

The Modern Olympia

By Craig Payst

Cast

M. Théophile LeClerc, a painter.
Victorine, a model.
M. Eugene Andre, a Boulevardier.
Mr. Jones, an American.
Mrs. Jones, his wife.

Théophile LeClerc (1828 - 1870) - Has been for too long only a footnote in the history of modern art. A great friend of Manet, the two shared similar ideas and styles, perhaps even too similar. In 1862 both men arrived, apparently completely independently, at an idea for a painting: a nude, reclined in a contemporary setting, with a black cat on her bed, and a black servant bringing her flowers. Manet's version of this painting would be the groundbreaking *Olympia*. Some scholars even suggest that the men shared a model. Degas' diaries around this time record that LeClerc was working with a "strident, willful" model named Victorine. Whether this is the same Victorine Meurent who posed so famously for Manet's *Olympia* is unknown, Degas does not give us her last name.

What is known is that shortly thereafter Manet and LeClerc had a tremendous falling out, and the friends did not speak again for seven years. Whether the fight was over their shared idea or their shared model is unknown. It must be appreciated, however, that two geniuses could arrive independently at the same idea for a painting which would change the course of Western art forever. To have been living in Paris at that time must have been a truly exceptional experience.

Degas forged a reconciliation between LeClerc and Manet in 1869. Manet was so overwhelmed with the brilliance of his old friend's work that the now-wealthy artist personally financed what would have been LeClerc's only solo exhibition. It was an act of kindness for which Manet would never forgive himself. LeClerc, along with all of his painting that had been gathered for the show, perished in March of 1870 during the bombardment of Paris, when a Prussian shell fell directly in his Left Bank studio.

Only two of LeClerc's painting survive, his vision of the odalisque named Olympia is not one of them.

Author's Note: Particularly attentive historians in the audience will note that I have been slightly dishonest with my dates. The action of the play can be inferred from M. Andre's plans for the evening to be taking place on March 13th, 1861 - the date of the infamous Paris premiere of Wagner's *Tannhauser*. We also see that LeClerc is beginning work on his odalisque. Unless M. LeClerc was a remarkably slow painter, it is unlikely that he would have begun the painting before the beginning of 1862, at the earliest.

To those searching for strict historical accuracy, I sincerely apologize. The gossip about Wagner was just too good to leave out.

Scene: Paris, 1861 - The heyday of the Second Empire. The action takes place in a small garret on the Left Bank occupied by the painter Théophile LeClerc. The back wall, center, contains a window which looks out over the Paris rooftops. A pile of canvasses leans against the wall to the left of the window, and further left is a worn armchair. There is a small bed center right, on which Victorine lays. LeClerc is sitting on a wooden stool near the window, sketching. There is a bottle of lemonade on the floor beside LeClerc.

Victorine: Theo...

LeClerc: Hmmm?

Victorine: Théo, I must have a break.

LeClerc: Hmmm.

Victorine: Théo, my back is absolutely killing me. This pose is impossible.

LeClerc: You're impossible, if anything.

Victorine: Impossibly thirsty, if anything. Haven't you got anything to drink?

LeClerc: No.

Victorine: Liar. There's a bottle of lemonade right beside you.

LeClerc: Well, if you're a good girl and hold still you can have some when I'm finished.

Victorine: *(rising from the bed to get the bottle)* This is Paris, Théo, there are no good girls.

LeClerc: *(Angrily)* Victorine!

Victorine: *(Unconcerned)* Haven't you got any glasses, Théo?

LeClerc: Over there.

Victorine: This has turpentine in it.

LeClerc: Oh, drink it. It's only poison.

Victorine: Oh, you artists are such children. Of course, all men are children. But artists are ever so much more so.

LeClerc: Are you ready to begin again?

Victorine: In a minute, I must stretch. Twelve centimes an hour isn't all that much, Theo. I can stretch if I want to. Besides, Bougerau paid me thirty and let me stretch.

LeClerc: Bougerau painted you?

Victorine: I was a muse. Or a grace. Or a nymph. Or something, anyway, I was wearing a sheet.

LeClerc: I'm surprised, thirty centimes an hour. That's good wages from a man who usually finds his models lurking by the convent school with a bag of lemon bon-bons.

Victorine: That was unkind. He's a very polite man, though he did offer me bon-bons.

LeClerc: Did you take any?

Victorine: I don't care for sweets. Anyway, it's more than you've offered me. I had to be positively rude to get this lemonade.

LeClerc: Well, I look forward to seeing what Bougerau has made of you at the next Salon. I'm sure the painting will be easy to find, it'll be the one behind a phalanx of thirty-two angels with trumpets wedged up their arses, blowing its praises.

Victorine: You're just jealous. I've never seen any of your paintings at the Salon.

LeClerc: I'm aware of that, thank you.

Victorine: You paint like no-one else I have ever seen, Théo. Certainly no-one at the academy. Do you sell many paintings?

LeClerc: A great many. Mostly on window blinds. If drapes ever come back in to fashion I shall probably starve.

Victorine: I wasn't even sure that you were an artist, when you first approached me in the café Guerbois. There are men, you know the type, they pretend to be artists and if they know you're a model...well, they're just cheap, aren't they? Even thirty centimes an hour is less than a courtesan would cost. And they're right, too, in principle, but they're not getting anything from me, I can tell you. Sometimes I think I should never have left Nancy, but I couldn't bear to work in a mill. Now the Emperor seems intent on tearing down my entire block. All of Paris is being torn down, raised, or lowered these days. I have a girlfriend who says I can stay with her in Montmartre, but it's such a long walk. Father's a drunkard, that's why I left. He beat mother and he tried to beat me, but I wouldn't let him. You're from Paris,

though, you can tell. Those that were born in Paris have a certain look in the eye. You're either Parisian or a Jew. Of course, if you were a Jew I wouldn't mind. I'm very broadminded. Théo, you never say anything.

LeClerc: Are you ready to begin again?

Victorine: In a minute, the feeling's still not back in my legs. You can get gangrene from that, you know, if your legs are asleep too long. That's what happened to the girl who modeled for Ingres, the one with the back.

LeClerc: The Valpincon Bather?

Victorine: Yes, her. All the models know the story.

LeClerc: I've never heard.

Victorine: It's because you never talk to your models, Theo, unless it's to snap "Hold Still!" You're such a tyrant.

LeClerc: You should try posing for Edouard sometime. Compared to him I'm positively an angel.

Victorine: Who's Edouard?

LeClerc: Edouard Manet. A genius nearly equal to myself.

Victorine: I've never heard of him.

LeClerc: No-one has ever heard of either of us, my dear.

Victorine: Well, why don't you just paint like everyone else? Honestly, Théo, these flowers look like the flowers that you would buy on a street corner, not like the flowers that hang in the pictures in the Salon.

LeClerc: That could be because I bought the flowers on a street corner. Life has a way of creeping into my paintings.

Victorine: You can see every brush stroke.

LeClerc: Paintings are made of paint. I'm not trying to hide anything.

Victorine: Still, I like it. The flowers are so blue. And the Salon, what do they know anyway? They're all just a bunch of aristocrats. Isn't it amazing how all of the truly annoying ones managed to slip past the guillotine? We can begin again, if you like.

LeClerc: No, the mood's gone. I need a rest myself.

Victorine: I'll just lie down again, if you don't mind. Could you hand me that lemonade?

LeClerc: Certainly.

Victorine: Thank you.

LeClerc: (*walks over to the window*) Oh, what's the use? You're right, Victorine, no-one has ever heard of me and no-one ever will. The Salon is Cabanal, the Salon is Amaudy-Duval, and the Salon is very, very Bougerau. But the Salon is not Manet, it is not Degas, and it certainly isn't Théophile LeClerc. They say my shadows are like streaks of boot-blackening, and that the flesh of my nudes has the green tint of a corpse.

Victorine: I certainly look forward to the finished work.

LeClerc: My flowers are the flowers that one buys on the corner. I believe in what is real, Victorine, and that is a great problem for a Frenchman. We all see the world as we wish it to be, none of us can see anything that dares to be as it is, directly in front of our noses. Ideas are the great problem of this country. The Academy teaches to paint with the eyes of history, to look through the model to the ideal that she represents. We are told we must see the world through a veil of theory.

Victorine: Well, I'm sure you and M. Monet will sort it all out for us.

LeClerc: Manet.

Victorine: Whomever. Honestly, Théo, this lemonade is terrible. How long have you had this bottle?

LeClerc: Since yesterday.

Victorine: It tastes as if it's been lying around for a year.

LeClerc: That may be how long it was lying in the street where I found it. I don't know, I don't go down that street very often.

Victorine: For heaven's sake, haven't you any absinthe?

LeClerc: I drank the last the other night. There may be a sugar cube, still.

Victorine: Even some claret would be better than this.

LeClerc: You're in luck. I see M. Andre bounding towards my door. He can usually be counted on to produce a bottle or two out of thin air. Or his uncle's cellars.

Victorine: M. Andre? You don't mean Eugene? Oh no, Théo I must leave. I must leave at once. I can't see him, not now!

LeClerc: Too late. He's just come through the front door. There's no way to get past him on the staircase. You can put your robe on, if you like.

Victorine: Oh, what's the use? It's certainly nothing he hasn't seen before.

LeClerc: I never know with M. Andre. He seems such a Boulevardier, caring nothing for anything which doesn't happen in the Opera house, or the racetrack, as if he were as simple as the rest of those young Turks in the Jockey Club. But sometimes there is such sincerity in him, and despite what he may say I know he thinks highly of my paintings.

Victorine: Believe me, Théo, there is a world of sins which liking your paintings doesn't forgive.

(M. Andre bursts into the room, carrying four bottles of champagne and a box containing a pair of dueling pistols)

Andre: Théophile! My old friend!

LeClerc: M. Andre ***(they kiss)***

Andre: Where are your glasses? I'm simply dying for some champagne. I've just come from a duel with that scofflaw M. Villiers. Oh, don't look so horrified, Théo, no-one was hurt, that's absolutely the last thing one wants in a duel. A gentleman is trained almost from birth how to miss very convincingly. A lot of noise, a lot of smoke, everyone walks away with all members intact and honor is satisfied. The next day you're back drinking again with the same chap in the Rat-Mort. It's all part of the beauty of being French. This glass has turpentine in it. Ah, here we go. I say, Théo, have a look at this.

(Andre tosses a silver whistle to LeClerc)

LeClerc: Pour Tannhauser.

Andre: Isn't it hilarious? It's for Tannhauser.

LeClerc: Is he in the gendarme?

Andre: No, no, Théo, you simply must keep up. There's some German Jew called Wagner who's putting on something called Tannhauser at the opera next week and by all reports it's going to be absolutely dreadful. The whole thing has no melody whatsoever, just a godawful amount of strings straining and moaning like an old woman on a chamber pot. And the damned fool has the temerity to stick his ballet right in the middle of the first act. I shall hardly have finished my dinner by then, how am I going to get to the opera house in time to pick out which ballerina I want to take home for the night? Anyway, Honore had these things made up, the idea is to blow the whistles during the show and hopefully prevent a single note from being played. Honore has put a remarkable amount of effort into the whole thing. He's got different tunes picked out and hand signals for letting us know which tune to play when, everything's worked out. Pity I can't seem to remember what any of the signals are but I'm sure I can pick it up from someone else as we go along. I mean, really, the problem with these Prussian types is that for some unknown reason they all think they're so dashedly interesting. Tannhauser? Who the devil is Tannhauser? Give me Orpheus, or Actis, or something with a nymph or two in, that's the stuff of Opera! Not some damned dreary kraut or other that once buggered a dragon and absolutely no-one's ever heard of. Except perhaps the dragon's mother.

Victorine: M. Andre.

Andre: Victorine. I didn't see you there.

Victorine: M. Andre, if ever you walked into a room this small and failed to notice a woman this naked I'm sure your membership in the Jockey Club would be revoked immediately.

Andre: Indeed.

Victorine: Now pour me some of that champagne and save me from Théo's lemonade.

Andre: Of course. I'm told that this particular brand was our late emperor's favorite, he even drank it for courage before Waterloo. I'm also told that our current emperor drinks it for

courage before going to see his wife. I'm afraid I can't vouch for its effectiveness in either regard, but it is quite pleasant on the palate. I say, Théo, I haven't seen this one of the flowers before. It's quite good.

LeClerc: 10,000 francs.

Andre: I'll see if I can persuade my uncle. Of course dear Saint-Germaine's tastes do run more towards the obscene. Perhaps you could do one of Victorine here for him. She's about the type.

LeClerc: In fact I'm doing some studies for an odalisque now. Bring your uncle the Count around when I'm finished and talk him up to 50,000 on the walk over.

Andre: I certainly shall. Théo, my friend, you do have tremendous talent. It's such a pity that you are forever unseen by the world. Would it destroy you for once to paint something realistic?

LeClerc: I paint the world as I see it.

Andre: No, No, I don't mean realistic, I mean realistic. Do something in the style of the academy, just one painting. Get into the Salon and get your name out there. Then spring this on them. Your work is too unconventional for the Salon, Théo. To them you know nothing about how a painting should look, they think you are only struggling to make some kind of impression.

LeClerc: Monsieur, I would do as you say but I simply haven't got it in me. I can only paint as I do, I can only paint the truth. In my art I do not seek to embellish, only to represent.

Andre: Well, that's the problem, isn't it, Théo? No one goes to the gallery to see life, they go to see art. Quite frankly I agree with their view on the matter as well, I do Théo there's no use in protesting. There is plenty of life in the streets, and frankly most of it is miserable. Have you seen how many beggars are on the streets of Paris, how many girls there are in a shop one day and in a brothel the next? We'll have another revolution on our hands soon if we're

not careful, and another July Monarchy as well. That is exactly the sort of thing that people don't want to think about, exactly what they go into the galleries to forget. Life is like a stinking pile of muck, Théo. Art should be the scented handkerchief which one holds to the nose, to keep the smell of life out.

Victorine: You never could contain your metaphors, M. Andre.

Andre: Perhaps. But at least I do not mix them, but limit myself to one simile at a time.

Victorine: But M. Andre, your tongue glides as smoothly as silk sheets, and you move so rapidly from one simile to another. One can be forgiven for thinking that you are between two sets of sheets at once.

LeClerc: M. Andre, I must respectfully disagree with you on this point.

Andre: Oh?

LeClerc: Monsieur, do you ever stroll about the boulevards in the morning?

Andre: Monsieur, I can assure you that if I were to be seen doing anything in the morning my reputation would be absolutely ruined.

LeClerc: But M. Andre, what you are missing! To see the broad streets of Paris in the early morning, before the light of day has fully formed, to see those particular pale shade shadows of the bridges and the buildings, or the leaves in the trees, the way the light dashes through, this is an astonishment to the senses! Tell me, my friend, what color are the waters of the Seine?

Andre: I have been led to believe that water is generally regarded as blue.

Victorine: You obviously haven't been down to the Seine recently.

LeClerc: Amid the general public the waters are regarded as brown, perhaps highlighted here and there with a spot of green from some discarded cabbage. There, M. Andre, is your filth.

Flowing through the streets of Paris. But such beautiful filth! Even in those stinking waters there are a thousand hues, all owing to vagaries of the sun, a thousand shades of muck each more marvelous than the next.

Andre: Well, that's exactly my point, Théo. Let the water be brown in the river if it wants to, but when water is on a canvas it should be blue. The whole purpose of art is to take out the muck and leave only the pieces that are worth seeing. The galleries are not for revelation, they are for distraction. And don't try to deny it, either, Théo, if aren't isn't a distraction then why spend so much time painting naked women?

LeClerc: Indeed an excellent distraction, Monsieur.

Victorine: M. Andre is easily distracted.

LeClerc: But a woman is also a revelation!

Andre: Now this is an argument that I simply can not wait to hear!

LeClerc: I intend to compose a study of a nude, an odalisque, that is why I have hired Victorine here.

Victorine: Obviously.

Andre: Not so.

LeClerc: The Salon wishes to have only the familiar, by this I mean what it thinks of as the familiar. This is why year after year we are plagued with Diana at her bath or Hecuba mourning this, that, or the other. But M. Andre, when is the last time you saw Hecuba mourning, laughing, or even drinking tea anywhere in Paris?

Andre: You have me there, Théo.

LeClerc: The Salon seeks out the narrative, the story which has been told a thousand thousand times before and to which they know the beginning, middle, and end, and that they can know without a second thought.

Andre: Or even a first.

LeClerc: Indeed! They applaud themselves for their cleverness in being able to read the signs, to know that this Trojan herded sheep and that one herded goats, and once they are satisfied that they know fully what it is they are seeing, they can declare the artist a genius. They want everything approached on their own terms, but I shall confound their expectations by confronting them with the everyday! By what is truly familiar!

Andre: Oh, do go on.

LeClerc: A woman, Victorine, nude, relaxed on a bed. But not a bed in Troy or a Turkish Harem, a bed in France, in Paris, now. She has a black ribbon tied around her neck, there is a black cat stretched out on the bed. Perhaps there are some flowers in the background. It is a scene which presents itself in Paris a thousand times a day.

Andre: Well next time you go looking for it Théo, do come and find me.

LeClerc: But what is her particular story? What is the context? I'll give them their narrative, all right, but I won't give them a clue as to what the actual story is. They shall have to open their eyes to the world around them to see. To see who she is, my odalisque, where she belongs, what she is. But I dare any of them to know what she is thinking.

Andre: Well, that certainly is a narrative, Théo. The only problem is that apart from the central character being a nude woman, it doesn't sound like a particularly interesting one. Look, if you're insisting on doing a modern scene why not paint something with a little panache? The emperor struggling to stay on his horse, or my duel with M. Villiers. Why I'll even pose for you, Théo. ***(Takes a dueling pistol from the box and strikes a pose)*** Here, what do you think of this? Rather heroic, no? And I'm sure my uncle would buy it, especially if you painted me getting shot.

LeClerc: The offer is most tempting, M. Andre, but it will have to wait. A black cat on the bed is as heroic as I care to get at the moment.

Andre: Yes, well perhaps those Americans will enjoy it. They may find your narrative very convincing.

LeClerc: Americans? What Americans?

Andre: Oh, didn't I mention? I met some Americans at the Jardin Turc last night. They seemed very keen on your paintings, once I talked you up a bit, of course. I They should be here any moment.

LeClerc: You invited them here?

Andre: Of course, why do you think I brought even more champagne than usual?

Victorine: Which I shall have some more of.

Andre: These Americans seem terribly impressed with the wine, of course they were even impressed with a baguette. However, man does not live by bread alone and he certainly doesn't sell anything by it. If we're trying to sell your paintings, Théo, the last thing we need is a sober audience.

LeClerc: They are buying? They have money?

Andre: As much money as Americans can have, I suppose. I have your best interests at heart, Théo. When the woman began talking about how she would just adore having some real Parisian artwork to take home and hang in her log cabin you sprang immediately to mind, my friend.

LeClerc: Monsieur, how can I thank you?

Andre: Think nothing of it, Théo, and consider the sale a sure thing. They bough that dreadful swamp Louisiana, compared to which I'm sure your paintings are positively pleasant.

Victorine: Americans with money! Think of it, Théo, to have francs again! Wouldn't it be so nice to have something besides potatoes for breakfast?

Andre: Breakfast?

Victorine: Breakfast, M. Andre. It's the meal that people have in the morning. When you're not seen.

Andre: Indeed.

LeClerc: More champagne, then, if you wouldn't mind, M. Andre. I am looking forward to meeting these Americans. I hear they are a practical people. Perhaps they will appreciate my painting of life as it is.

Andre: Indeed, M. LeClerc. And when you paint Victorine here, will you paint her as she is? With that mole there, or the way her flesh bunches up in that unattractive pouch beneath her armpit?

Victorine: Monsieur.

LeClerc: Even so, Monsieur. Every mole. Every lump.

Andre: It seems awfully unfair, Théo. Women do spend so much time making themselves presentable. They ply on more paint in one day than you could run through in a lifetime. Why, take Polaire, that ballerina I brought home from the opera last night. By the time she had finished unlacing her corsets and undoing this button or that I had almost forgotten what she was there for?

Victorine: Is your memory failing you now as well, M. Andre? It seems everything goes soft once one advances past a certain age.

Andre: My point for you, Théo, is that art is not wholly unlike the fairer sex. Illusion. Everything that is beautiful in it is achieved chiefly through deceit.

LeClerc: On the contrary, Monsieur, the illusion often interferes with what is beautiful. I reflect only the glory of nature, nothing of my own.

Andre: Oh, don't go bringing nature into it, Théo. You sound like one of those dreadful Romantics. My uncle is one of those, he goes traipsing about Provence wearing a rather silly looking cape, carrying a particularly silly looking walking stick, and eating at inns where the snails haven't been properly washed. Art has nothing to do with nature, in fact the very word means it was made by men. It's in the Greek, I'm convinced. In fact I'm convinced it's the only bit of Greek I remember. Father tried to make me learn Greek, of course, although somehow he got it in his head that the best way for me to learn would be for me to be packed off to school in England. My uncle finally persuaded him otherwise by letting him know that it was more the habits of the Greeks than their language which English boarding schools were

famous for. My uncle may have Romantic notions, but they're not quite that Romantic.

Anyway, it was the Sorbonne for me once that bit of new was uncovered. He suddenly had no objection to my being ignorant as long as I remained very, very French. Where was I going with this?

LeClerc: Monsieur, I assure you that I have no idea.

Andre: Oh, yes, nature and all of that. Well, it's the Greek ideal, isn't it, Théo? One shouldn't be too concerned with the world as it is, only as it is supposed to be. We live in a fallen world, Théo, man dwells no more in the garden of Eden. Take Amaury-Duval, now he paints the world as it should be. The God who planted Amaury-Duval's trees isn't the same fellow who's responsible for that mess my uncle is so fond of sulking in. His trees are green, well-branched, and each is exactly where it should be in relation to the rest. I don't know what you find so compelling in nature, Théo, God has done a remarkably poor job of it if you ask me. Remember, this is the same God that created the clap we're talking about.

Victorine: M. Andre, are you now better than God?

Andre: God made you poor. I brought you the champagne.

LeClerc: A truly benevolent deity would have remembered the baguettes.

Andre: I'll bear it in mind the next time I create the universe. And remind me to skip Germany next time, that one didn't seem to turn out too well. But I think I shall cause ballerinas to grow on trees. Then perhaps I shall have more of a liking for your landscapes, Théo.

LeClerc: I'll be satisfied if you simply make cobalt affordable, Monsieur God.

Andre: I've no idea what you're talking about, Théo, but consider it done.

Victorine: And will you make all the men in your world priests and celibate, except for yourself?

Andre: No, I think we've had enough of this priesthood nonsense. I shall have only one priest, M. Offenbach, and only one temple, the Theatre des Jeunes Eleves. If M. Offenbach would sing my praises then I should be a happy God indeed.

LeClerc: How easy it is to become God these days! Even the emperor had to have a famous uncle!

Victorine: M. Andre does share some similarities with our savior, Théo. In both cases the paternity is in doubt.

Andre: (laughs) And what of it? Honestly, Victorine, you're becoming positively bourgeois in your old age. You think I haven't heard the gossip like everyone else? M. Andre, whose family tree has roots that run under the gardener's shed. And do you know what they say about our empress? That she shares a father with a whore in every port where a British ship has ever dropped anchor? Half the ancien regime was fathered by stablehands, it could explain the love of horses. Bloodlines are merely the subject of idle gossip, much like the color of neckties or which artist is keeping which whore as a mistress. It simply has no effect on the way things are. It isn't so much on which side of the sheets one is born, my dear, it's the quality of the floor one hits coming out of the bed. De Morny and the emperor share a parent, and it's only a secret because the emperor says it is. Now, the emperor runs the entire country, but De Morny runs the banks. Tell me, who has the real power there?

LeClerc: I never knew you to be political, M. Andre.

Andre: Of course I'm not political, Théo. The emperor strictly forbids it. All political gossip is strictly forbidden, and with good reason, too. If everyone spent all their time talking about politics this would still be a republic, and we all know where that got us. I'm not political at all, no-one is anymore, and it's all very fortunate for you. Why do you think Paris is so mad about art, painting, and all the gossip about which new cellist Mme. Upskirts is premiering at her salon next week? It's because the newspapers are absolutely forbidden to print anything of real importance. We are all forbidden to talk about politics in the cafés, but where there are cafés there must be gossip, so we talk about art. That's why I like you, Théo, you're such a wonderful source of gossip. Why, this little afternoon alone should give me enough anecdotes that I very much doubt I shall have to pay for dinner for an entire week.

LeClerc: I have not eaten dinner for an entire week, M. Andre. You dismiss power so easily because you are fortunate enough to possess it, Monsieur. No matter which side of the sheets you were born on, the floor on which you landed was a very high quality indeed. Myself, I was not so fortunate. I know which side of the sheets I was born on, and I also know that the only reason I had a floor to land on at all was because my father worked very hard and died very

young. He was a clerk for the board of toll roads who painted watercolors as a hobby. He was pleased when his son showed talent, and he worked very hard and went into debt so that I might attend the atelier. You speak of idle gossip about this artist or the other, but what you do not see is that each word that is spoken will see to it whether I eat or not that evening. You and the rest of the fools at the Jockey Club are my masters, M. Andre. You ask me why I intend to paint the world as it is? Because just as the Salon sees through a veil, you see through a veil of privilege. Someone must be left in the world whose eyes are uncovered.

Victorine: Such words! He hasn't a centime to buy bread, yet he has twelve an hour to pay me to sit here like this!

LeClerc: It is a sacrifice I make for my art.

Victorine: There 's no charge for looking at the landscape, Théo. Hah! Perhaps that's why Amaury-Duval has so much more money than you, he saves his model's fees by painting rivers! Alas, if only I had mountains instead of molehills I could pose for him and get a proper meal in the mornings.

LeClerc: Mademoiselle, you can be very willful at times.

Andre: She's only showing you the world as it is, Théo, that's what you want to see, isn't it?

LeClerc: I don't want her to see the world as it is, Monsieur, I want you to.

Andre: My God, Théo! You're delightful!

LeClerc: What I mean is that you must see that art does have meaning beyond just the gossip of the Jockey club. The Salon is not an exhibition, it's a symptom!

Andre: A symptom, of course. Have some more champagne, Théo, and tell us what ails us.

LeClerc: Thank you.

Andre: Victorine?

Victorine: Of course.

LeClerc: France, M. Andre, is suffering from an illusion. An illusion that we are the height of perfection. An illusion that the emperor and not the bankers rule the country. It is the illusion expressed in the flat and diffuse women that Bougerau paints. It is an illusion which exists in his peasant girls, in scenes of a pastoral bliss from a France which never existed. Bougerau's Venus eats ambrosia, my Venus feasts on bread, my Venus knows.

Victorine: Knows too much and feasts too rarely. But thank you for the opportunity in allowing me to be the pill which France must swallow to cure our illusion.

Andre: So that's it, Théo? This painting of yours will keep the barricades from going up?

LeClerc: It is only a small part.

Andre: Well, a Venus that eats bread. So it seems that God, too, does not live by bread alone.

Victorine: Sometimes, M. Andre, I think that you are not quite sure what it is that you mock.

Andre: Possibly.

LeClerc: The point is that the barricades will rise again one day if we persist in deluding ourselves so. Perhaps if our artists turn their attention to what is real instead of some fairyland which never existed, then that dose of truth, no matter how small, will be enough to bring some focus to the diffuse light of our vision. Until France can see France as France, nothing will change.

Andre: It's a very convincing argument, Citizen LeClerc. Unfortunately, those that will be throwing up the barricades will probably not be the same ones touring the galleries.

LeClerc: Then open the doors and let them in!

Andre: Oh, but they leave fingerprints!

Victorine: M. Andre is very concerned about fingerprints, Théo. Any place a peasant girl touches him will surely be one which he can easily conceal.

Andre: I am only being realistic. You should approve, Théo. The truth of the matter is that whether by accident of birth or inherent ignorance the galleries, the boulevards, the opera, they are all the property of the bourgeois. The proletariat rarely, if ever, go there, just as none of the bourgeois are allowed near the stomping grounds of the aristocracy. It's simply a matter of taste. There's no use trying to influence the proletariat by appealing to the bourgeois.

LeClerc: I have no intention of appealing to the proletariat. I am addressing the disease, not the symptom.

Victorine: So much might in a picture of some flowers! Let the barricades go up, I say! What's France done that's so marvelous anyway?

Andre: Well, there's champagne for a start.

LeClerc: Ingres. David. Manet.

Andre: And of course M. Offenbach.

LeClerc: He's German.

Andre: Not any more. We've improved upon him.

Victorine: And what of those starving in the streets? Or the million little wars our million little kings have plunged us into?

Andre: Despite his protestations to the contrary, M. LeClerc and I do share certain obvious interests. We are both great admirers of beauty, seemingly why he has chosen Victorine here as his model instead of some hag he pulled off of Montmartre.

LeClerc: And though you would see beauty painted up like a goddess, I prefer her as she is. To me, the world is enough.

Andre: You know, Théo, you should see if you can't get those Americans to take you back home with them. I'm sure you'd make a fortune on the lecture circuit back there. I understand the entire nation is enraptured with gathering in tents and hearing about how the world is. Self-improvement, I believe they call it.

Victorine: Oh, wouldn't that be exciting, Théo? I should love to see America!

Andre: Whatever for? The streets are all mud and one can't walk down them without having a red Indian put an arrow into one's back. Paris is enough for me, I'm indifferent to the whole idea of America.

LeClerc: Of course indifference is much the fashion this season.

Andre: Yes it is, isn't it? It's damned annoying. I've spent years carefully cultivating my air of indifference and now every young Turk at the Jockey Club thinks he can't care just as well as I.

Victorine: Is there no-one you care for, Eugene?

Andre: Offenbach is quite nice. And that chap who runs the Jardin Turc, one really must give him credit.

Victorine: Perhaps I shall go and lecture in a tent in America. Tell the Americans what French men are really like.

Andre: Well, I'm told that everything in America has its price.

Victorine: Is it more than twelve centimes an hour?

LeClerc: Perhaps we should have some more champagne.

Andre: Yes, perhaps we should.

LeClerc: Yes, of course we Parisians are a much different sort, I think, than from any other race. We are only truly at home with beauty, this is why we put so much care into our buildings and our bridges. Identical houses, mere habitation, this is what I saw last year in England. Manchester is a dreadful city, all smoke and brick, not like Paris at all.

Victorine: Yes. I believe it is common opinion that our ballerinas are the most tempting in the world.

Andre: Indeed. Such is the beauty of Paris, where even a shop girl thinks she is a queen.

LeClerc: This dueling picture of yours, M. Andre, the more I think of it the more I like the idea.

Andre: Do you now? **(He takes the pistols from the box and begins toying with them)** I think it would be quite an exercise for you, Théo. A chance to show off your truth and toss in a little honor as well.

Victorine: Paint fast, Théo, M. Andre is a very quick shot.

Andre: Accurate, as well. Shouldn't you be paying your girl soon, Théo? She's been sitting there for hours and you've hardly so much as wiggled your brush in her direction.

Victorine: M. LeClerc can do whatever he wants with his brush, Eugene. He is a great artist.

Andre: Yes he is, isn't he? I particularly like that nude he has over there. He worked with that model for quite some time, as I recall. His brush did simply marvelous things to her. What was her name again, Théo? Or can't you remember, either?

LeClerc: I would have thought you indifferent on the matter, M. Andre.

Andre: Call it intellectual curiosity.

LeClerc: I assure you, Eugene, I care for nothing but my art.

Victorine: He speaks the truth, Monsieur. He is not fashionably indifferent like yourself. He has not yet learned the style of caring for absolutely nothing.

Andre: Then I shall have to teach him. As fashions go, it's stylish and convenient.

Victorine: Oh to hell with you! To hell with your champagne, your styles, your boulevards, your operas, your Offenbach, your Uncle, and you! To hell with you, Eugene Andre, to hell, to hell, to hell, to hell!

(During this exchange Brad and Kelly Jones, two Americans in modern dress, have been seen walking past the window at the back and then entering stage right, where they stand and watch)

Kelly: Is this a bad time?

Andre: Ah, M. LeClerc, Théo, these are the Americans I was telling you about. M. and Mme. Jones, was it not?

Kelly: Madame. Hi, I'm Kelly.

Brad: Brad Jones. Damn glad to meet you.

Andre: May I present M. Théophile LeClerc, and this is Victorine. She is modeling for M. LeClerc's next masterwork.

Brad: Boy, you guys really like `em fat, don't you?

Kelly: Brad! Shhh! It's art! We're delighted to meet you, monsieur, Madame.

Victorine: Mademoiselle.

Kelly: Oh, right, of course. Oh Brad, just look at this place! It is just so...so...so...French! Exactly as I always imagined Paris would be. Isn't this just absolutely charming? And look! Over there! On the floor! Real Art! You can see that Theo here is just as talented as Eugene said. You'd have to pay a fortune for something like this in the mall.

Brad: That one with the blue flowers isn't bad.

Kelly: Doesn't my sister have that one hanging in her living room?

Brad: No, hers are yellow.

Kelly: Are you sure? I think it's this one.

Brad: No, no, you're wrong, honey.

Kelly: Oh, how do you remember? Men never pay attention to things like that, do they Victoria?

Brad: I remember because she kept us hanging around in Prints To Go for three hours while she picked the stupid thing out. I missed the first half of the Stanley Cup playoffs. Three hours of "I have to find something to go with my new red sofa, I have to find something to go with my new red sofa," only to pick out the same stupid print that she had seen when she walked in the door three hours ago. And I also remember that when she made us go pick up "my new red sofa" when those stupid Mexicans were loading "my new red sofa" into the back of my new black Excursion they put a three inch scratch in it. And men do remember things like that, don't they Theo?

LeClerc: Théo.

Brad: What are you getting so hot and bothered for? You're not even really talking French.

Kelly: I know where I've seen it before! That girl in the office who wears those skirts that are way too short for her, you know the one? Oh don't give me that innocent shrug, you know just who I'm talking about. She has that painting of those flowers, at least I think it's that one, on a coffee mug that she is always leaving unwashed around the break room. It drives me absolutely up the wall! I mean, hello, a little courtesy? Ooh, is that real French champagne?

Andre: Let me get you a glass.

Brad: Dude, do the dishes. This is full of paint thinner.

Andre: Madame.

Kelly: Ah, Merci.

Brad: Thanks, pal.

Kelly: Well, cheers!

Andre: Salut.

Kelly: Oh, right, salute. So, Mr. LeClerc, you're the genuine article, huh? A real artist, and not just a web designer or something?

LeClerc: Yes. And you are....American?

Kelly: We're both in Marketing.

Andre: Well, what are the odds?

Brad: So can you make a living doing that, Theo? I had a cousin who was an art major in college, he was all into that, and he ended up being a manager at a Rack Room. The son of a bitch won't even give me a discount, either.

Kelly: Aren't you cold?

Victorine: I'm fine, thank you. For March in Paris it's really quite warm.

Kelly: So, are you a student?

Victorine: No, Madame.

Kelly: Because there was this girl in my dorm who lived down the hall from me and she did nude modeling for extra money when she was in school. It was ten, twelve bucks an hour, which is not bad if you're a student. Pays for beer, anyway.

Brad: And Frank, don't forget Frank.

Kelly: Oh yeah, that guy, Frank.

Brad: He used to do it, too.

Kelly: Yeah, but he was a complete freak.

Brad: A total freak.

Kelly: Just a freak.

Brad: He was not doing it for the money, if you know what I mean.

Kelly: Such a perv.

Brad: Total loser.

Kelly: With a big L.

Andre: How unfortunate, then, that you were acquainted with such a person. More champagne?

Kelly: Oh, well, please.

Brad: Bubbly. Boo Yeah.

Kelly: So, Theo, how long do you think it will take you to paint Victoria here?

Victorine: Victorine.

Kelly: All these French names! I just can't keep up!

Brad: I just call everybody Jean-Luc.

LeClerc: The painting will take three months or so. Four, if you include the sketches and the finishing.

Brad: Four months? Can't you just use a computer?

LeClerc: I have done a few rough sketches, and the idea seems to be coming clear enough. It will be an odalisque. Victorine, here, in the foreground. The colors, I think, will be very subtle, I want the paleness of her skin to dominate the picture. I would like to have some flowers in the background, but have not yet worked out how to incorporate them. The scale would be wrong to have them simply sitting in a vase.

Kelly: Uh huh. Well that sounds very nice, doesn't it, honey?

Brad: I don't know much about art, but I'll give your fifty bucks if you paint my wife naked.

Kelly: Brad!

Brad: C'mon, honey, you wanted real French art. We can hang it in the bathroom.

LeClerc: What's fifty bucks?

Andre: About 1,500 francs, I believe.

LeClerc: Monsieur, you have a deal!

Kelly: Oh, no you don't!

Brad: C'mon, honey.

Kelly: Absolutely not. Absolutely not.

Brad: We can show it off to the neighbors. That'll show Phil and his genuine tribal eBay mask.

Kelly: No!

Andre: Sir, the lady protests.

Victorine: Too much.

Andre: I wasn't going to say it.

LeClerc: Madame, it is perfectly natural, completely harmless. Like being at the bath.

Kelly: I don't live in a boarding house like you arty types. I have my own my own bathroom.

Brad: Aw, don't you want to be art?

Kelly: Sorry, I'm not playing "who wants to be art?" No!

Brad: Is that your final answer?

Kelly: You know, that is so over I can't even believe you just said it.

Victorine: Bourgeois women, they are all alike.

Kelly: You just called me fat, didn't you? I took French in high school!

Brad: The guy is really pretty good, Kelly. At least you can tell what his stuff is supposed to be. See? That's some blue flowers, and this is another fat naked chick.

Kelly: That's another reason I'm not letting him paint me. He makes every girl he paints look fat.

LeClerc: That one is available for 8,00 francs.

Brad: You know, it would look good in my cube.

Kelly: Sure. Let's see how long you keep your job with that hanging over your stapler. Tell you what – I'll give you fifty bucks to paint him naked. How does that sound, huh?

Andre: How perfectly modern! I adore it!

LeClerc: Perhaps I have a solution. I could do the both of you on a single canvas.

Andre: Yes! Yes! How absolutely perfect!

LeClerc: Perhaps something en plein air, reminiscent of the garden of Eden.

Kelly: Yeah, what do you say, Adam? Ya got the apples?

Brad: Sure, what the hell? We can stick it on the Christmas card this year.

Kelly: Well all right then. I'll do it if you do it.

Brad: Okay.

Kelly: All right.

Brad: Well get naked.

Kelly: I will.

Brad: All right.

Kelly: All right.

Brad: Okay.

Kelly: Okay.

Brad: All right.

Victorine: For the love of God, why did you people come to France?

Brad: The whole damned Caribbean was booked and I snagged these seats off of Travelocity cheap because some guy died.

Kelly: And of course the romance of having my husband painted by a real French artist.

Naked.

Brad: Right beside my adoring, naked wife.

Andre: Well, M. LeClerc is exceptionally gifted. He's quite the talk among the bohemians.

LeClerc: For all the influence they have.

Andre: Your fame will grow, Théo. Give it time. If I can persuade Saint-Germaine to purchase one of your paintings the world will be at your door.

Andre: So, you're just waiting for some guy in a top hat to buy one of your paintings and you expect to get famous that way?

LeClerc: The comt is a very influential man.

Brad: Well, sorry, but comt me out because that's a suck-ass viral marketing strategy if I've ever heard one. Dude, do you even have a web site?

LeClerc: The spiders like that corner.

Brad: Dude, you need some serious consulting. **(he pulls out his cell phone)**

Kelly: Honey, you promised. Not while we're on vacation.

Brad: Look, I see the opportunity, I take the initiative. That Succesories poster isn't just hanging up there to impress the boss. Yeah...Stacy, it's me...Yeah, I know I'm on vacation but I've got a real opportunity here...Look, I don't have my laptop with me. Go to Register.com and see if Impressionist.com is taken...okay.. okay... damn! No, I don't want some stupid .org address, nobody checks out anything with .org on the end of it. And don't even think of hitting me with that .biz shit. Look, I need something that says French, that says art, that says French art...Yeah, artist. Up and coming hot property. I want to take him virally. Growth potential. T-shirts, calendars, those printed umbrellas. Hell, we can make a fortune of tote bags every time that cut public broadcasting's funding....his name? No, nobody's ever heard of him. We've got to build the brand first, painter of light kind of deal. Look, just get me something with a .com at the end of it, okay? MyImpressionism.com, ImpressMe.com, French ArtFag.com, anything as long as its got a .com at the end of it, okay?...and call me! Okay, great Stacy, see ya. My friend, you are on the road to fame and fortune. In America we know

how to make our own success. For you I realize that's not an option, which is why you pay me to make it for you.

Kelly: And he's good, too.

LeClerc: You can get me in the Salon?

Brad: Salon, Slate, sure, we'll put pop-ups on all the online mags. But for your target audience I see more of an aggressive print media campaign. Class, you know, little blocky adds in the New Yorker. I can get Conde Nast out here, we'll do a photo shoot. Get you and your model. We could even use a model as your model. Or an actress. Actresses are the post-model model.

Kelly: You know, honey, sometimes you're so much like your Q-Profile it's scary.

Brad: What do you mean?

Kelly: You always want to reinvent your content instead of just leveraging it.

Brad: Such as?

Kelly: All I'm saying is keep the fat girl and we've got the next Bridget Jones on our hands.

Brad: You're seeing Paris as vacation central for your 26-35 SWF in the 135-250 pound range?

Kelly: A lot of white girls out there are just waiting to exhale.

Brad: It'll never fly.

Kelly: And why not?

Brad: Free associate.

Kelly: Let me get in the zone. Okay I'm in the zone.

Brad: French man.

Kelly: Rude and smelly. I see what you mean.

Brad: Europe is dead, honey. The only reason we're here is that any place that makes a decent margarita is booked. Look, when you're just out of college crawling around some ancient dump may be great, but we've already sold those people their backpacks. To anyone in a sensibly affluent market group Europe is nothing but rude waiters and mad cow disease. You want a vacation, you want someplace where the sun shines occasionally and the natives aren't so fricking restless.

Kelly: You are so wrong. Snob appeal.

Brad: Is dead.

Kelly: No. Snob, snob, snob.

Brad: Can I strap a boat to the back of it?

Kelly: Ben and Jerry?

Brad: I can strap a boat to the back of Ben and Jerry. Can I strap a boat to the back of this?

Answer the question, can I strap a boat to the back of this?

Kelly: How many bottles of Evian have we sold this quarter?

Brad: I want Russell Crow Europe, not Al Gore Europe.

Kelly: Do I have to bring you another Dasani?

Brad: Europe is a loser. Nobody wants a loser. **(Phone Rings)** Yeah?...Oh, brilliant! Beautiful! Stacy, you're a doll. And get me a quote on some T-shirts...about four thousand. Okay, thanks Stacy.

Kelly: What? What did she get?

Brad: This is beautiful. This is great. Wallsofprovence.com

Kelly: Oh, coup.

LeClerc: Provence?

Brad: Europe, but not too Europe. It may be real but you can't find it on a map kind of Europe.

Kelly: And we can piggyback off that guy with the year thing.

Brad: Rough but honest. Sophisticated yet real.

Kelly: French, but low fat. How could I ever doubt you?

Brad: Hey, when you're hot, you're hot!

Kelly: And he did it all without a single focus group. God, I love it when you take risks like that. That is why you are continually two and a half months ahead of the acceptance curve.

Andre: A bold move, I'm sure. What did he do?

Kelly: He established your brand!

Brad: How could you not have noticed? You, my friend, are now the decorative equivalent of simplify, simplify, simplify.

LeClerc: Simplify, simplify, simplify?

Brad: Take what's important and throw away the rest.

LeClerc: If that's the case, couldn't you just say "simplify" and be done with it?

Brad: We tried that, it didn't test as well. People needed the other simplifies to feel closure.

Andre: Well, getting the cork out of another champagne bottle should be simple enough.

Brad: If you get me a receipt, I can expense that.

Andre: Oh, there is no receipt. I commandeered it from my uncle's cellar in his townhome along the Rue Des Martyrs. Saint-Germaine is perhaps the non plus ultra of every bit of tyranny and lechery that seeped down from the ancien regime, but he does keep a marvelous cellar.

Brad: Whatever.

Kelly: Do you have some chips, or pretzels, or something? Doesn't even have to low fat, I'm on vacation.

LeClerc: There's a bit of leftover cabbage soup, and I think a potato.

Kelly: I'll wait.

Andre: Forgive me for asking, Monsieur, but I've been working on my uncle for some time and have yet to get him to even cast an eye over Théo's work. Do you truly possess the influence to gain entry for M. LeClerc into the Salon?

Brad: Hell no.

Andre: Them, forgive me, how will his paintings be seen?

Brad: Peer to peer marketing. I'm thinking Pottery Barn.

Kelly: Honey, please. This is French we're talking about. Hello? Targét!

Brad: Oh, beautiful honey, that is just beautiful.

Victorine: Théo, these people are idiots.

LeClerc: I'm glad I'm not the only one who thinks so.

Kelly: Uh huh, honey, look, let's just bear in mind the fact that when I go to work, I keep all of my clothes on, okay?

(Phone Rings)

Brad: Yeah?...Okay, great, thanks Stacy. Bye. Okay, we've got the deal for the shirts.

Kelly: God, I love this feeling.

LeClerc: What feeling? What does all this mean?

Brad: Let me explain it to you. In America, we have the technology to make you stronger, better, faster, and to put those pretty little blue flowers of yours on a T-shirt which every woman who loved Shakespeare in Love will be wearing on casual Fridays.

LeClerc: You're going to make a shirt out of my canvas? What fool would wear something so uncomfortable?

Brad: Look, you just paint, okay? I'll handle the fashion end of things.

LeClerc: Monsieur, I am afraid that you know very little about art.

Brad: That's because there's no such thing. It's not art. It's content. It's all content. You can paint all the fat naked chicks you want on canvas and hang them on walls all over this filthy city. People hang all kinds of crap on their walls. Your naked chicks are content. Walls are a content delivery system. You are a content provider, but without me your content never gets to its delivery system. So you have a choice, you can either place your content on one wall where a bunch of tourists will walk by, take one look, and then forget it, or you can give it to me and I will place your content on four million walls and people will look at it every day. And they will remember it. And they will remember you. You will be bigger than Picasso and those other guys all rolled into one.

Kelly: Walls, T-shirts, coffee mugs, calendars, pencil sharpeners, limited edition collectors plates, hell, limited edition Volkswagen Beetles. We are offering you a chance at immortality. Victoria, how'd you like it if your boyfriend here were famous?

Victorine: He's not my boyfriend.

Kelly: Well how about you? How would you like to be famous?

Victorine: Madame, you have only been in Paris a short time but I can see already that the opinions of the Boulevardiers have worn off on you. You, too, cannot tell the difference between a model and a whore.

Kelly: I bet I can tell you who makes more money.

Victorine: I've no doubt you have an impressive bank book.

Kelly: Oh, listen to you miss I'm art, I'm so pure. Do you think because you're art you're so much better than me? Well, honey, if you're art I'm commerce and commerce can buy and sell art any day. Slut.

Andre: M. Jones, you will have your wife apologize to Victorine this instant.

Kelly: You're right, I'm sorry. I didn't ask how much.

Victorine: Intolerable woman!

Kelly: French slut!

Victorine: Rude American!

Kelly: Yeah? Well how would you like a good old-fashioned rude American bitch slapping?

Victorine: Madame, do your worst!

(They Wrestle)

LeClerc: Viva Victorine! For France! For Art!

Brad: You know, on second though I don't think this relationship is going to work out. Go commerce! Kick art's ass!

Andre: Stop it! Stop it! Both of you **(Pulls them apart)**

Kelly: I got a lump of hair!

Andre: This is a civilized country, we'll settle this in a civilized manner. Monsieur, your wife has insulted the model of M. LeClerc. You two shall have to settle this with a duel.

LeClerc: A what?

Brad: You mean shoot him?

Kelly: Remember honey, he wanted to see me naked.

Brad: Well, that was your idea.

Kelly: He wanted to see you naked, too.

Brad: Okay, give me the gun.

LeClerc: Eugene, are you mad? I know you were born to this sort of thing but my father was a toll-roads clerk! I've never fought a duel in my life!

Andre: Théo, calm down, remember what I said? A lot of noise, a lot of smoke, honor is satisfied and these horrible Americans are back on the boat in the morning. When it's over I'll take you and Victorine out to Le Rat-Mort to celebrate. We can even go to the opera, we'll shout down M. Wagner together. I'll even pick out the plumpest, juiciest ballerina just for you.

LeClerc: No one ever gets killed, you say?

Andre: A gentleman wouldn't dream of it. I'll be your second. Just remember to aim directly for his heart, these pistols are guaranteed to miss the target by a mile.

LeClerc: M. Andre, with you beside me I cannot loose.

Andre: Good man *(They Kiss)* Gentlemen – please choose your weapons.

Brad: How do you load this thing?

Andre: Allow me, monsieur.

LeClerc: What are you doing? Load mine, you're my second.

Andre: Then I'll get t o you in a second. There, Monsieur, this is the part which produces the bang.

Brad: Hello? American! I have seen a gun before, thank you.

Victorine: God be with you, Théo.

LeClerc: Fear not, my dear. The world has not yet seen my odalisque. I suspect even fate longs for the sight of her.

Kelly: Kick his ass, honey.

Brad: You betcha.

Andre: Gentlemen! If you please, ten paces between you. M. Jones...old friend...may God have mercy on your souls! One...Two...Three...Four...Five...Six...Seven...Eight...Nine...Ten!

(An Exchange. Andre and Victorine both clutch their chests, hit)

Brad: I'm alive! I'm still alive! That means I won, right? Cool.

Andre: Oh my.

LeClerc: God forgive me, I have shot M. Andre! Eugene! Oh my God, dear God, Eugene!

Andre: Think nothing of it, Théo. You missed the man whom you were supposed to miss. A gentleman could have done no better....My uncle...take him my pistols...tell him what happened...tell him that my next to last request was that he use his influence...get you into the Salon.. you are... a genius... the world should know... friend...

LeClerc: Eugene...

Andre: Promise it, Théo.

LeClerc: It is promised.

Andre: My last request...

LeClerc: Yes?

Andre: Victorine...

LeClerc: Yes, Eugene?

Andre: Tell her I wanted to...my uncle forbid it. **(He dies)**

LeClerc: Dear friend. The boulevards will now be forever empty.

Brad: Wow, I guess we've learned that in the battle between art and commerce don't be the guy in the dumb suit.

Kelly: You know, he seemed like a nice guy, too.

LeClerc: Victorine...Victorine *(He sees the blood stain spreading across her chest)*

Monsieur, your bullet has gone straight through her heart!

Brad: Uh oh.

Kelly: Good thing that wasn't me, huh?

LeClerc: Monster! Tyrant! Look what you have done!

Kelly: Yeah, I guess our work here is finished.

Brad: Yeah, look, you know it was his idea.

Kelly: Now, I'm sure this sort of thing happened all the time around here. No-one will think twice about it. Artists are so temperamental.

Brad: Yeah, um...tell you what, here's fifty bucks, you can just mail me that painting, okay?

Kelly: Yeah, and if you're ever in the tri-cities are be sure to look us up, okay?

Brad: We'll catch a hockey game. Just, buy some khakis before you come.

Kelly: Take care now.

Brad: Hang loose. You know, that was kind of fun.

Kelly: Much better then Eurodisney.

(They Exit. LeClerc, Stunned picks up the bottle of champagne beside Victorine and gently closes her eyes. He moves over to Andre and does the same for him, and then

places Andre's silk hat on top of his corpse. LeClerc raises the champagne bottle in a toast)

LeClerc: The last drop (***he looks at the bill given to him by Brad***) Who is Ulysses Grant?

Curtain