

## **THE ARRIVAL OF A TRAIN**

By Rachael Carnes

### **CHARACTERS**

Jeanne Lumière      Sister to Auguste and Louis Lumière

## **THE BASEMENT OF THE GRAND CAFÉ, PARIS**

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Rachael Carnes, member:  
Dramatists Guild, National New Play Network, Playwrights Center, AWP  
1050 W 17<sup>th</sup> Ave, Eugene OR 97402, 541-221-5792  
[www.rachaelcarnes.com](http://www.rachaelcarnes.com)  
[carnes.rachael@gmail.com](mailto:carnes.rachael@gmail.com)  
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THE ARRIVAL OF A TRAIN

JEANNE

One franc — The show's half an hour. You'll see the best films — Oui. The arrival of the train — Je ne sais pas — The train arrives? — Oui, je sais, c'est stupide, n'est-ce pas? But that's what happens —

My brothers are over there — Wave! Yes — See? They're the inventors. Auguste is shy — He looks away, see? Louis! Come here! They want to meet you!

What? This? This was my idea. Do you like it? I told them people would come and you came! Here you are. Vous êtes ici! One franc, Sir, one franc — Mademoiselle. There are a few seats left —

*She addresses the full audience.*

When they were born, my brothers were kept close — But each were encouraged to take initiative and action. Moi? I help posed the families in the photography studio — A mother with her baby, a bride and groom on their wedding day. I had a collection of props to warm them up with — A basket of flowers, a wagon, a cart —

My brothers were with my father — All the time — Working in their dark room, developing, the chemicals — They told me I didn't belong there, that I was better suited up front. The chemicals give my brother migraines — Did you know that? — But not me.

Do you all have something to drink? Garçon! We're celebrating! S'il vous plait!

My brothers went away to industrial school —

“The school was intended to give boys an education which would enable them to improve their position in life. The intention of this school is to instruct the son of the workman, of the artisan, of the small manufacturer, or the tradesman, in the sciences and arts applied to industry — To develop in him on the sole condition that he is intelligent, moral and industrious, those aptitudes which will surely conduct him to well-being, if not fortune, and to create new elements of productive force and of future prosperity to the country.”

I stayed to run the shop.

You see the image but forget how it got there — The coaxing, the patience!

It takes several minutes to expose the negative — meaning that the subjects — that baby — have to sit or stand completely motionless for the duration — or ruin the photograph.

That was my job.

THE ARRIVAL OF A TRAIN

Propped in a chair — a table — A special stand. Like this? (*She poses.*)  
The worst is the women with their children — The dead ones — Oui! Ladies — Cover  
your ears — They'd bring in their children for a memento — Preservation.

That's what we do here —

We capture a future that hasn't happened yet.

Well, my brothers do — Wave, boys! I just —

There are no duplicates — No do-overs —

The photographs are delicate. I made the cases — Quoi, monsieur?

Expensive though, right?

I always said that — But this, this is one franc! One franc to see these slices slung  
together — A train arriving, and sprinklers!

You're witnessing birth!

Are we ready? They say we're ready — This is! Thank you for coming!

One franc — You all have a drink now? Good! Let's roll the film!

Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat — That's me on the platform, there, see me? Right there  
— Just out of the frame — Behind the man walking —

Don't be afraid! It's not real — Oh mon dieu — I was afraid this would happen!

Stop the projection!

You want your franc back? Non —

The train is on this screen — See? My hand makes a shadow. See how my hand makes a  
shadow? Look — I can make a little rabbit. See the rabbit hopping? Do you want to try?  
Have another drink —

Okay, let's roll it again!

Flag waving — It's a sunny day — A nice day — Good climate — I said we should film  
there — The conductor walks out ahead here — Now he's running — Then the little boy  
walks with his father — holding hands — The woman in the hat points — They're  
choosing what car to get on — Door opens — On and off — They look at the camera —  
Who is this? What is this? Qu'est-ce que c'est?

THE ARRIVAL OF A TRAIN

C'est fini.

I have ideas for other cinemas — But I sell tickets.

My brothers are why we celebrate!

Raise your glasses to Auguste! To Louis!

Je t'aime mes frères.

To France! And to the future!

*End of play.*