
DRAMA

0411/13/T/PRE

Paper 1

May/June 2015

PRE-RELEASE MATERIAL

To be given to candidates on receipt by the Centre.

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

The questions in Paper 1 will be based on the stimuli and on the extract from Neil Simon's play *The Dinner Party* provided in this booklet.

You may do any preparatory work that is considered appropriate. It is recommended that you perform the extract, at least informally.

You will **not** be permitted to take this copy of the material **or** any other notes or preparation into the examination. A clean copy of the pre-release material will be provided with the Question Paper.



This document consists of **23** printed pages and **1** blank page.

STIMULI

Choose **one** of the following three stimuli and devise a piece of drama based on it. You should work in groups of between two and six performers. Your piece should last approximately 15 minutes.

In the Written examination, you will be asked questions about your piece that will cover both practical and theoretical issues.

Stimulus 1

Title: *It really built up the team*

Stimulus 2

Poem: *Flowers* by Wendy Cope

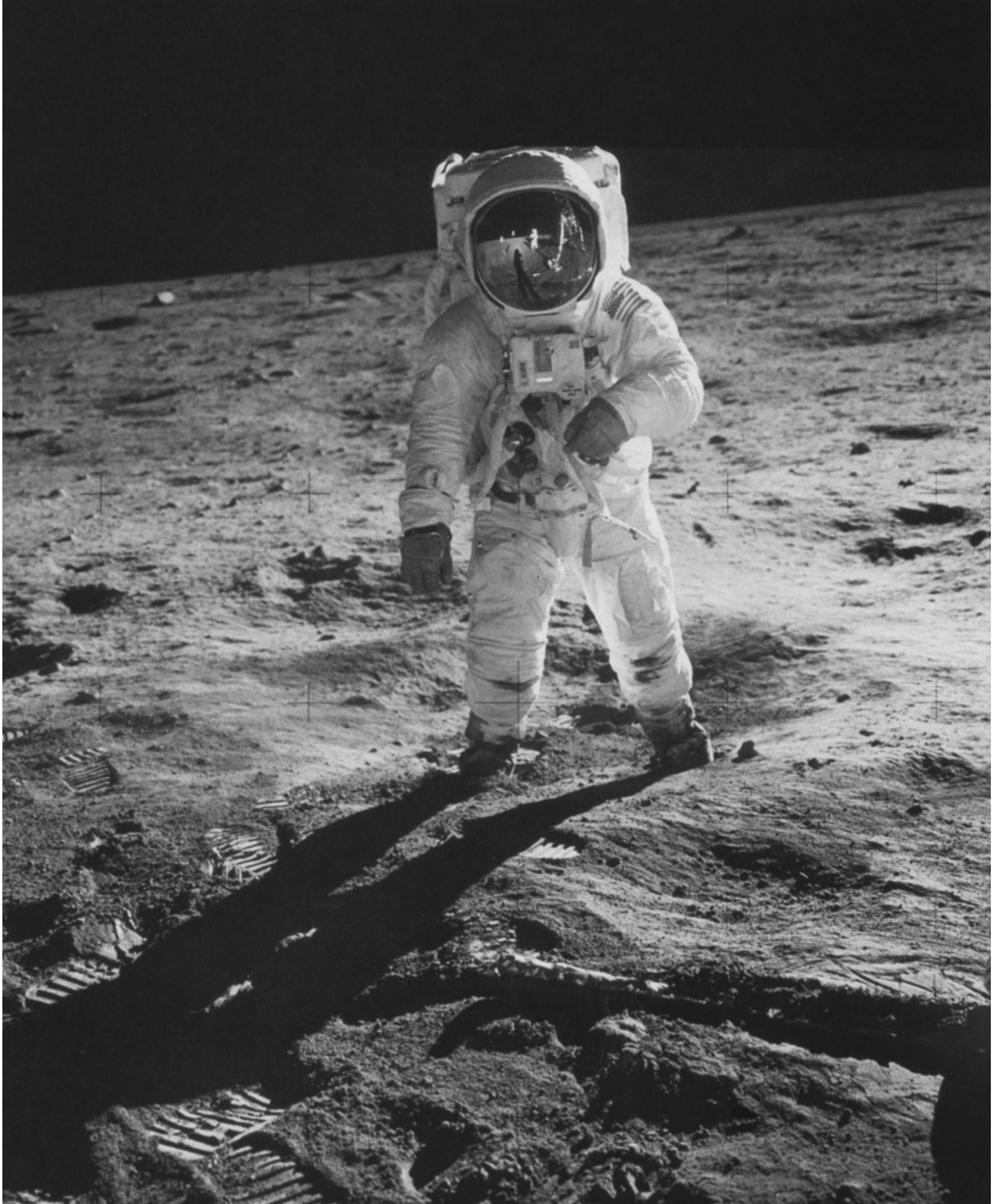
Some men never think of it.
You did. You'd come along
And say you'd nearly brought me flowers
But something had gone wrong.

The shop was closed. Or you had doubts –
The sort that minds like ours
Dream up incessantly. You thought
I might not want your flowers.

It made me smile and hug you then.
Now I can only smile.
But, look, the flowers you nearly brought
Have lasted all this while.

Stimulus 3**Photograph:** *On the moon*

Apollo 11 astronaut Buzz Aldrin standing on the moon, with astronaut Neil Armstrong and the lunar module reflected in his helmet visor, during the historic first walk on the lunar surface.



EXTRACT**Taken from *The Dinner Party* by Neil Simon**

These notes are intended to help you understand the context of the drama.

Neil Simon's play *The Dinner Party* was first performed in Los Angeles, California, in 1999.

The play has several elements in the style of a farce. The action takes place in Paris at an exclusive restaurant called *La Casette*, to which the host, Paul Gerard, has invited three divorced men. Unbeknown to them, their former wives have also been invited. The guests arrive sequentially during the course of the play although the host himself never shows up.

The style of the drama involves rapid delivery of dialogue, clever plays on words, and unlikely twists in the plot, as well as characters behaving strangely.

The Dinner Party is not divided into Acts. The extract is taken from the opening and consists of about two-thirds of the play.

Characters (in order of appearance)

Claude Pichon	Early forties. Runs an antique bookshop.
Albert Donay	Early forties. Works in the car rental trade.
Andre Bouville	An attractive man who runs a chain of men's clothing stores.
Mariette Levieux	Aged 36/37. An attractive woman formerly married to Claude.
Yvonne Fouchet	A pretty young woman, formerly married to Albert.
Gabrielle Buonocelli	An elegant woman, formerly married to Andre.

The action of the play takes place in a private dining room of *La Casette* restaurant. The time is assumed to be the present.

A private dining room in a first-rate restaurant in Paris. The present.

At stage right is a dining table set for six. Against the wall at stage left is a long serving table with large silver tureens of food and bottles, a few already open. In the center of the room is a small sofa for two and a chair on each side of the sofa. Everything in the room, from furniture to the wall decorations, is French and softly attractive.

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[CLAUDE PICHON, *early forties, in evening dress, stands alone in the room, looks at his watch and sips a drink. He looks a little lost. He looks at the dining table, then crosses to the buffet table, lifts tureen covers, sniffs food, then over to the hors d'oeuvres and samples a few. Turns and looks lost again.*

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There is a double door almost at rear center stage. Another door, smaller, on the side wall. The large door opens and another man enters, about the same age, in evening dress as well. This is ALBERT DONAY.]

- ALBERT: Hello. Am I in the right place? The Gerard party? 15
 CLAUDE: Yes. Well, I think so. I'm the first one here.
 [ALBERT *comes in, closes the door.*]
- ALBERT: I'm Albert Donay.
 CLAUDE: Claude Pichon.
 [They shake hands. ALBERT *winces in pain, pulls his hand away and tries to shake off pain.*] 20
- ALBERT: AHHH ... Ooooh.
 CLAUDE: I'm sorry. Did I do that?
 ALBERT: No, I did. Hurt my finger putting my tie on.
 CLAUDE: Yes, bow ties are a bother. Did you make it yourself? 25
 ALBERT: No, it's my father's. He snapped it while my finger was up. [*Holds his finger to his throat.*] This is *very* nice, isn't it?
 CLAUDE: Well, it *is* La Casette.... They say that Josephine lived here once ... Napoleon used to visit her secretly through that door.
 [*He points to the small door.*] 30
- ALBERT: Really? How convenient to have a restaurant in your own home.
 CLAUDE: I, er, don't think it was a restaurant then.
 ALBERT: Of course not. This is all new to me.... I rarely come into Paris.
 CLAUDE: Of course.
 ALBERT: Any idea who's coming tonight? 35
 CLAUDE: No, not a clue.
 ALBERT: Same here.... Are you, er ... alone?
 CLAUDE: Alone? Yes.
 ALBERT: I thought perhaps your wife
 CLAUDE: No, no. I'm not married. 40
 ALBERT: [*Pointing.*] Ah ... but you still wear your wedding band.
 CLAUDE: No. It comes off. [*He slides it off.*] Depends on whether you want to be available or *unavailable*. [*He slides it back and forth.*] You make your choice when you see who your dinner partner's going to be.
- ALBERT: Very practical. 45
 CLAUDE: You go to enough dinner parties, you hear wedding bands sliding on and off all around you.... You have no ring so I assume you're single.
 ALBERT: Yes, I am.
 CLAUDE: Never married?
 ALBERT: Twice. Both to the same woman. 50
 CLAUDE: Ah. And both marriages failed.
 ALBERT: Well, obviously the first marriage was better than the second otherwise

- there'd be no point going back for another try.
- CLAUDE: I can see that. [CLAUDE sips his drink as ALBERT crosses and pours one for himself.] Any idea what this party's about? 55
- ALBERT: Not a clue. I was hoping you did.
- CLAUDE: Except, of course, that Paul's hosting it.
- ALBERT: Paul?
- CLAUDE: Paul Gerard, the attorney.
- ALBERT: Paul, of course. Had it on my calendar for weeks. My secretary reminded me this morning. She gave me the address, the time, didn't write down the name. Just assumed I remembered it was Paul. 60
- CLAUDE: So you're very busy then.
- ALBERT: No, my secretary is.
- CLAUDE: What is it you do, if I may ask? 65
- ALBERT: I'm in the auto industry.
- CLAUDE: Really? In production?
- ALBERT: No. Rentals.
- CLAUDE: I see.... You find it interesting?
- ALBERT: God, no. Bore me to death. It's my father's business.... Actually, I'm an artist. Studied at the Academy. 70
- CLAUDE: Good for you. What sort of paintings do you do?
- ALBERT: Cars, mostly. In the abstract. Well, they're all out there sitting on the lot posing for me.... I don't need a studio.
- CLAUDE: Abstract cars. Much of a market for that? 75
- ALBERT: Well, people come there to rent cars, not buy paintings.... I tried renting the paintings once, it didn't work out.
- CLAUDE: Do you like Fragonard.
- [CLAUDE indicates the mural on the back wall.]
- ALBERT: Not before dinner, no. 80
- CLAUDE: The artist, Fragonard. That mural is in the style of Fragonard. Around 1786.
- ALBERT: [Looks at mural.] Actually I paint in the style of Range Rover.... If the customer wants, I paint in their name on the license plate. 85
- CLAUDE: Clever.
- ALBERT: And what do you do?
- CLAUDE: I have a shop. Antique books. Classics, mostly. 1st Editions ... Victor Hugo, Émile Zola, Charles Dickens.
- ALBERT: How lucky for you. To spend your days with people like that.
- CLAUDE: Well they don't exactly come into the shop. 90
- ALBERT: Oh, but they do. They're there on your shelves, night and day, just waiting for someone to open their pages.... Do you ever find personal letters from very famous people?
- CLAUDE: Well, I have an Albert Einstein letter to his cousin, a relative in Austria.
- ALBERT: Einstein's relative. Do you think that's where he got his idea for his — 95
- CLAUDE: Don't even go there. [Looks around.] I wonder where the others are. Today is the seventeenth, isn't it?
- ALBERT: [Holds up his watch, squints at it.] I can't tell. They print the dates so small, you need a microscope. And the face doesn't have any numbers. But it's the in thing they say. 100
- [Shows it to CLAUDE.]
- CLAUDE: So what's the advantage of the watch?
- ALBERT: It was on sale.
- CLAUDE: Right. Lower the prices.... Maybe that's what you should do with your paintings. 105
- ALBERT: I've tried that. I sold six frames, no paintings.... Are you always so prompt for things like this?
- CLAUDE: I wasn't prompt, I was early.... You were prompt.

- ALBERT: Right.... Large party, you suppose?
 CLAUDE: I wouldn't think so. There's only six places for dinner. 110
 [*He points to the dining table.*]
 ALBERT: Does Paul usually give small parties?
 CLAUDE: I've never been to *any* of his parties.
 ALBERT: Nor have I. I don't party much. I usually paint at night.
 CLAUDE: Yes, your car series, of course.... Do you ever paint *people*? 115
 ALBERT: Only if they're in the cars.
 CLAUDE: Of course, it's what you call ... "your style." ... So you're really not a close friend of Paul's.
 ALBERT: He handled my divorce.
 CLAUDE: Really? He handled mine as well.... Did he do well by you? 120
 ALBERT: It was a difficult time.
 CLAUDE: Tell me about it.
 ALBERT: Oh, it's a long story....
 CLAUDE: No, it's just an expression. "Tell me about it," meaning I've had the same problems. You never heard that expression? 125
 ALBERT: Not really. I don't go out to lunch much.... [*He looks around.*] Ever been here before?
 CLAUDE: La Cassette? Just once. In the upstairs restaurant. A bit steep for me. The food, of course, is first rate.
 ALBERT: I'm not much into rich foods. I have simple tastes.... No organs.... No lungs, no kidneys, no liver, et cetera. 130
 CLAUDE: No meat at all?
 ALBERT: Some ... as long as the meat doesn't have any body function.
 CLAUDE: I see your point.
 ALBERT: [*Looks around.*] No waiters, I notice. 135
 CLAUDE: Yes. I noticed that too. Apparently this is to be a very *intimate* dinner.
 ALBERT: I agree. It all has a bit of the mystique about it, don't you think?
 CLAUDE: In what way?
 ALBERT: In a mystique way. Vague. Cryptic. Enigmatic. Ambiguous.
 CLAUDE: How do you mean? 140
 ALBERT: [*Looks at him, puzzled.*] Pretty much what I've said. I've used up all my synonyms.
 CLAUDE: You mean hard to put your finger on.
 ALBERT: Yes. I forgot that one. Hard to put your finger on.
 CLAUDE: Perhaps it's *meant* to be. Secretive, I mean. 145
 ALBERT: Secretive, that's another good word. But why?
 CLAUDE: It could be a surprise party.
 ALBERT: Why would he invite *me* to a surprise party? I don't know any of his friends. Do you?
 CLAUDE: Since I don't know who's coming, I don't *know* if I know them. 150
 ALBERT: Perhaps we got on the list by mistake.
 CLAUDE: No. He's too good a lawyer to make an error like that.
 ALBERT: Well, maybe he's good at legal things but not at party things.
 [*The entrance door opens and a man leans in. This is ANDRE. An attractive man, dressed in a neat gray business suit with a smart shirt and tie.*] 155
 ANDRE: Excuse me, is this the Paul Gerard affair?
 CLAUDE: We believe so. Just getting under way.
 ANDRE: Am I the first to arrive?
 ALBERT: No. We are. 160
 [*They are standing close together.*]
 ANDRE: You're guests? ... I thought you were waiters.
 CLAUDE: Waiters? [*Smiles.*] I'm afraid not.
 ANDRE: Good heavens, it's evening dress. I didn't know.

CLAUDE:	Really? It's on the invitation.	165
ALBERT:	[<i>To CLAUDE.</i>] Actually it wasn't. But the card was so festive. All those blue ribbons tied in a bow. I just assumed —	
CLAUDE:	I assumed, as well.	
ANDRE:	If it didn't say evening dress, then it isn't evening dress. [<i>CLAUDE and ALBERT look at each other.</i>]	170
CLAUDE:	Do we have time to go home and change?	
ALBERT:	I rented the suit. I have to have it back by ten.	
CLAUDE:	Is that a problem for you?	
ALBERT:	Well, I rented the shoes, too. The shirt isn't mine. The tie is my father's. My father is not the problem —	175
CLAUDE:	Some other time. [<i>Crosses to ANDRE.</i>] I'm Claude Pichon.	
ANDRE:	Andre Bouville. [<i>They shake hands.</i>]	
ALBERT:	Albert Donay. [<i>They shake. ALBERT pulls his hand away in pain.</i>]	180
ANDRE:	I'm sorry.	
ALBERT:	It's all right. It's a small bow tie injury. [<i>Holds his finger to his neck.</i>]	
CLAUDE:	Maybe you can shed some light on this, Bouville.	
ANDRE:	On what?	185
CLAUDE:	The reason for this dinner party.	
ANDRE:	I didn't know it <i>was</i> a dinner party.	
CLAUDE:	Didn't you receive an invitation?	
ANDRE:	No. I was away on business. My office sent me a fax. "Be at La Casette, private dining room, Tuesday the 17 th , eight p.m., Paul Gerard."	190
ALBERT:	And you didn't put "dining room" and "dinner" together?	
ANDRE:	I had eighteen meetings in three days. I couldn't put my <i>socks</i> together. I just landed at the airport. My pilot had to wake me.	
CLAUDE:	You have your own pilot?	
ANDRE:	Yes, he comes with the plane.	195
CLAUDE:	You have your own plane?	
ANDRE:	It's very common to lease them these days.	
ALBERT:	I know about leasing. I'm in rentals myself.	
ANDRE:	Really? What kind of planes?	
ALBERT:	... Non flying Autos, trailers, recreational vehicles.	200
ANDRE:	No. No, no, no. Get into leasing planes....	
ALBERT:	I'll get you a drink. [<i>He crosses to sidebar.</i>]	
CLAUDE:	[<i>To ANDRE.</i>] And what business are you in, if I may ask?	
ANDRE:	Men's apparel. I have a chain of boutiques around the country.	205
ALBERT:	[<i>To ANDRE.</i>] Bouvilles, of course. Is that you? My God. You've got shops everywhere you look.	
ANDRE:	Not everywhere. Location is an art form today. [<i>Takes drink.</i>] Thank you.	
ALBERT:	Your marketing campaigns are wonderful. Not that I'm much into clothes myself.	210
ANDRE:	Well, perhaps if you bought instead of rented. [<i>He sips his drink.</i>] No waiters around?	
CLAUDE:	No. I think we're on our own tonight.	
ANDRE:	No waiters at La Casette? Impossible.	
CLAUDE:	We think Paul's up to something out of the ordinary here.	215
ANDRE:	Like what?	
ALBERT:	Something vague. Ambiguous. Hard to put your finger on.	
ANDRE:	What does that mean?	
CLAUDE:	Difficult to say. Unclear. Obscure. Evasive.	
ALBERT:	[<i>To CLAUDE.</i>] Very good. That's three more we forgot.	220

ANDRE: I haven't a clue what you're both talking about.

CLAUDE: I have a question for you, Andre. Are you married?

ANDRE: No.

CLAUDE: *Never married?*

ANDRE: Once. A few years ago. 225

CLAUDE: Would you be surprised if I told you that Albert and I are *both* divorced men?

ANDRE: Not at all.

CLAUDE: Why not?

ANDRE: Because wives read invitations more carefully and they would have *told* you it wasn't evening dress. 230

ALBERT: He's got a point.

CLAUDE: Since Paul Gerard represented Albert and myself in our divorces, can I assume he did yours as well?

ANDRE: It would be folly if you didn't. 235

CLAUDE: [*Points to dining table.*] As you can see, it's clearly a party for six, yet the first three guests are all divorced men who've never set eyes on each other. Do you find that odd?

ANDRE: Oddly, I don't. I've been to dinner parties where I've hardly known a soul.

ALBERT: He's got a point there, as well. 240

CLAUDE: Were they all men? Were they all divorced?

ANDRE: [*Getting annoyed.*] I could tell that *some* were men. I could tell that some were *women*. Don't know about divorced.

ALBERT: Did the men arrive first? Were there no waiters?

ANDRE: Waiters, yes. No clue as to who arrived first. Some couples were married. 245

CLAUDE: Sorry I didn't take notes on this.

CLAUDE: Ah, but we have no waiters. We have no women. We have no married couples.

ANDRE: [*Testily.*] It's only five past eight, for heaven's sakes. And women generally take longer to dress than men. Women also prefer making a later entrance than men. 250

ALBERT: [*To CLAUDE.*] He's got an excellent point there.

CLAUDE: But we *can* agree that this dinner is only for people that Paul Gerard helped get divorced.

ANDRE: Six people? It would be more like six hundred. And Paul Gerard has more sensitivity than to throw such a dreadful party. 255

CLAUDE: [*He goes to get a drink.*]

CLAUDE: [*To ANDRE.*] Who then are the other three guests?

ANDRE: Well, obviously Paul and his wife, who are *not* divorced, which leaves the sixth guest unaccounted for. 260

CLAUDE: Ah, but what if Paul is not *bringing* his wife? What, if in fact, Paul and his wife are *themselves* divorcing?

ANDRE: Highly unlikely.

CLAUDE: Why?

ANDRE: They celebrated their 32nd anniversary yesterday. 265

CLAUDE: Have you heard from them *today*? Maybe things didn't go well last night.

ANDRE: What's the word I'm looking for?

CLAUDE: Logical?

ANDRE: Inane. Completely inane.

ALBERT: Why don't we wait and see who shows up? 270

CLAUDE: Fine. But nevertheless, who might the other three guests be?

ALBERT: Well, now it's obvious. Three more women.... Am I right?

CLAUDE: You are right, Albert.... Three attractive women *and* — unattached.

ALBERT: If that's true, that's very good.

ANDRE: If it's true, and I'm sure it's not, I don't *need* to meet someone new. I've already *met* someone new. So in that regard, this party is a complete 275

waste of time for me. Goodbye.
[He heads for the door.]

CLAUDE: You can't leave. It would be an insult to Paul.

ANDRE: I'm just going to get cigarettes.... Please talk about me while I'm gone. 280
[He leaves, closes door.]

CLAUDE: What a HUGE pompous ass!
[Door opens. ANDRE looks in.]

ANDRE: But with the right suit, no one notices it.
[He smiles, leaves, closes door.] 285

ALBERT: *[To CLAUDE.]* He got you on that one, too.

CLAUDE: He's a snob who's above all this. He won't stay long. That means three women and just the two of us. I like our chances.
[He starts for the door on the other side of room.]

ALBERT: Where are you going? 290

CLAUDE: Unfortunately, to the men's room. If a woman arrives, make no advances until I return. Understand?

ALBERT: I understand, but it's not binding.

CLAUDE: I think you've picked up some bad habits from your friend, Bouville.
[He goes out angrily, closes door.] 295

ALBERT: My friend?? He disliked *me* even *more* than he disliked you ... my friend.
[ALBERT looks over the hors d'oeuvres and pops one in his mouth. He likes it and pops another in his mouth.
The entrance door opens. A woman comes in. This is MARIETTE. About 36 or 37. Attractive in a smart suit. ALBERT does not see her yet.] 300

MARIETTE: Excuse me. Is this the Gerard party?
[ALBERT, embarrassed, turns, nods trying to swallow the hors d'oeuvres. He holds up his finger for her to wait.]

ALBERT: Hmm?

MARIETTE: The Gerard dinner party? 305
[ALBERT holds up his finger again, turns his back to her for a moment, tries hard to swallow fast. Wipes his mouth with a napkin quickly, then turns.]

ALBERT: *[With food in his mouth.]* I'm thorry, I haven't ... *[He swallows.]* I'm sorry. I haven't eaten all day. *[He wipes his mouth, then turns back to her.]* The Gerard dinner party? Yes. It is. 310

MARIETTE: *[Looks around.]* Are we the first?

ALBERT: No. I'm the second, you're the fourth. Please come in. *[She does. He closes the door behind her.]* I'm Albert Donay.

MARIETTE: How do you do? Mariette Levieux. *[They shake. ALBERT bites his lip, trying to quiet the pain. We hear a little painful murmur as he tries to smile.]* Are you all right? 315

ALBERT: Oh, yes, I do that when I'm happy to meet someone. *[She looks at him queerly.]* Is it Miss Levieux?

MARIETTE: Yes.... Where're one and three? 320

ALBERT: Pardon?

MARIETTE: If we're two and four ...?

ALBERT: Ah. Yes. One and three. Three went to get cigarettes and one went to the men's room.

MARIETTE: Yes. 325

ALBERT: Would you care for a drink?

MARIETTE: That would be very nice, thank you.

ALBERT: *[Goes to get drink.]* It's very odd but number one just said that he was quite sure that number four would be a woman.

MARIETTE: Did he? Why is that odd? 330

ALBERT: *[Pours drink.]* Because one, two and three are all men.
[He crosses with drink.]

- MARIETTE: Are they? ... Is there some reason why we're all referred to as numbers?
 ALBERT: No, no. Except it might confuse you if I said names of people you hadn't met yet. 335
 [He gives her a drink.]
- MARIETTE: Well, I know you're Albert and you know I'm Mariette so I think that's a good start.
- ALBERT: [Smiles.] An excellent start.
- MARIETTE: This is a lovely room. [Looks at dining table.] Are we just six for dinner? 340
 ALBERT: It would appear that way.... It's Albert, remember?
 MARIETTE: Yes. You told me.
 ALBERT: I know, I meant in case you wanted to use it.
 MARIETTE: Thank you, Albert, I will.... I suppose five and six are Paul Gerard and his wife? 345
- ALBERT: We don't really know that. There's even some conjecture that the Gerards won't be coming.
- MARIETTE: To their own party? Why would they do that?
- ALBERT: There was some confusion about that also. By one and three. And by two, I was two, but now I'm Albert.... Did the Gerards give you any hint? 350
- MARIETTE: Actually, I never spoke to them.
- ALBERT: But you are a friend of the Gerards?
- MARIETTE: Not to Paul. Just his wife. But he wrote me such a charming letter enclosed in the invitation, I decided to accept.
- ALBERT: [Smiles.] I'm glad you did. By the way, it's not evening dress. I misread the invitation. 355
- MARIETTE: Are you saying I'm overdressed?
- ALBERT: No. You look absolutely perfect. Actually, I'm overdressed. And number one, too.... I mean number one *is* too.... Number three *may* have gotten it right. I have no idea what five and six are wearing. 360
- MARIETTE: Since you don't know who they are.
- ALBERT: Exactly.
- MARIETTE: And if it's not the Gerards, who might it be?
- ALBERT: Well, Claude ... he's number one ... Claude thought that perhaps the Gerards selected three women to come to dinner. 365
- MARIETTE: Which women?
- ALBERT: Most likely three women who don't know each other.
- MARIETTE: You mean six total strangers?
- ALBERT: Not total. We all seem to have some connection to Paul Gerard. Am I making myself clear? 370
- MARIETTE: Perhaps, but not to me.... For three men who don't know each other, you seem to have gotten very involved.
- ALBERT: Well, one and two were more involved than I was.
- MARIETTE: I thought you were two.
- ALBERT: Involved. No, not as much. 375
- MARIETTE: That you were *number two*.
- ALBERT: Ah, right. [He spills his drink.] Sorry. [Pulls out handkerchief and spreads it on floor. He helps her across. As she crosses, ALBERT wipes the spill up with his handkerchief. He crosses to her holding the handkerchief in one hand, the glass in the other.] If you didn't know who was coming or what you were coming to, why did you come? 380
- MARIETTE: Very simple. I thought it was time for me to get out and meet new people.
- ALBERT: That's why I came. [He looks for a place to put the wet handkerchief. Seeing none he squeezes the drink from the handkerchief into the glass, followed by the handkerchief itself.] And that's what you and I are doing now. [Looks for a place to put the glass. Not finding one he puts it in his pocket.] Aren't we? 385
- MARIETTE: No, I meant that I was interested in meeting new *people* as opposed to

just one person. I don't think I'm ready for just one person, yet. Please don't take that personally. 390
 [ALBERT *crosses and places the glass on small table.*]

ALBERT: No. I understand. What you mean is, you want to meet a diversified group of people instead of one specific person.

MARIETTE: Yes.

ALBERT: But what if in the diversified group of people you met one particular person who was more unique than anyone in that combined diversified group? Would you be against that? 395

MARIETTE: I don't know. This is the first time in my life I'm having a conversation like this.

ALBERT: It's my first time through it too. [MARIETTE *starts to leave, ALBERT backs up to doors blocking her way.*] If I seem forward, I assure you I'm not. I'm quite a reserved person, but you seem so easy to talk to.

MARIETTE: Well, that may have something to do with the number of people talking, don't you think. [She looks around.] If you'll excuse me a moment, I have a rather urgent phone call to make. 405
 [ALBERT *opens the door for her.*]

ALBERT: I'll be waiting right here.

MARIETTE: [Halfway out the door.] I'm sure you will.

ALBERT: Albert.

MARIETTE: [From hallway.] Albert. 410
 [She leaves. ALBERT *closes the door behind her. At that moment, CLAUDE comes back through the side door.*]

CLAUDE: I have one other theory, Albert. Listen to this

ALBERT: You missed her. Number four. You were right. She was a woman.

CLAUDE: Damn! What did she look like? 415

ALBERT: Just as you described. *Very* attractive. Maybe late thirties. Very bright. Not the kind who would like Andre at all.... And very available.

CLAUDE: How do you know?

ALBERT: She said it was time to get out and meet new people.

CLAUDE: What did I tell you? Where is she? 420

ALBERT: Had to make a phone call. Said it was urgent. By the way, we hit it off *extremely* well.

CLAUDE: Which is not to say she and I won't.

ALBERT: No, no. You forfeited that when you went to the men's room.

CLAUDE: I forfeited nothing if she prefers me. 425

ALBERT: We agreed that if I preferred her, you would get five and six.

CLAUDE: If I found five and six to my liking.... Don't forget, I have seniority here.

ALBERT: How do you know you're older than I am?

CLAUDE: Not *older*. Earlier. I was here first.

ALBERT: And I was here *promptly*. Promptly has precedence over coming too early. 430

CLAUDE: And wasn't it I who said "It's a woman, Attractive. Age between thirty and thirty-eight and unattached"?

ALBERT: Well, now you're too *late*. She attached herself to me.

CLAUDE: And she could *promptly* unattach herself just as fast. 435
 [The door opens and ANDRE enters.]

ANDRE: The Gerards are not coming. Housekeeper said they're in Sardinia.

CLAUDE: Exactly what I predicted.

ANDRE: You never once mentioned Sardinia.

ALBERT: [To ANDRE.] You just missed number four. She was here. 440

ANDRE: In the black evening suit. Yes, I saw her coming out.

ALBERT: Very attractive, I thought.

ANDRE: I always thought she was.

CLAUDE: Do you know her?

ANDRE:	We dated after my divorce. And hers. We went to Morocco for a weekend.	445
ALBERT:	Really? She doesn't seem the type to do that.	
ANDRE:	Go to Morocco?	
ALBERT:	With you.	
ANDRE:	Albert, you're actually being rude.	
ALBERT:	Claude says I'm picking it up from you.	450
CLAUDE:	[To ANDRE.] How did it go in Morocco?	
ANDRE:	Amusing. But then I met someone else. As did she.	
ALBERT:	You have no right making her personal business public.	
ANDRE:	I'm not making it public. I'm just telling you and Claude in private.	
CLAUDE:	Did she see you just now?	455
ANDRE:	No, she was going in the opposite direction. As I'm about to do myself. Since we now know what this dinner is about, and since I've already <i>dated</i> what this dinner's about, I leave the rest for you. [ANDRE <i>heads for the door.</i>]	
CLAUDE:	You can't walk out. That would be an insult to some innocent, well-meaning women.	460
ANDRE:	I can't speak for others, and Mariette may be well meaning, but I wouldn't exactly say she's an innocent.	
CLAUDE:	Mariette? Her name's Mariette?	
ANDRE:	Yes.	465
CLAUDE:	Blonde? About this tall?	
ANDRE:	That's her.	
CLAUDE:	Mariette Levieux?	
ANDRE:	You've dated her?	
CLAUDE:	On and off. Then on. Then I married her. Then I divorced her.... He's invited both of us? Why would Paul do that?	470
ANDRE:	To brighten up the party. In lieu of noisemakers and paper hats. [<i>The door opens, MARIETTE enters, looks straight at CLAUDE angrily.</i>]	
MARIETTE:	I called your house. They said you were at La Casette.... why would Paul do that?	475
ANDRE:	In lieu of noisemakers and paper hats.	
MARIETTE:	[<i>Turns, looks at ANDRE.</i>] Oh, no. You're here as well? Who else is coming? My doctor, dentist and accountant?	
ANDRE:	Don't think so. That would make seven.	
MARIETTE:	If this is a joke, I find it appalling. [To CLAUDE.] Did you know about this?	480
CLAUDE:	If I did, you think I'd come in evening dress to see you wearing the jewelry I paid for?	
MARIETTE:	This is the nightmare of my life.	
CLAUDE:	Tonight's may be worse. [To ALBERT.] Back to the original plan. I get five and six.	485
MARIETTE:	I'm leaving before this turns into farce.	
ANDRE:	It <i>already</i> is farce. I think we're aiming for a much higher form of absurdity here.	
MARIETTE:	I'm going to call Paul Gerard and ask for an explanation.	490
ANDRE:	Sorry. He's in Sardinia.	
MARIETTE:	[<i>Angrily to ALBERT.</i>] Why didn't you tell me that?	
ALBERT:	[<i>Points to ANDRE.</i>] Because I didn't go to the phone with him.	
CLAUDE:	[To MARIETTE.] I didn't have a <i>clue</i> you'd be here.	
MARIETTE:	You didn't have a clue during our marriage.	495
ALBERT:	Listen, if you two would rather be alone....	
MARIETTE:	Stay here, Albert. You're the only gentleman in the room.	
CLAUDE:	Gentleman? He was just talking about women like used cars.	
ALBERT:	[To MARIETTE.] I try to be a gentleman, Mariette.	
ANDRE:	[To ALBERT.] Well, it's a long, steep climb.	500

CLAUDE: [To MARIETTE.] I can't believe you went to Morocco with him.
 MARIETTE: [To ANDRE.] You went *public* with that?
 ANDRE: It wasn't a stock offering.... And I didn't know he was your ex-husband.
 MARIETTE: What are the chances of my being in a room with three men, two of whom I dislike intensely? 505
 [Restraining herself from hitting ANDRE and CLAUDE, MARIETTE crosses away with shawl and purse in hand. As she passes ALBERT, she flings her shawl, hitting him in the face. She puts her shawl and purse on sofa and crosses to serving table.]
 CLAUDE: [To ANDRE.] Did Paul know you knew my ex-wife well enough to take her to Morocco? 510
 ANDRE: There was no reason to tell Paul since there was no reason for me to know you *or* who your ex-wife was.
 ALBERT: [To CLAUDE.] Doesn't it bother you hearing this?
 CLAUDE: No. It bothers me that I gave her half my *money* to hear this. 515
 ALBERT: It would bother me.
 CLAUDE: Why? You're hearing it for free.
 MARIETTE: And I didn't take half your money. You got half of your *own* money.
 ALBERT: [To MARIETTE.] If you knew Paul Gerard was your husband's lawyer, why did you come to his dinner? 520
 MARIETTE: Because Helena and I are best friends.
 ALBERT: Who's Helena?
 MARIETTE: Paul's wife. Didn't you know?
 ALBERT: No. So are you saying that you were the best friend of the woman who was married to the man who represented your husband in divorce? 525
 ANDRE: In the history of speech, that sentence has never been uttered before.
 MARIETTE: I don't think Helena knew who Paul was inviting. She knew only that I was looking to meet new people.
 CLAUDE: Or maybe she didn't think you'd recognize me now that I'm living on half my own money. 530
 MARIETTE: [To ALBERT.] Albert, from now on, I don't want that man to address me in the first person.
 ALBERT: Do you want me to tell him because I think he heard you say it?
 CLAUDE: [To MARIETTE.] You came here to meet new people? Didn't you meet enough new people in Morocco? 535
 MARIETTE: I don't consider someone trying to sell me a ride on a camel as new people. Tell him.
 ALBERT: [To CLAUDE.] Mariette doesn't consider someone trying to —
 CLAUDE: [To ALBERT.] Stay out of this. Go outside and paint some used cars.
 MARIETTE: [To ALBERT.] And to put matters straight, I've been completely alone since my break-up with George Ormande. 540
 ALBERT: [To MARIETTE.] I think this would go better without me in the middle.
 CLAUDE: [To ALBERT.] Who the hell is George Ormande?
 ALBERT: I don't know. I'm sure it's not the camel driver.
 MARIETTE: [Finally to CLAUDE.] He was my attorney in the divorce. You never paid attention to *anything* concerning me, did you? 545
 CLAUDE: Really? [To ALBERT.] Then why did I pay her all that alimony?
 ALBERT: I don't know. I wasn't in the courtroom.
 [He walks away.]
 ANDRE: As scarcely entertaining as this is, why don't you all calm down while I call Paul in Sardinia and find out exactly what they have planned. [He turns, looks at ALBERT.] Albert ... you have a smudge on your face. 550
 ALBERT: I do? [He rubs his face and looks at his hand.] Where?
 ANDRE: In the men's room.
 ALBERT: In the men's room? 555
 ANDRE: Go and look.

- [ANDRE *leaves.*]
- ALBERT: [*Suddenly gets it.*] Oh. Yes, of course. [*To CLAUDE.*] I don't think that she —
- CLAUDE: I don't want to hear it. 560
- ALBERT: [*To MARIETTE.*] Excuse me. I have a smudge —
- MARIETTE: Would you please?
[ALBERT *leaves.* CLAUDE and MARIETTE *are alone.*]
- CLAUDE: [*To MARIETTE.*] Well, aren't *you* popular.... The only woman at the party and already you've met your ex-husband, your ex-boyfriend *and* your next boyfriend.... Enjoying yourself Mariette? 565
- MARIETTE: Sorry, but Andre never got to *be* an ex-boyfriend and Albert will *never* be my next boyfriend.... But I'm delighted to have you as an ex-hubby.... As for me, I intend to be an ex-guest. [*Grabbing her shawl and purse, MARIETTE heads for the door.*] I hope you and your friends have an *exquisite* dinner. [*She opens the door.*] Excuse me, won't you. 570
[*She goes closing the door behind her.*]
- CLAUDE: [*Angrily.*] Extraordinary.
[*The side door opens and ALBERT comes out quickly.*]
- ALBERT: I heard you two shouting. Mariette seemed very upset. 575
- CLAUDE: She asked you to leave and you listened at the door?
- ALBERT: Well, I had nothing else to listen to.... Is she coming back?
- CLAUDE: Did you hear her say NO?... WHY ARE YOU ALWAYS A BEAT BEHIND?
- ALBERT: [*Points to watch.*] I told you. I can't see the numbers on my watch. 580
[*The door opens quickly and MARIETTE comes in.*]
- MARIETTE: No. I've changed my mind. I'm staying.
- ALBERT: [*Smiles.*] I'm so glad you did. I KNEW we —
- MARIETTE: Would you please leave us alone, Albert?
- ALBERT: Of course. I have a smudge on my face. 585
[*He goes back through small door.*]
- MARIETTE: [*Paces before she talks, then —*] Claude ... I know this is awkward, but do you know what I never said at our divorce?
- CLAUDE: That you'll take less money.
- MARIETTE: Is that all you divorced men talk about?
- CLAUDE: You think there's a club we all go to on Thursday nights and say, 590
"Remember when we had more furniture in this club?"
- MARIETTE: If there's anything in my apartment that you really want, come over and get it.
- CLAUDE: Fine. What time do you open?
- MARIETTE: You were never this materialistic while we were married. 595
- CLAUDE: Of course not. I still had my material.
- MARIETTE: Then come and take it all. I mean it. Except the jewelry you gave me... They mean something to me.
- CLAUDE: No, I gave you the jewelry, it's yours.... By the way, how's my half of the dog? 600
- MARIETTE: Babette is fine, thank you.
- CLAUDE: Does she ever bark for me? ... Or is that not the half I got?
- MARIETTE: You can have her any weekend you want.... Look.... What I never had a chance to say to you in our divorce was thank you for sharing your knowledge of literature with me.... It helped me become a better writer. 605
- CLAUDE: Thank you.... I must say, you've had a tremendous success, Mariette.
- MARIETTE: Not that you approved of my writing. You thought it was trash, didn't you?
- CLAUDE: You mustn't hold me accountable when I talk in my sleep.
- MARIETTE: No. I understand. I know how much you wanted that success for yourself.
- CLAUDE: I had my chance.... It just wasn't in the cards. 610
- MARIETTE: I'm sorry.
- CLAUDE: Maybe if you hadn't taken the cards *with* you

- MARIETTE: You're impossible. I'm leaving.
[*She turns to go.*]
- CLAUDE: No. I'll go. 615
[*He crosses, opens door.*]
- MARIETTE: [*Points to his hand.*] Why are you still wearing your wedding ring?
CLAUDE: It was the only safe place I knew to keep *you* from getting it.
[*He goes out of the door. ALBERT rushes in.*]
- ALBERT: I heard the door slam. I'm glad you're still here. Where's Claude? 620
MARIETTE: I've always wondered myself.
[*The large door opens. ANDRE steps in.*]
- ANDRE: Paul's line is busy. I heard the door. Has anyone else arrived?
MARIETTE: Yes. I went through that door and came back. Claude went out *that* door
but *didn't come back*. Albert came in that door. He's been here until *you* 625
came in the door to tell us Paul's line is busy.
- ANDRE: *Very* good. Would you consider working for me?
MARIETTE: Andre, you know I write novels.
ANDRE: Yes, I read one. The offer still stands.
[*He leaves.*] 630
- ALBERT: This room is so busy. Do you know that Napoleon came in through that
door?
- MARIETTE: Really? I must have missed him.
CLAUDE: [*Comes back in.*] One last thing
ALBERT: Claude, I think Mariette is very upset now. 635
MARIETTE: Albert, would you leave us alone, please?
ALBERT: Of course. [*Heads for the men's room.*] It's just that I don't know what to
do in there any more.
[*He goes.*]
- CLAUDE: Do you know why my career didn't flourish, Mariette? Because the 640
writers I aspire to be were beyond my reach. All those in my shop,
Voltaire, Victor Hugo, Émile Zola. Thomas Mann
- MARIETTE: No. You were right to learn from the best.
CLAUDE: They defeated me. You don't learn to think like Tolstoy. You have to be
born Tolstoy.... You don't learn to write like Kafka. You have to have 645
nightmares like Kafka.... I read passages to you from every book I ever
loved because heaven knows, you would never tackle it on your own.
- MARIETTE: Are you begrudging the help you gave me?
CLAUDE: NO. I was jealous of what you did with it. Nabokov was too oblique for
you so I broke it down and simplified it. Nabokov is great but I'm easier 650
to understand.
- MARIETTE: But you *did* teach me. Isn't that satisfying enough?
CLAUDE: Don't you understand? I couldn't translate even a speck of their genius
into my own work. But somehow what I did learn went directly to you. It's
like second-hand smoke without the nicotine. 655
- MARIETTE: But first-rate advice. You were always smarter than me.
CLAUDE: But what I wrote was inferior versions of the classics. What you wrote
was superior versions of my inadequate prose which you turned into
mediocre fiction, which is exactly what the public wants.
- MARIETTE: Why should I write what the public *doesn't* want? And I'm glad the public 660
does because I can't write any better than I do ... when you read pieces
to me from Voltaire and Camus and Proust and Sartre, I absorbed it
without even knowing I was listening. Who today can write like they did?
But in my own small way, I learned how to write a story, compose a
sentence, how to keep a reader's interest before they fall asleep.... You 665
taught it all to me, Claude. By osmosis. I think your anger comes from
thinking I stole from you.... If I stole anything it was your passion for the
written word. Maybe it's the only thing in the world we still share.

- CLAUDE: Aside from the dog.
- MARIETTE: I think it was right that we divorced, Claude.... I just think we did it a little too soon. 670
[As he steps toward her, we hear a knock at the door.]
- CLAUDE: STAY OUT OF HERE, ALBERT. WE'RE HAVING A MARITAL SPAT.
- MARIETTE: *[Points to big door.]* It was *that* door.... Come in! 675
[The big door opens. A pretty young woman, although not too stylishly dressed, comes in. This is YVONNE.]
- YVONNE: *[Quickly, without stopping.]* Oh. Hello. I'm Yvonne Fouchet. I know I'm late for dinner and I apologize but as I was coming here in the taxi, I thought it over and realized it would be a big mistake for me to be here tonight, for reasons of my own. So if you would please give my regards to the Gerards, I'll call another taxi and leave. It was very nice meeting you both. *[Smiles.]* Goodbye. 680
[She leaves, closing the door.]
- CLAUDE: *[To MARIETTE.]* Where are these people coming from? 685
[The small door opens and ALBERT rushes in.]
- ALBERT: I heard the door again. Did anyone else show up?
- MARIETTE: Number five was here but thought it over in the taxi and decided to go home.
- ALBERT: Go home? Did she say why?
- MARIETTE: Hard to say. She spoke without commas or periods. 690
- ALBERT: *[To CLAUDE.]* Did you say anything to her?
- CLAUDE: No. She did a short comic monologue and left.
- ALBERT: What did she look like?
- MARIETTE: Like someone I think you would have liked, Albert.
- ALBERT: I think I've already *met* someone I like. *[Holding up a silver tray for MARIETTE to see her face.]* Unless you think I'm out of line here, Claude. 695
- CLAUDE: No, I got off that line two years ago. But you can take Mariette home in one of your abstract cars.
- MARIETTE: I'm not yours to pass to strangers, Claude. 700
- CLAUDE: He's not a stranger. He's a guest in a rented suit.
- ALBERT: *[To MARIETTE.]* I'm thinking of buying it.
[The door opens, ANDRE comes in.]
- ANDRE: Well, it's all settled.
- CLAUDE: Did you get through to him? 705
- ANDRE: Oh yes.
- MARIETTE: Did you speak to him?
- ANDRE: Oh yes.
- ALBERT: Did he tell you why he gave this party?
- ANDRE: Oh yes. He didn't *give* this party. He just loaned his name. Someone *else* is giving the party. 710
- ALBERT: Did he say who?
- ANDRE: Oh no. What he *did* say was, "Please see it through. All six of you."
- CLAUDE: We don't *have* six. Number six hasn't arrived yet and number five *did* arrive but she left. 715
- ANDRE: Why did she leave?
- MARIETTE: Because she's smarter than us.
- ANDRE: *[To ALBERT.]* Why did you let her go?
- ALBERT: I never saw her come in.
- ANDRE: *[Crossing to door.]* Well, in that case, if she's not coming back, there's definitely no reason for me to stay. *[ANDRE opens the door revealing YVONNE.]* Hello, we were expecting you. 720
- YVONNE: I thought it over in the taxi again and decided I would stay after all.
- MARIETTE: We were hoping you would. *[Introducing herself.]* Mariette Leveux.

YVONNE: No. It's Yvonne Fouchet. 725

MARIETTE: Fine.

CLAUDE: Claude Pichon.
[*He crosses and shakes hands.*]

ANDRE: Andre Bouville.
[*He crosses and shakes her hand.*] 730

CLAUDE: [*Points to ALBERT.*] And, er ...he's Albert Donay.
[*ALBERT nods slightly and turns away.*]

YVONNE: Very nice to meet you all.... Am I the only one here who doesn't know anyone?

MARIETTE: Some of us do. Some of us don't. And some of us don't care. 735

CLAUDE: [*To YVONNE.*] Let me get you a chair.

YVONNE: Thank you.
[*CLAUDE stands behind a chair but she sits on empty sofa.*]

YVONNE: This may sound stupid but why are we all here?

ANDRE: We're not sure. 740

YVONNE: Has anyone thought to ask?

CLAUDE: [*Points to ANDRE.*] He called Sardinia but no luck.

YVONNE: Am I supposed to understand that?

MARIETTE: I think that's what the party's about. To find out what the party's about.

ANDRE: [*To YVONNE.*] If it's not too personal, may I ask why you decided to come back. 745

YVONNE: Well, as I was leaving, I saw someone I knew coming up the back stairway. I don't think he saw me. We hadn't seen each other in some time. Well, we did, but we hadn't *spoken* to each other. Well, I did, but he didn't.... I knew he wouldn't be keen on seeing me so I just got into the taxi and left. And then I said to myself, "No. Although I know he holds a very deep grudge against me, I think it's foolish for two people who were once very close to ignore each other forever." So I put on my bravest face and came back here to the restaurant. 750

MARIETTE: Good for you, Yvonne. 755

CLAUDE: [*Smirks.*] Why would anyone hold a grudge against *you*?

YVONNE: Well, he has good reason. We haven't spoken to each other since our divorce.

ALBERT: [*To MARIETTE.*] Not true. I said hello to her at a friend's wedding about a year ago. 760

YVONNE: [*To others.*] He didn't say hello. He sort of grunted towards me. But a grunt isn't actual speech.
[*CLAUDE, MARIETTE and ANDRE all look at each other.*]

CLAUDE: Puzzle solved. The six guests are all divorced couples. [*Leans over, gloatingly, to ANDRE.*] Looking forward to *that*, Andre? 765

ANDRE: Sorry to disappoint you, but my ex-wife is dead.

YVONNE: Oh, I'm sorry. You must miss her terribly.

ANDRE: [*Not concerned.*] Well, we were divorced first.

YVONNE: Yes, but she's still dead.

ANDRE: Yes. That's how it works. 770

YVONNE: Excuse me, but isn't that a rather cold thing to say?

CLAUDE: [*To YVONNE.*] It gets worse as it goes along.

ANDRE: Is anyone hungry besides me?

CLAUDE: [*To YVONNE.*] See? He's off the dead wife thing already.

MARIETTE: [*To ANDRE.*] If your ex-wife is deceased, and six of us have been invited, who else would you be expecting? 775

ANDRE: Why should I be expecting *anyone*?

CLAUDE: Because everyone here is a matched set. Is there anyone else in your past life?

ANDRE: My mother. She's eighty-eight and lives in Switzerland. So unless she 780

- can maneuver her wheelchair down the Alps, I wouldn't count on her. Whoever is behind this is intent on having a confrontation of couples.
- YVONNE: For what purpose?
- ANDRE: For the purpose of reviving a dead marriage.
- ALBERT: [To ANDRE.] Well, no one could revive yours unless someone could revive your dead wife. [They all look at him.] I said that without thinking. Sorry. 875
- YVONNE: Well, in my case it would be a waste of time. Albert and I have no wish to be united. Did you hear we were married and divorced twice?
- CLAUDE: Six times. 790
- YVONNE: No, it was twice.
- CLAUDE: Yes. We heard *twice* six times.
- MARIETTE: [To YVONNE.] You said you came back because you saw Albert on the stairs. But if you weren't talking to him, why come back at all?
- YVONNE: It was Albert who wasn't talking to *me*. I came back hoping he would. 795
- ANDRE: In order to win him back.
- YVONNE: Not at all. But it's painful to be ignored for the rest of my life. It's an awful feeling to know there's someone out there who hates you that much.
- ALBERT: I find it INTOLERABLE that you're asking her questions about our marriage. 800
- CLAUDE: Well, if *you* won't, what do you care if *we* do?
- MARIETTE: I understand your anger, Albert, but in a way I sympathize with Yvonne's situation, as well.
- ALBERT: *Her* situation? Do you know anything about *my* situation? What a disappointment you are, Mariette. 805
- MARIETTE: You met me eight minutes ago. That's not enough time to be disappointed.
- CLAUDE: [To MARIETTE.] I met you *nine* years ago. That's plenty enough time for me.... I'm off to the bar. Andre, care to join me?
- ANDRE: No, but I'll go anyway. 810
- [They go, closing the door behind them.]
- ALBERT: Then I'm leaving, as well. [He starts for the door.]
- YVONNE: PLEASE, MARIETTE, ASK HIM TO STAY.
- ALBERT: I'll wait out in the hallway.
- YVONNE: NO! I want him to stay *here*. In this room. 815
- MARIETTE: Albert, she wants you to stay *here*. In this room.
- ALBERT: Why? I have no intention of saying a single word to that woman.
- YVONNE: Even if he won't speak to me, I have things to say to him.
- MARIETTE: [To ALBERT.] Yvonne is quite willing to do the talking, Albert.
- ALBERT: But if I choose not to listen, I won't. 820
- YVONNE: I'll take that chance.
- MARIETTE: How conciliatory you are, Yvonne. [To ALBERT.] How accessible you are, Albert. [She starts for the door.] I'll leave you two to have a nice, quiet talk ... or half a talk, however it goes. [MARIETTE smiles at ALBERT, leaves, and closes the door. ALBERT and YVONNE are alone. He still hasn't turned to face her.] 825
- YVONNE: ... So, you're looking well, Albert.... At least your *back* is looking well.... Except your shoulders are sagging. That's always a sign that you're unhappy. [She moves to the chair closer to him.] When I first left, you swore that you would never speak to me as long as you lived. I thought it was just a figure of speech. But you haven't spoken in a year so I guess it's a figure of dead silence. [He turns to the other side of the room, his back still towards her.] I know it hurts when someone leaves and breaks up a marriage. [ALBERT holds up two fingers.] *Two* marriages ... but I never meant to leave you twice. I was satisfied with leaving you just once.... But you insisted we try it again and we did and it didn't work 835

again.... So why am I being punished for being right? [*With his back to her, he shakes his head.*] All right, then don't speak to me. But do you have to seek me out and confront me everywhere? On the street, in shops, at the movies.... If you'll release me from this torture, Albert, I'll give you anything you want... Not that I have much because I never took a penny from you for the divorce.... Each divorce... But I'll beg, borrow or steal just to hear your voice again. [*She looks at him. He is still stony silent.*] Say something, Albert. Move your lips, carve it in stone, drop leaflets from a plane, *write graffiti on my face with chalk*, BUT SAY SOMETHING, dammit! [*He suddenly holds up his index finger and writes a word in the air. She watches his finger.*] You're spelling something ... NEVER! ... I see. [*He now spells the same word with the finger, more rapidly this time.*] Never, never, never, never, yes, I got it, Albert.... Well, there's nothing left to say, is there? [*He points to himself, then points to the door.*] You're leaving, yes, I understand.... It was wonderful speaking to your finger, Albert.
 [ALBERT *walks to the doorway, turns the knob halfway, then suddenly sneezes loudly.*]

YVONNE: [*Without looking up.*] God bless you. 855
 ALBERT: [*As a reflex.*] Thank you.
 [*He leaves, closing the door behind him. YVONNE looks up, realizing what just happened. She stands.*]

YVONNE: Was that him? Did he just say "Thank you"? ... Oh, dear God. He spoke to me.... HE SPOKE TO ME!!! 860
 [*The door reopens, ALBERT re-enters, his head down in despair. He bangs on the door with his fist, angrily.*]

ALBERT: I knew one day this would happen.... But I NEVER thought it would be like THIS!
 [*He bangs door again.*] 865

YVONNE: For whatever reason, even if you didn't mean it, it's over, Albert.... You spoke to me.

ALBERT: I didn't *speak* to you. It was a reaction to God Bless You.... If *you* had sneezed, I would have blessed you.

YVONNE: Still it's over, Albert. I'm free. I can breathe again. 870
 ALBERT: You're *not* free. I was just being polite.
 YVONNE: No, I'm free. Free free free. I'm free as a *bird*. [*She jumps and twirls through the air like a ballerina.*] God bless you, Albert, my dear sweet friend.

ALBERT: I spoke not because I wanted to. But because I couldn't take the pressure any more. 875

YVONNE: Was your anger that great?

ALBERT: It was the only defense I had.

YVONNE: Defense against what?

ALBERT: Against admitting to myself that I still loved you. Still wanted you.... If I kept silent, unapproachable, I would have built a wall so high, it would keep me safe from you forever. 880

YVONNE: What's safer than two divorces, Albert? ... I'm sorry I caused you so much pain.

ALBERT: Not talking to you kept me from not wanting you. 885
 YVONNE: Why do you still want me?
 ALBERT: I will *always* want you ... but now I can survive without you.... It's safe for me to say your name now. [*Cheerfully.*] Hello, Yvonne. What's new, Yvonne? How've you been, Yvonne?

YVONNE: Oh, so so. Not much new. Saw a wonderful movie last week. 890
 ALBERT: I know. I waited for you to come out and not say a word to you.
 YVONNE: Yes, I saw you.

ALBERT: Please don't smile.

YVONNE: I'm not laughing at you.

ALBERT: I know. But your smile weakens my resolve. 895

YVONNE: Sorry.... So, are you seeing anyone? Special, I mean.

ALBERT: Actually, yes. Well, very, very briefly. I'm not sure it will work out.

YVONNE: Who is she?

ALBERT: Mariette.

YVONNE: I thought you just met her. 900

ALBERT: Yes. I said it was very, very brief.... What about you? Are you seeing anyone?

YVONNE: Well, you would know. You've been four steps behind me the entire year.

ALBERT: Partly hounding you and partly to protect you from unsuitable men ... like me. 905

YVONNE: You weren't the wrong man, Albert. We were the wrong *couple*.... And now that we've settled things, you'll never confront me on the street corners and other places, will you?

ALBERT: No. Never. [*They shake on it. ALBERT doesn't flinch.*] It doesn't hurt with you! 910

YVONNE: Thank you.... So since you've promised not to hound me anymore, I promise not to marry you a third time.

ALBERT: A third time? I don't have a friend close enough to *come* to a third wedding.

YVONNE: Then let's be grateful for little things. 915

ALBERT: It's nice talking to you again ... without rancor and anger about — well, what I've done to you this year.

YVONNE: But I understand why you did it. I'm sure you thought I was very cruel to you. [*ALBERT shrugs.*] But in marriage, people are always cruel to each other. 920

ALBERT: I loved you all the time.
[*ALBERT walks to the door, turns.*]
... I'm sorry this happened, Yvonne. [*She turns her back to him.*] Will you be staying for dinner?

YVONNE: I don't want to be cruel to you ... again. 925

ALBERT: Thank you.... Well, goodbye then ... Yvonne. [*He crosses to the door and as he goes, she looks at him, not wanting him to go.... In an effort to stop him she sneezes, then turns away.*] Bless you. [*His eyes are fixed on her to answer. She covers her face with her hands, trying not to let him see she is crying, but she doesn't answer.*] You don't have to cry, I'll finish it.... God bless you.... Goodbye.....
[*He goes. She removes her hands. MARIETTE comes back in.*]

MARIETTE: I know. Never never never never. I heard.

YVONNE: I hate marriage. The loving isn't worth the misery. Do you know of *anyone* who's happily married? 935

MARIETTE: Yes. Two pandas in the London zoo.

YVONNE: I like you, Mariette.

MARIETTE: I like you too, Yvonne.

YVONNE: Too bad they didn't invite just six women. We could have gotten along so well. 940
[*The door opens and GABRIELLE enters. She is elegant, striking looking, dressed smartly and brimming with confidence. It's hard not to like her.*]

GABRIELLE: Last one here, I hope. If not, I'll make a re-entrance.... Hello. Gabrielle Buonocelli. 945

YVONNE: You must be number six.

GABRIELLE: Am I? Did I win a door prize?

MARIETTE: The sixth guest, she means.

GABRIELLE: I *know* what she meant. And you're Mariette Levieux.

MARIETTE: Why, yes. Have we met? 950

GABRIELLE: No. We're meeting now. Are you related to *Charles* Levieux?

MARIETTE: He was my father.

GABRIELLE: Was?

MARIETTE: He died five years ago.

GABRIELLE: I'm sorry. I dated your father when I was seventeen. I hope that doesn't offend you. 955

MARIETTE: No, but it might offend my mother.

GABRIELLE: I understand. [*To YVONNE.*] And this pretty little thing must be Yvonne.

YVONNE: Yes. Yvonne Fouchet.

GABRIELLE: Was your father *Bernard* Fouchet? 960

YVONNE: No.

GABRIELLE: Good. Then we don't have to get into all that.... And where are the three little mice?

MARIETTE: If you mean the men, they're sitting at the bar.

GABRIELLE: If they were men, they'd be sitting in here. 965

YVONNE: They wanted to leave, but we're all waiting for you.

GABRIELLE: Am I that important?

MARIETTE: You are if this dinner party was your idea.

YVONNE: Is it? I mean you *did* know Mariette's name and mine. And you asked where the men were and not *who* they were.... You don't seem surprised by anything. 970

[GABRIELLE *pours a drink for MARIETTE and YVONNE and hands it to them. She then pours her own.*]

GABRIELLE: There are no surprises in life. Just corroboration of what you suspected.... Yes. I did know who was going to be here and why. As to who thought of this dinner party, I can tell you that as well.... It was Andre Bouville's wife. 975

MARIETTE: His wife? He said she was dead.

GABRIELLE: Yes, it was a request from the grave. They were her last words.

YVONNE: She said, "Please, let's have a dinner party" and then died? 980

GABRIELLE: Well, perhaps not her *very* last words. She lingered on for another six months but didn't say anything worth quoting... I *do* know the actual invitations were sent by Paul Gerard.

MARIETTE: But why would she include us? We didn't know her.

GABRIELLE: The Greeks say the dead have their reasons. 985

[MARIETTE *and YVONNE look at each other puzzled.*]

MARIETTE: If she couldn't come, why would she still have it?

GABRIELLE: They also say, even if you're dead, once you book it it's bad luck to cancel.

MARIETTE: If I'm not too impertinent, may I ask why *you're* here? 990

GABRIELLE: To look after the late Madame Bouville's interests.

[*She begins to cross to hors d'oeuvres.*]

YVONNE: What interests? What could be left between Andre and his ex-dead wife?

GABRIELLE: His unfulfilled remorse. 995

YVONNE: But isn't it too late to give it to her now?

GABRIELLE: Yes, but it could be put into an account and given to some other deserving dead wife.

YVONNE: She's strange, don't you think?

MARIETTE: Tell me about it. 1000

YVONNE: Ask how she died.

GABRIELLE: You girls won't like hearing it.

YVONNE: I know. Tell it anyway.

GABRIELLE: Andre drove a stake through her heart.... He was in a foul mood that

day. 1005

YVONNE: Are you saying he's a murderer?

GABRIELLE: Well, people who do business with him think he is. [*Looks at her watch.*]
Do you think we should call the boys in?

MARIETTE: I'm sorry, but has this murder been reported to anyone?

GABRIELLE: Yes, I just reported it to you.... 1010

YVONNE: I'm really having trouble with this.... Why did he kill her?

GABRIELLE: Oh, she was unfaithful to him.... And he couldn't forgive her.

YVONNE: It doesn't sound like he did.

GABRIELLE: On the other hand, he was unfaithful to her ... but she *did* forgive him.

YVONNE: If you ask me, I think they deserved each other. 1015

GABRIELLE: Don't judge them. Love is not an emotion shared only by the best people.... The unscrupulous are as entitled to love as anyone else.

MARIETTE: You seem to have extraordinary sympathy for two people who were less than savory.

GABRIELLE: It's true they didn't have a shred of decency. But if you're a maggot, is it wrong to love another maggot? 1020

YVONNE: Who was she?

GABRIELLE: A poor girl. As poor as he was once. They scraped the bottom of the same dirty barrel.... What's the expression? Grime always sinks to find its own level. 1025

YVONNE: But I mean, *who* was she? What was her name.

GABRIELLE: She was born Constanza Buonocelli, but my friends call me Gabrielle.

YVONNE: Gabrielle? ... You mean it's you?

GABRIELLE: Was I being obscure? Sorry. After twelve years of marriage, he suddenly left me for a more innocent version of me, fifteen years younger. I said I'd die before I gave him a divorce. As he left, he said, "Very well, Gabrielle, then I shall consider you dead." ... If that doesn't feel like a stake through the heart, tell me what does. 1030

YVONNE: And you still want him back?

GABRIELLE: Why not? I never stopped loving him. It was never his looks that attracted me. It was his mind. I find that brilliance and murkiness is attractive. 1035

MARIETTE: You can love a man who thinks of you as a corpse?

GABRIELLE: Why does love have to be so conventional? Wouldn't the world have cheered if the Elephant Man found an Elephant Woman?

MARIETTE: Is that how you see yourself. As the Elephant Woman? 1040

GABRIELLE: Oh no. I dress too well for that.

YVONNE: How did you two meet?

GABRIELLE: Gloriously! Like two bats crashing into each other in a cave.

MARIETTE: And do you actually expect that Andre will want you back?

GABRIELLE: I don't expect it. I predict it. 1045

YVONNE: How can you be sure?

GABRIELLE: I can't. But my attitude is good.

MARIETTE: Then what took you so long in approaching him?

GABRIELLE: He'd never agree to meet me. And he's clever enough to escape any chance meeting I planned. But he'll play this out tonight because of his respect for Paul Gerard. 1050

YVONNE: But where's the romance in all this? He seems so cold and callous. Don't you yearn for tenderness?

GABRIELLE: We're not tender people. Well, I think it's time Andre and I met.
[*YVONNE looks at MARIETTE, hoping somehow to understand all this.*] 1055

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