER (cont'd)

Friends-in-need yet to be discovered...

Vianne turns and faces the wind, as if drawn to it by some powerful, inescapable instinct. Her eyes are sparkling with intensity...

Anouk wakes up - and is distressed to see her mother seemingly entranced by the wind.

STORYTELLER (cont'd)
Battles yet to be fought...

Then, with great conviction and finality, Vianne SHUTS THE WINDOW AND FIRMLY LOCKS THE LATCH.

STORYTELLER (cont'd)
(wryly)
...by somebody else next time.

Vianne smiles serenely to herself... and Anouk, unseen by Vianne, breathes a huge sigh of relief.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. THE RIVER TANNES - SUNRISE

It is SUMMER, the wildflowers in full, glorious bloom. In the FAR DISTANCE we see THE SAIL OF A SMALL BOAT being borne by the wind along the RIVER TANNES, heading towards us. We can barely discern the figure of a dark-haired man on the boat...

INT. CHOCOLATERIE - MORNING

Vianne comes downstairs in a robe - and discovers ROUX WORKING ON THE FRONT DOOR, readjusting a hinge.

Roux sees Vianne. He maintains a poker face. So does she.

ROUX
(ostensibly referring to door)
Just needed... an adjustment. Hope it'll be better now.

STORYTELLER (V.O.)
Of course, I knew Roux's return had nothing to do with a silly old door.

VIANNE
(a BEAT)
I think it's going to be fine.

Roux smiles ever-so-slightly.

ANGLE TO INCLUDE ANOUK coming down the stairs in her pajamas and seeing Roux.

ANOUK
Roux!

Anouk, delighted, runs over to Roux and hugs him. Vianne goes to the counter (where she has already prepared a pot of hot chocolate). She begins pouring hot chocolate into three cups.

ROUX
(to Vianne)
Thought you'd never guess.

Vianne looks up, gives him a puzzled look.

ROUX (CONT'D)
(points at the steaming drink)
My favorite. Hot chocolate.

VIANNE
(obviously lying)
Mm-hm. I knew that.

Vianne and Roux both smile.

EXT. CHOCOLATERIE - MINUTES LATER

We're outside LOOKING IN THROUGH THE WINDOW at Anouk, Vianne, and Roux sitting at the counter, quietly having a simple French breakfast of bread and hot chocolate. Anouk dips two pieces of bread into her cup - and hands one to Roux and one to Vianne. Then Anouk gets up and goes to the window, gazing out.

STORYTELLER (V.O.)
And Pantoufle? Well, his bad leg miraculously healed...

ANOUK'S P.O.V. - THROUGH THE WINDOW

PANTOUFLE - the kangaroo - is hopping away, across the town square.

STORYTELLER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
...and he hopped off in search of new adventures.

And then PANTOUFLE DISSOLVES INTO THIN AIR, and is gone.

STORYTELLER (CONT'D)
I didn't miss him.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - SAME

Quiet and peaceful. A solitary balloon dangles from the statue of Auguste René Christophe de Reynaud. The CAMERA SLOWLY RISES UP FROM THE TOWN SQUARE... drifting up, up, and away from the little village.

