

Marvelous Madeleines

A Full Length Play

Wendy Schmidt

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CHARACTERS

ASTRID-NOÉMI	20s-40s, female, French accent; creative director of Marvelous Madeleines; a genius of cake design.
TOM FLANDERS	20s-40s, male, American; Director of Marketing for National Cookies; a genius of marketing; dressed for golf.
SIMONE	40s-60s, female, French accent; CEO of Marvelous Madeleines
HAROLD KNICKERBOCKER	40s-60s, male, American; CEO of National Cookies
SANDY MULLEN	30s-60s, female, American; Administrative Assistant to Harold Knickerbocker
RÉMY	20s-50s, male, French accent; Chief Accountant for Marvelous Madeleines; extremely neat

THE SCENE

Set can be very minimal with one or two items to indicate: several Paris cafes; a Catholic church; the living room of Harold Knickerbocker's home; a Protestant church

SCENE 1

(A café on the Place de la Bastille in Paris. SIMONE and RÉMY sit at a table facing out. The Bastille monument would be located where the audience is. Enter ASTRID-NOÉMI.)

ASTRID-NOÉMI

And voilà.

(SHE places a tiny, precious, satin-beribboned box on the table.)

ASTRID-NOÉMI

You will not believe the madeleine that is in here. When you taste it, you will realize, you may have had madeleines before, but you have never really known what it means to love.

(ASTRID-NOÉMI lifts the lid. RÉMY and SIMONE peer inside. They remove two madeleines.)

RÉMY

Oh – mon Dieu – what is this? What an unusual shade of green – is it chartreuse – no, citron – oh, my what is it?

SIMONE

The iridescent flakes, just to look at it in the light is a feast. What is it? What is it?

ASTRID-NOÉMI

You have to taste it first.

(RÉMY and SIMONE sink their teeth into the madeleine, and moan.)

RÉMY

Oh, that is orgasmic.

SIMONE

I am coming. I am coming multiple times. Oh!

ASTRID-NOÉMI

Lemon basil. Pistachio. Black pepper –

RÉMY

And mango!

ASTRID-NOÉMI

Nope.

RÉMY

Orange zest! Peaches!

ASTRID-NOÉMI

Nope! Tangerine juice.

SIMONE

Ahh.

RÉMY

Ahh. And these are on the shelves today?

ASTRID-NOÉMI

I just put them out. The line was a block and a half long today, but I don't think we'll run out – I designed a second one too.

SIMONE

Wonderful. I don't know how you do it. Where do you get your inspiration?

ASTRID-NOÉMI

Well, this madeleine came out of the keen sense of both rage and jealousy that Erwan is moving on with his life, and I am not in it.

SIMONE

What?

ASTRID-NOÉMI

We broke up.

SIMONE

Oh, my.

ASTRID-NOÉMI

But look on the bright side – now we can get married.

SIMONE

Yes – that's true!

RÉMY

Well, whatever the inspiration, I am glad that Marvelous Madeleines are still selling like hotcakes, because our debt only gets worse.

ASTRID-NOÉMI

Oh, Rémy – we'll get an American company to sell our madeleines in the U.S. like everyone else is doing. That'll take care of it.

RÉMY

I hope so, because we just received this.

(Enter HAROLD, TOM, and SANDY from across the stage, backing towards ASTRID-NOÉMI, SIMONE, and RÉMY's table, gazing out.)

RÉMY

(Passing a letter around.)

Marvelous Madeleines is being sued for back rent.

ASTRID-NOÉMI

I thought we paid our rent.

HAROLD

(Pointing into the audience.)

According to the map it should be right about there.

RÉMY

No, we were paying off the sugar bill instead.

SANDY

In the middle of the street?

ASTRID-NOÉMI

Without sugar we cannot make madeleines.

TOM

Maybe it's that big round thing over there.

RÉMY

Without a shop we cannot sell madeleines.

SANDY

No, that's the opera.

ASTRID-NOÉMI

That's true, it's hard to choose.

HAROLD

Well, all I see is another one of those poles with a statue on top. They sure have a lot of –

(HAROLD, TOM, and SANDY back into ASTRID-NOÉMI, SIMONE, and RÉMY's table and tip it over.)

RÉMY
Mon Dieu!

HAROLD
 Oh, terribly sorry.

SANDY
 We're sorry! Here, let us help you.

TOM
 Good going, Harold, you're knocking over the French people.

ASTRID-NOÉMI
 Oh – that's all right.

SIMONE
 Don't worry about it.

HAROLD
 Here, let me get that –

(HAROLD, SANDY and TOM help them pick up
 their table and coffee cups.)

HAROLD
 We'll buy you new coffees –

SIMONE
 Oh, you don't have to do that.

HAROLD
 I insist.

ASTRID-NOÉMI
 That's really kind, but –

HAROLD
 Name your poison.

ASTRID-NOÉMI
 I'm sorry?

RÉMY
 Oh – that means, what are you drinking!

HAROLD
 That's right! Hey, you have pretty good American for a French guy.

RÉMY

Thank you.

SIMONE

Are you looking for something?

SANDY

Yes! We're looking for the Bastille.

(Pointing out.)

According to the map it should be right about there.

HAROLD

It's the only thing left on our list, and I'll be danged if it's hiding from us.

SIMONE

Oh, it's not hiding, the revolutionaries tore it down with their bare hands.

HAROLD

You don't say!

RÉMY

Yes, they didn't leave one brick upon another brick.

ASTRID-NOÉMI

In fact, once the bricks themselves had been pulverized, they peed on them till they were mud.

HAROLD

Golly! Remind me never to piss off a Frenchman.

RÉMY

At least not a starving one.

HAROLD

Harold Knickerbocker, CEO of National Cookies. As you can probably tell, we're here on business, but we're doing a little sightseeing too.

SIMONE

I am Simone, and this is my company, Marvelous Madeleines. We make madeleines.

HAROLD

Oh! Nice! We make cookies. Lots of 'em.

SIMONE

I think I have heard of you.

HAROLD

We've never heard of you! In fact, I'm not even sure what a madeleine is.

ASTRID-NOÉMI

Oh, it's a French national treasure. It is a sponge cake shaped like a little shell – are you sure you've never seen them?

TOM

Oh, you know what they are, Harold, they have them at Starbucks.

ASTRID-NOÉMI

We make the most exquisite ones on the planet.

TOM

I'm sure you do, being French.

ASTRID-NOÉMI

Even so, Marvelous Madeleines – they are the best in France.

RÉMY

In fact, we are in the process of going bankrupt paying for sugar.

SIMONE

Shut up, Rémy.

HAROLD

Well! We are the largest cookie company on the planet, and we run a marketing machine like nothing humankind has ever seen.

TOM

Yep.

SIMONE

You sound so big and strong.

HAROLD

We are! And we're impervious to debt. You know, as big and successful as National Cookies is, we're single. What about – er – er –

SIMONE

Oh, Marvelous Madeleines is single too! You know, companies have been getting married in France for some time now.

HAROLD

Well, I should hope so, in the U.S. it's illegal for anyone else.

SIMONE

Yes - of course! This may be Europe, but it's not the dark ages.

HAROLD

That's nice! Simone. Er - do you mind if we join you?

SIMONE

Oh! Well, er - No! We would be delighted.

HAROLD

Great! Ha ha - Oh! Let me introduce everyone. This is Tom, my Director of Marketing, and Sandy, my fearless assistant.

SIMONE

(Shaking hands.)

Bon jour. Enchanteé. And this is the team of Marvelous Madeleines, Astrid-Noémi, my creative director and chief cake design genius, and Rémy, head accountant.

HAROLD

(Shaking hands.)

The pleasure is all mine.

SANDY

(Shaking Rémy's hand.)

I don't know why he calls me fearless all the time.

RÉMY

It's because you are a tiger underneath.

SANDY

Oh - ha, ha.

TOM

(Shaking ASTRID-NOÉMI's hand.)

Did she say cake design?

ASTRID-NOÉMI

That's right. Did he say marketing?

TOM

Yes!

ASTRID-NOÉMI

This is a field that fascinates me.

TOM

You fascinate me.

ASTRID-NOÉMI

I am fascinating.

(To everyone, as they sit.)

You know, it is very coincidental that we should run into you, because we were just talking about finding an American cookie company to sell our madeleines in the U.S.

HAROLD

Oh! Great! National Cookies would be happy to buy up your assets and move everything to the States.

SIMONE

Oh – no – we don't mean National Cookies would buy us. If you did that you'd be missing out on a giant opportunity.

HAROLD

Oh, yeah? And what opportunity is that?

SIMONE

To sell something of infinitely higher quality than National Cookies can produce themselves.

HAROLD

Now, wait a minute.

SANDY

I happen to think National Cookies cookies are pretty good.

SIMONE

Yes, but Marvelous Madeleines are superior – outstanding – indescribable –

SANDY

Oh, how good can they be?

ASTRID-NOÉMI

Let me show you. I have designed a brand new madeleine today, and you can *taste* them.

(ASTRID-NOÉMI produces a second tiny, precious, satin-beribboned box.)

ASTRID-NOÉMI

(Lifting the lid.)

A deep-fried almond-battered madeleine with chocolate mousse center and a lemon butter crème ribbon across its top.

(EVERYONE peers into the box and gasps. EACH reaches in and takes a dainty, butter crème-iced madeleine. They taste. Everyone becomes orgasmic.)

TOM

Oh! This lemon and butter - oh! I feel like a teenager getting to second base for the first time.

SANDY

(Breathless.)

Did you say deep fried... almond batter?

RÉMY

I have much heat - no, no, how do you say? - "I'm hot."

HAROLD

That is positively adulterous, Simone.

ASTRID-NOÉMI

It is only my latest creation, thank you.

HAROLD

Well, you must be the genius of the bunch, then.

ASTRID-NOÉMI

Oh, I am, yes.

TOM

I want you to feed me your lemon crème. I want you to sit in my lap. Do you golf?

ASTRID-NOÉMI

I've never golfed, but I want to now.

SIMONE

(Fanning herself.)

Oh... oh...

HAROLD

Heh-hem, well! That is something else, Simone. I would have to say, selling your madeleines in the U.S. would not be out of the question.

SIMONE

I'm glad, Harold.

HAROLD

In fact, selling them in the U.S. would allow National Cookies to make up for Marvelous Madeleines' inadequate marketing.

RÉMY

Excuse me?

ASTRID-NOÉMI

Ha! We don't need marketing, because my cakes sell themselves.

HAROLD

Yes, but imagine how many more you could sell if people had heard of them. Now, Tom here is my genius of marketing. Recently he launched a campaign for our vanilla wafers called "Too good for you." Ha! The whole idea is to create desire by a perception of unavailability.

SIMONE

Oh. And this works?

HAROLD

Yes! The wafer is shown in a glass box in a museum, on the plate of the president, in a bank vault, get it?

SIMONE

Uh, yes, but it works?

HAROLD

Oh, you bet. Sales have skyrocketed.

RÉMY

But this making them unavailable, putting them in a museum – this seem strange.

TOM

(Picking up one of the madeleines.)

That's not how I'd approach these, though.

HAROLD

Yes, Tom, why don't you tell us what you'd do with these?

TOM

Imagine this cake photographed on the beach at sunset. Nothing in the background but ocean, a rose-tinted cloud, and a bit of silk fabric streaming in the breeze. And the caption, "Made in Heaven."

(Everyone becomes orgasmic.)

HAROLD

It would look like a swimsuit model.

ASTRID-NOÉMI

It would look like Daniel Craig rising out of the ocean.

SIMONE

It would be like a nineteen year old sex slave wearing nothing but a thong sentenced to pleasure me for nine years, coming towards me on the beach.