COSMOPOLITAN

Expatriates in Paris

"The Brokenhearted"

by

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SILENCE FOR A FEW SECONDS AS CREDITS BEGIN: LOVELY LETTERING ADAPTED FROM EARLY FRENCH FILM STYLE; A STRIKING INSTRUMENTAL BEGINS, THEN:

THE CAMERA FLOATS OVER PARIS AT ITS MOST BEAUTIFUL, SMOOTHLY MOVING TOWARD THE MANSARDIAN ROOFTOPS OF ITS OLDEST QUARTER -- THE INSTRUMENTAL OF JIMMY RUFFIN'S 'WHAT BECOMES OF THE BROKEN HEARTED' SWELLS BUT, WHEN THE VOCAL STARTS, THE VOCALIST IS FEMALE AND THE WORDS FOREIGN -- JOAN OSBORNE SINGING IN AMERICAN-ACCENTED FRENCH.

THE CAMERA APPROACHES A VENERABLE BUILDING, THEN IS INSIDE IT, MOVING DOWN THE WINDING BACK STAIRWAY TO FIND A PRETTY YOUNG WOMAN IN HER TWENTIES CLIMBING THE STAIRS, HER FACE MOIST WITH TEARS... THE CAMERA REVERSES DIRECTION AND FOLLOWS HER AS SHE CLIMBS.

INT. CRAMPED BACK STAIRWAY, ANCIENT BUILDING -- DAY

The girl, AUBREY, walks laden with an awkward array of possessions followed by FREDERIC, a young intellectual, carrying her big suitcase. Up the winding stairs they walk in silence until arriving at the even more cramped hallway and maid's room. Frederic puts the suitcase down though there's little space for it, the music dipping for dialog:

FREDERIC
This is not bad. People kill *[keel]* to have these.
(looking out)
You can even see Montmartre from the view.

Aubrey knows the view.

AUBREY
(almost too upset to talk)
But, to cook, I can still use the kitchen--

FREDERIC
No -- the *locataires* are to arrive at any moment. They have paid for the use of the entire apartment. All I could do was nothing.

Though Frederic's situation is obnoxious he is not: the charm and likability which attracted Aubrey remains. He steps over to the tiny counter area hunching slightly so as not to bump his head on the sloping roof.

FREDERIC (CONT'D)
Here you have the warm plate, the boiling pot, the water from the faucet.

He turns the knob -- water does come out. Tight on the splashing water, then cut to:

WATER CURLING BEFORE THE PROW OF A BOAT ON THE SEINE

EXT. RIVERSIDE QUAI -- DAY

Aubrey walks along the quai, utterly sad -- the boat follows her on the river, then pulls ahead. Her eyes are wet, the music ascendant:

"BROKENHEARTED" FRENCH VOCAL
Que deviennent les coeurs brisées
Qui ont aimés et qui sont maintenant séparés?
Je sais que je vais trouver
Quelque instants de sérénité à mon esprit, peut être

Young lovers embrace at the balustrade by the river, making Aubrey's loneliness as she passes by seem even sadder.

EXT. WINDING MARAIS STREET -- DAY

Aubrey continues up the narrow sidewalk, so oblivious in her sadness that a young man must step into the street to let her pass. The music diminishes as the sound of a busy outdoor cafe comes up.

WINE POURING INTO A GLASS: ITS COLOR AN UNAPPETIZING PURPLE

WODDY (O.C.)
How can you drink that swill?

JIMMY (O.C.)
What?

EXT. RUE DU TRÉSOR - DAY

At the "Chapeau Noir," a sidewalk cafe the style of Philosophes or La Chaise au Plafond, WODDY, a somewhat pretentious European playboy type, bickers with an American, JIMMY, while HAL, good-looking but somber, remains silent.

WODDY
Côtes du Rhône swill.

JIMMY
Well, it's cheap.

WODDY
The whole point of coming to the "Chapeau" is the Bordeaux, which is good as well as cheap.

Jimmy looks around:

JIMMY
No, it's the surroundings I like.

On surrounding cafe terraces are many attractive women.

WODDY
Lots of places have attractive "surroundings;" this one has a good, cheap Bordeaux--

JIMMY
Not as cheap as the Côtes du Rhône.

HAL
Oh, give me a break! "Cheap Bordeaux!""Cheap Côtes du Rhône!..." You're broken records - talk about something else!

A pause; the others are surprised by his vehemence.

WODDY
And... how are you?

Hal says nothing.

JIMMY
In a funk. Another "rupture."

WODDY
Omigosh, not again.
(smiling, to Hal)
How many times has she dumped you?

HAL
It's not "dumping" -- they were break ups.

WODDY
How many times has she broken up with you? Twenty? Thirty?

HAL
It was nothing like that.
(pause)
Maybe sixteen... Or seventeen.

WODDY
A European man would never put up with that.

JIMMY
Oh. There are no break ups in Europe?

WODDY
Of course -- but to put up with such a woman? They have a sixth sense about whom they can push around and how far. With an American guy they know they can get away with pretty much anything.

JIMMY
That's... *known*?

WODDY
Yes, of course. American men are notorious milksops.

JIMMY
Yeah -- it's notorious. But... Clemence is breathtakingly attractive if otherwise problematical.

Woddy makes a skeptical face.

WODDY
Uh, I could never be interested in a woman her age -- skinny and dried out.

JIMMY
Well, Hal did manage to burrow himself "deeply within the French beast."

WODDY
(smiling)
What?

JIMMY
Penetrating French society -- which few of us accomplish or even seriously attempt.

WODDY
I don't see how that's an achievement.

JIMMY
Well, between all of us only Hal did it.
(to Hal)
How did you and Clemence even meet?

Hal recollects -- getting sentimental, dangerously so.

HAL
Through Fritz--

WODDY
Fritz Becker!?

JIMMY
You can actually meet nice people through Fritz... Not just criminals.

HAL
It's true... It was three summers ago; I was at a low point--

WODDY
You're always at a low point.

HAL
No, but even lower -- the pits: marriage over, family moved out, no one I knew in town. It's one aspect of expatriate life rarely talked about -- how horribly lonely you can get. I don't think it's just me -- a lot of people go through it.
(continuing)

PICTURE CUT:

Audrey stumbling along another street.

HAL (O.S.) (CONT'D)
There's a feeling of being hollowed out, not wanting to bother the few people you might know and maybe too sad to see even those you do...

She passes a couple of young lovers lingering there, making her own solitariness seem more stark.

HAL (O.S.) (CONT'D)
It's a feeling you might have in childhood but forget as an adult...until it comes back, a void inside which seems as if it'll never fill again.

TIGHT ON JIMMY'S FACE CONTEMPLATING THE "VOID."

WODDY
That does sound pretty bad...

EXT. MARAIS CAFE -- DAY

The three at their cafe table, Woddy less impressed:

WODDY
...but what happened with Fritz?

Hal recollects himself.

HAL
Well, Fritz suggested we meet at the Flore -- which normally I'd have avoided as he's either impossibly late or doesn't show up at all. But as I hadn't seen anyone in days...

INT. CAFE DU FLORE -- DAY (YEARS BEFORE)

A late afternoon in July: Hal at a table with his work spread out before him. A waiter replaces his empty espresso cup with a glass and a range of Bloody Mary ingredients.

ON SCREEN: Three Summers Earlier

HAL (O.S.)
...I let myself be tricked. Although I took plenty of work to keep busy during the inevitable wait -- it's impossible to anticipate how late Fritz's really going to be.

JIMMY (O.S.)
Oh brother -- yeah.

Hal looks up and around to wonder where Fritz could be -- the old-style cafe is a beehive of activity.

HAL (O.S.)
Of course Fritz had again lost his "mobile" [*pronounced the French way*] and my number with it, so had no way to call.

A waiter comes to his table.

WAITER
Monsieur, telephone.

He nods to where the matronly proprietress' station at a high desk by the stairs: she holds the phone.

HAL (V.O.)
It's strange they could identify me.

WODDY (V.O.)
Oh, yes...

EXT. MARAIS CAFE -- DAY (PRESENT)

HAL
What?

WODDY
Oh, come on: you couldn't be more of a Yank cliche.
(parodying Fritz's French)
"*Madame, est-ce que vous pouvez voir un Américain solitaire là-bas? Il a peut-être commandé une vodka tomate...*"

INT. CAFE DU FLORE -- DAY (YEARS BEFORE)

Hal walks over; the proprietress gives him the receiver.

MME PROPRIETAIRE
Pour vous, Monsieur.

HAL (IN CAFE)
Hello? Hello? Oh... Where are you?
(incredulous)
Versailles?!

EXT. MARAIS CAFE -- DAY

HAL
It turns out Fritz was in Versailles with some girl but wanted me to wait for him at the Flore.

JIMMY
Typical.

EXT. BLVD ST. GERMAIN -- LATE AFTERNOON (YEARS BEFORE)

Hal walks along with his satchel.

WODDY (V.O.)
What nerve.

Hal slows and stops at a bookstore.

HAL (V.O.)
I wasn't about to wait -- but on the walk back to my place did dawdle a bit.

Hal browsing in the bookstore -- or standing, face buried in a volume.

HAL (V.O.) (CONT'D)
To be honest I wasn't anxious to get home.

EXT. QUAI, LEFT BANK -- STILL LATER (YEARS BEFORE)

Hal strolls along the Seine -- the beautiful deserted summer atmosphere. The sound of car brakes.

FRITZ (O.S.)
Cooper! Cooper!

Hal turns; FRITZ BECKER calls from a dark green Mercedes.

FRITZ (CONT'D)
Bastard! You didn't wait... Come on, get in!

INT. MERCEDES HEADING WEST - LATE AFTERNOON (YEARS BEFORE)

Fritz and Hal ride in the back, the muscular driver looks like he could be packing heat.

FRITZ
Ariel's ex-Mossad.

ARIEL acknowledges this with a nod -- he looks very tough.

FRITZ (CONT'D)
Sorry -- got tied up with a girl in Versailles -- some problem with the baby sitter. This whole thing of women with children: I don't see the point -- why bother? Just a nuisance.

HAL
No, I think it's nice when women have kids.

Fritz looks incredulous.

FRITZ
What are you, a pedophile? There are plenty of great women who don't have kids, why torture yourself with one who does?

The car enters the circle at Porte Maillot. Fritz suddenly sees something:

FRITZ (CONT'D)
Arrête! Arrête! Stop...

Ariel doesn't respond immediately.

FRITZ (CONT'D)
Ariel -- stop here.

Ariel pulls the car over; Fritz jumps out and approaches a pretty dark haired young woman at the curb.

EXT. MARAIS CAFE -- DAY

The three as before:

JIMMY
What nerve.

WODDY
It's not nerve. It's insanity.

INT./EXT. MERCEDES -- LATE AFTERNOON (YEARS BEFORE)

Fritz scrambles back in the car.

HAL (O.S.)
Well, he did get the girl's number and dated her for a while.

ON WODDY:

WODDY
So. Anyone can do that.

BACK TO THE CAR, as it leaves town.

HAL (O.S.)
We were heading to a dinner party at his friend Rufo's house in Nanterre--

JIMMY (O.S.)
There are "houses" in Nanterre?

WODDY (O.S.)
There are people named "Rufo?"

EXT. MARAIS CAFE -- DAY

HAL
Well, actually, they call them "chalets."

EXT. NANTERRE NOWHERE LAND -- NIGHT (YEARS BEFORE)

The Mercedes proceeds haltingly through the depressing quarters of Nanterre, which is most of it.

HAL (O.S.)
But we ended up completely lost.

JIMMY (O.S.)
It's probably better to have an ex-Mossad driver in Jerusalem -- than Nanterre.

FRITZ
Could I borrow your phone?

Hal thinks a moment and then, reluctantly, hands Fritz his phone.

WODDY (O.S.)
Omigosh, dangerous handing someone like Fritz your phone.

EXT. A VERDANT STREET W/ NICE HOUSES -- NIGHT (YEARS BEFORE)

The Mercedes poking hesitantly into a driveway.

JIMMY (V.O.)
I thought “chalets” were, like, ski lodges.

HAL (V.O.)
No, “chalet” is what stand alone houses are called here.

MARKEETA
Fritz! Tu arrives!

EXT. NANTERRE CHALET -- NIGHT (YEARS BEFORE)

Markeeta approaches to greet Fritz and Hal; she had been sitting with some lovely women -- they move chairs to make way for the arrivals.

FRITZ
You’re all mothers, n’est-ce pas? This is my friend, Hal -- he’s lonely and craves the company of maternal women.

A positive reaction from the attractive young mother types: CLEMENCE smiles and makes way for Hal to sit near her; her English is especially charming:

CLEMENCE
Is that true, Hal, you crave our company?

EXT. RUE VIEILLE DU TEMPLE -- DAY

Aubrey, the girl followed earlier, eyes still moist, walks along the winding street as it opens up onto the cafes of the Rue du Tresor.

JIMMY
So you fell for her right away?

Aubrey sits at the table nearest them.

HAL
Pretty much...

EXT. NANTERRE CHALET TERRACE -- NIGHT (YEARS BEFORE)

Hal and Clemence deep in conversation.

HAL (O.S.)
...Clemence had recently gotten divorced so had all kinds of sad stories.

EXT. MARAIS CAFE, TERRACE -- DAY

WODDY
Oh, yes, “sad stories” -- Americans love those.

JIMMY
A lovely face and sad story... Hard to resist.

HAL
(worldly wise now)
Yup.

AUBREY (O.S.)
Merci.

One word but the accent is discernable; Hal notices Aubrey at the adjacent table.

HAL
Excuse me -- is anything wrong?

Aubrey stares at the “carte” with tears on her cheeks; she shakes her head.

JIMMY
Anything we can do?

She remains sad and silent.

WODDY
I’d suggest the Bordeaux -- it’s surprisingly good for the price.

Aubrey can barely speak; finally she gets out:

AUBREY
What I’d really like is Sangria.

WODDY
Oh, puke, no!
(regretting his harshness)
Why not try a, uh, kir?...
(MORE)

WODDY (CONT'D)
Chilled white wine with a bit of creme de cassis. A bit sweet but good -- and not expensive.

TIGHT ON: A SHOT OF DEEP PURPLE LIQUEUR BEING POURED INTO A WHITE WINE

WIDER: The Waiter puts the kir on his tray with other drinks.

INT./EXT. MARAIS CAFE -- DAY

The waiter carries the tray out to serves Aubrey.

AUBREY
...Everything was wonderful until I got in Paris. Then he found he couldn't write with anyone in the apartment.

JIMMY
What's his name?

AUBREY
Frederic *[pronounced the French way].* First he asked me to use the "chambre de service" during the day -- because he has such trouble concentrating--

Aubrey stops abruptly as if about to cry again; she takes a sip of the kir. Jimmy fills in the pause:

JIMMY
I've had that -- not being able to work when someone's in the apartment. The problem is, I can't work when there's no one either.

WODDY
Have you thought of getting a rabbit?

JIMMY
No. But I'll consider it.

Hal sees that Aubrey seems to have recovered.

HAL
So you're just killing time until Frederic finishes his writing day...

AUBREY
No.

She again stops as if to avoid crying and takes another sip.

WODDY
Good, right?

Aubrey nods. Woddy signals the waiter for another round.

JIMMY
When you say it “was wonderful” with Frederic, when was that?

WODDY
No, she said it “had been wonderful.”

JIMMY
Okay, but when was that -- the wonderful part. Because I think I missed it.

AUBREY
In Miami. We met at Art Basel -- it was wonderful. Frederic immediately wanted me to move to Paris to live with him; I’d just broken up with my boyfriend so getting away seemed like a good idea.

The waiter comes with a round of drinks and a dish of olives.

JIMMY
I think that’s true -- when you have a serious break up, putting the Atlantic Ocean between you can be very helpful.

WODDY
What about the Pacific?

Jimmy thinks a moment.

JIMMY
Don’t know. Never tried it.

HAL
(to Aubrey)
I’m sorry, you were telling us what happened.

Aubrey takes a sip, collects her thoughts and continues:

AUBREY
Well, for weeks after I got here we were like that with me mostly upstairs -- but still together. Then this week Frederic said he'd be away several months, a project in Lyons, and subletting his apartment.

HAL
What? Out of the blue?

Aubrey nods.

AUBREY
I asked if I could still use the kitchen since I'm taking the Escoffier course but he said no.

She can't go on. She takes some sips of the kir.

JIMMY
What a creep.

AUBREY
He's not.

WODDY
Hal got dumped too -- now he just mopes around listening to Al Green songs.

AUBREY
(offended)
I wasn't "dumped." Frederic just isn't used to living with anyone.

Hal gets a text message -- he reads it.

JIMMY
Clemence?

Hal nods.

JIMMY (CONT'D)
I thought her break-up ethos was never to initiate communication, only the occasional painfully laconic reply--

HAL
(quietly)
She was replying.

WODDY
You sent her a text?

Hal nods.

WODDY (CONT'D)
Sap.

JIMMY
Omigosh! Forget her!

WODDY
That's not going to happen.

JIMMY
"Madame Cauchemar."

AUBREY
What's that?

JIMMY
"Mrs. Nightmare" -- Hal's ex, she's very pretty but completely unstable.

HAL
Not completely.

JIMMY
That kind of relationship? It could kill you... That happens. People die.

WODDY
I don't understand it: she's very skinny.

A phone rings -- Hal's. He stares at the number, then answers French style:

HAL
Allo, Hal a l'appareil.

Woddy laughs. From the phone a faint voice shouts.

HAL (CONT'D)
Yes, Fritz -- speaking of the devil...
(to the others)
Party tonight -- "Ten-thirty... Better, eleven. Maybe dessert."
(to phone)
So, we're your second class friends, invited after dinner?
(MORE)

HAL (CONT'D)
(to the others)
"No, third class."
(to phone)
Would it be okay if we brought a beautiful American girl along?...
(he smiles, nods)
Okay, à bientôt...

Hal hangs up.

VIEW FROM A LINE 1 METRO SHUTTLING THROUGH A TUNNEL INTO THE PONT DE NEUILLY METRO STATION:

[Location scout: shown in this YouTube video, from the 7.40 point to 8.20:]

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_BVOruJjI2A

HAL (O.S.) (CONT'D)
He said to get off near the end of the train.

INT. PONT DE NEUILLY STATION -- NIGHT

Hal, Aubrey, Woddy & Jimmy -- all pretty well dressed -- exit the train and walk along the platform. Jimmy and Hal carry plastic bags with bottles of red wine; Woddy brings champagne.

AUBREY
Gosh, from all you've said about Fritz, I'm kind of scared.

HAL
Well -- you should be.

EXT. AVENUE CHARLES DE GAULLE -- NIGHT

The four walk along the dark avenue; Hal reads his notes.

HAL
"Left onto Rue de l'Eglise."

JIMMY
"Eglise" -- that means "church!"

There is a church ahead. They turn left, continuing up the residential street; Aubrey seems to be both smiling and crying.

HAL
Are you crying?

Despite evidence to the contrary Aubrey shakes her head “no.”

HAL (CONT’D)
Well, that’s too bad -- because if you cry, I won’t have to.

WODDY
Hope Fritz isn’t in one of his “moods.” Did you tell him I was coming?

HAL
You heard the call... Seemed best not to specify.

Doubt briefly pierces Woddy’s usual self-regard.

EXT. NEUILLY RESIDENTIAL STREET -- NIGHT

Music and raised voices come from the upper floor of a building up the street. They look to each other; Aubrey seems apprehensive.

HAL
Yes. Terrifyin’.

Aubrey tries to smile.

INT. HALL, BECKER APARTMENT -- NIGHT

The four enter the party, somewhat disoriented by the semi-aristo European-ness of it all: A number of guests linger at the dinner table, others act up in the kitchen and while a few put on music in the salon.

HAL
Bonsoir, bonsoir... Et Fritz?

Fritz appears; he seems surprised to see them.

FRITZ
I didn’t know you were bringing so many people.

An awkward moment of unwelcome; Hal looks to his entourage.

HAL
We’re not *so* many. This is Aubrey.

Fritz doesn't mind pretty Americans:

FRITZ
Enchanted -- I'll take that.

He helps Aubrey with her raincoat.

FRITZ (CONT'D)
Aubrey -- isn't that a boy's name?

Fritz disappears with her coat; as Aubrey enters the party others notice her including a tall Frenchman with dyed black hair. Down the hall Jimmy spots someone:

JIMMY
Omigosh, Gold Coat Girl's here.

Hal cranes his neck to see.

HAL
She knows Fritz?

AUBREY
Who?

HAL
Gold Coat Girl.

They look down the hall where a very fashionable young woman, slightly older than Aubrey, carrying a coat, is saying her good-byes.

AUBREY
Her coat's not gold.

HAL
Well, when we met her she was wearing an amazing gold coat.

AUBREY
What was amazing about it?

HAL
It just was... incredibly stylish and fashionable. For a while we didn't know her name so she became "Gold Coat Girl."

Gold Coat Girl approaches them, putting on her non-gold coat, as she heads toward the door.

JIMMY
Vicky -- you're going already?

VICKY (aka “Gold Coat Girl”) stops, giving Jimmy a bit of a blank stare. Then, noticing Hal, she starts to place them.

VICKY
Yeah I’m meeting some people.

JIMMY
Vicky, this is our friend Aubrey who’s just arrived.

Vicky sees Aubrey and seems impressed with her clumsy beauty.

AUBREY
No, I’ve been here six weeks.

VICKY
(smiles)
What are you doing with these guys? I’ll get your number, we should talk.

Vicky walks off and out the door in style, the others left gaping.

AUBREY
Wow -- she’s great. Aren’t all you guys after her?

Jimmy’s a bit incredulous:

JIMMY
No. Gold Coat Girl? We wouldn’t stand a chance with her. And... we’re in Paris -- why would we chase an American woman? That’d be -- ridiculous. Absurd.

INT. HALLWAY, BECKER APARTMENT -- NIGHT

The last comment having sunk Aubrey further she heads down the hall, her eyes watering. Hal catches up.

HAL
Don’t take that seriously.

Aubrey turns around.

HAL (CONT’D)
People say things like that -- but it’s not serious. If someone likes someone who doesn’t conform to their “plan,” of course they’d change it.

INT. KITCHEN & PANTRY, BECKER APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Hal returns to the kitchen where Fritz is giving a quick wash to some glasses.

FRITZ
Why'd you bring that guy?

HAL
Jimmy?

FRITZ
No, of course not: the Dutchman.

HAL
It'd have been awkward not to: we were together when you called... Woddy's not such a bad sort.

FRITZ
He sort of is a bad sort. You know, he's not well regarded in Paris. Not at all. Being seen in his company isn't good for your reputation.

Hal, a little amazed, laughs.

HAL
"Not well regarded in Paris!" Uh, if I were worried about my reputation, wouldn't it be you I should avoid?

FRITZ
No, I'm well-liked. I'm "colorful"--

HAL
A reprobate.

FRITZ
Yes, of course, but everyone knows you're just visiting the circus; you're not personally implicated. Constantly being in the company of someone odious like Woddy you are.

HAL
Odious?

Woddy enters the kitchen with an empty glass.

FRITZ
(very polite)
Oh, hello -- might I get you something?

WODDY
(looking around)
I brought a bottle of champagne...

FRITZ
Of course. I'm opening more.

Fritz opens the fridge revealing an assortment champagne bottles of different brands; he grabs two to open.

INT. SALON, BECKER APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Walking into the salon Jimmy is suddenly transfixed; across the room is the most beautiful Frenchwoman imaginable, delicate golden hair framing her lovely face.

INT. BECKER APARTMENT, CENTRAL HALL -- NIGHT

Jimmy finds Fritz outside the salon collecting glasses.

JIMMY
Omigosh, what an angel! I'm having a heart attack.
(clutches his heart)
French women are so lovely and beautiful -- it's mind boggling!

FRITZ
Who?

Jimmy nods in her direction: Fritz looks through the salon doorway to see the "angel."

FRITZ (CONT'D)
"She might look like an angel -- but she's not one."

Fritz takes the used glasses back toward the pantry.

JIMMY
(worried)
What do you mean?

FRITZ
Nothing -- was just fun to say.

JIMMY
Could you introduce me?

FRITZ
Just talk to her.

Jimmy follows Fritz as he goes back to the pantry.

INT. KITCHEN & PANTRY, BECKER APARTMENT -- NIGHT

JIMMY
(brainstorming)
Actually, at Alliance Francaise our prof taught us some approaches in very correct French.

FRITZ
That's what you're learning at Alliance -- "pick up" lines?

JIMMY
Yes. We practiced the "puis-je" form which is considered very good French: "Le Francais soutenu."

FRITZ
Oh the "pui-je" *[pronounced correctly]* form! That'll knock her socks off!

JIMMY
You're mocking me.

Fritz opens another bottle of champagne:

FRITZ
No. "Puis-je" pour you another?

He does so when the doorbell sounds; Fritz disappears to answer it. Jimmy sips his drink and returns to the salon.

TIGHT ON THE LOVELY FRENCH WOMAN AS JIMMY CONCLUDES HIS "PUIS-JE" APPROACH

She laughs.

LOVELY FRENCH WOMAN
"Puis-je?" How nice.

Her English is strangely unaccented.

INT. BECKER PARTY, SALON -- NIGHT

LOVELY FRENCH WOMAN
Where'd you learn that? Berlitz or Alliance?

Jimmy is perplexed; the LOVELY FRENCH WOMAN doesn't sound French.

JIMMY
Alliance... Et vous? Vous venez de quelle part?

LOVELY WOMAN
Quel endroit?

JIMMY
Oui, quel endroit.

LOVELY WOMAN
Vancouver.

JIMMY
(pronouncing in French)
Vancouver, France?

INT. KITCHEN & PANTRY, BECKER APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Jimmy returns as Fritz goes about his chores.

JIMMY
She's not French!

FRITZ
Yes. Aware of that.

JIMMY
Why didn't you tell me?

FRITZ
What would the entertainment be in that?

JIMMY
Oh, I'm entertainment for you!

FRITZ
Not much, but some: The comical bigotry of France-obsessed Yanks, gushing over everything here while denigrating everything at home.

JIMMY
She’s not from home; she’s from Vancouver.

TIGHT ON: BRANDY POURING INTO A GLASS

INT. PARTY ELSEWHERE, BECKER APARTMENT -- NIGHT

In an easy chair Fritz, finally relaxing, sips from a large brandy; Camille can be glimpsed in conversation with a fellow in the salon.

FRITZ
Camille *[Camy]* -- she’s lived here a long time -- married a French guy but they broke up... Well, they’re still in the same apartment but not “together.”

JIMMY
So many of the women we know here have early marriages gone awry or crazy living arrangements of some kind. As if they were all strangely prone to making bad choices.

FRITZ
I know. It’s great.

JIMMY
(laughs)
What?

FRITZ
Well, if they’re prone to making bad choices, there’s hope for us.

He takes another sip.

FRITZ (CONT’D)
If they weren’t, what chance would we have? We probably wouldn’t even know them. They’d be back in... Wilton, Connecticut...or Vancouver... happily married and with some boring kids. Uh! Far better to have them here, in Paris, making bad choices... for our delectation.

A sad Al Green song starts to play.

INT. SALON, BECKER APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Hal and Woddy sit near each other, Woddy already a little drunk. He notices the sentimental ballad:

WODDY
Oh no -- who put that on?

Hal, eyes watering, stands up and walks away.

FRENCH GIRL
(very concerned)
What? What is the matter?

WODDY
Al Green.

FRENCH GIRL
Algreen?

WODDY
His music makes my friend sad.

The French girl starts listening to the song attentively.

INT. ELSEWHERE, BECKER APARTMENT -- NIGHT

The Becker apartment -- their family residence -- is a warren of rooms and hallways on two levels. Hal wanders through them, looking sad. As his eyes start to water he steps out to the balcony over the street.

EXT. BALCONY, BECKER APARTMENT -- NIGHT

He finds Aubrey alone there, her arms wrapped around herself in the chill while still managing to hold onto a champagne glass.

AUBREY
Does summer never come?

HAL
Yes. Once all hope's been lost.

He notices Aubrey's teary face.

HAL (CONT'D)
Three summers ago I was having a bad patch when it actually got hot. It *can* get hot here.

AUBREY
You had a bad patch?

HAL
Yeah -- I was just thinking about it this afternoon -- I was still fairly new in town; then suddenly everyone I knew left and I had this crazy attack of loneliness...

Aubrey listens intently.

HAL (CONT'D)
The "yawning void," as they say. It was terrible. Seemed no way to stop it, no way to get a foothold at all.

AUBREY
What happened?

HAL
Sort of petered out as mysteriously it began.

Now Aubrey's really interested:

AUBREY
How?

HAL
Well they say: "all you need is one friend."

AUBREY
Who says that?

Hal thinks.

HAL
"They" do... But maybe it's more just being distracted -- because...

Fritz steps out onto the balcony with a champagne bottle.

HAL (CONT'D)
...I don't think I'd call Fritz a "friend."

Fritz refills Aubrey's glass.

FRITZ
I'm the best friend you'll ever have!
(MORE)

FRITZ (CONT'D)
And I’m going to do you one of the greatest favors anyone will ever do!

HAL
Oh no...
(slips some Euro bills out his wallet)
...how much do you need to borrow?

FRITZ
Put that away -- I’m too apt to take it. No, I feel responsible for having introduced you to Clemence -- but think I’ve found the means to free you.

HAL
I’m “free.”

FRITZ
Oh sure.
(laughs)
You’re the freest person imaginable.

HAL
No. It’s over.

FRITZ
Well, I think I have the lever to help you get you over her--

HAL
The lever?

FRITZ
Yes -- and the lever is a lady.

He glances to Aubrey.

FRITZ (CONT’D)
While you’re with Justine I’ll introduce this lovely girl around.
(to Aubrey)
What are your views on the monarchy?

INT. MASTER BEDROOM, BECKER APARTMENT -- NIGHT

JUSTINE, a tall brunette resembling an aristo Paula Prentiss (viz. “The World of Henry Orient”), sits in one Louis XVI chair and Hal in another as if at a job interview.

JUSTINE
...My first husband was American --
a Thorpe from Middleburg, Virginia -
- Virginia horse country.

Hal seems strangely callow in the company of such a worldly young woman.

HAL
You seem too young to have had a
“first husband.”

JUSTINE
In that world there are many young
marriages.
(changing topics)
Which Paris hotel do you prefer?

HAL
Hotel?

JUSTINE
Yes, do you prefer the Plaza
Athenee, George Cinq or Bristol?

Hal is stumped.

HAL
I actually haven’t stayed in any.
Judging from the public areas...
the Bristol’s pretty great.

JUSTINE
“Pretty great?” What does that
mean? Is there an “ugly” great?

Hal realizes he’s in trouble.

HAL
It’s a manner of speech. The
English language.

JUSTINE
No, I don’t think so. I know the
English language. I think it’s
something you made up.

INT. HALLWAY, BECKER APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Fritz and Hal walk down the hall.

HAL
What was that about?

FRITZ
She’s really attractive, don’t you think?

HAL
But what exactly was that? It felt like a job interview.

FRITZ
(laughs)
I think it was.

HAL
What do you mean?

FRITZ
Well... You can’t mope around about Clemence forever. Time to find another distraction.

HAL
Distraction?

FRITZ
Justine has, ostensibly, a stable marriage, young children et cetera. She wouldn’t want to upset everything with a divorce -- all the odium that comes with an open split...

INT. FOYER, BECKER APARTMENT -- NIGHT

From the foyer Fritz points out someone in the salon.

FRITZ
The fellow with the dyed black hair...

Fritz indicates the man just approaching Aubrey.

INT. BECKER APARTMENT, SALON -- NIGHT

In the salon the man with dyed black hair, ANTON -- tall and bony -- offers Aubrey champagne.

ANTON
Voulez-vous encore du champagne?

Aubrey smiles shyly and holds out the glass.

AUBREY
Oui, merci.

Anton detects her accent and shifts to English; not perfect but pleasant:

ANTON
I'm Anton, what's your name?

There's something stiff about him -- he's no "smooth operator."

AUBREY
Aubrey.

ANTON
(getting it wrong)
Audrey -- a lovely name.

AUBREY
Aubrey.

ANTON
Yes, Audrey, Audrey Hepburn -- you know, you resemble her.

This cheers Aubrey up; she gives up on correcting him:

AUBREY
Really? You think so?

ANTON
Surely everyone tells you so.

AUBREY
No. Not really. Not everyone.

ANTON
In-credible!

He says it in a nice way.

INT. FOYER, BECKER APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Fritz and Hal look toward Anton in the Salon.

FRITZ
"Good provider," et cetera, a bit stiff, but pays the bills.

HAL
He's French?

FRITZ
Yes... I don't think Justine's just gone off on some tangent. There's some sort of understanding between them.

Hal is shocked.

HAL
Gosh. How decadent.

Fritz smiles:

FRITZ
You'd turn that down? Afternoons with a beautiful woman?

HAL
I'm far too involved with Clemence.

FRITZ
That's too bad -- because I don't think Clemence's involved with you.

HAL
I couldn't just plunge into some decadent affair.

FRITZ
It doesn't have to be decadent: You could go hiking.

Hal is too maudlin to take a joke.

FRITZ (CONT'D)
That's okay. I don't think she liked you anyway.

INT. SALON, BECKER APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Anton is still in conversation with "Audrey."

AUBREY
The opera Bastille?

ANTON
Oh, no -- that ter-rible concrete bunker? No, the Opéra Garnier -- the beautiful, Belle Epoque palace at the Place de l'Opéra.

AUBREY
Oh, yes -- I've seen it -- near Starbucks.

ANTON
You must see the inside which is extraordinary. I have tickets for this week if you might want to come.

LATER, THE LIGHTS ARE MOSTLY OFF AND THE MUSIC WAY UP:

EXT. NEUILLY RESIDENTIAL STREET -- NIGHT

The same street seen earlier. Dancing can be glimpsed on the upper floor of Fritz's building. On the street in the foreground three guys in hoodies and the hip-hop clothing style of the "banlieue" or projects cross the frame.

INT. BECKER PARTY, SALON -- NIGHT

A dance song plays -- a small group has started dancing including Anton with "Audrey." Jimmy tries to get up his nerve to approach Camille. Woddy looks on, then bolts for the foyer when the doorbell sounds. Fritz follows.

INT. FOYER, BECKER APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Fritz arrives as Woddy hands some large Euro bills to the "banlieusards" (young French-Algerian guys from the projects in this case) at the door.

FRITZ
What are you doing? What are you doing here?

WODDY
They'd like to come in. Join the party.

FRITZ
No.
(to the banlieusards)
Ca va? Bonsoir.

Fritz nods, bows then closes and locks the door. He turns to Woddy:

FRITZ (CONT'D)
What were they doing here?

WODDY
Thought it might liven things up.

Woddy holds up a small packet.

FRITZ
You called them?

Woddy nods.

FRITZ (CONT'D)
You cited dealers here? At my mother's apartment?

WODDY
They're just kids, harmless... I've dealt with them before.

FRITZ
You're out of your mind!

Others approach to see what the discord is about.

WODDY
Oh come on. Here.

He dangles the packet, offering it to Woody.

WODDY (CONT'D)
C'est pas grave.

The less apologetic Woddy stays, the more excited Fritz gets.

FRITZ
No... Get out... You weren't invited, now you cite criminals at my family's apartment? Go. Now.

Woddy is taken aback.

WODDY
You're joking.

FRITZ
No, get whatever jacket, umbrella or whatnot you have, and leave!

The others stand nearby, all a little shocked.

JIMMY
Gosh, Fritz--

FRITZ
No. Your pal -- this jerk -- calls up drug dealers to come here where my family lives.
(to Woddy)
You're out of your mind.

WODDY
C'est pas grave.

FRITZ
Shut up. "C'est pas grave!" -- the motto of morons. Get out!

Woddy, intimidated, steps back, in so doing knocking a porcelain off the side table -- it falls and smashes. For a moment everyone is silent, looking at the destruction. Fritz takes the drug packets from Woddy's hand.

FRITZ (CONT'D)
Okay, I will take these. You can go.

HAL
Come on, Fritz.

FRITZ
No. Goodbye.

JIMMY
What have we done?

FRITZ
Doesn't matter.

JIMMY
Why punish the rest of us? I'd really like to stay.

FRITZ
The Lord works in mysterious ways.

JIMMY
What does that mean?

FRITZ
You're weak on theology. Go. I don't want to see you.

Fritz, turning to walk away, notices Aubrey.

FRITZ (CONT'D)
Uh... the girl -- Aubrey-Audrey -- can stay.
(MORE)

FRITZ (CONT'D)
(to Aubrey)
You should stay.

Fritz walks away.

EXT. NEUILLY RESIDENTIAL STREET -- NIGHT

As the party continues on the upper floor above Hal, Woddy and Jimmy walk away from the building -- Aubrey with them.

JIMMY
(to Woddy, angry)
Thanks a lot.

WODDY
No big deal.

JIMMY
No, it was a big deal -- we finally get to a decent party and are beginning to meet great people when some *jerk* thinks it's a good idea to call a drug dealer.

Woddy walks in silence for a few moments.

WODDY
I didn't think it was a good idea. It was more a compulsion.

JIMMY
I finally meet a terrific girl -- then have no chance to even get her number.

WODDY
Yeah, that was stupid -- you should always get the number right away.

HAL
Oh brother.

At the taxi stand ahead an enormous line has formed -- with no cabs in view.

HAL (CONT'D)
At least you could've gotten us kicked out earlier -- before the metro closed.

JIMMY
Omigosh, now we'll never get home!

WODDY
What a bunch of whiners! No wonder women can't stand you -- they hate that.

HAL
(to Aubrey)
Is that true?

AUBREY
What?

HAL
Do you hate whiners?

Aubrey thinks seriously.

AUBREY
No, in fact, I'm perversely attracted to them.

Vindicated, Hal and Jimmy smile at Woddy.

WODDY
But it is a perversity.

AUBREY
Frederic was a whiner to some degree; you know, not being able to work with anyone in his apartment.

JIMMY
And you still like him?

AUBREY
Sure.

JIMMY
(to Woddy)
You see.

WODDY
That means nothing.

As they linger on the cab line the situation looks bleak.

HAL
I think I'll walk.

JIMMY
Walk to the Marais from here? That's, like, hours.

HAL
I don't think it's that far.

WODDY
It's incredibly far. You're crazy.

HAL
I could use the walk.

Hal seems serious about it; he takes out a small MP3 player and some earbuds.

JIMMY
Oh, I see: a walk and cry.
(to Aubrey)
Crying is Hal's favorite thing.

HAL
No. It's *one* of my favorite things.

Hal puts on his earbuds: a thumping, portentous rhythm comes on low.

WODDY
Al Green?

Hal shakes his head.

HAL
Motown.

The others watch Hal go; Woddy shakes his head.

WODDY
He could very well die.

EXT. PARIS STREETS -- NIGHT

Jimmy Ruffin's "I've Passed this Way Before" plays on Hal's MP3 player and the soundtrack as he trudges through the beautiful wet streets.

INT./EXT. TAXI RACING ALONG PARIS AVENUE -- NIGHT

The music continues as Aubrey, Jimmy and Woddy ride in the back of a speeding cab; then a view of the streets they race through while the camera rises over the city as the credits roll.