

CHASTELY PREPARED

by

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Inspired By

Boule de Suif

by

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CHARACTERS

Roxanne "Buttercup" La Fever (23) - Fearlessly Patriotic Young Courtesan.

Valentin Bisquet (54) - Industrialist (Also plays General).

Marjorie Bisquet (49) - Wife of Monsieur Bisquet (Also plays Woman).

Henri Allonde (41) - Wine wholesaler. (Also plays Guard, Prussian Private).

Cecile Allonde (35) - Monsieur Allonde's Younger Wife, (Also plays Buttercup's mother).

Nun (30) - A Sister of the Lamentable Poor.

Captain (32)- Prudish Prussian Captor (also plays Stable Owner).

Innkeeper/Wife (40s) - Owners of Inn where Refugees held Hostage.

Coachman (28) - Coach driver. (Also plays Prussian Guard; Highwayman, Prussian Soldier).

Regine (7) - Buttercup's Illegitimate Daughter.

General (60) - Prussian Captain's Father.

Woman (51) - Regine's Stepmother.

Prussian Private (23)

PROJECTION UPSTAGE: ROUEN, FRANCE,  
1870s, FRANCO-PRUSSIAN WAR.

ACT I. SCENE 1.

Center stage, bed with opaque  
drapery on top and all four sides.

ROXANNE "BUTTERCUP" LA FEVER,  
twenty-three, kneels alongside the  
bed facing upstage PROJECTION of  
JOAN OF ARC.

BUTTERCUP  
(matter-of-factly)

BUTTERCUP  
Mademoiselle Arc; Roxanne La Fever; mother called me  
Buttercup. I'll call you Joan. I've never prayed to someone  
who's not a saint yet, but if anyone should be, it's you.  
Joan, if you don't mind, kneeling reminds me of work.

Lifting her skirt to rub her knees,  
Buttercup parts the drapery on the  
bed, and sits.

BUTTERCUP  
Prussians are invading so I'll make my prayer fast. I had  
Regine when I was fifteen and, big surprise, wasn't married.  
My boyfriend doesn't want to know who Regine's father is  
which is him. My dying mother told me to hand Regine to a  
nun, the nun took her away, and I got locked in a convent. I  
escaped to Paris where I did things you might not like so I  
could come back to find Regine and have a family with her  
father. I prayed to saints and holy people before trying you.  
St. Francis, of course, but the doves, squirrels, fawns,  
raccoons, and donkeys hog all the attention and besides,  
leave a huge mess.

(rubbing her knees through her  
dress)

BUTTERCUP smooths the blanket on  
each side of her.

BUTTERCUP  
Jesus has his hands full.

BUTTERCUP reflects.

BUTTERCUP

Each time I pray to the Virgin Mary, I always see Joseph's hurt eyes.

BUTTERCUP reaches inside the drapery, grabs a pillow, and hugs it.

BUTTERCUP

Mary Magdalen has me praying all the time; like I don't know what that's all about.

BUTTERCUP FLUFFS the pillow, tosses it back onto the bed, and again kneels facing JOAN of ARC.

BUTTERCUP

Joan, I'm really a lot like you, well, maybe just the fighting part. I'm not sure if someone who's not a saint yet knows how to send signs that are holy, but if you have a little time, and it won't get you in trouble with God, I'll thank you forever and so will Regine.

BUTTERCUP makes the sign of the cross and bows her head.

(LIGHT CUE: BLACK.)

ACT I. SCENE 2.

(LIGHT CUE: DIM.)

(SOUND CUE: Scary POUNDING on door.)

In a loose robe carrying a candle, BUTTERCUP opens the door center stage left.

A drunken Prussian SOLDIER staggers past BUTTERCUP into a table center stage knocking a picture frame onto the floor and a wine bottle on its side.

SOLDIER

SCHEISSE!

The SOLDIER snatches the wine bottle from the table, pulls the cork with his teeth, spits it out, and guzzles from the bottle.

Blearily, the SOLDIER wobbles around and finally notices BUTTERCUP, stage right.

SOLDIER

(wiping slobber with sleeve)

Deshalb bin ich soldat!

The SOLDIER reaches back, clumsily sets the bottle on the table, and BELCHES.

BUTTERCUP picks the broken picture frame off the floor, carefully removes a drawing of Joan of Arc, and tenderly smooths it out on the table.

BUTTERCUP

You quartered here?

The SOLDIER sloppily grins revealing red wine stained teeth.

BUTTERCUP

(grumbling to herself)

You could have picked a nicer sign, Joan.

BUTTERCUP brushes the SOLDIER's crotch with the back of her hand, and gestures center stage right.

The SOLDIER glances back over his shoulder and nearly loses his balance.

Furiously yanking off his jacket, the SOLDIER unbuttons his pants which fall on his ankles revealing long underwear, hops on one foot to remove a boot, loses his balance, and miraculously lands on a chair.

BUTTERCUP pulls off his other boot.

Pants at his ankles, the SOLDIER staggers center stage right.

BUTTERCUP grabs the wine bottle from the table and breaks it over the SOLDIER's head. He GROANS, but continues staggering stage right.

BUTTERCUP snatches a full bottle of wine from a sideboard, hits the SOLDIER on the head without breaking it, and he drops unconscious on the floor.

Yanking open a drawer on the table, BUTTERCUP removes a roll of cheesecloth and a knife with a curved blade, cuts a couple of lengths, and rapidly binds the SOLDIER's hands and feet while talking to Joan.

BUTTERCUP

Couldn't help it, Joan, my mother was raped by a Prussian in the last war. It's not your fault, but there's no holy Prussians.

BUTTERCUP finishes trussing up the SOLDIER, rolls up the drawing of Joan of Arc, pulls a second rolled drawing from the table drawer, waves at the heavens, and dashes stage left.

(LIGHT CUE: BLACK.)

## ACT I. SCENE 3.

(SOUND CUE: Horses WHINNYING;  
hooves KICKING stalls.)

In a narrow bed with a lit lantern  
on a hay bale, BUTTERCUP and the  
COACHMAN.

COACHMAN

Attack a Prussian soldier and they'll hunt you forever.

BUTTERCUP

He was Joan of Arc's first sign.

COACHMAN

Joan needs holier signs if she's ever going to be a saint.  
I'm taking bourgeois refugees to the English Channel at dawn,  
bribed a Prussian general. You're going with me.

BUTTERCUP

I'm not leaving without Regine.

COACHMAN

If the Prussians find you, and they won't give up until they  
do, they'll rape then kill you. You'll never see your  
daughter Regine or have a family with me.

The COACHMAN smiles  
understandingly.

COACHMAN

Joan wouldn't have sent that Prussian as a holy sign if she  
didn't want you to leave with me.

Buttercup grins proudly.

COACHMAN

Anything you want to prepare to eat on the road is in the  
cellar.

BUTTERCUP

I went to mass Sunday. If Regine was there and saw me, she'd  
know right away that I was her mother.

COACHMAN

(sarcastically)

Joan of Arc tell you to go to Sunday mass with people who despise you along with breaking a wine bottle over the head of a Prussian in your kitchen?

BUTTERCUP

Don't make fun of Joan.

COACHMAN

(taking BUTTERCUP in arms)

I hope to God you're right about Mademoiselle Arc.

BUTTERCUP

(kissing cheek)

Saint Arc.

(LIGHT CUE: BLACK.)

ACT I. Scene 4.

(LIGHT CUE: DIM.)

Collection of luggage center stage.

(LIGHT CUE: SPOT.)

In massive winter coats, fur hats, identities hidden by ridiculous Carnival face-masks, heavy-set, fraught with high dudgeon, mid-50's self-styled bourgeois refugees, VALENTIN and MARJORIE BISQUET.

A pale NUN with a cloak over her habit lurks behind them.

VALENTIN BISQUET

(furiously)

I paid that thieving coachman an arm and a leg to leave at dawn!

(bellowing)

Birds of spring are ready to sing!



MARJORIE BISQUET

(snippily)

Money turns the heads of the unwashed, but seldom in the right direction.

VALENTIN BISQUET

(snorting)

No surprise Prussians always win.

(LIGHT CUE: SPOT.)

Middle-aged bourgeois refugees HENRI and CECILE ALLONDE, also sporting preposterous Carnival face-masks, appear downstage right.

HENRI sets their suitcases next to the other luggage and joins CECILE.

(LIGHT CUE: LIGHTS UP.)

VALENTIN BISQUET

(snarling)

I warned that ingrate coachman to keep his big mouth shut!

MARJORIE BISQUET

(resentfully)

Who would ever travel with people who steal ingenious disguises outside a stinking stable in the freezing dark at this demonic hour?

VALENTIN BISQUET

That woman's flat feet remind me of someone.

MARJORIE BISQUET

Until we get to the English Channel, nothing can remind us of anything.

HENRI and CECILE take the measure of VALENTIN and MARJORIE.

HENRI ALLONDE

They're huge, we'll need a stable of oxen to move the coach a meter.

CECILE ALLONDE

(huffily)

I'm not sitting anywhere near them.

HENRI ALLONDE

(chuckling)

Even from here, there's little choice. I've seen those coats somewhere.

CECILE ALLONDE

Nothing can remind us of anything until we're safe in England.

HENRI ALLONDE

Big enough to hibernate.

CECILE ALLONDE

(wryly)

Should be wearing sleep masks.

CECILE giggles.

The COACHMAN appears stage right holding a lantern.

COACHMAN

Messieurs, Mesdames, it's warmer in the coach.

(LIGHT CUE: BLACK.)

ACT I. SCENE 5.

(PROJECTION UPSTAGE: COACH with HORSES.)

VALENTIN and MARJORIE sit facing HENRI and CECILE on parallel benches.

The NUN is perched at the end of VALENTIN's and MARJORIE's bench.

MARJORIE BISQUET

I'm colder in here than out there.

VALENTIN BISQUET  
(peering out)

Sun's up!

HENRI ALLONDE  
(also peering out)

Someone find the damn coachman.

MARJORIE BISQUET  
(snapping)

Probably back in bed.

CECILE ALLONDE

Sleep is what that type knows best.

The COACHMAN opens the door.

Face hidden behind a massive scarf,  
BUTTERCUP, holding a wicker basket  
covered with a tablecloth,  
approaches the door of the coach.

CECILE ALLONDE  
(snapping)

Close the damn door!

BUTTERCUP clambers inside with the  
basket.

MUTTERING, HENRI yanks the door  
closed.

A rolled-up document held by a  
ribbon drops from BUTTERCUP'S coat  
as she wedges the basket under the  
bench in the corner opposite  
VALENTIN and MARJORIE, and sits  
next to HENRI and CECILE facing the  
NUN.

MARJORIE BISQUET  
(whispering to VALENTIN)

Nothing like airing dirty laundry in public.

VALENTIN CHUCKLES.

CECILE ALLONDE

(nudging HENRI)

Why isn't her peasant luggage in the back like the rest of ours?

HENRI ALLONDE

(whispering)

There's something between her and the coachman.

CECILE ALLONDE

(sniffs)

Two peas in a pod.

Just as BUTTERCUP spots her document on the floor, VALENTIN snatches it, yanks off the ribbon, and shows it to MARJORIE.

VALENTIN BISQUET

(whispering)

What kind of idiot carries around a drawing of Joan of Arc?

Marjorie distastefully drops both the drawing and the ribbon on the floor.

Before BUTTERCUP can grab the drawing, CECILE snatches and shows it to HENRI.

CECILE ALLONDE

(sarcastically)

Thinks she's Joan of Arc?

HENRI ALLONDE

(dead-pan)

All we need is a stake, a little firewood, and a few screaming peasants.

HENRI and CECILE GIGGLE.

BUTTERCUP snatches the drawing out of Cecile's hand.

BUTTERCUP

Joan of Arc will be a saint.

BUTTERCUP'S sincerity produces astonished GIGGLES from both the BISQUETS and the ALLONDES.

(SOUND CUE: Whip CRACKS; hooves POUND.)

The NUN hits the floor.

(PROJECTION UPSTAGE: COACH pulled by HORSES on ROAD.)

Transfixed by the NUN's eyes, BUTTERCUP offers her hand which the NUN stonily ignores and clambers back on the bench.

BUTTERCUP (CONT'D)

Sister, forgive me, but I think we've met.

NUN

(pulling out rosary)

I never take coaches.

(SOUND CUE: (V.O.) COACHMAN SHOUTS horses to a stop.)

HENRI ALLONDE

(irritably)

We're hardly out of town!

CECILE ALLONDE

(peeking out)

A highwayman!

An ill-fed, white-bearded HIGHWAYMAN has a rifle pointed at the COACHMAN, nods towards the coach door, and the COACHMAN opens it.

The HIGHWAYMAN points the rifle into the coach.

HIGHWAYMAN

Money and jewels!

HENRI gets out and assists CECILE  
and the NUN.

VALENTIN and MARJORIE get out.

BUTTERCUP doesn't move.

HIGHWAYMAN (CONT'D)  
(pointing rifle at Buttercup)

OUT!

VALENTIN BISQUET  
(nudging HIGHWAYMAN aside)

In modern times it's perfectly honorable to do what a  
highwayman demands, Mademoiselle!

HENRI ALLONDE  
(nudging HIGHWAYMAN other way)

It's universally recognized that highwaymen are to be obeyed.

MARJORIE BISQUET  
(bumping HIGHWAYMAN knocking  
rifle to ground)

We don't need trouble when so easily avoided.

CECILE ALLONDE  
(picking up and handing  
HIGHWAYMAN rifle)

No one in authority advises resisting a highwayman.

MARJORIE BISQUET  
(to HIGHWAYMAN)

She couldn't find a better time to be selfish?

CECILE ALLONDE  
(to HIGHWAYMAN)

We don't even know the woman.

BUTTERCUP leaps out, snatches the  
startled HIGHWAYMAN's rifle,  
smashes his chin with its butt, and  
tosses the rifle as far as she can.

Our REFUGEES stare gap-jawed at the  
HIGHWAYMAN unconscious and bleeding  
at their feet.

HENRI ALLONDE

(bowing)

We are honored to be in your presence, Mademoiselle.

VALENTIN BISQUET

(awed)

You're an inspiration to all us French patriots.

MARJORIE BISQUET

We are eternally in your debt.

CECILE presses BUTTERCUP'S hand  
against her chest.

CECILE ALLONDE

Still fluttering.

(LIGHT CUE: BLACK.)

ACT I. SCENE 6.

(SOUND CUE: hooves POUND; coach  
CREAKS.)

Back on their benches, MARJORIE and  
CECILE lean as close as they can to  
BUTTERCUP who is shrunken back as  
far away from them as she can get.

BUTTERCUP's eau de toilette causes  
both MARJORIE's and CECILE's noses  
to crinkle.

CECILE ALLONDE (CONT'D)

(gushingly)

You were thrillingly impetuous, Mademoiselle.

MARJORIE BISQUET

(breathlessly)

Selfless is hardly too strong a word.

(SOUND CUE: (V.0.) COACHMAN SHOUTS  
horses to stop.)

Our REFUGEES GROAN bitterly.

COACHMAN  
(sticking head inside)  
Tree limb's blocking the road.

CECILE ALLONDE  
(shrieking)  
We're doomed!

HENRI ALLONDE  
(grumpily)  
Can't these lazy Highwaymen find other French refugees to rob  
for once?

COACHMAN  
Only a limb.

VALENTIN BISQUET  
(suspiciously)  
What if a crafty criminal intends to sow doubt for easy  
assassination?

COACHMAN  
Snow did it.

BUTTERCUP  
Everyone has to help.

VALENTIN BISQUET  
I didn't pay for passage to the English Channel to engage in  
labor not fit for a man of my position.

HENRI ALLONDE  
(nodding brusquely)  
Hardly a task for people representing our station in life.

MARJORIE peers out the window.

MARJORIE BISQUET  
If we don't all pitch in like the young woman wisely said,  
this is as close as we're getting to English Channel.

Cecile winks at Buttercup.

VALENTIN, MARJORIE, HENRI, and  
CECILE clamber out followed by the  
NUN and BUTTERCUP.



Mutely following the COACHMAN's directions, VALENTIN, MARJORIE, HENRI, CECILE, the NUN, and BUTTERCUP all line up on one side of a tree limb perpendicular to the roadway.

COACHMAN (CONT'D)

When I count to three, lift.

MARJORIE BISQUET

What?

HENRI ALLONDE

Lift on three.

COACHMAN

One, two, THREE.

GROANING, our REFUGEES attempt a lift.

VALENTIN'S and CECILE'S hands slip off and the limb resumes its original position.

COACHMAN (CONT'D)

Again on three!

Everyone improves their stances and grips.

COACHMAN (CONT'D)

Three!

In a lopsided and staggering frenzy of clumsy baby steps, our Refugees transport the limb parallel to the road.

Bonded by their mutually heroic triumph over the limb, VALENTIN, MARJORIE, HENRI, and CECILE, gregariously shake hands, pat each other's backs, gush compliments, and warmly chattering about the vicissitudes of working together, clamber back into the coach.

BUTTERCUP and the COACHMAN grin.

(LIGHT CUE: BLACK.)

ACT I. SCENE 7.

(SOUND CUE: Hooves POUND; coach RUMBLES.)

VALENTIN, MARJORIE, HENRI, CECILE, the NUN, and BUTTERCUP are in their respective places on the coach benches.

MARJORIE's and CECILE's eyes lock through their face-masks.

MARJORIE BISQUET

(silkiily)

There is the alluring appearance, Madame, that we might be traveling at the same time.

CECILE glances at HENRI who nods piously.

CECILE ALLONDE

(enthusiastically)

There exists the pleasingly provocative insinuation, Madame, that we might be traveling, perchance at the same time.

Both VALENTIN and HENRI nod agreeably.

MARJORIE BISQUET

We should find it sublime if you would kindly share your name.

CECILE ALLONDE

(removing face-mask)

Madame Cecile Allonde, my husband, Monsieur Henri Allonde.

HENRI pulls off his face-mask.

MARJORIE BISQUET

(yanking off face-mask)

Madame Marjorie Bisquet, my husband, Monsieur Valentin Bisquet.

VALENTIN slides off his face-mask.

MARJORIE BISQUET (CONT'D)

Cecile!

CECILE ALLONDE

Marji!

VALENTIN BISQUET

Henri!

HENRI ALLONDE

Valentin!

VALENTIN and HENRI heartedly shake hands.

VALENTIN BISQUET

It's providential!

HENRI ALLONDE

The stars have aligned!

VALENTIN and CECILE excitedly exchange seats.

CECILE and MARJORIE commence an intense WHISPERED conversation punctuated by SHRILL LAUGHTER.

BUTTERCUP and the NUN share a wide-eyed look at the suddenly animated bourgeois couples.

VALENTIN BISQUET

(pridefully)

We dramatically improve the quality of French refugees.

HENRI ALLONDE

(modestly)

It cannot go without even subtle observation that we are model refugees for all conquered peoples.

VALENTIN BISQUET

(loftily)

High time we started giving back.

CECILE ALLONDE

Haven't we forgotten someone?

VALENTIN, MARJORIE, and HENRI smile embarrassedly at the NUN.

CECILE ALLONDE (CONT'D)

Not the kind sister.

Eyelashes fluttering, MARJORIE and CECILE smile forgivingly at each other, then sweetly at BUTTERCUP.

CECILE ALLONDE (CONT'D)

Please accept our sincerest apologies, Mademoiselle.

MARJORIE BISQUET

Everyone certainly sympathizes why one might be overwhelmed to uncover precious friends in such bothersome circumstances.

VALENTIN and HENRI HUM lyric agreement.

CECILE ALLONDE

Would you do us the exquisite honor of sharing your name?

BUTTERCUP

(softly)

Roxanne.

MARJORIE and CECILE COO.

MARJORIE BISQUET  
(to CECILE)

Fresh as spring.

CECILE ALLONDE  
(to MARJORIE)

Promenades right off the tongue.

MARJORIE BISQUET  
May I inquire as to your surname, Mademoiselle?

BUTTERCUP  
(ignorant of term)

My what?

CECILE and MARJORIE share a  
suspicious glance.

CECILE ALLONDE  
Simply your last name, Mademoiselle.

BUTTERCUP pauses before responding.

BUTTERCUP  
My mother's.

CECILE ALLONDE  
(taking sharp breath)  
Pray who else but a woman of such rarefied qualities would  
dare admit her mother's cardinal sin to a coach full of  
strangers?

MARJORIE BISQUET  
(eyes widening, then narrowing)  
Disarmingly provocative.

Our REFUGEES silence for  
BUTTERCUP's last name, but she  
remains mute.

CECILE ALLONDE  
(reverently)  
Roxanne's maidenly shy.

MARJORIE BISQUET

(voice quavering)

Pristine as virgin snow.

CECILE ALLONDE

Mademoiselle, we would all be greatly charmed if you would kindly share your mother's last name.

BUTTERCUP

(blurting out)

La Fever.

MARJORIE BISQUET

So it's--

VALENTIN/HENRI

Roxanne La Fever.

The familiarity in HENRI'S and VALENTIN'S tone and simultaneous delivery causes both MARJORIE and CECILE to glare suspiciously at them.

Suddenly both seized by the olfactory memory when complimenting BUTTERCUP on dispatching the highwayman, both MARJORIE and CECILE SNIFF.

MARJORIE BISQUET

(raising eyebrows at CECILE)

That pedestrian fragrance, Mademoiselle La Fever, are you routinely burdened with it?

CECILE ALLONDE

(suspiciously to MARJORIE)

That preying scent haunted the faithful from the choir loft at mass only last Sunday.

The NUN glares narrow-eyed at BUTTERCUP.

MARJORIE/CECILE

Mademoiselle La Fever?

BUTTERCUP slowly pulls off her scarf.

CLUCKING, MARJORIE and CECILE display their backs to BUTTERCUP.

The NUN scowls.

VALENTIN and HENRI are seduced by the ceiling fabric.

CECILE ALLONDE  
(hissing)

Wanton harlot.

MARJORIE BISQUET  
(snorting)

Absolutely lacking common human decency.

CECILE ALLONDE  
(heart-wrenchingly)

We're blameless victims of a diabolical, vile, and cruel subterfuge.

MARJORIE BISQUET  
(resentfully)

Pretending to be a heroine.

MARJORIE and CECILE both glare at their guilty-looking husbands.

(LIGHT CUE: DIM: SPOT on VALENTIN.)

ACT I. SCENE 8.

Center stage, BUTTERCUP's bed.

On her hands and knees, BUTTERCUP's head sticks out the drapery on one side.

Underclothes and pants over the bottom of VALENTIN's shoes stick out the drapery on the opposite side.

(SOUND CUE: Bed CREAKS and GROANS.)

VALENTIN BISQUET

Thank God Henri Allonde and I possessed the vision to establish the Home Guard to preserve us from the Prussians.

BUTTERCUP

(sarcastically)

Children dressed as soldiers?

VALENTIN BISQUET

Appearance is reality in war.

BUTTERCUP supports her chin with a fist.

BUTTERCUP

Someone has to actually fight.

VALENTIN GROANS.

Almost instantly, VALENTIN pulls on his underclothes and pants.

VALENTIN BISQUET

Stay out of mass on Sundays.

BUTTERCUP gets out of bed tying on a robe.

VALENTIN flips a shiny coin that BUTTERCUP deftly snatches out of the air.

BUTTERCUP struggles to keep from laughing as VALENTIN proudly dons a garishly festooned Grand Marshal's jacket, then adds a violet-colored sash reading: Angel of Death.

VALENTIN BISQUET (CONT'D)

Monsieur Allonde and I were made Grand Marshals of the Home Guard for the victory over the Prussians.



BUTTERCUP

(laughing)

Victory? What victory?

VALENTIN spots another violet-colored sash under his shoe.

VALENTIN BISQUET

Why's that Angel of Death sash under my shoe?

BUTTERCUP

Home Guard soldier must have left it.

VALENTIN BISQUET

(anxiously)

The Home Guard are saving us from the Prussians!

BUTTERCUP

Hadn't eaten in days.

Ripping off and throwing his Angel of Death sash on the stage, Valentin disappears stage right.

(LIGHT CUE: BLACK.)

ACT I. SCENE 9.

(PROJECTION of COACH and HORSES on ROAD)

(SOUND CUE: Coach CREAKS and ROCKS.)

MARJORIE sharply elbows VALENTIN.

HENRI peers sideways at BUTTERCUP.

(LIGHT CUE: DIM; SPOT on HENRI.)

(LIGHT CUE: BLACK.)

## ACT I. SCENE 10.

On BUTTERCUP's bed, HENRI, on his back with his pants and underclothes at his knees sticking out of the drapery on one side, head sticking out of the other, GROANS.

HENRI pulls up his underclothes and pants as he stands.

Henri dramatically puts on his garishly festooned Grand Marshal's jacket, then the violet-colored Angel of Death sash.

Henri is surprised to see another Angel of Death sash hanging from a bedpost.

HENRI ALLONDE

(officially)

Only the Home Guard are permitted Angel of Death sashes.

BUTTERCUP (O.S.)

(hidden by drapery)

Home Guard soldier left it.

HENRI ALLONDE

(horror-struck)

The Home Guard are preserving us from the Prussians!

BUTTERCUP (O.S.)

A military uniform with a scary sounding sash can't make a child a soldier.

HENRI ALLONDE

(optimistically)

Just one, right?

BUTTERCUP (O.S.)

Woods have been jumping with them for days.

HENRI tears stage right.

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

Forget something?

A shiny coin flies toward the bed.

HENRI ALLONDE (O.S.)

Have the decency to stay away from mass on Sunday!

(LIGHT CUE: BLACK.)

CECILE ALLONDE (V.O.)

HENRI!

ACT I. SCENE 11.

(SOUND CUE: HOOVES POUND, COACH  
CREAKS.)

(SOUND CUE: (V.O.) COACHMAN  
SHOUTS horses to halt; pained  
GROANS and MUMBLED EPITHETS from  
our REFUGEES.)

The COACHMAN appears at the door.

COACHMAN

Horses have to be fed and watered.

Our REFUGEES GROAN bitterly.

MARJORIE BISQUET

(taking Cecile's arm)

"Toilette."

MARJORIE and CECILE exit the coach  
stage right.

After a delicate interlude, the NUN  
extends her hand to HENRI who helps  
her down from the coach to exit  
stage left.

BUTTERCUP gets out, goes stage  
right, and prays to Joan.

(LIGHT CUE: DIM; SPOT ON  
BUTTERCUP.)

BUTTERCUP

Buttercup, Joan. I'm still stuck with the awful bourgeois. Why does God make people like that? Prussians are after me so I can't look for Regine. Please keep looking and send another sign if you get the chance.

(LIGHT CUE: BLACK.)

ACT I. SCENE 12.

Rigidly posed on their benches, our REFUGEES are grimly and mutely focused on getting to the halfway inn without further interaction with humans or foliage.

(SOUND CUE: Faint SPLASH, SHRIEK,  
PIGS SQUEALING.)

The smiling COACHMAN sticks his head inside.

COACHMAN

Horses are ready, where's the good sister?

CECILE ALLONDE

(primly)

Even Jesus obeyed nature's call.

Cloak and habit oozing fetid liquid, the NUN emerges stage left to clamber athletically into the coach pulling the door closed behind her.

Our REFUGEES gracelessly scramble out the opposite door waving their hands in front of their faces to gather at the rear of the coach.

MARJORIE BISQUET

I'm going to throw up.

BUTTERCUP GIGGLES.

HENRI ALLONDE

(chortling)

Stumbling into a half-frozen pig sty is hardly a laughing matter, Mademoiselle.

VALENTIN BISQUET

(glancing toward coach and  
hissing)

Have nuns no sense of smell?

CECILE ALLONDE

(hissing)

Damn incense.

VALENTIN BISQUET

(determinedly)

It's every man for himself!

MARJORIE BISQUET

(sarcastically)

You're the one who dragged her along for our divine protection.

CECILE ALLONDE

(hissing)

She's the bride of Jesus!

VALENTIN BISQUET

(motioning everyone closer)

Jesus didn't have Prussians hounding his every step!

CECILE ALLONDE

(adamantly)

I will not have Jesus's wife's death on my conscience!

MARJORIE BISQUET

We'll all go to Hell!

HENRI ALLONDE

(grumpily)

We've already arrived.

BUTTERCUP  
 (matter-of-factly)  
 She has to get rid of the habit.

HENRI urgently motions all to lower  
 their voices.

HENRI ALLONDE  
 (hissing)  
 Nobody's telling a nun to remove her habit!

VALENTIN BISQUET  
 (strangled whisper)  
 No proper Catholic would even dream such a sacrilege!

BUTTERCUP  
 Your wives can give her something to wear.

Before our REFUGEES can stop her,  
 BUTTERCUP grabs a valise, opens a  
 door to the coach, and hops inside.

MARJORIE BISQUET  
 (gritting teeth)  
 I didn't think it humanly possible for this wretched day to  
 get more vile.

CECILE ALLONDE  
 (perplexed)  
 Nuns have no fashion sense.

(LIGHT CUE: BLACK.)

ACT I. SCENE 13.

Holding her nose, BUTTERCUP is  
 seated across from the NUN with the  
 valise open on her lap.

BUTTERCUP  
 Anything tickle you?

The NUN scowls.

BUTTERCUP (CONT'D)  
 Sister?

NUN

They're just not my colors.

BUTTERCUP flips a dress onto the NUN's lap, closes the valise, and jumps out.

The NUN flings the dress out the door hitting BUTTERCUP's back.

(LIGHT CUE: BLACK.)

ACT I. SCENE 14.

(SOUND CUE: Hooves POUND; coach CREAKS.)

The NUN, wrapped tightly in a horse blanket up to her neck, rolls, sausage-like, back and forth on the coach bench.

(SOUND CUE: Coach CREAKS to a STOP.)

Our REFUGEES GROAN fitfully.

VALENTIN BISQUET

(chuckling)

I ordered the coachman to halt when we came to a flat stretch so we may enjoy our mid-day repast in peace.

MARJORIE and CECILE share a panicked glance.

VALENTIN nods expectantly at HENRI and CECILE, and smiles brightly at MARJORIE.

VALENTIN BISQUET (CONT'D)

Cherie, where did you secret our provisions for this day's gustatory diversion?

MARJORIE glances embarrassedly at CECILE.

HENRI rubs his hands together in ravenous expectation.

HENRI ALLONDE

(cheerily)

Cecile, I'm famished, where's our travel larder?

The question generates a single SOB from CECILE.

(SOUND CUE: Stomach GURGLE.)

VALENTIN and HENRI exchange sharp nods, exit the coach, and disappear stage right.

(SOUND CUE: URINATION on LEAVES.)

Momentarily, VALENTIN and HENRI enter stage right buttoning their pants.

(SOUND CUE: Leaves RUSTLE.)

Valentin/HENRI  
(HISSING)

Ambush!

(SOUND CUE: Leaves RUSTLE.)

VALENTIN BISQUET  
(panicked)

Steadfast!

(SOUND CUE: Leaves RUSTLE.)

HENRI ALLONDE  
(peering around frantically)

Resolute!

VALENTIN and HENRI tear pell-mell toward the coach and scramble inside.

(SOUND CUE: Leaves RUSTLE.)



BUTTERCUP enters stage left trailed  
by the COACHMAN.

VALENTIN and HENRI warily peek out  
a coach window.

BUTTERCUP struggles to keep a  
straight face.

BUTTERCUP

No ambush.

VALENTIN and HENRI share a  
contemptuous look.

VALENTIN BISQUET

Someone called Buttercup suddenly acquired the expertise to  
ascertain a classic ambush?

BUTTERCUP

(dead-pan)

Rabbit hole.

HENRI ALLONDE

(adamantly)

Valentin and I distinctly heard--

COACHMAN

(dead-pan)

Rabbits.

Overcome with amusement, BUTTERCUP  
and the COACHMAN turn away.

VALENTIN takes HENRI's arm.

HENRI ALLONDE

Our steely demeanor frightened the ambusher's away.

VALENTIN BISQUET

They realized the kind of men they were up against and wisely  
fled.

(SOUND CUE: Leaves RUSTLE.)

VALENTIN and HENRI SQUEAK and  
CLUTCH.

(LIGHT CUE: BLACK)

ACT II. SCENE 1.

PROJECTION UPSTAGE: COACH PULLED BY  
HORSES.

(SOUND CUE: Hooves POUND; coach  
CREAKS.)

Sour-faced, our REFUGEES rock  
forlornly from side-to-side on  
their benches.

Slowly, VALENTIN'S eyes widen and  
he breaks into a self-deluded  
smile.

VALENTIN BISQUET (CONT'D)

The worst is indisputably behind us.

A slumping HENRI'S eyes pop open  
and he straightens up.

HENRI ALLONDE

(proudly)

We've triumphed over every obstacle imaginable in a refugee's  
tormented path to freedom.

VALENTIN BISQUET

(finger at temple)

Kept our heads when other refugees would have lost theirs.

MARJORIE BISQUET

(squeezing CECILE's knee)

No simple task maintaining grace and dignity when forced to  
amuse oneself as a refugee.

HENRI ALLONDE

(stretching)

A hot soak and my fighting spirit is again nothing with which  
to trifle.

VALENTIN BISQUET

(poking bicep)

A snappy aperitif and I'm primed for man or beast.

CECILE ALLONDE

(sighing)

A great weight has been lifted.

HENRI ALLONDE

(SLAPPING VALENTIN's knee)

Wine's on me at the halfway inn!

Our tepidly restored REFUGEES  
gently clap their gloved hands.

A slight smile appears on the NUN'S  
face.

(SOUND CUE: LOUD BANG.)

Our REFUGEES, the NUN, and  
BUTTERCUP fly off their benches.

(LIGHT CUE: BLACK.)

ACT II. SCENE 2.

MARJORIE, CECILE, and the NUN  
shiver in the coach.

Next to the luggage piled  
haphazardly at the rear of the  
coach, VALENTIN, HENRI, and  
BUTTERCUP rub their arms and shake  
their frozen legs.

COACHMAN

(walking up)

Too much weight to get free of the pothole.

VALENTIN and HENRI regard each  
other in horror.

COACHMAN (CONT'D)

They stay and we won't thaw until spring.

VALENTIN and HENRI inhale fortifying breaths, tip-toe to the coach door, and reluctantly stick their heads inside.

At a nod from HENRI, VALENTIN starts to SPEAK when CECILE talks over him.

CECILE ALLONDE

Forcing delicate flowers into the freezing cold casts little impression on potholes.

MARJORIE and the NUN nod emphatically.

HENRI ALLONDE

(plaintively)

We've tried everything else.

The NUN SNEEZES.

VALENTIN BISQUET

(apologetically)

Weight combined.

HENRI ALLONDE

(over SHRILL protests)

The movement of a few sleek kilograms is the difference between freezing to death or very shortly welcoming the warmth and security of the halfway inn.

MARJORIE BISQUET

(dismissively)

Unload the luggage.

HENRI ALLONDE

(lightheartedly)

That has already been accomplished in anticipation of your thoughtful recommendation.

MARJORIE BISQUET

(shivering)

I never knew Hell got cold.

CECILE ALLONDE

I'll positively die!

(SOUND CUE: HOWLING WIND.)

VALENTIN and HENRI duck and pull their coats tight.

The NUN shivers uncontrollably under the horse blanket.

Trembling from the cold, MARJORIE waves VALENTIN and HENRI back, and yanks the door closed.

(LIGHT CUE: BLACK; LIGHTS UP.)

The COACHMAN opens a coach door and BUTTERCUP tosses in a CHITTERING SQUIRREL.

The COACHMAN SLAMS the door to hysterical SCREAMS.

(LIGHT CUE: BLACK.)

ACT II. SCENE 3.

(SOUND CUE: Hooves POUND; coach CREAKS.)

(LIGHT CUE: DIM; SPOT ON BUTTERCUP.)

BUTTERCUP, eyes closed, prays to Joan.

BUTTERCUP

(thinking to herself)

Me again, Joan. I tossed a squirrel into the coach to scare the women keeping us stuck in a pothole. The Nun flew out of the coach like a bat in a horse blanket; another sign would cheer me up.

(LIGHT CUE: LIGHTS UP.)

CECILE YAWNS, followed by  
MARJORIE'S SQUEAKY YAWN, then a  
SUCKING YAWN from the NUN.

VALENTIN and HENRI YAWN at the same  
time.

CECILE ALLONDE  
(abruptly SHRIEKING)

I can't feel my ears.

Cecile's SHRIEK startles our  
REFUGEEs who all require a few  
seconds to get their bearings.

HENRI ALLONDE  
(mournfully)

I'm one gaping hollow.

VALENTIN BISQUET  
(heatedly)

Lives were endangered, only a savage thinks about food!

MARJORIE BISQUET  
(snorting)

Prussians can't hold a candle to starvation.

CECILE ALLONDE  
(starry-eyed)

I want to be sautéed in foie gras.

HENRI ALLONDE  
(dreamily)

Me and a knuckle of ham.

CECILE pulls a flask from her coat,  
yanks the cork with her teeth, and  
downs a drink.

CECILE ALLONDE  
Cheats the hunger.

CECILE offers the flask to MARJORIE  
who takes a drink and hands it to  
HENRI.

HENRI wipes the top with his scarf, takes a mouthful, and hands it to VALENTIN.

VALENTIN takes a swig and keeps it.

CECILE stares dead-eyed at VALENTINE and MARJORIE until they look at her.

CECILE ALLONDE (CONT'D)  
(spookily)

I never fully appreciated the charm of cannibalism.

VALENTIN and MARJORIE share a horrified look.

HENRI takes the flask from VALENTIN and offers it to the NUN.

HENRI ALLONDE

Freshen your lips.

The NUN makes a lightning-fast sign of the cross, SUCKS the flask dry, and smirking, flips it into HENRI's lap.

Arms crossed, faces tucked into scarves, VALENTIN, MARJORIE, HENRI, CECILE, and the NUN close their eyes, hug themselves, and withdraw into solitary, frigid, sorry, and cripplingly ravenous thought.

BUTTERCUP opens her eyes, stretches, brings her heels back under her seat, and hits her wicker basket.

Smiling at her forgetfulness, BUTTERCUP spreads her legs and slides the basket out from under the bench.

BUTTERCUP removes a tablecloth, a crude earthenware plate and cup, and balances them on the seat between her and VALENTIN.

BUTTERCUP PEELS fat-soiled paper off a tureen.

VALENTIN's, MARJORIE's, HENRI's, CECILE's and the NUN's nostrils widen, eyes pop open, jaws contract, and heads snap towards the fortune of food and drink bookended by BUTTERCUP's calves.

Tantalizingly within lustful reach is a lavish array of the most appetizing and alluring food our REFUGEES have ever laid their eyes upon; really.

BUTTERCUP SNAPS off a chicken drumstick and our REFUGEES coronate the sound with orgiastic SIGHS.

BUTTERCUP yanks meat off the bone with her teeth and our REFUGEES SUCK the oxygen out of the coach.

CECILE ALLONDE

(stingingly)

I'll toss the cheap tablecloth, cup, food, basket, and whore out the door!

MARJORIE BISQUET

(sniffling)

She heartlessly shames us before our husbands.

BUTTERCUP glances at VALENTIN whose eyes are frozen on the titillating contents of her picnic basket.

BUTTERCUP

A soupçon, Monsieur Bisquet?



GROWLING prehistorically, VALENTIN assaults BUTTERCUP'S basket.

(SOUND CUE: LUTE, HARPSICHORD, and HARP MUSIC)

In a primordial feeding frenzy, MARJORIE, HENRI, CECILE, and the NUN join VALENTIN in rapaciously ransacking BUTTERCUP'S basket, psychotically cramming food into their mouths and into their clothing as fast as the coach's cramped quarters will physically permit.

VALENTIN'S, MARJORIE'S, HENRI'S, CECILE'S, and the NUN'S lips soon SMACK to the same beat seasoned by BURPING, savory MOANS, debris SUCKING from teeth, and celebratory FLATULENCE.

(SOUND CUE: MUSIC FADES; FAINT SNARLING AND GROWLING.)

VALENTIN BISQUET  
(pausing chewing)

QUIET! QUIET!!

HENRI ALLONDE

STOP CHEWING!

Our REFUGEES freeze mid-chew.

(SOUND CUE: LOUDER SNARLING AND GROWLING)

MARJORIE BISQUET  
(through food in mouth)

WOLVES!

CECILE ALLONDE  
(through food in mouth)

WE'LL BE TORN LIMB FROM LIMB!!

BUTTERCUP  
 (matter-of-factly to VALENTIN  
 and MARJORIE)

Wolves always eat the biggest first.

VALENTIN and MARJORIE CLUCK.

BUTTERCUP flips a stale croissant  
 into the basket.

BUTTERCUP (CONT'D)  
 Wolves smell anything, they won't give up.

BUTTERCUP nudges the basket into  
 the center of the coach.

MARJORIE BISQUET  
 (adamantly through food in  
 mouth)  
 I can't! I simply can't! I WON'T!

CECILE ALLONDE  
 (WAILING through food in mouth)  
 WE'RE GOING TO DIE ANYWAY!!

HENRI ALLONDE  
 (swallowing then speaking)  
 Don't they appreciate horse meat?

VALENTIN BISQUET  
 (swallowing then speaking)  
 Why take the chance?

HENRI grabs the ham bone from teary-  
 eyed MARJORIE and tosses it into  
 the basket.

MARJORIE MUTTERS hatefully under  
 her breath.

BUTTERCUP  
 Wolves smell anything...

From places in their clothing,  
 CECILE tosses a pastry; MARJORIE a  
 pomegranate; the NUN, a corchon.

BUTTERCUP (CONT'D)  
(tonelessly)

Everything.

VALENTIN worms a hand inside the crotch of his pants and retrieves a glob of cheese that slithers remorsefully off his fingers.

MARJORIE sticks a hand under her dress and produces a spiritless baguette that spools from her fingers.

HENRI sticks a hand down the back of his pants, jerks on something, and tosses a meatless chicken bone into the basket.

CECILE angles a hand into her décolletage and produces a slimy sausage that takes a swan dive off her fingers into the basket.

VALENTIN opens a door and BUTTERCUP kicks the basket out.

(SOUND CUE: HOWLS, GROWLS fade.  
Hooves POUND, coach CREAKS.)

Sated and exhausted, VALENTIN, MARJORIE, and HENRI soon SNORE peacefully.

CECILE's eyes grow heavy and almost instantly, she is asleep.

The NUN, cheered by the meal and sips of wine, intones a soft, mellow psalm to which BUTTERCUP, eyes closed, reverently HUMS.

The NUN's eyes flash angrily.

(LIGHT CUE: BLACK

## ACT II. SCENE 4.

(PROJECTION UPSTAGE: INN COURTYARD with COACH; CHIMNEY producing voluminous SMOKE.)

Center stage, a rough-hewn table with lit candles, baskets of bread, and artisanal clay pitchers and cups of wine.

(SOUND CUE: Pots and pans BANG and CLANG; a MAN and WOMAN BRAY at each other.)

SNIFFING voraciously as they enter center stage left, VALENTIN and MARJORIE energetically chase their noses to the end of the table closest to the NOISY kitchen stage right.

Entering center stage left, HENRI and CECILE preciously tip-toe their way towards VALENTIN and MARJORIE.

VALENTIN BISQUET

Henri!

MARJORIE BISQUET

Cecile!

CECILE and MARJORIE exchange air KISSES.

VALENTIN and HENRI SLAP their hands together for a hearty handshake.

MARJORIE BISQUET

(pulling chair away from table)

We absolutely insist!

Crammed shoulder-to-shoulder to  
prevent interlopers, VALENTIN,  
MARJORIE, HENRI, and CECILE  
joyfully fill, empty, and refill  
cups with wine.

HENRI ALLONDE

When the chips are down, financial status dictates survival.

VALENTIN BISQUET

(airily)

Informs one's performance under fire.

HENRI ALLONDE

(grabs MARJORIE's forearm)

It was divinely ordained that Valentin and I became refugees  
to defeat adversity.

MARJORIE BISQUET

(matter-of-factly)

I liked the ham bone.

Buttercup appears stage left to  
eavesdrop.

CECILE ALLONDE

What's-her-name would have some nerve sitting at our table.

MARJORIE BISQUET

Valentin, order what's-her-name to sit with the help.

CECILE ALLONDE

It would avoid unpleasantness.

MARJORIE BISQUET

Valentin, I can't possibly eat with what's-her-name.

HENRI ALLONDE

I'd think twice about saying anything.

VALENTIN BISQUET

She's feral and unpredictable.

BUTTERCUP prays to Joan before  
entering.

(LIGHT CUE: DIM: SPOT ON  
BUTTERCUP.)

BUTTERCUP

Joan, the bourgeois ate all my food, couldn't get over me saving them from some highwayman and some wolves, now don't want me near them. God doesn't punish people with terrible signs, but the bourgeois sure deserve one.

(LIGHT CUE: LIGHTS UP.)

BUTTERCUP enters and heads towards  
our REFUGEES.

VALENTIN, MARJORIE, HENRI, and  
CECILE are dumbstruck.

Halfway down the length of the  
table, BUTTERCUP snatches a pitcher  
of wine and a cup, and turns in the  
opposite direction.

BUTTERCUP sits at the opposite end  
of the table, pours a cup of wine,  
smirks knowingly at the still  
catatonic VALENTIN, MARJORIE,  
HENRI, and CECILE, and positions  
her chair to face the fireplace.

The NUN enters wearing a dressing  
gown. She and BUTTERCUP lock eyes  
for an instant before she sits  
alone in the middle of the table  
facing the House.

(LIGHT CUE: DIM; SPOT.)

BUTTERCUP's eyes widen, she stands  
to face House, and a searing memory  
materializes.

(LIGHT CUE: BLACK.)

I N T E R M I S S I O N

## ACT III. SCENE 1.

In grim dimness, in a single narrow bed, a WHEEZING gray-faced WOMAN writhes painfully.

A silent FIGURE lurks in the shadows stage left.

The WOMAN in bed GROANS and a foot extends from the shadows.

(SOUND CUE: INFANT CRYING.)

The foot disappears back into the shadows.

An anxious teenage BUTTERCUP carrying a CRYING INFANT appears stage right. Sensing danger, she ducks from sight.

MOTHER  
(weakly)

"Buttercup?"

BUTTERCUP, taut with fear, enters jiggling the CRYING INFANT.

Emerging from the shadows arms extended, the NUN.

NUN  
The bastard.

Panicked, BUTTERCUP turns to leave.

MOTHER  
(coughing)

Buttercup?

Torn, BUTTERCUP turns back.

NUN  
Your mother is meeting her maker, the bastard.



BUTTERCUP

(angrily)

She's not a bastard! Her name is Regine!

MOTHER

(hoarsely)

Buttercup, the gentle sister is only here to help.

BUTTERCUP reluctantly hands REGINE to the NUN and approaches her MOTHER's bed repeatedly glancing back to make sure REGINE remains in the NUN's arms.

BUTTERCUP hugs her MOTHER and unleashes a COUGHING FIT.

(SOUND CUE: CRYING ceases.)

BUTTERCUP instantly springs up.

The NUN'S arms are empty.

BUTTERCUP

Where's Regine?

NUN

You're still a child, soon without a mother.

BUTTERCUP

(SOBBING)

No, NO!

NUN

(officially)

You must atone for your sins.

MOTHER

(COUGHING)

Buttercup.

A soulful GASP sends BUTTERCUP tearing back to the bed where she embraces her deceased MOTHER and SOBS.

NUN

(approaching BUTTERCUP)

The good Lord selflessly provides painful wisdom to young sinners.

The NUN yanks sharply on BUTTERCUP's wrist.

NUN

You'll come immediately to the convent.

(LIGHT CUE: BLACK.)

ACT III. SCENE 2.

Teary-eyed, BUTTERCUP is about to confront the NUN when the COACHMAN enters. BUTTERCUP smiles gratefully at him and he sits alone at a tiny table stage left.

VALENTIN, MARJORIE, HENRI, CECILE, and the NUN are in their established places at the dining table.

VALENTIN and HENRI, keeping their backs to BUTTERCUP, posting queasy smiles, approach the COACHMAN.

HENRI ALLONDE

Bracing adventure.

VALENTIN BISQUET

We've made arrangements for a new coach and driver.

HENRI ALLONDE

The wives, unpleasant memories.

COACHMAN

(downing slug of wine)

I know the feeling.

VALENTIN BISQUET

Memories you will have the decency to keep to yourself.

COACHMAN  
(resentfully)

You don't expect--

VALENTIN BISQUET  
(head bobbing in concert with  
HENRI)

Keep every franc!

VALENTIN and HENRI maintain their backs to BUTTERCUP and return triumphantly to their end of the table.

The INNKEEPER delivers a plate to BUTTERCUP, sets another before an empty chair near her, and motions the COACHMAN over.

Tureens and platters of food arrive that VALENTIN, MARJORIE, HENRI, CECILE, and the NUN attack as if they haven't eaten in a fortnight.

The INNKEEPER'S WIFE sits between VALENTIN, MARJORIE, HENRI, and CECILE and BUTTERCUP next to the NUN facing House, downs a glass of wine, and quickly pours another.

The INNKEEPER sits across from his WIFE.

The COACHMAN sits in the chair next to BUTTERCUP and she nods sharply towards the NUN.

BUTTERCUP  
(gravely)

She stole Regine.

INNKEEPER'S WIFE  
(hand even with neck)

I've had it up to here with these fancy pants Prussians. Pork and potatoes, potatoes and pork. Day after day. Fancy pants, my foot, they're nothing more than potatoes and pork.

INNKEEPER SHUSHES her.

The INNKEEPER'S WIFE DRAINS her cup  
and pours another.

Smiling triumphantly, HENRI extends  
his cup toward VALENTINE, their  
cups CLACK, and they each drain  
their cups.

INNKEEPER'S WIFE

That Prussian captain's in love with tight pants and shiny  
boots.

VALENTIN/MARJORIE/HENRI/CECILE

(alarmed)

Prussian captain?

CECILE ALLONDE

Henri was awarded transit papers by a Prussian General.

MARJORIE BISQUET

I believe Valentin bribed the general first.

VALENTIN and HENRI exchange  
embarrassed looks.

INNKEEPER

(BELCHING)

Took our hamlet a month ago.

VALENTIN BISQUET

(locking eyes with HENRI)

He mention when he'd be back?

INNKEEPER

(snorting)

When it suits him.

INNKEEPER'S WIFE

(speculatively)

I have no idea how he gets out of those pants without help.

INNKEEPER

(winking at WIFE)

Captain takes his pick.

MARJORIE/CECILE  
(sharing anxious look)

Pick?

INNKEEPER'S WIFE  
(licking lips lewdly)

Whatever French woman he fancies.

(reacting to VALENTIN's, MARJORIE's, HENRI's,  
and CECILE's expressions)  
We did lose the war.

MARJORIE BISQUET  
(thrusting chest out)

He absolutely respects the institution of marriage, they're  
not complete savages, these Prussians!

CECILE ALLONDE

He wouldn't dare!

HENRI ALLONDE  
(arching neck)

It's a degenerate violation of international canons of  
military ethics.

VALENTIN BISQUET  
(running hand sleekly over  
hair)

I'd report him forthwith to the proper authorities.

The INNKEEPER and the INNKEEPER's  
WIFE share an astonished look and  
burst into LAUGHTER.

A tall, lean, blond Prussian  
CAPTAIN with a large yellow  
handlebar mustache enters stage  
left to gaze implacably at our  
REFUGEES.

INNKEEPER  
(bolting toward CAPTAIN)

Keep your big mouth shut, Mireille!

Bewildered by the INNKEEPER's abrupt departure, VALENTIN, MARJORIE, HENRI, CECILE, the NUN, BUTTERCUP, and the COACHMAN follow his movement until they see the uniformed Prussian CAPTAIN and all GASP.

The COACHMAN leans towards BUTTERCUP.

COACHMAN  
(worriedly)

He here for you?

BUTTERCUP smiles at the CAPTAIN who nods stiffly.

She shakes her head 'no.'

(LIGHT CUE: DIM; SPOT on BUTTERCUP.)

BUTTERCUP  
Joan, you sent another damn Prussian! Oops, sorry.

(LIGHT CUE: LIGHTS UP.)

The CAPTAIN approaches the table.

CAPTAIN  
(crisply)

You are civilian captives of the Imperial Crown of Prussia and shall immediately provide identification and transit papers.

HENRI ALLONDE  
(springing to feet)  
My transit papers are signed by your commanding general!

VALENTIN BISQUET  
(jumping up)

MINE TOO!!

CAPTAIN  
 (wearily)  
 Obtain the required documentation.

VALENTIN and HENRI scurry stage  
 left.

The NUN stands.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)  
 You are?

NUN  
 A Sister of the Lamentable Poor.

CAPTAIN  
 Where's your habit?

The NUN yanks a handful of scapular  
 away from her neck.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)  
 (gesturing at Coachman)  
 You?

COACHMAN  
 Drove the coach.

CAPTAIN  
 You'll be transporting soldiers.  
 (to BUTTERCUP)  
 Do you have the required documentation, Mademoiselle?

BUTTERCUP  
 (contemptuously)  
 I don't need documentation to prove I'm a proud citizen of  
 the Republic of France!

WIVES AND NUN  
 (horrifically)  
 Roxanne, please!

BUTTERCUP pops up and strides  
 toward the CAPTAIN who, utterly  
 flabbergasted, is forced to jump  
 out of her way.

(LIGHT CUE: BLACK.)

ACT III. SCENE 3.

BUTTERCUP enters stage right and heads center stage.

Brandishing a knife, a soiled bandage around his head, the SOLDIER from BUTTERCUP's kitchen enters downstage left.

SOLDIER

DIE HURE!

BUTTERCUP stops at a window and turns to confront the SOLDIER racing, knife extended, toward her.

The SOLDIER lunges with the knife, BUTTERCUP deftly steps aside, and he disappears upstage.

(SOUND CUE: GLASS SHATTERS; SCREAM; THUNK.)

(LIGHT CUE: BLACK.)

ACT III. SCENE 4.

(PROJECTION UPSTAGE: INN with CHIMNEY SMOKE.)

MARJORIE and CECILE, facing House, are perched in wide-eyed silence at their end of the table.

The CAPTAIN and the INNKEEPER converse in low tones.

BUTTERCUP pops in stage left and slaps her identity card into the CAPTAIN's hand.

(SOUND CUE: SHOUTS of ALARM.)



The CAPTAIN presses BUTTERCUP's card into the INNKEEPER's hand.

CAPTAIN

Collect the documents.

The CAPTAIN rushes stage left as VALENTIN and HENRI enter stage right.

HENRI ALLONDE

(approaching table)

What happened?

MARJORIE BISQUET

Just pray it has nothing to do with us.

VALENTIN, MARJORIE, HENRI, and CECILE eye each other mournfully.

(LIGHT CUE: BLACK.)

ACT III. SCENE 5.

The CAPTAIN sits in chair center stage facing the House. A stack of papers sits on the table next to him.

A GUARD enters stage right.

GUARD

The private was with the brigade that took Rouen. The town surrendered without a fight, but his head was bandaged before he hit the cobblestones; a knife was next to his body.

CAPTAIN

Civilians involved?

GUARD

That young woman looked out the same window right after he flew through it.

The CAPTAIN paws through the documents and yanks one out.

CAPTAIN

(reading)

French identity card says Roxanne La Fever; no transit papers.

The GUARD removes an envelope from a coat pocket.

GUARD

(handing envelope to CAPTAIN)

A courier brought this from your father, the general; he wants an immediate response.

CAPTAIN

(yanking another document from stack)

I know who my father is, on the table.

GUARD

(hesitantly)

He needs an immediate resp...

CAPTAIN

(tossing document on table and snatching another)

I have a dead soldier likely killed by a civilian and I will respond once I have dispatched my sworn duties.

The GUARD sets the envelope on the table, salutes, and exits stage right.

CAPTAIN

(snorting)

Tried to keep me out of the war in bleak hamlets, HA!

The CAPTAIN finishes examining a document and shoves it into the stack knocking his father's message onto the floor.

(LIGHT CUE: BLACK.)

## ACT III. SCENE 6.

The NUN enters the empty dining room stage left and spots something under the table.

The INNKEEPER'S WIFE appears upstage right stirring a bowl with wooden spoon.

The NUN picks up the document, yanks off the ribbon to reveal a drawing of Joan of Arc.

The NUN calmly RIPS the drawing into tiny pieces.

The spoon over her mouth in shock, the INNKEEPER'S WIFE disappears.

BUTTERCUP enters stage left, immediately spots the ribbon covered by pieces of paper on the floor, and hurriedly gets down on her knees to collect them in her skirt.

BUTTERCUP pauses to stare at the stone-faced NUN.

NUN

Didn't anyone ever teach you that it's impolite to stare?

BUTTERCUP

You tore up Joan of Arc.

The NUN stares unblinkingly at her bible.

NUN

It's a cardinal sin to pray to graven images.

BUTTERCUP

Joan of Arc will be a saint.

NUN

It's been nearly five centuries since Joan of Arc was burned at the stake. The Good Lord obviously doesn't intend sainthood, you might as well pray to a block of cheese.

BUTTERCUP stands and dumps the pieces of the drawing collected in her skirt on the table.

BUTTERCUP

You stole Regine.

The NUN SLAPS her bible closed.

NUN

God took your bastard child.

BUTTERCUP

Her name is Regine and I put her in your arms.

NUN

I'm the bride of Jesus of Nazareth and you put your bastard in God's arms.

BUTTERCUP

WHERE'S REGINE!

The NUN and BUTTERCUP silence when VALENTIN, MARJORIE, HENRI, and CECILE enter stage left to sit mutely and despondently at their end of the table.

The NUN and BUTTERCUP glare silently at each other.

Tenderized refugees VALENTIN, MARJORIE, HENRI, and CECILE place their heads in their arms over the table.

(SOUND CUE: LOUD VOICES.)

MARJORIE lifts her head slightly.

One of CECILE's eyes pops open.

VALENTIN and HENRI tighten their eyes and GRUMBLE.

(LIGHT CUE: DIM; SPOT DOWNSTAGE RIGHT.)

The INNKEEPER and his WIFE sit drinking at a small table.

Sporting mischievous smiles, the INNKEEPER and his WIFE raise their voices and SPEAK for our REFUGEES' benefit.

INNKEEPER'S WIFE

That bonbon belonging to Monsieur Mutton-chop snagged the handsome Prussian's eye.

INNKEEPER

Muttonchops that look like muskrats' asses.

They LAUGH.

INNKEEPER (CONT'D)

Might favor meat on his bones.

INNKEEPER'S WIFE

(panicked)

Heaven knows what gets loosed if the corset comes off the plentiful one!

INNKEEPER

(as if to bolt)

Lard avalanche, run for your life!

More LAUGHTER.

The NUN SNAPS her bible shut and disappears stage left.

Our REFUGEES storm out in a collective huff stage left.

BUTTERCUP tip-toes towards the Innkeeper and wife.

INNKEEPER (CONT'D)

(chuckling)

That got them out of our hair.

INNKEEPER'S WIFE

How about the looks when I said the Captain takes whatever French woman he wants?

INNKEEPER

(ROARING with vulgar LAUGHTER)

That prig has never dipped his quill.

BUTTERCUP glances at the House and raises her eyebrows just slightly.

(LIGHT CUE: BLACK.)

ACT III. SCENE 7.

CAPTAIN seated in chair center stage with GUARD standing next to him.

CAPTAIN

Send someone to Rouen to see if the dead private was quartered with La Fever.

GUARD

What about the transit papers?

CAPTAIN

Bourgeois bribes are my father's pension plan. Give them to that sly Innkeeper so he can chisel some francs from them and tell him to bring me La Fever.

GUARD

The Nun told the Innkeeper's wife La Fever's a prostitute called 'Buttercup.'

CAPTAIN

(chuckling)

Like every French woman, no?

They ROAR with brassy LAUGHTER.

ACT III. SCENE 8.

VALENTIN and HENRI are head-to-head  
at the end of the dining table  
MURMURING.

At the opposite end of the table,  
sipping wine, BUTTERCUP gazes at  
the fire.

Her back to BUTTERCUP, the NUN  
reads her bible.

MARJORIE leads CECILE downstage  
right.

MARJORIE BISQUET

(primly)

The strapping young captain would naturally choose you for  
his sinful assignation because he unfailingly senses I am  
pristinely married.

CECILE ALLONDE

(ominously)

I've journeyed countless heaving miles with young officers;  
no telling what perversions twist their otherwise unoccupied  
minds.

MARJORIE BISQUET

(fanning herself)

It would be against the laws of God and nature.

CECILE ALLONDE

(dead-pan)

That's the attraction.

MARJORIE CHIRPS, adjusts her  
bodice, then smiles slightly.

The INNKEEPER enters and approaches  
BUTTERCUP.

INNKEEPER

Captain wants you.

BUTTERCUP

No Prussian dare command anything of a citizen of the  
Republic of France!

INNKEEPER

(chuckling)

"Dare command?" Yeah, sure. Get moving, I have important things to do.

Making a face at our REFUGEES, the INNKEEPER impatiently motions for BUTTERCUP to stand.

BUTTERCUP

The French do not do the bidding of Prussians!

The INNKEEPER grabs BUTTERCUP's shoulder and she peels his hand off.

Our REFUGEES WHISPER anxiously.

INNKEEPER (CONT'D)

You're all in deep trouble.

CHORTLING, the INNKEEPER disappears stage left.

CECILE ALLONDE

(whispering bitterly to  
MARJORIE)

Only a barbaric Prussian would choose a common whore over two noble French women!

MARJORIE BISQUET

(tremulously)

I was poised to make the ultimate patriotic gesture.

Winking conspiratorially at MARJORIE, HENRI, and CECILE, VALENTIN takes a seat next to BUTTERCUP.

VALENTIN BISQUET

Manners prevent us from showing it, but as fellow Frenchmen, we passionately embrace your feelings towards those who occupy our precious nation by force.

BUTTERCUP

Filthy swine!



VALENTIN BISQUET

We must, however, even in these vexing circumstances, not allow the enemy to sow distrust.

BUTTERCUP

(as if reflecting)

Stick together.

VALENTIN BISQUET

(flashing smile)

Insight beyond your tender years, Mademoiselle. The handsome young captain likely seeks clarification of some trivial aspect of your documentation, probably a clerical error. Your tete-a-tete will be brief and by tomorrow morning, we'll be happily on our way.

Smiling confidently at our REFUGEES, BUTTERCUP exits stage left.

VALENTIN hurriedly re-joins MARJORIE, HENRI, and CECILE.

BUTTERCUP appears unnoticed stage left to eavesdrop.

VALENTIN BISQUET (CONT'D)

I bribed the innkeeper for our transit papers, another coach takes us to the Channel at dawn.

HENRI ALLONDE

What about what's-her-name?

MARJORIE's and CECILE's jaws set.

MARJORIE/CECILE

(chillingly)

No room for the whore.

(LIGHT CUE: BLACK.)

ACT III. SCENE 10.

Downstage center, the CAPTAIN faces the House.

Appearing stage left, BUTTERCUP unbuttons her dress and approaches the CAPTAIN from behind.

BUTTERCUP

Cherie?

The CAPTAIN shoves the empty chair at his back with the bottom of his foot toward BUTTERCUP.

CAPTAIN

Mademoiselle La Fever.

BUTTERCUP sits on the edge of the chair at the CAPTAIN'S back.

Peering at the House, the CAPTAIN clasps his hands behind him.

BUTTERCUP

(sighing)

I cry myself to sleep because I thought you'd never order me to your bed.

CAPTAIN

(smirking contemptuously)

Futile tears, Mademoiselle, my bed is always flawlessly occupied.

BUTTERCUP

(again sighing)

I dream only of you.

The CAPTAIN abruptly faces BUTTERCUP.

Shocked and embarrassed, he shrinks back dutifully maintaining his eyes above BUTTERCUP's head.

CAPTAIN

Redecorate yourself! What do you take me for? Good God!

BUTTERCUP  
 (brightly)  
 An impossibly dashing idol of women.

CAPTAIN  
 (snapping angrily)  
 Conduct yourself with dignity in the presence of a Prussian  
 captain!

BUTTERCUP  
 (spreading knees)  
 I'm already moist.

CAPTAIN  
 (STOMPS foot)  
 We are not here to discuss precipitation! When you receive my  
 order next, you shall be chastely prepared. You and your  
 companions shall remain at this inn until you do so and  
 explain the dead soldier!

BUTTERCUP rises and slowly moves  
 stage right.

The CAPTAIN glances back.

BUTTERCUP licks her lips lewdly.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)  
 (spinning away)  
 CHASTELY PREPARED!

Utterly perplexed, the CAPTAIN  
 slumps in the chair.

(LIGHT CUE: BLACK.)

ACT III. SCENE 11.

BUTTERCUP bursts into the Great  
 Room and VALENTIN, MARJORIE, HENRI,  
 and CECILE spring from their  
 chairs.

BUTTERCUP  
 BASTARD! SCOUNDREL!!

## OUR REFUGEES

Mademoiselle?

BUTTERCUP flings a forearm over her eyes and storms out.

BUTTERCUP (O.S.)  
THAT PRUSSIAN WANTS ME CHASTELY PREPARED!

(LIGHT CUE: BLACK.)

## ACT III. SCENE 12.

(PROJECTION UPSTAGE: ALTAR WITH CROSS.)

BUTTERCUP enters center stage right, genuflects, and kneels facing the altar.

(PROJECTION UPSTAGE: JOAN OF ARC.)

## BUTTERCUP

Hi Joan, me. I hope your feelings weren't hurt when the nun ripped you to pieces and called you a grave image because you've been dead forever. I'll offer a prayer to make you feel better.

BUTTERCUP makes the sign of the cross and bows her head.

Entering downstage left carrying a document tied with a ribbon, the INNKEEPER'S WIFE pads up behind BUTTERCUP and sets it on a pew.

The INNKEEPER'S WIFE genuflects and tip-toes out.

BUTTERCUP sits on the bench, feels something with her right hand, picks up the document, and delicately unties the ribbon.

A drawing of Joan of Arc.

BUTTERCUP looks up toward the heavens and smiles.

BUTTERCUP

Merci, Joan.

(LIGHT CUE: BLACK.)

ACT III. SCENE 13.

MURMURING a rosary, the NUN crosses from center stage left to center stage right.

BUTTERCUP enters center stage right with the drawing of Joan of Arc, sees the NUN, and shows it to her.

BUTTERCUP

Where's Regine, Sister?

Filled with horror, the NUN tears center stage left.

ACT III. SCENE 14.

Center stage right, VALENTIN perches on a stool and peers in.

HENRI, in a dressing gown, tip-toes to a door stage left and KNOCKS.

HENRI ALLONDE

(urgently)

Buttercup, Henri; Henri, Buttercup.

VALENTIN, hands flying to his mouth to stifle his AMUSEMENT, falls off the stool.

HENRI ALLONDE (CONT'D)

(insistently)

Won't take but two minutes.

In a nightgown, BUTTERCUP opens the door.

BUTTERCUP

(hissing)

Get away from here!

HENRI ALLONDE

(showing coin)

Being a refugee is backbreaking.

Back on the stool covering his mouth with both hands, VALENTIN balances awkwardly.

HENRI touches BUTTERCUP's breast with the coin and she sends it flying.

BUTTERCUP

(LAUGHING)

Think I'm doing anything with a Prussian prisoner?

(LIGHT CUE: BLACK.)

ACT III. SCENE 15.

(LIGHT CUE: DIM.)

Bundled in heavy clothing, center stage next to their luggage, MARJORIE, CECILE, and the NUN.

Downstage enter, peering anxiously at the House, VALENTIN and HENRI.

VALENTIN BISQUET

(disgustedly)

The lazy French are the same in a city or some backwater hamlet!

HENRI ALLONDE

(contemptuously)

You'd think these Gallic rustics would cherish paying customers during an enemy occupation.

VALENTIN and HENRI nod curtly at MARJORIE, CECILE, and the NUN before slipping stage right.

MARJORIE and CECILE embrace and exit stage left.

The NUN follows.

VALENTIN and HENRI appear center stage left and approach the STABLE OWNER holding a baguette.

HENRI ALLONDE (CONT'D)

Bonjour, Monsieur, do you know where we might locate the stable owner?

STABLE OWNER

(chewing bread)

Stables are mine.

VALENTIN BISQUET

(snapping)

You were to have our coach at sunrise!

STABLE OWNER

(airily)

Got new orders.

HENRI ALLONDE

Who gave you the new orders?

STABLE OWNER

(chewing)

Innkeeper.

HENRI ALLONDE

Why would he do that?

STABLE OWNER shrugs.

(LIGHT CUE: BLACK.)

ACT III. SCENE 16.

(SOUND CUE: earsplitting SNORING invaded by boiler-like TREMORS.)

Center stage, next to the dining table, VALENTIN, HENRI, and the INNKEEPER'S WIFE circle each other warily.

INNKEEPER'S WIFE

He's not to be awakened except in case of fire.

HENRI ALLONDE

This is life-and-death!

INNKEEPER'S WIFE

I wait, you wait.

Plopping despondently at the table, VALENTIN and HENRI stare blankly at the House.

Shortly, upstage, the sleepy-eyed INNKEEPER enters.

HENRI ALLONDE

Why did you cancel our coach?

INNKEEPER

(scratching)

Captain ordered me.

VALENTIN BISQUET

Why would he do that?

INNKEEPER

Why should I know?

VALENTIN BISQUET

You know everything at this inn, Monsieur.

The INNKEEPER peers suspiciously around the room before speaking in a WHISPER.

INNKEEPER

Prussian captives don't get explanations.

(LIGHT CUE: BLACK.)



## ACT III. SCENE 17.

Cynically observed by the INNKEEPER'S WIFE, MARJORIE and CECILE are crouched uncomfortably over a low table CRACKING walnuts and dropping the meat into a bowl.

CECILE SIGHS balefully.

CECILE ALLONDE

Maybe she'll listen to that abominable nun.

The pace of MARJORIE'S NUT-CRACKING increases dramatically.

MARJORIE BISQUET

Seems to aspire to religion in some God-awful manner.

HOWLING SATANICALLY, Cecile backhands the bowl of walnut meat across the floor forcing the INNKEEPER'S WIFE to leap into the air.

(LIGHT CUE: BLACK.)

## ACT III. SCENE 18.

BUTTERCUP enters stage left and sits at the end of the table opposite VALENTIN, MARJORIE, HENRI, and CECILE who all idly observe the INNKEEPER'S WIFE remove the remnants of their meal.

The INNKEEPER enters stage left, approaches BUTTERCUP, and all necks crane in their direction.

INNKEEPER

It's beyond me, but this perpendicular Prussian pointedly wants to know if you're chastely prepared?

BUTTERCUP

(dashing stage left)

NO. NO! NO!!

WHISTLING amusedly, the INNKEEPER disappears stage left.

Valentin edges HENRI center stage right with Henri longingly looking where BUTTERCUP departed.

HENRI ALLONDE

Despicable holding us hostage for sordid physical gratification.

VALENTIN BISQUET

(WHISPERING lustfully)

Chastely prepared, must be addictive.

(LIGHT CUE: BLACK.)

ACT III. SCENE 19.

VALENTIN, MARJORIE, and CECILE are crammed tightly together at their end of the table while the NUN says a rosary by the fireplace.

The INNKEEPER pokes his head in center stage left.

INNKEEPER

The Captain laughed at the idea of keeping La Fever and letting you go.

MARJORIE BISQUET

(POUNING table)

I'll expire of old age in this wretched hellhole!

CECILE ALLONDE

(furiously)

It's that vixen's trade, she has no right to refuse one over another!

MARJORIE BISQUET

(yawning)

Her virtuous airs bore me to death.

After a tortured moment of silence, CECILE takes MARJORIE by the arm and gracefully guides her stage left.

CECILE ALLONDE

(WHISPERING salaciously)

Freedom prowls in our loins.

(LIGHT CUE: BLACK.)

ACT III. SCENE 20.

In bed, center stage, the CAPTAIN, entertaining a cherubic smile, is sound asleep.

Materializing center stage right in a voluminous nightgown, MARJORIE THUNDERS full-throttle toward the CAPTAIN's bed.

MARJORIE BISQUET

TAKE ME! TAKE ME!! TAKE ME!!!

MARJORIE stumbles, strikes the corner of the bed, and the CAPTAIN goes flying.

The CAPTAIN's arrival on the floor is heralded by a lung-clearing OOF.

WHIMPERING, as rapidly as he can on his hands and knees, the CAPTAIN RUMBLES stage right.

MARJORIE rolls off the bed onto the floor, stumbles to her feet, and reels stage right.

Shortly, the CAPTAIN reappears center stage right, lurching wildly when he feels a nudge.

The vastly amused INNKEEPER squeezes past the CAPTAIN carrying two steaming buckets towards a bathtub.

CAPTAIN

You dare haul contraband into my private quarters?

INNKEEPER

(cheerily)

A caressing soak in virgin French water will reinvigorate your Teutonic savoir faire, mon capitaine. I'll keep water animated should your torrid skirmishes demand further steeping.

The CAPTAIN ducks behind a dressing screen.

CAPTAIN

(in high dudgeon)

Only in France would a devout Lutheran get mugged in immaculate slumber!

(SOUND CUE: POURING water.)

His back to the CAPTAIN, GIGGLING under his breath, the INNKEEPER slowly empties the bucket.

INNKEEPER

Hazard a guess as to who sought to share your prodigious insolence, mon capitaine?

CAPTAIN

(snapping)

It's France, a fragrant gargoyle!

Tears in his eyes from the struggle to control his amusement, the INNKEEPER sets the empty bucket down and grabs the other one.

INNKEEPER

I trust Madame possessed savoir faire sufficient to light up her Christian name?

CAPTAIN

(utterly confused)

Wanted me to take her somewhere! Holy Jesus, can't she tell it's the dead of night!

(SOUND CUE: POURING WATER.)

The INNKEEPER empties the second bucket and exits.

(SOUND CUE: LAUGHTER.)

Scowling at the LAUGHTER, the CAPTAIN painstakingly CLIPS his mustache in a mirror.

Pausing, he shudders at the memory of MARJORIE, then resumes CLIPPING.

CECILE tip-toes in from stage right, drops her dressing gown, and slips undetected into the tub.

The CAPTAIN tosses his gown over the dressing screen, wets a finger, and tests the air as he approaches the tub.

Closing his eyes, tilting his head back slightly, the CAPTAIN extends a wrist into the tub and engages a warm breast that caresses him with a seductive SIGH.

CATERWAULING as if snake-bitten, he stumbles stage right, grabs the dressing screen and, clumsily carrying it, disappears center stage right.

CECILE springs from the tub, throws her dressing gown over her shoulders, and tears stage right.

Shortly, the INNKEEPER enters center stage right followed by the CAPTAIN still bearing the dressing screen.

Peering fearfully over the top of the screen, the CAPTAIN watches the INNKEEPER swirl his hand in the tub water.

CAPTAIN

Be sure you get to the bottom.

INNKEEPER

(removing arm, shaking it,  
struggling not to laugh)

Did the most recent sylph, mon capitaine, possess Gallic aplomb of such inundating quantity as to inspire the disrobing of her God-given name for a nickname?

Angrily shoving the dressing screen to land flat on the floor, the CAPTAIN struts around holding his head.

CAPTAIN

Perky French breasts announce themselves! This brothel of a nation is lactating with them! OUT!

The CAPTAIN follows the INNKEEPER as he exits center stage right, mimes locking and testing the door, and kneels next to the bed to pray.

(SOUND CUE: Raucous LAUGHTER.)

The CAPTAIN leaps into bed and pulls the covers over his head.

(LIGHT CUE: BLACK.)

ACT III. SCENE 21.

(LIGHT CUE: DIM.)

Seated at the dining table, CECILE is bent over with her head between her knees.

The side of MARJORIE's face is distorted against the table top.

Slumped in a chair, VALENTIN's arms are extended perpendicular to his body as if crucified.

HENRI storms in center stage left.

HENRI ALLONDE

No amount of money will persuade that baguette-gumming stable oaf to rent us a coach and horses!

BUTTERCUP appears center stage right to eavesdrop.

SHRIEKING, MARJORIE yanks her hair with both hands.

MARJORIE BISQUET

I have to get out of here!

CECILE ALLONDE

(sputtering)

Would it have killed her to secretly seek out the captain this morning so that we might have a joyful surprise?

MARJORIE BISQUET

To her, it's shaking hands!

CECILE ALLONDE

(reasoning calmly)

She could have saved appearances by telling the captain she took pity on our distress. No one would have been the wiser and we'd be long gone.

HENRI'S wan expression suddenly brightens, and he smiles confidently at VALENTIN.

HENRI ALLONDE

Valentin, all opponents suffer defeat when the timeless art of French subterfuge receives masterful application.

VALENTIN rises heroically.

VALENTIN BISQUET

Henri, any human citadel shall be breached with inspired Gallic deceit.

MARJORIE and CECILE huddle for an intense discussion.

BUTTERCUP enters center stage left to sit at her end of the table.

VALENTIN, MARJORIE, HENRI, and CECILE exchange knowing, narrow-eyed nods signaling the commencement of the SEIGE on CITADEL BUTTERCUP.

CECILE ALLONDE

(sing-song)

Innkeeper's wife said you visited the chapel this morning, Mademoiselle La Fever?

HUMMING, MARJORIE collects a table setting and, with saucy elan, sets it before BUTTERCUP.

Cheerily, HENRI pours wine until the cup overflows.

VALENTIN BISQUET

(exuberantly)

Innkeeper, Innkeeper, another meal, toute de suite!

Our REFUGEES and the NUN who watches like a hawk, gather giddily at BUTTERCUP's end of the table.

The INNKEEPER's WIFE sets a towering plate of food in front of BUTTERCUP.



Gesticulating enthusiastically,  
VALENTIN, MARJORIE, HENRI, and  
CECILE MURMUR transparent lies  
about how appetizing the food  
appears and smells.

BUTTERCUP

(as she chews)

Does one good to pray.

CECILE touches MARJORIE's hand.

CECILE ALLONDE

Women rarely get credit for their sexual heroics.

MARJORIE BISQUET

(ominously)

Because we act it out in ways undetectable by men.

VALENTIN and HENRI share a sunken  
look.

BUTTERCUP pauses chewing, flowering  
unrestrained and wholly unwarranted  
optimism about the imminent victory  
in the SIEGE on CITADEL BUTTERCUP.

CECILE ALLONDE

One only needs to harken back to Cleopatra who reduced enemy  
generals to panting toadies by the strategic surrender of her  
considerable physical charms.

Wide-eyed with sheer ignorance,  
BUTTERCUP SWALLOWS abruptly.

Vastly under-confused about the eye  
widening and swallow, VALENTIN,  
MARJORIE, HENRI, and CECILE are  
instantly ablaze with passionately  
muttered affirmation.

CECILE ALLONDE (CONT'D)

These heroines relied on their curves, a weapon unrivaled by  
man's most ingenious inventions of war.

Brow deeply furrowed in fruitless thought, BUTTERCUP nods and our REFUGEES sprout goose bumps they unconsciously rub.

CECILE ALLONDE (CONT'D)

(warbling)

We owe fond memory to the brave women who vanquished invaders with their heroic caresses.

MARJORIE dabs an eye with her handkerchief.

To what our REFUGEES wrongly attribute as the surrender to the towering saga of female carnal subterfuge, BUTTERCUP's fork HITS the floor.

Faint with delirious expectation, our weak-kneed REFUGEES lean on the table and each other.

The INNKEEPER enters and our REFUGEES part like the Red Sea.

INNKEEPER

(bored to tears)

So Mademoiselle, this stiff Prussian once again, yet one more time after so many rigid times previously, still wishes to know if you are chastely prepared?

The impossibly winning smiles of our REFUGEES cascade over BUTTERCUP who loads food into her mouth and chews as if engaged in meaningful contemplation.

Our REFUGEES hold their quaking breaths until she SWALLOWS.

BUTTERCUP brushes her lips with her napkin, drops it on her half-finished plate of food, and heads stage left.

BUTTERCUP

(matter-of-factly)

No, Monsieur, I am not.

Our REFUGEES' volcanic SIGHS  
deflate their cheesy optimism.

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

Chastely prepared.

Eyes violent, spittle on their  
lips, our outraged REFUGEES stare  
bewilderingly at each other.

CECILE ALLONDE

Chastely prepared?

VALENTIN BISQUET

CHASTELY PREPARED!

MARJORIE BISQUET

(hysterically)

She's an emotional kidney stone grinding through me night  
after night after night!

Cecile PLOPS into BUTTERCUP's  
abandoned chair.

CECILE ALLONDE

I'm getting embalmed, it's the only way out.

VALENTIN notices BUTTERCUP stage  
left.

VALENTIN BISQUET

SHHHH!

(smarmily)

Mademoiselle?

BUTTERCUP

Who's Cleopatra?

MARJORIE's and CECILE's foreheads  
simultaneously THUNK on the table.

(LIGHT CUE: BLACK.)

## ACT III. SCENE 22.

Our addled REFUGEES push their uneaten meals to the edge of the table.

VALENTIN, a bundle of nerves, repeatedly TAPS the heel of his fork on the table.

MARJORIE BISQUET

I refuse to eat another plate of this slop.

CECILE ALLONDE

These horrid French bumpkins know any other way to cook besides boiling?

VALENTIN BISQUET

(bolting stage left)

Everything is ultimately free enterprise!

Bored to death, MARJORIE and CECILE STACK plates and utensils and carry them stage right.

## ACT III. SCENE 23.

VALENTIN waits impatiently for BUTTERCUP.

BUTTERCUP enters center stage right and regards VALENTIN warily.

VALENTIN BISQUET

Henri Allonde and I will pay any amount you want, no questions asked, to be freed from this lacerating confinement.

BUTTERCUP

I will never sleep with a Prussian.

VALENTIN BISQUET

Sinning for a living doesn't come with the right to pick and choose!

BUTTERCUP

You dress children as Home Guard soldiers to die at the hands of the Prussians!

Sputtering angrily, VALENTIN storms center stage left.

ACT III. SCENE 24.

VALENTIN storms in center stage right towards HENRI.

VALENTIN BISQUET

(sputtering)

Turned down real money spewing patriotic hogwash!

HENRI ALLONDE

(contemptuously)

What's a whore know about patriotism!

MARJORIE and CECILE dash in center stage right and tear stage left.

Corsets, petticoats, bellies, elbows, knees, single and double chins, and noses collide as they struggle to squeeze through a narrow opening producing a cacophony of unladylike GRUNTS, SQUEAKS, and SQUAWKS.

(SOUND CUE: HEAVY feet POUND up stairs.)

(LIGHT CUE: Lights DIM, then UP.)

MARJORIE and CECILE enter center stage right.

CECILE ALLONDE

(huffing)

The captain's water lubricated me!

MARJORIE BISQUET

(puffing)

I deflowered his bed!

They irritably SHUSH each other as  
BUTTERCUP appears stage left.

CECILE ALLONDE

(screeching)

There's nothing more on God's green earth I can erotically  
contrive!

MARJORIE BISQUET

(huskily)

I transformed my body into uncivilized wilderness ripe for  
savage conquering!

BUTTERCUP

(chuckling as she disappears)

Vive la France.

SOBBING, MARJORIE and CECILE sink  
to the floor.

(LIGHT CUE: BLACK.)

ACT III. SCENE 25.

VALENTIN, HENRI, and the NUN huddle  
downstage right.

NUN

She commits a cardinal sin every time she prays to the graven  
image of Joan of Arc.

VALENTIN BISQUET

Buttercup actually imagines she's devout.

HENRI ALLONDE

We've spent ourselves ragged to convince her to honor the  
hard-fought freedom of her fellow Frenchmen.

NUN

I'll pray on it.

(LIGHT CUE: BLACK.)

ACT III. SCENE 26.

Our resolutely stone-faced REFUGEES and the NUN march single file past BUTTERCUP, take chairs away from the table as they glide around it, and form a loose circle downstage center.

The INNKEEPER enters and approaches BUTTERCUP.

Our REFUGEES and the NUN exchange conspiratorial, cold-eyed glances.

INNKEEPER

Okay, Mademoiselle, this wantonly turgid Prussian satyr yet again one more be-stiffed time achingly demands to know if you are chastely prepared?

BUTTERCUP

NEVER!

CHUCKLING, the INNKEEPER exits.

VALENTIN BISQUET

Sister, perhaps you can guide us in resolving a deeply vexing ecclesiastical conundrum.

Buttercup has no clue what Valentin just said.

The NUN's smile flashes like the blade of a guillotine.

NUN

I can certainly weigh solutions the Good Lord is eager to embrace.

Our REFUGEES exchange savage glances.

HENRI ALLONDE

It would lift a mournful heaviness from our troubled consciences.

VALENTIN BISQUET

We are not only Prussian hostages, but even more aggrievedly, hostages to ourselves.

Our REFUGEES' heads bob up-and-down  
in urgent agreement.

BUTTERCUP's brow furrows in utter  
confusion.

NUN

(silkiily)

The problem to which you refer is driven by one of the most admirable of beliefs of god-fearing citizens, love of country. It is my informed canonical opinion, however, that if a motive is praiseworthy, God perceives eccentric acquiescence morally fungible.

Scratching their heads, BUTTERCUP  
and MARJORIE both mangle the big  
words when they try to repeat them.

VALENTIN BISQUET

Does God accept all methods and pardon the act when the motive is pure?

NUN

Reprehensible action is capable of deriving merit from the thought which inspired it. The lecherous tyranny of an alien officer must be assuaged in favor of the devout who sanctify their souls daily in God's serene honor.

Our REFUGEES make the sign of the cross and reverently tilt their heads to pray, each carefully keeping an eye on Buttercup as she absent-mindedly makes the sign of the cross, wanders center stage left, and stops.

(LIGHT CUE: DIM; SPOT ON  
BUTTERCUP).



BUTTERCUP

Joan, the Nun just committed a mortal sin. If you've got an extra one lying around, a holy sign might help her remember that she's still the bride of Jesus.

(LIGHT CUE: BLACK.)

ACT III. SCENE 27.

Center stage, the CAPTAIN sits in a chair facing the House.

The GUARD enters stage right.

GUARD

The dead private was quartered with La Fever. She broke a wine bottle over his head, bound him with cheesecloth, and left him for dead.

CAPTAIN

Get the girl!

GUARD

(chuckling)

Chastely prepared?

CAPTAIN

By the hair if you must!

GUARD

(spotting envelope on floor)

Isn't that your father's message?

CAPTAIN

(embarrassedly)

The general!

The GUARD picks up the envelope, hands it to the CAPTAIN, salutes, and exits stage right.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)

(ripping open envelope and scanning letter)

Oh, my God.

Shaken, the CAPTAIN plops in a chair with his father's letter dangling from his fingertips.

(SOUND CUE: KNOCK.)

GUARD (O.S.)

La Fever.

CAPTAIN

(uneasily)

Send her in.

From center stage right, BUTTERCUP is shoved so hard she lands on the floor.

The CAPTAIN tries to help her up, but BUTTERCUP angrily shoves him away.

Mortified by her near nakedness, the CAPTAIN averts his eyes, removing and holding out his dressing gown.

BUTTERCUP slips it on.

Stage right, VALENTIN appears to eavesdrop.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)

Accept my sincere apology for having you brought here without being allowed to dress properly.

BUTTERCUP

(sarcastically)

Chastely prepared?

CAPTAIN

(holds out letter)

Read this.

BUTTERCUP

(stammering shamefacedly)

I, I never learned.

CAPTAIN

It's from our father.

BUTTERCUP

(snapping)

I have no father!

CAPTAIN

(measuredly)

A young officer, our father came to Rouen during the last war and fell in love with Roxanne La Fever.

BUTTERCUP

(stunned, then outraged)

HE RAPED HER!

The CAPTAIN slides a chair towards BUTTERCUP and helps her sit.

CAPTAIN

(gently)

Natural to think so, but it was simply young love. She passed, I'm very sorry.

BUTTERCUP

(choking up)

That nun took Regine at mother's death-bed, locked me in a convent, and gave her to someone in Rouen. I escaped to Paris and did what I had to for Regine.

CAPTAIN

Father married my mother and he and your mother's lives never crossed.

(gently touching BUTTERCUP's  
cheek)

Father didn't learn about you until he returned because of this war and looked for your mother. He wants to meet both you and Regine.

BUTTERCUP

We have to find Regine.

The CAPTAIN helps BUTTERCUP to her feet.

CAPTAIN

You'll have a coach to the Channel first thing in the morning so you'll be safe.

BUTTERCUP

We have to find Regine first.

CAPTAIN

I must ask, did you push our soldier out the window?

BUTTERCUP

Chased me with a knife and tripped.

CAPTAIN

Why did you attack him in your kitchen?

BUTTERCUP

Thought I came with the victory.

The Captain pauses and smiles.

CAPTAIN

How did you get the nickname "Buttercup?"

BUTTERCUP

(dropping eyes)

Mother said I was as sweet and innocent as a spring flower.

The CAPTAIN takes BUTTERCUP into his arms.

(LIGHT CUE: DIM; SPOT on VALENTIN.)

Shocked and profoundly disgusted by the wrongfully perceived embrace, VALENTIN disappears.

(LIGHT CUE: LIGHTS UP.)

BUTTERCUP

Regine.

CAPTAIN

I'll bring her to you, promise.

(LIGHT CUE: BLACK.)

## ACT III. SCENE 29.

(PROJECTION UPSTAGE: COACH AND HORSES.)

VALENTIN presses large bag of coins into the STABLE OWNER's hand, pats his back, and clambers inside the coach.

VALENTINE, MARJORIE, HENRI, and CECILE smirk triumphantly at each other.

VALENTIN BISQUET

Where's the good Sister?

CECILE ALLONDE

(flippantly)

Muttering around eyes half-closed with that claustrophobic rosary.

VALENTIN BISQUET

I have a toothsome secret.

(SOUND CUE: FAINT SHRIEK, SPLASH, PIGS SQUEALING.)

BUTTERCUP suddenly appears at the open coach door, stealing our REFUGEES' attention from the faint pig sty catastrophe.

VALENTIN/HENRI

(sneering)

No fraternizers!

MARJORIE BISQUET

(snidely)

Traitors need not apply!

BUTTERCUP

This coach is mine!

MARJORIE BISQUET

(smirking at Cecile)

And we know how you got it.

BUTTERCUP

(aghast)

I'd never do anything with that Prussian captain!

MARJORIE and CECILE CACKLE.

VALENTIN BISQUET

A guard brought you to his room last night.

BUTTERCUP

(combatively)

How do you know?

VALENTIN BISQUET

(winking at fellow REFUGEE's)

Mysteries of the corridor.

CECILE ALLONDE

(contemptuously)

You expect us to believe we're being allowed to leave this god-forsaken rat-hole because some loathsome Prussian respects a common whore for not sleeping with him?

BUTTERCUP

(hotly)

He does respect me.

MARJORIE BISQUET

(mirroring other REFUGEES'  
sneers)

Convince us.

BUTTERCUP

(defensively)

It's our secret.

Our REFUGEES are startled to see the NUN, habit grossly stained and dripping swine effluvia, appear out of nowhere to speak to BUTTERCUP.

NUN

The first step toward redemption, my child, is the acceptance of one's sins.

The coach door is suddenly yanked closed causing BUTTERCUP and the NUN to reel backwards.

VALENTIN BISQUET (V.O.)

GO!!

(SOUND CUE: Whip CRACKS; coach SHUDDERS; HOOVES POUND.)

(LIGHT CUE: DIM; SPOT on BUTTERCUP and NUN.)

The NUN BURSTS into tears and sinks to her knees.

BUTTERCUP looks down at the NUN for a poignant moment.

Teary-eyed, the NUN looks up at BUTTERCUP.

BUTTERCUP extends a hand.

The NUN takes it and BUTTERCUP pulls her to her feet.

NUN

It's just you, me, and God now, Buttercup.

BUTTERCUP

And Joan.

NUN

(chuckling ruefully)

And Joan.

BUTTERCUP

Take me to Regine.

NUN

I'll need a dress.

Glancing at each other, BUTTERCUP and the NUN burst into LAUGHTER.

ACT III. SCENE 30.

The GUARD enters stage right clutching two badly soiled Grand Marshals' jackets and approaches the CAPTAIN seated at a table.

CAPTAIN

Where are the bourgeois?

GUARD

Headed for the Channel in Roxanne's coach.

CAPTAIN

Roxanne?

GUARD

Left both her and the Nun in the courtyard.

The CAPTAIN stands and gestures at the Grand Marshals' jackets.

CAPTAIN

What are those filthy rags?

GUARD

Grand Marshals' jackets and an Angel of Death sash.

CAPTAIN

Saddle my horse.

ACT III. SCENE 31.

Stage Left, BUTTERCUP sticks her head in and frantically looks around then disappears.

(SOUND CUE: Feet POUNDING up stairs.)

(SOUND CUE: Feet POUNDING in hallway above ceiling.)



(SOUND CUE: Feet POUNDING down stairs.)

BUTTERCUP races from stage left to disappear stage right.

Breathless BUTTERCUP re-appears stage right just as the COACHMAN enters stage left.

COACHMAN

Why are you still here?

BUTTERCUP

Bourgeois stole the coach; where's the captain?

COACHMAN

Just rode out.

The freshly-scrubbed NUN appears in a form-fitting, very flattering dress.

BUTTERCUP

The good sister will take us to Regine.

The COACHMAN is captivated by the NUN's civilian appearance.

COACHMAN

Sister?

BUTTERCUP sharply KNEES the COACHMAN.

COACHMAN

Ow!

ACT III. SCENE 32.

(PROJECTION UPSTAGE: COACH AND HORSES ON ROAD.)

(SOUND CUES: Whip CRACKS; hooves POUND; coach CREAKS)

VALENTIN BISQUET (CONT'D)

Know who Buttercup's father is?

CECILE ALLONDE

Didn't we just rid ourselves of her forever?

MARJORIE BISQUET

I don't have the strength to care one way or the other.

VALENTIN BISQUET

The general who signed our transit papers. A young officer in the invasion before this one, he came to Rouen and fell in love with Roxanne La Fever, Buttercup's mother.

MARJORIE BISQUET

(derisively)

Romance among the miscreants.

VALENTIN BISQUET

Had a son.

CECILE ALLONDE

(laughing)

With La Fever?

VALENTIN BISQUET

Prussian wife.

CECILE ALLONDE

(mock horror)

We're hostages to a tale without an end!

VALENTIN BISQUET

(chuckling)

Last night Buttercup slept with her brother to free us.

(LIGHT CUE: BLACK.)

VALENTIN/MARJORIE/HENRI/CECILE

(V.O.)

"CHASTELY PREPARED!!"

(SOUND CUE: Gleeful, SINISTER  
HOWLING LAUGHTER over POUNDING  
hooves.)

(PROJECTION: ROUEN SIGN; COACH and HORSES RACING TOP SPEED on ROAD.)

(SOUND CUE: HOOVES POUNDING; COACH RUMBLING.)

ACT III. SCENE 33.

REFUGEE luggage is piled haphazardly center stage.

VALENTIN and HENRI haplessly clutch their transit papers.

In tears, MARJORIE and CECILE hang on to each other.

The CAPTAIN folds back the lapel of one of the Grand Marshal's jackets, then flings it at VALENTIN.

CAPTAIN  
(sarcastically)  
"Grand Marshal Valentin Bisquet."

The CAPTAIN pulls back the lapel of the other Grand Marshal's jacket, then flips it at HENRI.

CAPTAIN  
(contemptuously)  
"Grand Marshal Henri Allonde."

The CAPTAIN pulls the Angel of Death sash from a pocket, shows it to VALENTIN and HENRI, and drops it at their feet.

CAPTAIN  
(chuckling)  
You two gladiators are the only Angel of Death prisoners of this war.

(LIGHT CUE: BLACK.)

ACT III. SCENE 34.

From downstage left, the NUN leads BUTTERCUP across from a tiny town house upstage center.

The NUN kisses BUTTERCUP on both cheeks, hurries across the street, and POUNDS stoutly on a door.

A sour-faced, gray-haired WOMAN opens the door and peers quizzically at the NUN, then toward BUTTERCUP.

NUN

I'm here for Regine.

WOMAN

(suspiciously)

Don't I know you?

REGINE appears next to the WOMAN.

BUTTERCUP

(SHOUTING)

REGINE! REGINE! I'M MAMAN!

Starting toward REGINE, BUTTERCUP is violently seized by a Prussian SOLDIER.

REGINE

(starting for Buttercup)

MAMAN!

The WOMAN yanks REGINE back through the doorway, then SLAMS and locks the door.

Resisting the Prussian SOLDIER, BUTTERCUP sees a half shutter open center stage right revealing REGINE.

BUTTERCUP

MAMAN, REGINE, MAMAN!!

A PRUSSIAN GENERAL, wearing a medallion-decorated great coat, appears upstage right and strolls downstage contemplatively smoking a huge pipe.

REGINE leaps onto the stage and tears downstage center towards BUTTERCUP and the SOLDIER.

REGINE

MAMAN!

The sour-faced WOMAN appears at the window, GROUSES something, YANKS the shutters tight, and LOCKS them.

The GENERAL does a double-take when he sees BUTTERCUP and REGINE embracing.

GENERAL

(shouting at Soldier)

Release her.

GENERAL

Roxanne?

BUTTERCUP GASPS and tears up.

GENERAL

(approaching, waving SOLDIER away)

Bonjour, Regine.

REGINE

(utterly perplexed)

How do you know my name?

GENERAL

(smiling warmly)

I'm your grandfather.

The GENERAL takes REGINE by the hand, BUTTERCUP takes her other hand and all face downstage center.

Smiling happily, the NUN appears  
upstage right.

NUN  
(YELLING)

Buttercup!

BUTTERCUP turns and smiles.

NUN  
Guess who's chastely prepared?

The NUN joyfully laughs and  
disappears upstage right.

The smiling COACHMAN appears  
downstage right.

GENERAL  
Who's that?

BUTTERCUP  
Regine's father.

GENERAL  
No, that beautiful woman.

BUTTERCUP  
(chuckling)  
A chastely prepared Sister of the Lamentable Poor.

(LIGHT CUE: DIM; SPOT on  
BUTTERCUP.)

BUTTERCUP smiles at the heavens.

BUTTERCUP  
Couldn't have done it without you, Joan.

(LIGHT CUE: BLACK.)

THE END

INSERT: Jeanne d'Arc became a saint  
in 1920.

