

EXT. PARIS PARK - PRE DAWN - ESTABLISHING

In a public park in the heart of Paris, four friends, BALASZ, CLAUDE, BRULETTE and TIAMAT lie head to head on the grass, waiting for the sunrise.

CLAUDE

What do you know about that.

TIAMAT

About what?

CLAUDE

Every day about this time, the sun comes up.

BRULETTE

And every day we lie here and watch to make sure it does. What does that say about us?

BALASZ

Maybe that we have hope.

TIAMAT

Bravo! Balasz greets the sun each day with hope.

CLAUDE

And what does he hope for? A warm bed? A cup of wine and good times. Simple things, no?

BRULETTE

And love! What would it be without love?

CLAUDE

Ah, love. We should all be so lucky. Still, they say there is someone for everyone.

BRULETTE

Even me. Even Balasz --

BALASZ

My love, she comes. Each sun brings her closer to me.

INT. GIANNI'S GALLERY - NIGHT

A title card reads:

Beverly Hills, April 1, 2001

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A busy Art show in full swing. CARTER works the room, the center of attention, while the Artist, AUBERGINE (also known as Abby, Abette, Bonvin) is being edged out of the room by GIANNI, a handsome Italian man in his fifties.

GIANNI

You should go now if you're going to go.
In a minute he'll be looking for you.

AUBERGINE

Yeah. If I'm lucky, he won't even know
I'm gone until I'm back again.

GIANNI

Take my advice, Abette -- if you are
going to go, you need to leave! Now!

With a last hug for Gianni she slips half way out the door, grabbing a bottle from a tub overflowing with bottles of the best champagne.

AUBERGINE

Still, it is I who creates it. I only
should have the right to kill it. I hope
you like my surprise, Gianni. I painted
it for you.

GIANNI

Surprise -- what surprise?

She slips away. A tremor of noise comes from the party, and Gianni turns back to it.

EXT. GIANNI GALLERY - NIGHT

Aubergine walks quickly away from the Gallery, popping the Champagne and taking a mouthful right from the bottle.

AUBERGINE

(yelling back towards the
gallery)
Art exists only in the moment of
creation. Everything else is just
interpretation. Categorization. These are
the things that separate us!

She approaches a brand new Jaguar, ceremoniously pouring the remainder of the bubbly through the open sun roof before hailing a taxi. Close on the Jag's license plate which reads:

ARTFUL1

INT. AIRPLANE FIRST CLASS CABIN - DAY

Aubergine reaches under her seat and pulls out a bottle of wine and begins to uncork it. Her neighbor raises an eyebrow.

TRAVELLER

That is an extraordinary wine, madame.
May I?

AUBERGINE

Be my guest.

TRAVELLER

Oh, my -- where did you get this?

AUBERGINE

It is from my private collection, sir.
Say, would you share it with me? I would
like that very much.

TRAVELLER

Oh, my. What an absolute treat that would
be. Your generosity --

The flight attendant joins the discussion.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

Le vin et bon, monsieur?

TRAVELLER

(wistfully)
Mais oui, le vin est très, très bon!
C'est du très très bon vin.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

(helping to pour the wine)
Santé! Enjoy.

TRAVELLER

Forgive my rudeness, but I didn't catch
your name.

AUBERGINE

My name? You can call me, uh -- Bon. Vin.
Bonvin.
(raising her glass)
Cheers!

Hereafter, Aubergine will be known as BONVIN.

INT. GIANNI'S GALLERY - NIGHT

The party is thinning out. Carter, Gianni and a group of the elite art media heatedly discuss a painting in the show, what appears to be a portrait of Aubergine.

CARTER

It's not signed! Do you see a signature?

ART CRITIC #1

So if Aubergine didn't paint it, who did?

GIANNI

Who says she didn't? Come on now, it is a gift to me, why do you even care?

CARTER

She breathes through her brush. I think I should know her work by now -- almost as well as you, Gianni, don't you think? Was she even legal when you had her?

GIANNI

As if she were chattel!

CARTER

Well, I'm sure we could settle this quickly enough. Abby! Abby darling --

Carter wanders purposefully through the straggling crowd, while Gianni shrugs and stands by.

EXT. PARIS STREET - NIGHT

Bonvin exits a taxi in front of the Hotel Victor Hugo.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Bonvin sits back in an overstuffed chair in an opulent suite, bottle of wine in one hand, balcony doors open to the night. Sound of a fountain in the courtyard below, the new moon hangs like a grin in the dusky purple sky.

GIANNI (V.O.)

To get the best out of life, you have to cheat it. Let your heart take over your head. Start over. Fresh canvas, new brushes. This could be exactly what you need.

Her head nods on her chest and she sleeps.

INS. DREAM SEQUENCE

Bonvin looks into a pool of water, reaches down to touch her reflection. As the ripples clear, the reflection is not of herself, but of Balasz. She touches the water again, and the image ripples, disappears.

EXT. GRAVESITE - DAY

A rainy afternoon, Bonvin is one of very few attendees at a funeral. The tombstone reads

LISBETTE DUDEVANT

Bonvin stares into the sky, daydreaming as the preacher drones his service.

INS. DAYDREAM SEQUENCE

Aubergine, five years old, is being dragged out of a house by her aunt LISBETTE. From outside the little girl can still hear her parents fighting.

PAPA (O.S.)

You betrayed me! How could this happen?
You whore! You deserve to die along with
the bastard child!

MAMA (O.S.)

You were months away -- how could I know
you were coming back? There was no word!
I didn't mean for this to be! Please
believe me!

PAPA (O.S.)

I go to care for my mother, God rest her
soul, and this is how you welcome me!
With a belly swollen with a child that is
not mine!

SOUNDS of a severe beating, Mama crying. Close on Aubergine, tears streaming.

MATCH DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. RAILROAD TRACKS - DAY

Close on Aubergine, eyes wide, pull back to reveal her held in Lisbette's arms as they follow the screaming couple to the tracks. Mama holds a bloody bundle in one arm as Papa drags her by the other, a trail of blood marking their passage. A train whistle SOUNDS, very close.

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CONTINUED:

YOUNG AUBERGINE

Mama -- Papa -- no!

LISBETTE

Hush, child. She gets what she deserves.

Papa drags Mama onto the tracks and holds her there as the train bears down on them, all the while Lisbette is holding young Aubergine so that she cannot help but see.

EXT. GRAVESITE - DAY - BACK TO SCENE

Bonvin walks briskly away. LE CROIX, the estate attorney, catches her up.

LE CROIX

Aubergine - please wait, we must speak.

BONVIN

(walking)

So speak. Who's stopping you?

LE CROIX

Ah -- there is a small matter of the estate. You are the only heir --

BONVIN

Only because there is no one else left.

LE CROIX

Yes, but -- some decisions must be made.

Bonvin turns abruptly.

BONVIN

As far as I am concerned -- sell it all. I have no interest in what is to be had.

LE CROIX

And the proceeds, Madame?

BONVIN

The Hospice may benefit. Some charities. I'll think about that. I shall contact you.

LE CROIX

Yes, Mademoiselle. I look forward to it.

Bonvin stomps off to a waiting limousine.

INT. BAR NOIR - DAY

Bonvin enters a dark and almost deserted restaurant and seats herself at the bar. The bartender, his name tag reads LUIS, attends with trademark distant gaze and all-knowing smile.

LUIS
Quelque-chose?

BONVIN
Your choice, Luis. Du vin rouge, whatever you think is good.

He brings the wine.

LUIS
It will be a better day yet. Do not worry.

BONVIN
I have some faith in that, thank you.

LUIS
Are you American?

BONVIN
Oh God, no. But I spent many years there. Has my accent suffered that much?

LUIS
It was just a guess. I'm lucky that way. I can read people. You, for instance. You are -- an artiste?

BONVIN
No. Not an artist.

LUIS
Okay, then, a singer.

BONVIN
(laughing)
Perhaps I should sing for you. You would beg me to stop.

LUIS
(leans in close)
Do you know what I really think? I think that you are running from something.

BONVIN
It seems I can't run fast enough.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LUIS

You may have to turn and face it eventually.

BONVIN

Well to tell you the truth, today I had to face an unlikely bit of my past. My aunt passed away and I was asked here to settle her affairs. I'm certain I don't know why I came.

LUIS

I am sorry about your aunt.

BONVIN

Oh, don't be. I'm not. Hateful witch. I haven't seen nor heard from her since I she shuffled me off. I think I was five.

Luis crosses himself.

BONVIN (CONT'D)

(continuing)

No need for that, friend. I barely knew her, but rest assured she didn't suffer enough.

LUIS

Then I shall not ask more. Do you return to America soon?

BONVIN

I don't know about that. Now that I'm here -- something is calling me. I don't know what.

LUIS

Paris, my friend, sings a song of love. Perhaps you should stay, at least for a little while. Your dreams will be richer for it.

BONVIN

Thank you, Luis. Perhaps I will. Just for a while --

EXT. PARIS STREET - DAY

A busy side-street with markets and cafe's. Bonvin approaches an apartment house with a vacancy sign and goes inside.

INT. LOFT - DAY

The landlord NICOLE shows Bonvin the loft. It is one big empty, unfinished room with a view of downtown Paris from its window. She gazes from it while Nicole gives his pitch.

NICOLE

C'est une bonne chambre d'artiste, vous êtes artiste mademoiselle? Il y a beaucoup d'artistes dans cette batisse. Regardez, mademoiselle! Le lumiere viens du sud-est. Ici la toilette --
(pointing to an open door)
Ici l'armoire.

Bonvin pokes around the place.

BONVIN

I'll take it.

INT. ART STORE - DAY

Bonvin shops for supplies. Picks up an Art Magazine and looks at the cover photo of one her paintings, the self portrait. The headline reads:

"Fake Aubergine Disauthenticated By Expert"

The article shows a photograph of Carter, pontificating. She skims through it before tossing it back in the rack with a laugh.

BONVIN (V.O.)

I have never known true love. Freedom is the only thing that will preserve me, I am now convinced. Freedom and obscurity.

Bonvin gathers her purchases and leaves the store, bumping into a man on her way out. It is BALASZ.

BALASZ

Ah, je m'excuse --

She keeps on moving, glancing over her shoulder. He watches her walk away, his unwavering stare brimming with intensity.

EXT. PARK - DAY

A public park, lush and green. Fountain, benches, people, birds. A few artists are painting, hoping to sell. Bonvin moves to find a spot of her own, speaking out joyously (in English) to the disinterested park-goers.

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BONVIN

To be just another painter in the world.
What a luxury! Free, and alive! I don't
remember who I was. Please do not remind
me!

As she is setting up, a young artist named CLAUDE chastises
Bonvin in dramatic fashion.

CLAUDE (O.S.)

I hope you don't think you can just come
here and take over.

BONVIN

Don't worry, I just came to paint. I
don't want your business.

CLAUDE

Well, all right. My name is Claude. You
are new to Paris?

BONVIN

I am Bonvin. I just moved here from the
United States.

CLAUDE

Well, I won't hold that against you.
Welcome, then, Bonvin. We are a small
group here and we are like family in a
way. There's Claude - that's me - and
Tiamat over there, he paints portraits.
And Balasz --

(squinting)

Where is Balasz, I wonder? Hm.

BONVIN

Balasz? Who is that?

CLAUDE

Ah, Balasz. He is a cat of a different
color. A philosopher! A musician! A
master piper! But you will meet
everybody, in time. You can come to have
dinner with us if you like. It's nothing
fancy, but maybe we can be friends after
all.

BONVIN

(hesitates)

Okay.

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CONTINUED:

Claude looks horrified as a gust of wind knocks his canvas to the ground. A big lazy dog gets up from the ground and walks right through the painting, tail wagging.

CLAUDE

Ah! Stupid mutt! Honoré, take that, you wretch! Shit, shit, all my days work! You must excuse me, now!

(starts off)

Oh, Honoré! How could you?

Bonvin watches the drama for a moment before turning to see Balasz standing a few paces away. She looks back at Claude for a moment. When she looks back, Balasz is gone.

INT. CARTER'S HOUSE - DAY

Carter stomps through what had been the house he shared with Aubergine.

CARTER

If it's the last thing I do, I'm going to find you, Aubergine. You can't hide forever.

He pulls a portable phone from his pocket and dials. An answering machine picks up on the other end.

GIANNI (V.O.)

This is Gianni's Gallery. Please leave your message after the beep.

CARTER

Maybe you really don't know where she is, you wop bastard. You can take it to your grave, if ya do know, and that's all right. You underestimate my resources. A girl like Abby can't stay hidden for long. She needs me, Gianni. And I'm gonna find her with or without your help.

INT. BONVIN'S LOFT - DAY

Bonvin lies spread-eagled on a king-size bed set right in the middle of the room, covered by a white sheet. Early morning sun casts shadows on the sparsely furnished room.

BONVIN (V.O.)

This man. I see him wherever I go. I feel like I'm projecting his image onto strangers, wishing him into being. But like the perfect lover, he is always a footstep away, in shadow.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Bonvin paints a scene in the busy park, intent on her work. A man approaches her.

PARK MAN#1

I want to buy this painting,
mademoiselle.

BONVIN

Oh, I couldn't think of selling it just
now.

PARK MAN#1

I will give you one thousand francs.
(starts counting the money)
You cannot refuse.

BONVIN

It's not the money. I was just enjoying
the doing of it. I don't know if you
would understand.
(pauses)
You really like it?

PARK MAN#1

My wife -- she loves this park. Loves to
come and feed the birds, watch the
painters, but she is very sick and can
not come now. This will be good medicine
for her. Please do me this pleasure. Take
the money.

PARK WOMAN #1

Take it, girl. Take the money!

Bonvin reluctantly takes the money.

BONVIN

I can't give it to you now. The paint is
not yet dry.

PARK MAN#1

I will come back in three days. Friday I
will come. Is that acceptable?

BONVIN

Fair enough, sir. For your wife.

The old man walks away. In the distance, Claude has an angry
fit as his dog cowers. He approaches Bonvin.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CLAUDE

You tramp! You say 'I am not here to sell my work, I am just to paint, not to take the food from Claude's table!' I should know better! To hell with you!

BONVIN

Claude -- wait, come back!

An amused chuckle O.S., Bonvin turns her head to see BALASZ watching by as the crowd scatters.

BALASZ

Poor Claudine. He is so sensitive. And you are so much prettier than he is.

BONVIN

It's you . . .

BALASZ

You were expecting someone else? A friend? A lover?

BONVIN

Haven't we met before? I just don't know where.

BALASZ

Only in dreams, my sweet. Only in dreams.

He stands, a peal of thunder sounds and it begins to rain heavily. They quickly gather up her things and run off.

INT. BONVIN'S LOFT - EVENING

Hair drenched and wearing only a shirt, Bonvin sits while Balasz massages her.

BALASZ

Get up now. Stretch your arms up -- feel better? Now.

BONVIN

Tell me your name again.

BALASZ

It is Balasz. Bah - lage. You forget already?

BONVIN

No -- it's the way you say it. It's so familiar. I don't know. I've heard the name before.

(CONTINUED)

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BALASZ

Perhaps it is my voice that is familiar.
Come. Over here.

Balasz stands Bonvin in front of a full length mirror.

BALASZ (CONT'D)

Look at yourself, lovely one. In ages past you could not do that without disdain. But it is not yourself you run from, it is what you have become. Now, you take away the clothes, the things that have served to hide you, and all there is left is what you see -- cold, scared, tiny little girl. What does she want? Does she want to be loved? She does not know the meaning of it. But in the life of the spirit, she is always at the beginning, and so everything is new again. Each moment, each day invents itself in such a way. Why is it that the flesh cannot let go? Does she want to be kissed? She only knows the answer to that as the lips brush her skin. Once again alive, she knows no right or wrong. The universe has breathed innocence back into her soul as she folds back the layers of time that no longer serve.

BONVIN

(trembling)

What you say -- it's like poetry --

BALASZ

They are only words. Your heart knows the truth.

They kiss passionately.

BALASZ (CONT'D)

I have waited so patiently for you to come.

INT. BONVIN'S LOFT - MORNING

Bonvin opens her eyes from sleep, notices the bed is empty. She sighs heavily and lays back.

BONVIN

Everyone leaves.

She picks up a wine bottle, not quite empty, drinks the rest. Staring at the ceiling. Starts to cry.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Bonvin in a public phone booth, feeding it coins and trying in vain to connect.

BONVIN

(yelling into the phone)

No, it is Los Angeles, California.

California! Ah, merde. Please try again, okay? Okay.

(waiting)

No? Hello? Later. Yes, I'll try again later.

INT. BAR NOIR - NIGHT

Bonvin enters and sits at the bar. Luis attends.

LUIS

Good evening, mademoiselle. Quelque-chose?

BONVIN

Du vin rouge, s'il vous plait.

The bartender brings a glass of wine, Bonvin lights a smoke.

BONVIN (CONT'D)

Thank you. I need this.

LUIS

So you decided to stay after all. It must be love.

BONVIN

You should be a novelist. I make no promises to stay -- but I met a man.

LUIS

You see? Luis was not so far off.

BONVIN

It's not like that. He was just -- there. Everywhere I turned, there he was. I even dreamed about him. Paris gave him to me, like I had ordered him just so. And now, he is gone. Vanished, just like that. I feel like a fool.

LUIS

You have seen that your dreams do not lie, and yet you still feel like a fool?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BONVIN

Perhaps I am only lying to myself.

EXT. GALLERIE MUSEE - DAY - ESTABLISHING

A busy afternoon on the street, Bonvin enters Gallerie Musee.

INT. GALLERY MUSEE - DAY

Bonvin browses among paintings until she comes to one of her own. Stunned, she stares at it in awe. The gallery director, EDUAN, approaches.

EDUAN

Ah! The Aubergine. It is my personal favorite.

Bonvin flinches at the sound of her true name.

BONVIN

I find -- I am surprised to see it.
Forgive me.

EDUAN

We do not get many American painters who command such respect. Aubergine has the distinction that every work is a masterpiece.

BONVIN

(scoffing)

I hardly agree. See here, the color of the ocean. There is nothing on earth that color. Don't you find it -- pretentious?

EDUAN

Perhaps it is not of this earth. But I get the feeling that wherever that ocean is, it is exactly that way. Are you a painter?

BONVIN

Painter? Well -- painting is what I like to do. To tell you the truth, I come from a long line of wine makers.

EDUAN

Ah! Wine is a passion we share then! But I suspect your talent is not worth such modesty. You have the look, I dare say. Would you like to see my treasures? Come, come. Let me reveal to you my secret!

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CONTINUED:

They go to the back of the gallery, through a door.

INT. GALLERIE MUSEE STUDIO - SAME TIME

The dusty studio is crammed with half finished efforts.

EDUAN

It is a hobby of mine, I suppose, to fail miserably. This is why I have the gallery, so I can surround myself with greatness and perhaps leave something of my love for it behind. I should like to see some of your work. I am intrigued to know what your muse tells you.

BONVIN

Oh, I am certainly not as good as -- anything you have here.

EDUAN

Even if that were so, I have a good feeling about you. What is your name?

BONVIN

Bonvin. Pleased to meet you --

EDUAN

Eduan. It is a pleasure, Bonvin. You are welcome anytime. Perhaps we can share dinner sometime? Some wine.

BONVIN

Yes, I'd like that. I'll be back. I promise.

EDUAN

Do not promise anything, Bonvin. Promises are made to be broken. Isn't that an American phrase? Just do come to visit me. I am a lonely old man and would enjoy your company, even if it were just to tell me how hopeless I am. You could perhaps inspire me to do better.

BONVIN

Good-bye, Eduan. And thank you.

INT. BONVIN'S LOFT - NEXT. MORNING

Bonvin is naked, squeezing tubes of paint onto herself, smearing it thickly on her body. There is a canvas stretched out against the wall to which she applies herself.

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CONTINUED:

BONVIN (V.O.)

And if Balasz came back to me tomorrow,
could I live with him? Can I live without
him? And will I ever be the same after
this night alone? Have I won, or lost?
Perhaps it is the same thing, after all.

INT. BONVIN'S LOFT - NIGHT

Bonvin lies awake in bed, still covered in paint, staring
into the dark as the moonlight bathes her in silvery light.

BONVIN

But I can still dream.

INT. BONVIN'S LOFT - MORNING

Bonvin wakes with the sun in her eyes. A movement startles
her and she turns to find Balasz there, like he had never
left.

BALASZ

Good morning, my eternal beauty. Did you
miss me?

BONVIN

I thought I'd never see you again.

BALASZ

Oh ye of little faith. But here I am,
after all. I had to fetch my pipes.

Balasz gestures to a suitcase. Going to it, he pulls out a
set of bagpipes and proceeds to fill the bag with air.

BONVIN

Pipes. Ah, the master piper. One day you
must confess to me your story. And
perhaps I will even tell you mine.

BALASZ

The only story there is, Bella, is ours.

He plays for her. Music continues.

FADE TO BLACK

INS. TITLE CARD

Which reads: Two years later.

Music continues.

INT. BONVIN'S LOFT - PRE DAWN

Music continuing. Bonvin and Balasz sleeping. A sharp knock sounds, ending the music. Bonvin's eyes fly open, but she waits until the knock comes again before going to the door

BONVIN

Who is it?

CARTER (O.S.)

Abby. It's me.

BONVIN

Ah, shit.

She takes a deep breath, then opens the door slowly. Light from the hallway blinds her as Carter pushes his way in without invitation.

BONVIN (CONT'D)

How did you find me? Don't you know what time it is?

CARTER

Purely by accident, I assure you. And yes, I know the time. Nigh to the witching hour, indeed.

Bonvin closes the door, stands stiffly by it.

BONVIN

Two years --

CARTER

Two years, I know. Two long, heart-aching years. Two years, seven months, twelve days and six hours since I saw you last. But who's counting. Thought you might have dropped me a line, at least. A phone call -- do you even have a phone?

BONVIN

No phone, no. But I tried. I tried to write you a letter.

CARTER

Dear Carter, thanks for the memories.

BONVIN

It's not like that. You know it's not like that.

Balasz in the BG is rising from the bed, smiling.

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CONTINUED:

BALASZ

Bonjour.

CARTER

Who's he?

Bonvin crosses the room to stand by Balasz, they exchange a glance.

BONVIN

He was just leaving.

Balasz smiles, dresses slowly, then leaves. The sun is starting to rise. They are alone.

BONVIN (CONT'D)

You can't stay. Not here.

CARTER

Well I'm here now. Maybe I don't feel like leaving just yet.

BONVIN

You are the life I left behind. The thing I have done so well to forget. How can I trust you? I cannot trust myself.

Carter scopes the room, flips through canvasses that are stacked against the wall, pulls one out.

CARTER

Very nice. You've grown.

BONVIN

I don't need your approval.

CARTER

You once did.

BONVIN

And see what it got me.

CARTER

Come on, babe. Our life wasn't so bad, was it? We had it all. We had each other.

BONVIN

You may have had all you wanted. I had nothing. You took my art from me like it was a thing that only had value if it were bought and sold. There was nothing in that for me. You made me sick with your hunger for it, the praise, the

(MORE)

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BONVIN (cont'd)

parties, the adulation! All for you! Your little Abby, your little invention! That is not what I painted for, and I hated them all, how they treated me - like a child! I wanted to see them all dead for what they took from me. They had no passion for my work except for as it made them richer. You never could understand. You were just like them, but worse because you brought me to their tables, into their houses, to their fancy galleries. It was not my dream -- my dream was of the day I could be just a painter again, just another painter in the world! It's all I ever wanted for myself! I don't need the same things that you do, Carter, don't you see? There was nothing more inside me when I left. I had no love for my life anymore. I had no choice but to go.

CARTER

You think you understand me so well. It didn't have to be a struggle. What we had, it was enviable. Everything you painted, everything you sculpted, it was all so pure, so perfect. I helped you to share it with the world! Is that such a bad thing?

BONVIN

If that were all it was, and you make it sound so innocent. But look at the life we had. There was no soul in it. No true artist could survive in such a world. I would have died not knowing the stillness of my own heart.

CARTER

You lived every artist's dream! An ideal!

BONVIN

Who's ideal? Not mine, I assure you. I asked for nothing but canvas to paint on, and my freedom. I have that now. Nobody calling after me, nobody wants to know who I am or where I came from. I am finally free!

CARTER

Don't you think people wonder about you?

BONVIN

No. I don't care. There is no one.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CARTER

No one for you, maybe. But for me, no one else -- Abby, do remember New York? Should I have left you there to die? How could I? It's always been you, Aubergine. Without you, I am nothing.

He reaches out to her, but she pulls away.

BONVIN

Have I not paid my debt of gratitude? Have I not paid with my soul? If you truly care so much for me, why can't we end it here, Carter, why?

EXT. BONVIN'S LOFT - DAY

The front door flies open and Carter and Abby burst into the street, Carter not trying to conceal his distress.

BONVIN

You really don't have to stay, you know. It makes no difference to me. You are free to go at any time.

Carter stops and takes her by both shoulders.

CARTER

Look. The past -- is the past. I made a mistake. You can't blame me, it's what I do. It's what you do. Abby --

BONVIN

And don't call me that anymore. You'll blow my cover. They call me Bonvin now. Please respect that.

CARTER

I'll call you whatever you want. Just give me another chance.

She considers it.

BONVIN (V.O.)

The obsession with his search for me had replaced the love in Carter's lonely heart. I am sure that he loved me very deeply in his own fashion, but over the years the meaning of it had disappeared and only the anger remained. Like his own private holy war. If he ceased to search, he ceased to exist. Such was his life. He needed me mostly in that way, and I,

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BONVIN (V.O.)
the true foil, was willing to elude him
into eternity.

BONVIN (CONT'D)
All right. You can stay. But I will
promise you nothing, and you will not
meddle in my affairs. Deal?

CARTER
Daisy, I won't let you down. You can rely
on me.

INT. CAFÉ DE SOL - DAY

Carter and Bonvin enter. Balasz sits at a counter, talking
with the waitress, Brulette. The two seat themselves,
Brulette approaches coldly.

BONVIN
Deux café-au-lait, brioche, un Perrier
avec lime -- anything else?

CARTER
A Perrier for me too, please.

BALASZ (O.S.)
Tu parles pas Francais mon nouvel ami?
Espanol? Italiano? or just plain English?

Balasz joins them at the table.

BONVIN
This is Balasz. Balasz, meet Carter. An
old friend. He will be staying with us
for a while. If it suits him.

BALASZ
I am pleased to meet you. And -- do not
worry about your french. Bonvin et moi,
we will help you in that.

CARTER
That's not a French accent you have.

BALASZ
I speak all languages. I am a student of
words.

CARTER
Funny. She hates it. There were times she
wouldn't speak for days and days.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BALASZ

Silence has its own language, you know.
And a much more delicate vocabulary.

The coffee arrives, Brulette plunking everything down with a clatter.

BONVIN

Brulette. Be nice. Carter, Brulette is usually a very nice girl.

CARTER

Charming.

BALASZ

So, Carter. Tell me what it is that you will do here in Paris.

Carter looks at one, then the other before answering.

CARTER

I'm an art critic.

BALASZ

And Bonvin is your muse!

CARTER

But I can see she hasn't told you much about me. Probably just as well. Excuse me.

Carter rises from the table and walks away. When he is out of sight, Balasz pulls his chair closer to Bonvin, putting his head on her shoulder.

BALASZ

No need to say it. It is there in the eyes. Let me see -- two lovers. A sort of symbiosis. Then one day she disappears. He cannot stand to be left behind, and so he sets out to find her. It takes two years, but completely by accident he finds a painting of hers in a Paris cafe and decides to stay until she appears. Dame Bonvin is elusive, but with diligence, with patience, one day he will have the prize.

BONVIN

There's a confession here for you, somewhere. I just don't know where to start.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Carter returns, Balasz sits up straight, casting a seductive look at Carter.

BONVIN (CONT'D)

If you knew he was looking for me, why didn't you say something?

BALASZ

Parce-que, cherie, it was bound to happen. A love like this --

(reaching across to caress
Carter's cheek)

love like this will never die. But you got more than you bargained for, no? Come, it won't be so bad. I don't snore.

CARTER

Maybe I shouldn't --

BONVIN

Balasz is right. Perhaps we have some unfinished business.

BALASZ

So! We will celebrate. We could go to le Grande Hotel and drink champagne until we burst! Perhaps we should make it a party. Brulette? What have you got to wear in your tiny little closet?

Balasz gets up and goes to Brulette.

CARTER

Gonna show me the town, tripping Daisy?

BONVIN

No -- you can show yourself the town. I'm not much of a social butterfly, you know that.

Balasz returns to the table, triumphantly.

BALASZ

It is done! Tonight will be spectacular, that I promise you. And it will be only a taste of things to come. You -- are invited.

EXT. GRANDE HOTEL - NIGHT

The four of them are arm in arm and leaning on each other and laughing as they exit the hotel and stagger off down the street.

INT. BONVIN'S LOFT - NIGHT

Still laughing, the four come crashing through the door, falling over each other onto the furniture.

BALASZ

Your taste in wine is despicable, sir. It is possible that you have never drunk of the fountain of youth.

BONVIN

I don't know if he'd appreciate it.

BALASZ

You underestimate the man, my love.

CARTER

I'll drink anything you've got right now. More champagne?

BRULETTE

I could use a drink. I'll have one too. And I shall have a smoke, please.

BALASZ

In a moment you shall have it all, nice girl. Bonvin, do not worry. He is tougher than he looks.

Balasz brings a bottle of wine and four glasses, and a cigarette for Brulette. Handing Bonvin the bottle to open, he goes to turn on a radio.

BONVIN

He's so dramatic.

BRULETTE

Do you have any vodka? I have a joint.

Balasz approaches Carter, yanking him up to dance, the girls soon joining in.

INT. GALLERY MUSEE - DAY

Bonvin and Carter enter. Eduan greets her enthusiastically.

EDUAN

I did not think the day would get any more beautiful, and then, poof! Here you are, ma cher Bonvin! Hello, How are you?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BONVIN

Eduan, this is an old friend of mine,
Carter. Carter, this is Eduan.

CARTER

Pleased to meet you.

Carter casts a questioning glance towards Bonvin.

BONVIN

Come, I want to show you something.
(pulls him away)
and don't you say a fucking word,
understand?

They go to the "Aubergine". Carter snaps to attention.

CARTER

Hey! I almost forgot. Gianni gave me
something to give to you, just before he
died. I have it here -- I don't know what
it's for. I even forgot I had it.

Carter digs in his wallet, pulls out a key.

BONVIN

What did you just say?

CARTER

He made me promise to find you and give
you this.

BONVIN

No! Did you just say 'before he died'?

CARTER

Don't tell me you didn't know. It was all
over the trades.

BONVIN

(in shock)
You're telling me this now? How --

CARTER

Heart attack. In his sleep.

Bonvin takes the key, crying big tears. Carter comforts her,
silent for a moment.

BONVIN

He was the only friend I ever had.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CARTER

I thought you knew.

BONVIN

I should have -- I should have been there. I should have been there for him.

CARTER

I'd have thought that you would have stayed in touch.

BONVIN

But I didn't -- I tried. I didn't try hard enough! Carter, what have I done?

CARTER

Look, you absolutely can not blame yourself, all right? Everybody has their time, you know? Come on, we better go.

Carter casts a scrutinizing glare at the 'Aubergine' as they turn from it to make their way out.

EDUAN

Good-bye, my dear. Good-bye my new friend. You should come another time, no? I would enjoy that. Carter? Is it?

CARTER

Yes. Thank you. I believe I will.

INT. CAFE DE SOL - NIGHT

The cafe is closed. Brulette, Balasz, Claude, Tiamat, Bonvin and Carter sit drinking, smoking, and playing poker while music blares.

CARTER

Anybody else?

BALASZ

(throwing down his hand)
I'm out.

BRULETTE

I'll see your bid, and raise you five.

BONVIN

I'm out.

TIAMAT

Okay. Five francs. You might as well have it all.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CLAUDE

That only leaves me. Here you go.

Claude and Tiamat throw their money on the pile, and they all lay out their hands.

CARTER

Full house.

CLAUDE

Four aces?

BONVIN

(looking at Brulette's hand)

Ah! I think our nice girl here has got you both.

CARTER

Let's see, Brulette -- shit.

BRULETTE

Royal flush! Pay up, you dogs. That's what you get for messing with me! Hah!

TIAMAT

Okay, I have no more money left.

CLAUDE

Me neither. Where is that whiskey? I need to drown my sorrows.

BALASZ

How will you ever spend your winnings, nice girl?

CLAUDE

She is not a nice girl. She makes my dog go hungry tonight.

BRULETTE

I could be nice, if you were nice to me. Bonvin is nice to me. Balasz is nice to me.

Bonvin gets up and sits on Brulette's lap, giving her a drunken snog.

BONVIN

It's all very, very nice. What are you going to buy me, then?

BRULETTE

Shut up! Stop it!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CLAUDE

Don't be shy on our account.

Brulette kisses Bonvin. Carter gets up, walks outside, lighting a smoke. Balasz follows him.

CARTER

I can't stand it when they do that.

BALASZ

We're just trying to cheer Bonvin up.
Don't be jealous.

CARTER

I am not jealous.

BALASZ

I think you are. Do you think for one
minute she wants you to feel deprived?

CARTER

Come on, all she wants is to see me
squirm.

BALASZ

After all, we are adults too.

Balasz rubs Carters shoulders, kisses the back of his neck.

CARTER

I can't do this. Balasz --

BALASZ

We don't have to. But you should trust
me. Do you trust me?

Carter turns to him, locking his gaze.

CARTER

Should I? I don't even trust myself.

BALASZ

This is partly why you are here,
monsieur. To trust. To allow yourself to
be trusted. To respect what is in your
heart.

CARTER

(as if hypnotized)

I can see why she loves you so much. You
think alike. You're almost like her, in a
way. I can see her in your eyes.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CARTER (cont'd)
(whispers)
Abby --

A giggle from inside cuts through the music. Carter turns and disappears down the street.

INT. BONVIN'S LOFT - DAY

Balasz gathers paintings together while Bonvin paints by the window.

BALASZ
Cherie.

BONVIN
Hmmm . . .

BALASZ
How would you feel about it if we put
some paintings in a gallery?

BONVIN
I have no thoughts on that. Who put that
in your mind, anyway? As if I didn't
know.

BALASZ
I just thought we could use the money.

BONVIN
Money is not really what we need.

She stops painting and goes to him.

BONVIN (CONT'D)
(continuing)
This is perfect. All of this. My greatest
fear is living with us right now.

BALASZ
Carter?

BONVIN
He is treacherous.

BALASZ
And so am I. If there is one thing that I
am sure of, it is that I am here for you,
and you for me.

BONVIN
What are we going to do with him?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BALASZ

I don't know what to say, except for that it is your past, and you must embrace it to let it go.

Bonvin sinks into his arms.

BONVIN

I am a lost soul to my own cause, Balasz.

BALASZ

And what a stroke of luck that I have found it.

BONVIN

I have been thinking too much. About Gianni. You know, when something bad has happened, and you feel like you've failed, somehow, and it plagues you. In the middle of the night, I'll wake up.

BALASZ

What could you have done? It was his time.

BONVIN

I abandoned him, Balasz. I stopped trying. I couldn't get through on the phone -- I'm just no good at writing letters. Oh, it's all an excuse! I could have done anything. I could have brought him here, or I could have gone to him. Time passed so quickly, and he just slipped away. I guess I thought he'd always be there.

BALASZ

I know just what you need. A holiday. Provence, perhaps? We could bring Eduan. And leave the other one behind.

BONVIN

Well, there is a festival this month -- we can leave tomorrow morning!

BALASZ

I will pack! Come, my one. Your new life begins this day!

INT. CARTER'S OFFICE - DAY

Carter sits in a tiny warehouse office in front of a computer, talking on the phone.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CARTER

Let me explain how Patron Age works, Carlos. We have a number of artists in our stable from which you can choose and commission a work to Mr. Armani's liking. Or, you can trust us to choose an artist for you. Conversely, you may bring an artist who is not yet associated with us, and we will oversee your generous patronage. I also have works from many fine new painters and sculptors, and we can authenticate, date and restore anything in your collection.

(pauses, listening)

Yes, yes. Well, you can check the website. My current catalogue is displayed as well as the works of some of our artists. You speak with Mr. Armani and if you can come to an agreement -- yes. As always, sir. I am at your service. Not at all. It is my pleasure.

He hangs up, activating his computer.

CARTER (CONT'D)

Now to the more intricate part of the job.

INT. BAR NOIR - DAY

Bonvin has a glass of wine and talks to Luis.

BONVIN

Things are getting so complicated.

LUIS

Yes, well. You create your own hell, I'd wager.

BONVIN

The worst part -- I mean, really the worst part is that through all my selfishness and needing to simplify my stupid life, I've lost a good friend.

LUIS

Where did you leave him?

BONVIN

Not like that, no. He died -- and it'd been so long since -- I never really got to say good-bye, or thank you, or even tell him that not a day goes by when I

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BONVIN (cont'd)

don't think of him. He was my only true friend.

LUIS

Forgive yourself. Have courage. It is more that you should reflect, and make sure that it doesn't happen again. Forgive, Bonvin - friendship demands it!

BONVIN

Still . . .

LUIS

You must not grieve. I will not allow it. Drink! A vôtre santé!

They toast and drink.

BONVIN

You are right. I'm just going to have to try to stop being so self-absorbed.

LUIS

Only if you must. You would shatter my image of you.

BONVIN

Well, now we can't have that.

She finishes her wine, leaves money on the bar and exits; fumbling in her pocket she finds Gianni's key.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Balasz and Claude sit on a park bench, Claude's dog gnawing a stick at Claude's feet.

CLAUDE

You must admit, though, the summer has been good to us, no? We don't work very hard, yet we always have a few extra francs. Last year at this time, I work so much -- and for nothing! Ha! Who needs a gallery? All of Paris is our gallery, Balasz.

BALASZ

Certainly all of the Left Bank. I saw one of your pieces at La Petite Syrah. You've been holding out on me, Claudine.

CLAUDE

(eyes flashing with pride)
Ah, the beautiful young man who owns the
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

 CLAUDE (cont'd)
place!
 (sighs)
Perhaps he will take another.

 BALASZ
Here comes trouble.

Carter approaches, joins them on the bench.

 CARTER
Hey, Balasz. Claude.

 CLAUDE
I just felt a chill -- did a cloud pass
over?

 BALASZ
It is only your lunch coming back to
haunt you. You shouldn't eat at the
McDonalds. I told you so.

 CLAUDE
I think I hear my name being called. Will
you excuse me --

 BALASZ
A bientôt, Claude.

 CARTER
See you later.

Claude and his dog leave.

 BALASZ
What brings you here today? Slumming it,
as they say?

 CARTER
Just making the rounds. Say -- did you
talk to our girlfriend?

 BONVIN
Only enough to know that she wants no
part of a gallery show. I didn't press
the issue. She suspects you are at the
bottom of it at any rate.

 CARTER
There's nothing I could say to convince
her, I'm sure.

 BALASZ
Probably not. She doesn't seem to care
about the money.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CARTER

(laughs)

Of course she doesn't care about the money, you dumb shit, she's loaded beyond belief. She's got more money in more offshore banks on this planet than you and I could dream of spending in our lifetimes.

Balasz squints at Carter, confused.

CARTER (CONT'D)

(continuing)

Okay, don't tell me you didn't know this. You've spent the better part of two years with her. She can't be that much of a mystery.

BALASZ

We are self-sufficient. I have always survived on a vagabond's purse. We do quite well on the paintings that I sell. And she will taste wine from time to time, at the cuvee. In the Côtes du Rhône, or Provence. That is always a lucrative trip for us.

CARTER

Ah, the wine, yes. Do you know how big her wine collection is in the United States?

BALASZ

I have no idea.

CARTER

The auction proceeds alone would support a third world country.

BALASZ

Perhaps that would be a good use for it.

CARTER

And then again, perhaps she will return to her home one day, and perhaps she will want to have a bottle or two to celebrate.

BALASZ

Home. Home sweet home.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CARTER

She's been very selfish, Balasz. Making you trot her canvases down here to piss them away to tourists who have no idea of their potential worth.

BALASZ

I think I manage to fetch a fair price for her work. She never asks how much, you see. Just as long as there is enough for us to eat and drink. We have expensive tastes, mind you, but it hasn't been a problem. We seem to always be ahead.

CARTER

But how would you like it if you never had to sell a painting again. Or if just one of those paintings could buy a whole vineyard in Piedmont, and all the grape stompers you could round up? How would you like to be the boss, Balasz?

BALASZ

You must think I am unhappy, but you couldn't be more wrong. The boss? Who cares who is the boss and who are the help? I, for one, am content. And though what you have told me here is certainly a surprise, it makes no difference. It changes nothing. The money, I think, is something that will please you, and for you, I will try to persuade her. It could not hurt anything. And you are someone to consider. After all, you are family too.

Balasz takes Carter's hand as he tries to pull away. Balasz holds him tighter, leaning in.

BALASZ (CONT'D)

But if you betray me, if you hurt Bonvin in any way -- in any way -- I will cut out your heart and you shall watch me eat it. Do I make myself clear?

CARTER

As an unmuddied lake. As clear as an azure sky of deepest summer, friend. You can rely on me.

INT. BONVIN'S LOFT - DAY

ECU Carter, waking with the sun in his eyes to movement and bustle around him.

CARTER
(rising up)
Hey. Goin' somewhere?

BONVIN
Yes. We'll be back soon. Don't worry.

CARTER
Where you off to? How soon is soon?

BALASZ
To the country. Provence, Côte D'Azur. It will be a terrible yawning bore, I assure you.

CARTER
Wine business, I presume?

BONVIN
Bingo! You are so smart, my ever-bearing sweet. It is barrel tasting time in the provinces. Would you like us to bring anything back?

CARTER
Whatever you think is -- appropriate.

BONVIN
How about that cheese you like. I will see the farmer that makes it there.

CARTER
Sure. That sounds fine.

BALASZ
Okay then, you stay out of trouble, you hear?

BONVIN
Yeah. No parties.

BALASZ
Not unless we are invited.

CARTER
When are you coming back?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BONVIN

Uh --

BALASZ

Soon. I don't know.

BONVIN

Three days. Four, maybe. What, you scared I'll run off again?

CARTER

Can't say it doesn't cross my mind.

BONVIN

Or mine, from time to time.

CARTER

Yeah, no doubt.

BALASZ

You ready, cherie? I am waiting. À bientôt, Carter.

Balasz moves towards the door with their luggage.

BONVIN

If I weren't coming back, do you actually think I'd say good-bye?

CARTER

I guess I don't know what you'd do, Daisy. You're still a mystery to me.

BONVIN

(blowing a kiss)

Watch me disappear, then. Balasz! Wait for me!

She runs after Balasz, loaded with parcels, out the door.

INT. TRAIN COMPARTMENT - DAY - TRAVELLING

Balasz reclines in a private compartment, gazing out the window at the passing countryside. Bonvin enters.

BONVIN

I am so excited -- just think -- we've escaped the barbarous hordes and soon we'll be free!

Bonvin pulls an unlabeled bottle of wine from her bag and starts to uncork it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BALASZ

I am still quite astounded at how easy it was to escape.

BONVIN

The trick is to catch him while he's still asleep. He won't be angry until a bit later, when he has no one to eat supper with. Ah! The festival!

BALASZ

The festival!

BONVIN

The festival. Santé!

She uncorks the wine, and tips the bottle at Balasz, drinks, passes it to him.

BALASZ

And to us, cherie. These days, in my heart, will last a lifetime.

EXT. CARTER'S OFFICE - DAY

A uniformed courier delivers a very large package to the building. Carter arrives in time to sign for it, and the man brings it inside.

INT. CARTER'S OFFICE - DAY

Carter unwraps the package. It is a large painting, but we do not see its subject.

CARTER

Surprise, Aubergine. Here is one bit of your past you cannot run away from.

EXT. COUNTRY TRAIN STATION - EVENING

Eduan disembarks from a train onto a platform teeming with activity. A sign on the station house reads:

"VERDINES"

BONVIN (O.S.)

Eduan! Eduan! Over here!

Eduan cranes to see the source of the voice as Balasz and Bonvin come to lead him through the maze of people.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EDUAN

Ah! Here you are. I was losing hope of finding you, there is such a crowd here. Bonjour, bonjour Bonvin!

BONVIN

We have a room for you at the Inn. It is very close to the festival, but far enough away that the endless singing will not disturb your sleep.

BALASZ

Come, now! We have much to do before supper. Let's go!

They go off merrily.

EXT. FESTIVAL GROUNDS - NIGHT

A number of country folks gather around a blazing bonfire. Balasz wails on the bagpipes, others dance, sing, play, drink and laugh; Bonvin approaches Eduan with a ladle of wine.

BONVIN

Who will be first? I took this nectar from that man there.
(pointing to an obviously
inebriated farmer)
I've bought a barrel of it. Go ahead --
Eduan?

EDUAN

I am not educated as you in the tasting of young wines, but --
(tastes)
I don't know how you can tell if it will be good or not. I am a horrible failure.

BONVIN

Eduan, listen. If you get drunk, and maybe you dance with a pretty lady, then who is the horrible failure?

Balasz puts down his pipes and approaches.

BALASZ

Do you have some for your dog, my lady?

BONVIN

Only if you beg, pet.

Balasz gets on his knees and begs like a dog while Bonvin slops the wine into his mouth, after which he howls into the

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

air, gets up and spins Bonvin into a dance around the fire. A peasant lady takes Eduan's hand and pulls him into the dance.

EXT. HILLSIDE - NIGHT

Bonvin and Balasz run, chasing each other up a dark hillside, the sounds of the party in the not-so-distant background.

BALASZ

Here we are at last.

BONVIN

From here, I can see where my happiness lies.

They sit on the grass, looking out upon the landscape before them, punctuated by many bonfires all the way to the horizon.

BALASZ

If the world were at our feet, where would we be standing?

BONVIN

Right here, I think. I have an affection for it, I must confess.

BALASZ

Confess nothing and leap with me, sweet. Your kiss is the only thing that will save me from extinction.

BONVIN

And then who would save me?

BALASZ

Maybe Carter.

BONVIN

He did once, you know.

BALASZ

I should like to know how he saved you. Indulge me.

BONVIN

It's a long story. But to make it short, I grew up in a vineyard. My grandparents raised me. They were grape growers and made very good wines. I had a gift, they said, a gift for tasting. It is all I did through my childhood. My grandfather taught me so much -- I could taste your wine and tell you what was in your soil and precisely what time the sun would

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BONVIN (cont'd)
disappear from your slope. It was natural for me, and somehow too easy. All I wanted to do was paint. I ran away when I was sixteen. Lied about my age and fled to America. To Los Angeles.

BALASZ
I hear it is very nice there.

BONVIN
It's all right. I don't miss it at all, really. Anyway, I met Gianni. He owned a gallery. He was a lot older than me, maybe forty one or forty two. We became lovers. He was my greatest advocate, and my only friend. He wanted to help me to sell my paintings, so he introduced me to Carter.

BALASZ
I'll have to shake his hand for that someday.

BONVIN
If you only could, you would be instant friends. But anyway, why would you want to shake his hand for that?

BALASZ
Cherie, if you had not have been running from Carter, it may have taken so much longer for me to find you.

BONVIN
I would have found you.

They embrace and kiss, the starry sky spinning above them.

INT. CAFE DE SOL - DAY

Brulette is smoking a cigarette as Carter enters. He sits at the counter.

BRULETTE
You look like the cat that ate the mouse.

CARTER
That's canary. The cat that ate the canary.

BRULETTE
Whatever. You want something?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CARTER

Double espresso. That's all.

BRULETTE

Where is Balasz?

CARTER

They went to Provence. Wine something-or-other.

BRULETTE

Bonvin and her wine. How can one person not tire of it?

CARTER

I like wine. I just don't have the palate for it that she does.

BRULETTE

It's boring. I like whisky much better.

CARTER

Yeah, me too. Or tequila.

BRULETTE

Tequila. What is that?

CARTER

It's a sublime spirit made in Mexico from a plant called the Blue Agave. Many people think it's a Cactus, but it is actually more closely related to the Iris. Have you never had it?

BRULETTE

No, never.

CARTER

Well, we will have to remedy that. What are you doing, say, later?

BRULETTE

Drinking. Te-qui-la.

CARTER

Very good. Cheers. I'll pick you up.

BRULETTE

Pick me up. You Americans have a funny way of saying this and that. Pick me up. What does this mean?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CARTER

It means, I will come to get you.

BRULETTE

Oh. All right. When?

CARTER

About nine. I have some business
beforehand, so about nine-ish.

BRULETTE

Nine-ish. Okee dokee.

Carter leans forward and kisses her on the cheek, tucking
some money into her pocket before leaving the cafe.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Claude is painting. His dog raises his head and barks as
Carter approaches, on a mission.

CARTER

Claude, hi. Listen, I wanted to ask you
something.

CLAUDE

(not interested)
Ask me. I might answer.

CARTER

Would you be interested in hanging one of
your paintings for a client of mine?

CLAUDE

(suddenly interested)
Perhaps. Did you have one in mind?

CARTER

I'd let you choose it. You have a good
feel for that sort of thing. I'll tell
you what he likes, though. Landscapes
mostly, turbulence, explosions of color,
portraits only if they are tortured. A
lot of tension.

CLAUDE

I see. Yes, I have one or two maybe that
would suffice. Tell me who it is for.

CARTER

I can't say. I am hanging a few of Ab --
Bonvin's, and some others. I don't know
which he will like, but there is always a

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CARTER (cont'd)

chance. The money is quite remarkable, I can tell you that.

CLAUDE

All right. As much as you mostly give me a pain in the stomach, I have nothing to lose. When do you need the pieces?

CARTER

Tonight. Come by the loft tonight at seven.

CLAUDE

I will see you then, monsieur. À bientôt.

CARTER

À bientôt. And I thank you.

Carter hurries off.

EXT. HILLSIDE - NIGHT

Bonvin continues telling her story to Balasz.

BONVIN

I hated Carter. I hated his attitude, like I needed him or something. Like he was doing me an essential service. At our first meeting, the first thing I did was trip over my own feet and fall flat on my face as I was letting him in. And he just laughed, and laughed. He humiliated me! I only met with him because Gianni thought it was a good idea. Gianni wanted him to help me, to give me a career. After I met him, I didn't care if I ever sold a painting. He epitomizes the art trade and all it's corruption. And he thinks it is nothing. He has no more emotion for it than the people he sells it to. He sees an artist as a machine, the pieces themselves as the product. The bastard patrons are worth more to him, except that he needs the artist to first create the things he sells. Bah!

BALASZ

His must be a very empty heart.

BONVIN

I told Gianni that I never wanted to see Carter again. I told him I didn't want to sell my paintings if it had anything to do with that wretch.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BALASZ

But something must have changed.

BONVIN

Not really, you know. I still feel the same. I even feel pretty much the same way about him, when it comes right down to it. Dog help me. One day, this lady comes into Gianni's gallery. She looks around, and she buys one of my paintings. My painting! I was so excited, my first painting sold! and what a price, I couldn't believe it. Two thousand dollars! Gianni took the money and we bought cases of champagne to celebrate. I felt so giddy. Imagine, me, a nobody painter - just a painter! And this woman chose my painting out of everything in the gallery. That was the prize for me. I thought it was a just a happy mistake.

BALASZ

I have a feeling I know where this is going.

BONVIN

Can you guess? A week later, the phone rings, and I pick it up --

(mimicking)

hello, I says, and this voice on the other end says to me, 'did she buy it, Daisy?' - that's what he called me, Tripping Daisy, after my little spill at our first meeting - and I realize that it's him, it's been him all along, and he was the reason that lady bought my painting. I was so mad! I slammed down the phone and I cried and cried.

Balasz hugs her closer, feeling her angst.

BONVIN (CONT'D)

And that was just the beginning. My work sold and sold and sold, as fast as I could pump it out. That lady was very rich and very famous. Van-der-bilt.

BALASZ

Never heard of her.

BONVIN

The day came when I had to leave Gianni.

INT. NEW YORK LOFT - DAY - YEARS BEFORE

A young Aubergine paints a canvas in a huge, modern loft.

BONVIN (V.O.)

(continuous)

I was getting to be nineteen, and I needed to be on my own. I had an agent in New York, and she convinced me to move there. So I did. I was caught up in the whirlwind, and I didn't know how to handle it. But I could paint all I wanted, and that was good. Good for my anger. I was too shy to speak, so I did what I knew how to do: I painted madly. But the life got to be too much. There were a lot of drugs, a lot of parties. I got addicted to heroin.

Pull back to reveal a group of young people sitting around a coffee table, some passed out, JUNKIE GUY cooking up a spoon full of heroin.

JUNKIE GUY

Hey, Abby. I fixed one for ya.

Aubergine puts her brush down slowly and walks over to the group and sits beside Junkie Guy, who takes her outstretched arm and strokes it gently before giving her the fix.

BONVIN (V.O.)

There are still paintings out there with my blood on them. Only I know the ones. They carry the imprint of my silence and the death of my spirit.

Aubergine sleepily walks back to her easel, syringe in hand, cleans it in a glass of water, squirting the blood onto the canvas.

INT. NEW YORK LOFT - NIGHT

Aubergine is lying on the floor amidst piles of trash, canvas and broken glass. The door opens and her AGENT enters, stands in the doorway.

BONVIN (V.O.)

(continuous)

My agent. Evil woman. Every week she would come and steal my paintings. She would leave money, and she would pay my dealer, so he would keep me high. She was trying to kill me off, and horde my

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BONVIN (V.O.)
paintings so that when I finally
overdosed, she could sell me for
millions.

The Agent sorts through stacks of paintings, stepping over
Abby's prone form.

BALASZ (V.O.)
I would have killed her with my bare
hands! This is unbelievable!

BONVIN (V.O.)
She was spreading rumors in the art world
that I was dead or dying. If it wasn't
for Carter, it would have been a fact.

The Agent tosses a wad of cash onto the table in front of
Junkie Guy, who barely stirs as she leaves with a stack of
canvases in tow.

INT. NEW YORK LOFT - NIGHT

Aubergine sits with Junkie Guy, nodded out with a handgun
across her lap. There is a knock at the door, which goes
unanswered. Another knock comes, more insistent. Abby gets
up, gun in hand, and goes to the door.

BONVIN (V.O.)
(continuous)
I awoke as a rapping shattered my
peaceful dream.

She answers the door and Carter enters, concerned.

CARTER
My God. I didn't believe it, so I had to
see for myself. Daisy, my Daisy, what
have you done?

He notices Junkie Guy on the couch and starts towards him in
anger.

CARTER (CONT'D)
You -- hey, buddy. Time to go. Get up.
Now!

JUNKIE GUY
Hey, dude, I live here, ya know. Chill,
man.

Aubergine is standing behind Carter, the handgun leveled at
his head.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CARTER

Okay, fair enough. Abby?

He turns to face the gun barrel wobbling in Abby's hand. He reaches out effortlessly and grabs the gun, empties the chamber, pocketing the bullets.

CARTER (CONT'D)

Let's go. Say bye-bye, now.

Carter picks Abby up and carries her out the door.

INT. HOTEL SUITE - NIGHT

Aubergine throws herself around an opulent suite in the throes of heroin withdrawal. Carter dodges most of her swings, but doesn't try to stop her.

BONVIN (V.O.)

But he didn't take me to rehab. Not to a hospital, oh, no. That was not Carter's way, and I guess I have to be grateful for that too, as painful as it was at the time.

BALASZ (V.O.)

How did he cure you if you didn't go to the hospital? That couldn't have been easy.

BONVIN (V.O.)

It was probably the most painful thing in my life. Valium, marijuana, Quaaludes even, nothing really helped right away. I wanted to kill him. I wished I was dead myself.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY - A WEEK LATER

Abby and Carter sit at their dinner table, spread with lobster, caviar, champagne. Abby is looking better, but lethargic.

BONVIN (V.O.)

(continuous)

He fed me Champagne and Beluga until I burst. That was his cure. He wanted to hide me from the prying eyes of the art media, to prove all the rumors untrue. By the end of the week, we had become lovers. My fate was sealed.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Carter rises from the table and goes to Abby. He kneels at her feet, putting his head in her lap. She runs her fingers through his hair lovingly.

EXT. HILLSIDE - NIGHT

Bonvin continues to reveal herself to Balasz.

BONVIN

(continuous)

He saved me. He banished my Agent and brought me back to exist amongst the living. We moved to Los Angeles and bought a massive home in Pacific Palisades.

BALASZ

That sounds like a really nice place.

BONVIN

Yeah, it's not bad. All the big Hollywood film directors live there. Even Polanski once lived there!

BALASZ

I love Polanski.

BONVIN

He is my favorite.

They sit for a moment in silence, listening to the sounds of the festival.

BONVIN (CONT'D)

Anyway, that's it. Gianni talked me into coming here. I came for my aunt Lisbette's funeral. Sometimes I think I should not have come at all, but when I wake up each day and see your beautiful face, how could I ever regret my choices?

BALASZ

But cherie.

BONVIN

Aren't the stars beautiful tonight? Gianni is surely with us here, in the soul of this night. I could die here and be happy.

BALASZ

Cher Bonvin. Do not decide to die before the story is finished.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BONVIN

Finished? What did I leave out?

BALASZ

Your true name, for one. But I know it already.

BONVIN

You do?

BALASZ

I suspected. Carter told me some things. Nothing conclusive, but I surmise. However, that is not what I was talking about.

BONVIN

What then?

BALASZ

Bonvin. What about the vineyard?

INT. BONVIN'S LOFT - DAY

Carter has the loft hung like a gallery, beautifully and tastefully. A knock comes at the door.

CARTER

It's open.

Claude enters with a couple of paintings. Carter is fussing with his displays and does not look up right away.

CLAUDE

Hallo, monsieur Carter. Wow, I must say this looks really quite good. Where did you get all this? It is surely not all Bonvin's?

CARTER

No. Not all. Let's see what you've got.
(taking his paintings)
Yes, and -- yes! Lovely! Right, Claude, I'll let you know how it goes. Cheers!

CLAUDE

That's it? I am dismissed? Great God, I feel so used! All right, then. When do Bonvin and Balasz return?

CARTER

I can assure you, I have no idea. Maybe never.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CLAUDE

Oh, mon dieu! do not say such things! I cannot bear that thought. You will, uh, call me? When are you showing?

CARTER

Tomorrow morning. I will have either money or your work back to you by tomorrow supper, all right?

CLAUDE

Okay. All right.
(moves to leave)
Good day.

CARTER

Good day, Claude. Close the door on the way out.

INT. CAFE DE SOL - NIGHT

Brulette is dressed up and waiting for Carter. He enters, offering her a flower. A Daisy.

CARTER

You look lovely, Brulette.

BRULETTE

Thank you sir. And so do you.

CARTER

Ready?

BRULETTE

Sure.

CARTER

Let's get on with it, then.

They leave the shop.

EXT. PARIS STREET - NIGHT - TRAVELLING

Brulette and Carter walk briskly.

CARTER

I've taken the liberty of making a reservation at a Mexican restaurant I know of. Are you hungry?

BRULETTE

I am very hungry. And very thirsty, too, I might add.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CARTER

You will not be deprived of anything this evening, I promise.

They arrive at the restaurant and enter.

INT. MEXICAN RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Carter and Brulette are sitting at the bar, drinking Tequila, drunk.

CARTER

What have you got against Bonvin anyway?

BRULETTE

Bonvin. I don't have anything against her. I just don't understand why Balasz is so bound to her. It makes me angry.

CARTER

You're jealous!

BRULETTE

Jealous? No, you are wrong.

CARTER

I don't think I am.

BRULETTE

She just appeared one day, and then, poof! I never see him hardly at all. One day, he comes into the cafe with her, and they invite me to the loft to see her paintings and to have a drink. He was so soft with me, he wanted me to know I could still have him if I wanted, but that I could have her too.

CARTER

Was that the first time? With her?

BRULETTE

I was never intending to be with a woman. Balasz is sometimes very -- feminine. I thought once that he was queer.

CARTER

Well, not quite queer.

BRULETTE

No, not really. But he loves who he loves, man or woman. He can be either of those things. And so can she. It is more

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BRULETTE (cont'd)

fear that I have of her. Even as much as Balasz has a power over me, Bonvin does as well, and it makes me so angry!

CARTER

Yeah. I know how that is. She's like a black hole.

BRULETTE

What is this - black hole?

CARTER

It's a vacuum in space that everything gets sucked into.

BRULETTE

(shuddering)

Yes, she is like that. Why?

CARTER

Bonvin is -- a true artist. She exists only to create, to invent. It is a rare gift, she has, and it is an envious one. She invented herself. Carelessly, almost. I wish I could take credit for it, but that part is all hers. I gave her so much. Everything I had. And still she left me. Any other man would have given up after being shit on like that, but I had to find her. I have got to make her give back what she took from me. I want her demons to make her pay. And then I want her to fuck my brains out. Is that wrong? Do you know what I mean?

BRULETTE

No. But I don't care, either. Anyway, you wanna fuck?

CARTER

Paris seems to have done wonders for my sex appeal --

BRULETTE

Come on. Before I change my mind.

EXT. COUNTRY INN - EARLY MORNING

Bonvin waits on a bench outside the Inn. A courier truck pulls up. The driver hands her an envelope, she signs for it and the driver departs. She empties it, out drops the key, and a letter. She reads.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GIANNI (V.O.)

Abette, I hope that one day you will be holding this letter and thinking warm thoughts of me. I have a job for you that you may actually enjoy. I leave it to you to decide, because I know how it is with you and your work. I have a dear friend, Baroness Philippine de Rothschild -- I think you know what that name means -- she has been looking for you, specifically to paint a label for one of her wines, and I promised her I would get the message to you somehow. I told her that I thought you might want to do it, if the message were to reach you through the correct channels. I never thought I would say this, but my hope is that Carter will find you and put the key in your hand that will deliver this message. Ironic, isn't it, that the dying wish of an old man is to undo the conspiracy he has so carefully sought to weave. So I leave it with you, Cara mia. If indeed this note were to reach you in due time, go on with my memory in your heart, and know that you were my only love, sweet girl. Forever, Gianni.

Bonvin's eyes flood with tears. ECU on a tear falling to the page.

MATCH DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BONVIN'S LOFT - BATHROOM - DAY

ECU drop of water into tub. Pull back to reveal Brulette in the bath. Carter is sorting through the paintings after his showing, taking down the displays.

BRULETTE

So he bought four?

CARTER

Cash and carry, precious. Hey, look, I've got some business to attend to, so, uh, I guess you can let yourself out, okay?

BRULETTE

Yeah, all right-ee. Fuck and run. I am not offended.

CARTER

Good. Then I'll see you later?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BRULETTE

Maybe. I might be busy. I might have a date.

CARTER

Okay then, we'll catch up with you soon.
Bye!

He takes a stack of paintings and leaves.

INT. TRAIN COMPARTMENT - DAY - TRAVELLING

Bonvin, Balasz and Eduan are returning from the festival.

EDUAN

These days will live forever in my memories. I thank you from the bottom of my heart, Bonvin.

BALASZ

It has only been the most wonderful time.

BONVIN

One of so many, my friends, one of so, so many.

EDUAN

Bonvin, do you think that we could speak frankly for a moment?

BONVIN

Of course, dearest. Speak! I command you!

BALASZ

We have been conspiring, my lovely. Eduan and I have a plan for you, and I am hoping that you will indulge us.

Bonvin smiles, ready to agree to anything they want.

INT. CARTER'S OFFICE - DAY

Carter sits in his office, surrounded by a clutter of many paintings, making a phone call.

CARTER

Claude? Carter. Could you come by my office? Sooner than later, really.
Thanks, see you soon.

Hangs up the phone, sighs. The phone rings.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CARTER (CONT'D)

Patron Age. Hi. Yes, I have arranged for the wire transfer. One hundred and eighty one thousand U.S. dollars. I have to sign tax forms at the bank and it's a done deal. Ready? One Bonvin, one Calliste, and two from a new recruit. Claude Leonie. L-e-o-n-i-e. Yeah, go ahead and write it up. But make sure that Bonvin gets the top spot, okay? She is my protegé, not Claude. Like Aubergine was?

(thinking)

No, Bonvin is -- quite different. But trust me, this one won't get away. I think I'm very close to a show. I just need a little more time.

INT. BONVIN'S LOFT - NIGHT

Carter and Brulette are on the table, having a carnal moment, so intent that they do not notice that Bonvin and Balasz have returned. Balasz sneaks up and kisses Brulette on the back of the neck. She screams and they scramble apart.

CARTER

Thanks for the warning.

Brulette slaps Balasz, who is quite amused.

BRULETTE

You scared me! Oh, my God!

BALASZ

How was I to know you two were such good friends? Come, now, is it my turn yet?

He takes Brulette's arm and pulls her closer, kissing her.

BONVIN

Do you mind if I turn a light on for a minute?

CARTER

(lighting a cigarette)

Go ahead. I'm done.

BONVIN

(to Brulette)

He's such a sensitive guy, isn't he? Anyway, Carter, let's have a chat.

CARTER

Look, I -- I know how this looks.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BONVIN

Oh, I don't care about that. No, it's art business. I've decided I will do a show for you. This is more of a favor to Eduan and Balasz than it is to you, but I too have an agenda. And ultimately, you are the winner, here.

CARTER

I am speechless.

BALASZ

Good. When we want your opinion, we will give it to you. Now, we have a lot of work to do, don't we?

BONVIN

But first --

Rummaging in her luggage, she finds a bottle of champagne.

BONVIN (CONT'D)

First, we celebrate!

INT. GALLERIE MUSEE - DAY

Eduan and Carter argue, Claude, with his dog, looks on in silence. The dog has a very expensive looking new collar.

CARTER

You were the one to offer the space, Eduan. Why would you change your mind? Am I not being generous enough?

EDUAN

It's not the money, monsieur. You must understand, I am an old man. I love Bonvin, and I would hang her paintings any way you like, really I would, but I just am not up to having so many people here. It is causing me great worry, and especially this surprise that you speak of. I don't have a very good feeling about it.

CARTER

I could make it very easy for you, Eduan. You would not be disappointed in the remuneration. I could even arrange for you to find one or two very valuable items to appear in your own collection. I have a great deal at my disposal.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EDUAN

Please understand me. I will not change my mind. Maybe if you could explain properly what this surprise is?

CARTER

Something from her past, something very special. But I have to keep it under wraps until the opening or else the whole thing goes to hell.

EDUAN

In as much as Bonvin does not speak of her past with any fondness, I cannot imagine that this will be a pleasant surprise.

CARTER

You have no sense of adventure. Does he, Claude?

CLAUDE

Don't drag me into this, I beg you.

CARTER

Another non-believer. Okay, suit yourself. But mark my words, this is the crime of the century, and you will forever after regret your decision.

EDUAN

I am prepared to take that chance.

CLAUDE

Carter, let's go see my friend at Artique. He will help, for sure. Sorry, Eduan.

EDUAN

Of course. Good luck, Carter. Again, my apologies.

CARTER

Good day to you, sir. But surely I will see you at the party. The Champagne will flow like water! Cheers!

Carter and Claude leave.

INT. BAR NOIR - DAY

Bonvin sits at the bar, having a glass of wine with Luis.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LUIS

It was a success, Provence?

BONVIN

Provence! I am for the first time beginning to miss the home of my youth. Provence is very much like it.

LUIS

And where might that be?

BONVIN

On the Rhône. Right on the river. My family waits there, what is left of them. I'm sure they think that I am dead.

LUIS

They have faith yet, you will see. They wait for the Master to return. But you're not thinking of leaving Paris, are you?

BONVIN

No, I don't think so. Not yet, anyway. Ah, Luis, I didn't tell you my secret!

LUIS

Still keeping secrets from me? Shame!

BONVIN

Listen! I am going to paint a label for Mouton-Rothschild! Can you believe it?

LUIS

Ah! The artist's series! And you told me you were no painter -- how you have lied to me, Bonvin. I may never trust you again.

BONVIN

Trust in this, friend. It is the first job I have been offered that I am eager to start. I am even going to do a show to present it! Perhaps Christian Mouieux will be there!

LUIS

(laughing)

To see you this way -- like a child, laughing, planning. I think it is a good sign.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BONVIN

A good sign of what, Luis? That I am finally losing my mind for real?

LUIS

Or maybe that you are coming to your senses. Love life, Bonvin. It suits you well.

BONVIN

All right, then. I shall. I will go and love life until it pleads for mercy! À bientôt, Luis.

LUIS

À bientôt, Bonvin.

She leaves.

INT. BONVIN'S LOFT - DAY

Balasz enters, finds a note on the table.

BONVIN (V.O.)

Cher Balasz, I have gone to Bordeaux for the day. Back by midnight, I promise. Kisses, Bonvin.

INT. MOUTON ROTHCHILD OFFICE - DAY

Bonvin sits, awaiting her appointment. A SECRETARY enters, Bonvin stands, nervously.

SECRETARY

You may go in now. The Baroness is waiting.

BONVIN

Thank you.

The Secretary holds the door and announces her.

SECRETARY

Mademoiselle Aubergine Lucie Dudevant.

Bonvin enters the inner office.

INT. MOUTON INNER OFFICE - DAY

Bonvin sits with PHILIPPINE.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PHILIPPINE

I had practically given up hope that you would appear, even though Giovanni had promised he would find you for me. Where have you been these years? Hiding in some vineyard, I expect?

BONVIN

That would be a logical assumption, I suppose. Believe it or not, I have been in Paris.

PHILIPPINE

Right under our noses, too. How is it that we have escaped each other? I am such a great admirer of your work. I own three of your sculptures, and two oils. And now you will paint for Mouton! I am very excited!

BONVIN

As am I, Baroness. But I have an odd request. You see, I have designed a relative obscurity for myself. I left the United States, fled the art world and its hypocrisy. I changed my name. This is why you have not heard about me, though I still paint. More than ever, really.

PHILIPPINE

Go on, dear girl. I would like to hear your story. I would like to understand you better. This is, as you know, a very personal project of mine.

EXT. CHATEAU MOUTON-ROTHSCHILD - DAY

The Baroness and Bonvin walk in the gardens and vineyards.

PHILIPPINE

You are a remarkable woman, Aubergine. I am so thrilled to have finally met you, and I so look forward to this venture. It will be the most special one yet!

BONVIN

For me also. It is my hope that this is the start of a long friendship, and I thank you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PHILIPPINE

You must come back some day and stay longer. I would like to talk wine with you. I hear you are a master.

Bonvin smiles radiantly.

BONVIN

Wine is my first passion. Everything else is an invention. Au revoir, Philippine. I shall speak with you very soon! You may contact me through the gallery I mentioned, but please remember --

PHILIPPINE

Bonvin, yes of course. I will not forget such privileged information. Today, you have touched my heart. We are sisters of a sort, you know. I am anxious for our next meeting. Au revoir!

Bonvin walks to where a driver waits with a limousine.

INT. GALLERIE MUSEE STUDIO - DAY

Bonvin and Eduan are covered in white dust, laughing as they both chip at a block of marble.

EDUAN

You see, your side is already better than mine.

BONVIN

My side will be nothing without yours.

EDUAN

Bonvin, I don't mean to meddle, but I must speak up. Something has been on my mind lately.

BONVIN

Sure, Eduan. What is it?

EDUAN

It's Carter. And this show.

BONVIN

I don't mind that we're not going to have it here. You shouldn't have to work so hard, after all.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EDUAN

It's not that, Bonvin. It's Carter himself. I just don't trust him. He's got something up his sleeve, I don't know what.

BONVIN

Oh, Carter is mostly harmless. He's done a lot of things that I don't feel comfortable about, but I'm going to grit my teeth and get through it. It'll be fun, since you and Balasz will be there to support me. My new wine label! Can you believe it? I have managed to make him promise to leave that part of it alone. I can't allow him a chance to screw it up for me. You must let me paint it here, Eduan!

EDUAN

Of course, my dear! Anything you desire. Still, I worry. Would he do anything to hurt you, Bonvin?

BONVIN

Hurt in what way?

EDUAN

I don't know. Like I say, I can't quite put my finger on it, but I just don't trust him. He's up to some treachery, and I don't want to see you get hurt. That is why I didn't want the show in my Gallery. If it was just you, you know I would fly my doors wide open for you and whatever you wanted to do. But that one -- and now he has Claude Leonie hanging on his every word.

BONVIN

I heard he sold two of Claude's paintings and managed to find him a wealthy patron. That's something for Claude, don't you think?

EDUAN

Yes, perhaps. But if it were such a good thing, why not you?

BONVIN

Because I've done all this before. I have no desire to be a rich man's trifle. It is a bad business for someone like me,

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BONVIN (cont'd)

because I paint for myself, not for anyone else. Except maybe Chateau Margaux. That should be my next conquest!

(beat)

I have been far too hard on Carter, I think. You know, for the first time in my life, I feel like what he's doing is meant to happen. It all came together at the right time. So I let him run his game for a while. Perhaps I have been too selfish.

EDUAN

I would not be so quick to trust him. He has the air of a sneak. I am starting to wonder if he is not fooling us all.

BONVIN

You old wretch, you worry too much. Everything is going to be just fine, you'll see.

EDUAN

I hope to God that you are right.

INT. ARTIQUE - DAY

Carter and Claude and the dog discuss their plans with JEAN-PAUL, the gallery director.

JEAN-PAUL

As you can see, it is raw space. But it is very big, and we have ample grids for hanging, or we could divide the room. It is up to you.

CARTER

This could work. Absolutely. Pardon me for asking, but Claude, how well can I trust this man?

CLAUDE

He is a very good friend. You can trust him, but it might cost you.

Jean-Paul casts a glare at Claude, who winks at him when Carter turns his head.

CARTER

A price for your silence?

JEAN-PAUL

I have no idea what you are talking about.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CARTER

Of course you don't. Listen, this could be a very profitable situation for you, but you must keep it strictly to yourself, and I will have to keep certain details from you until the last minute, of course, just to preserve my interests.

CLAUDE

It's a surprise. For the artist.

CARTER

Not only for the artist, my friend. One of the great mysteries of this decade in art will be solved. And trust me, the world will hear the gasp that arises from this room. The whole world will hear of it.

JEAN-PAUL

Well, the date you want is available. You seem reasonable enough, and your reputation speaks for itself. I will do what I can to help, monsieur.

CARTER

(shaking his hand)
You will not regret it.

INT. CAFE DE SOL - DAY

Bonvin sits with Claude and Balasz with the table spread with Poloroids and a room layout they are working with.

BONVIN

This is so exciting.

CLAUDE

I am excited for you.

BONVIN

Me? I am excited for you! I hear you are flying to Martinique to meet with a King!

CLAUDE

(embarrassed)
I do not feel quite as worthy as I should, I suppose.

BALASZ

It will be fun for you, no? Maybe the King is a Queen!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

They all laugh.

CLAUDE

I will miss your show, that is the sad part. And Honoré will miss me so.

BALASZ

He will be fine with Tiamat.

CLAUDE

You don't know how he howls! He might be out in the street soon enough!

BONVIN

Okay, I think I have some ideas, here. See what you think of these pieces with Carter's layout.

BALASZ

Hmm. Yes, this is good, but I still think we should eliminate this wall, and put the Casablanca and the Trio here.

CLAUDE

There is something to go there.

BONVIN

(looking at a typed list)
Number -- one hundred eleven. Not listed. It must be my Rothschild label. Do you know?

CLAUDE

No, Bonvin. Not for certain.

BONVIN

That must be it -- oh, I can hardly wait!

INT. ARTIQUE - NIGHT

Carter and Jean-Paul survey the gallery, almost all hung for the show. The lighting, the design is very elegant.

JEAN-PAUL

I must say, I am impressed. You have a special gift.

CARTER

Everything is in place, the wine will arrive tomorrow, the caterers will be here at noon. It will be perfect.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JEAN-PAUL

And this one here --

They walk to a large canvas, covered with a sheet.

JEAN-PAUL

(CONT'D)

(continuous)

What of this?

CARTER

This, my friend, is the great unanswered question. The thing that will be a mystery no more after tomorrow night.

JEAN-PAUL

I have read much conjecture about what it might be, and I have had to beg ignorance to a great many people. I would dearly like to know, monsieur, for what you have purchased my silence.

CARTER

Friend, you haven't long to wait. Tomorrow night, where the wine royals gather, the world's eye will turn. And at last I will have my pound of flesh.

Carter pulls the sheet off the painting, which we do not see. Jean-Paul gasps.

INT. BONVIN'S LOFT - DAY

It's the day before the show. Bonvin, Balasz and Carter prepare for the opening.

BONVIN

Where is my Dream of Venus? I want that to go too. I've decided.

Silence greets her.

BALASZ

Carter --

BONVIN

Where is it?

BALASZ

He bought it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BONVIN
(incensed)
What? And did exactly what with it?

CARTER
It's not here.

BONVIN
And you bought it for what reason?

CARTER
I still have clients, you know. This one wanted something really special, my sweet. I assure you it was taken care of generously.

BONVIN
You know I don't care for the money, Carter. You hid this from me!

CARTER
It slipped my mind.

BALASZ
I thought you knew -- forgive me, cherie.

CARTER
You stay out of this.

BONVIN
No, you stay out of it -- stay out of my life! You lied to me so many times how can I know what is the truth anymore? You think I am here for your amusement and edification? Think again!

Bonvin starts to become nauseous, has to sit down.

BALASZ
Are you all right?

CARTER
Just calm down. I wasn't going to not tell you -- there just -- hasn't been a right time. I thought you'd be okay with it.

BONVIN
I am here because I had to get away from this consumerist ideal that you hold so sacred, you and all your swell friends, and your swell plans. I don't need you, I don't want you in my work anymore. If you
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BONVIN (cont'd)

can't be my friend, if I can't trust you to respect my choices, if you can't find it in your heart to respect my needs, then we must part, Carter. I am not a child anymore. I can take care of myself. All alone, if need be.

Looking like she's going to be very sick, and visibly angry, she leaves.

BALASZ

You're a shit head.

CARTER

What?

BALASZ

Trust me, I know. Shit. Head.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

A thunderstorm breaks with a gust of wind and rain.

Bonvin staggers against the wind, to arrive at Gallerie Musee.

She slumps against the door, where Eduan finds her.

INT. GALLERIE MUSEE STUDIO - NIGHT

Eduan comforts Bonvin as she lies bundled in a blanket on a chaise.

EDUAN

I told you. Don't say I never told you.

BONVIN

I know. I should know better.

EDUAN

Why do you feel such loyalty to him? I would never have put you two together in a lifetime.

BONVIN

It's a long story. There's a man -- or rather, there was a man, a very good friend to me. So good, in fact, he wanted to give me the moon and the sun and all the tea in Boston harbor. All I had to do was paint and sculpt and drink wine and make love. And then he introduced me to Carter, because he thought Carter could help me. Carter is this big art critic

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BONVIN (cont'd)
and fine art dealer. The biggest
commissions in the United States come
through him. Patron Age -- ever heard of
that?

EDUAN
Yes. Yes, of course. Interesting.

BONVIN
I hate him.

EDUAN
You are safe here, Bonvin. Just lie here
and rest.

BONVIN
I feel ill -- my stomach.

EDUAN
You just be still, maybe you can sleep.
Sleep and dream, little one, sleep and
dream.

Eduan leaves, dimming the light and shutting the door softly.

INT. GALLERIE MUSEE STUDIO - NIGHT - LATER

Bonvin is sleeping. The door opens and first light, then
shadows fall across her face.

BALASZ (O.S.)
Cherie. Wake up now.

Balasz sits at her side on the chaise.

BONVIN
Balasz -- oh. What time is it?

BALASZ
Time for you to get up and get dressed.
You will be late for the opening.

BONVIN
I'm not going.

BALASZ
I think you should.

BONVIN
No. Why should I?

BALASZ
Because if you do not, then it will be
only his show. If we go together, we can
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BALASZ (cont'd)

steal it back. The Rothschilds are there!
Christian Mouieux! The Rolling Stones!
Spiderman! All your heroes. Come with me,
my one. I brought you my favorite dress
to wear.

Balasz pulls out a dress on a hangar.

BONVIN

I hate that dress!

BALASZ

Maybe that is why it's my favorite. When
you wear it you are vexed. You are very
sexy when you are vexed.

She pauses before her reluctant resignation.

BONVIN

Okay -- I'll go. Don't you leave me
though. Don't you run off and leave me
alone. I don't know how I feel about this
yet.

BALASZ

Just for tonight, we will not think
anything of it. We will go, we will drink
and eat, and I will crush your hand I
will hold it so tight. You will beg for
mercy.

BONVIN

Give me that dress!

BALASZ

(standing)
Come and get it --

They tussle over the dress.

INT. ARTIQUE - NIGHT

The opening is in full swing, packed with celebrities. The
featured item is roped off and covered up, the subject of
much discussion. Carter works the room, Jean-Paul approaches.

JEAN-PAUL

Is the artist expected this evening? Many
people have been asking.

CARTER

I've sent our friend to get her. They
should be here -- soon. I hope.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JEAN-PAUL

It is still early. But very busy. We have sold quite a few already. I am surprised.

CARTER

Save your astonishment for later on.
Excuse me.

Carter disengages himself and goes over to a group of very stiff art patrons.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT - TRAVELLING

Bonvin and Balasz walk slowly along a city street on their way to the opening.

BONVIN

Eduan went earlier. He said it was a beautiful show.

BALASZ

It is. I was shocked at Carter's aesthetic sensibility.

BONVIN

He's got one or two things that nobody does better. I guess that's one. Oh -

Bonvin stops, sick again.

BALASZ

Cherie, you are sure you are all right?

BONVIN

It's just stress. I'll be better when this night is over, I promise you.

BALASZ

There is something else we should discuss, you know.

BONVIN

I know. It's about Carter, right?

BALASZ

I will not see you suffer at his hands anymore. I shall tell him tomorrow that he must move out.

BONVIN

You'll not find an argument from me. I think I must finally let him go. He made

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BONVIN (cont'd)
his own bed. Tonight, I will pretend to
like him. Tonight will be the last time.

They arrive at Artique, the swell folks spilling in and out
the front door.

BALASZ
Here we are.

INT. ARTIQUE - NIGHT

The opulence of the opening is only overshadowed by the
attending crowd, who are now well into their evening. A
waiter comes with a tray of champagne, another one with
hors'd'oeuvre. Brulette approaches.

BRULETTE
Ah, the artiste is here! There has been
much talk about whether or not you were
coming. It is getting quite late. Come
with me.

She takes Bonvin's hand in a sisterly way and pulls her
through the crowd while Balasz hangs onto Bonvin's other
hand.

BRULETTE (CONT'D)
Carter! Here they are. You see? She would
not miss it.

CARTER
(kisses her cheek)
The guest of honor has arrived. You have
Champagne? Your favorite, Salon, blanc de
blancs. See, I haven't forgotten what you
like. Doesn't it all look grand? Mimi --
Mimi!

MIMI, a young woman with a clipboard is passing by as Carter
flags her down.

CARTER (CONT'D)
Mimi, this is the artist, Bonvin. And our
dear friend Balasz you have met. Mimi is
the money changer tonight. How are we
doing?

MIMI
I have only four paintings left to be
sold. Plus the surprise.

BONVIN
Surprise? What's this?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CARTER

Ah, the pièce du résistance, if you will.
I am sure you will be sufficiently, uh,
thrilled.

Bonvin is confused as she listens to the ensuing talk.

MIMI

When are we going to unveil it? Everybody
is asking, and you would not believe the
bids I have been offered.

BONVIN

It is my wine label, right?

CARTER

(ignoring her)

Of course, you told them it is not for
sale?

MIMI

As you instructed me, monsieur. Anyway, I
must get back to work! Ciao. Very pleased
to meet you, Bonvin. I am now a great
admirer of your work. I even bought one
for myself. See?

Mimi shows Bonvin the lot she purchased from the list.

BONVIN

(smiling)

Rapture. That is one of my favorites. I
am glad you will enjoy it.

MIMI

Bonne chance!

She disappears into the crowd while Balasz pulls Carter
aside.

BALASZ

Tell me what is this surprise? I will not
have you upset Bonvin. She is not feeling
well, I expect because of your attitude.

CARTER

Well, perhaps there's no time like the
present, eh? How about it Daisy, you
ready for the big moment?

BONVIN

(suddenly pale)

All right. I guess so.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Carter springs into action, clapping to get everybody's attention.

CARTER

Everybody! It is time for the unveiling. Would you please make your way into the central viewing area, to lot number one hundred and eleven.

The crowd moves to the roped off display, where not one, but two paintings are there, each covered with a sheet. He takes Bonvin's hand and pulls her close, Balasz still attached to the other hand. The crowd hushes.

CARTER (CONT'D)

For any of you that have not met our lovely artist this evening, I would like to present her to you. Bonvin, you have made a remarkable impression on our guests.

Building applause which threatens not to end. Bonvin finally is won over by their warmth. They ask her to speak and she goes forth, reluctantly.

BONVIN

Thank you. It appears that you like my work. There is a part of me in each and every one of these, and that is something that you cannot put a price on. In fact -

Bonvin goes forward and pulls one of the waitresses from the crowd, a teenage girl.

BONVIN (CONT'D)

(continuing)

I would like to give you one. Mimi! Where is Mimi!

CARTER

(hisses)

What are you doing?

Bonvin ignores him, calm, and pleased with herself.

BONVIN

Mimi, over here please. You have four paintings still not sold. May I see? Yes, thank you.

Bonvin looks at the list while chatting with the girl.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BONVIN (CONT'D)

You could have this one, or this one. Look, this one is only sixty thousand American Dollars. Such a price. But see the size of it? Would it fit in your apartment?

WAITRESS

Yes, I think so.

BONVIN

Then it is yours. Mimi? Could you arrange shipment for this young lady.

The crowd claps for the young girl.

CARTER

And now may I present to you, Baroness Philippine de Rothschild.

Applause as the Baroness joins Bonvin, taking her hand.

PHILIPPINE

I have waited many years for this moment. The Mouton-Rothschild Artist's series has never before had such a passionate label to adorn what is, in my opinion, a truly classic vintage. It is my distinct pleasure to present this to you, with my dear friend Bonvin.

Carter stands back as Philippine tugs the cord to unveil the painting. The crowd oohs and ahhs appreciatively, as the two women hug each other. As Philippine steps down, Carter signals, and a moment later, Jean-Paul approaches with a palette, a tube of paint and a brush.

BONVIN

(pales)

What is this?

CARTER

My surprise, dear tripping Daisy. The price for my undying devotion.

An occasional tinkle of glasses, but otherwise dead silent. She takes the brush. Locking Carter in her stare, she squeezes the paint onto the palette.

BONVIN

Go ahead, my love. Do your worst. For you only. My final installation.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Carter ceremoniously unveils the second painting. The crowd gasps. It is the unsigned 'Aubergine'.

PARTY GUY #1

That is an Aubergine!

PARTY WOMAN #1

Not an Aubergine. A fake! Discredited!

Discussion rises in the crowd. Close on Philippine, angered and shocked.

PHILIPPINE

You really are an evil man.

CARTER

(to Bonvin)

Go ahead, Daisy. Sign it for me.

Bonvin goes to the painting, and the crowd hushes as she bends, searching for a good spot, signs her name:

BONVIN

And steps away, dropping the brush. She takes Balasz's hand, turns with a wistful smile to the crowd, and leaves. The crowd roars as it sees the signature, and a bidding war begins. The Baroness claps tearfully.

PHILIPPINE

Et tu, brute. Et tu.

INT. BONVIN'S LOFT - MORNING

Carter, Balasz and Brulette sit, still dressed from the night before, Carter staring at a letter.

BONVIN (V.O.)

I have packed nothing. But where I am going, I need no luggage.

BALASZ

It is so. You make it so. She is gone, now. Gone from me too, and so it is that I finally hate you, perhaps as much as she does.

BRULETTE

(coquettish)

But look, you have me still. Balasz?
Carter?

Carter gets up and throws a wine bottle against the wall.

EXT. CAFE - VENICE ITALY - NIGHT

Eduan, and several others sit in a busy cafe, dressed in costume as it is Carnival time in Italy. Bonvin, in costume, joins them.

EDUAN

Ah, Bonvin. Tell me again why you must leave Paris? If it is only because of --

BONVIN

Shhhh! You are not allowed to speak that name in my presence again.

EDUAN

And what of Balasz? Surely he must join you soon?

BONVIN

Be quiet, old friend. I will not be alone.

EDUAN

Promise to send me letters. I would die in sorrow if I were to be forgotten by you. Remember an old man, every now and then.

BONVIN

Eduan, you will never leave my thoughts. I hope one day that you will come and join me. I will make sure there will be lots of things for us to chop away at.

Church bells begin to ring, as if from every steeple. Huge snowflakes begin to fall. Bonvin rises, ready to dash off. Her bag drops open and her passport falls out. Both she and Eduan bend to retrieve it, Eduan reaching it first. Smiling, he looks at it casually.

INS. BONVIN PASSPORT

Which reads 'Aubergine Lucie Dudevant'.

EXT. CAFE - VENICE ITALY - NIGHT

Back to scene.

EDUAN

(stunned)

I had no idea ...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BONVIN

It was my only secret. Only the Baroness knew it for sure. And Balasz. But the cat's finally out of the bag, and that is why --

(she puts her carnival mask back on)

I must go now.

She takes her passport and dashes off, leaving Eduan staring and waving after her.

EDUAN

Au revoir -- Aubergine.

He sits, rejoining his friends, unrecovered from his shock.

INT. TRAIN COMPARTMENT - DAY - TRAVELLING

Bonvin stares out at the rolling countryside, the sun setting in brilliant colors.

BALASZ (V.O.)

Once upon a time, there was a beautiful Cat who lived in the jungle. She was not the biggest cat, nor did She have the brightest markings. But there were no others quite of her kind or nature, and the other jungle creatures basked in her warmth, for She always had a kind nudge or a sweet caress. At the end of the day, She would sing into the sky and it would turn colors at her call, and the sun would be lulled to sleep so the world could dream.

INT. CARTER'S OFFICE - DAY

Carter sits at his desk, ignoring the RINGING telephone. He is visibly upset. Claude enters with his suitcase in hand.

CLAUDE

(enthused)

I am back! Tell me, how did the opening go? How is Bonvin?

Carter just stares at him wordlessly.

BALASZ (V.O.)

(continuous)

The sky would deepen slowly with her melodies, while each and every dream of each and every creature became a star,

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BALASZ (V.O.)

twinkling as it was freshly born to the heavens. As She dreamt, the world would spin 'round, but when her dreams faded and She could no longer hold the stars in the sky, they would disappear, one by one, until once again the sun could return.

CLAUDE

Hallo -- Carter? Speak up, man. What is wrong?

Carter buries his head in his hands, as if to cry. The phone continues to ring, unanswered. Claude picks it up.

CLAUDE (CONT'D)

Hallo? No, but -- he is not available at the moment. Yes, yes. I see. No problem. Good-bye.

INT. CAFE DE SOL - DAY

Brulette sits alone with her coffee, daydreaming.

BALASZ (V.O.)

Word travelled of the big Cat and her color-music-magic, and one day a man came to see for himself, and to dream the dreams of the innocent. She met him with joy and wonder, as it was all that She knew, and set to showing him, not the wonders of her song, but the magic of the jungle around them and all the treasures therein.

A man walks into the cafe, Brulette serves him humorlessly.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - EVENING

Bonvin gets off the train in a rural station, walks with hand baggage to a waiting taxi.

BALASZ (V.O.)

(continuous)

She walked him through forests of Gardenia and Jasmine, with scent so intoxicating that He forgot who he was. She drew him into rivers of water so pure that it drove out his fear of forgetting.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - EVENING

Bonvin exits the taxi seemingly in the middle of nowhere, walks along a country dirt road, a creek running alongside.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BALASZ (V.O.)

(continuous)

She took him to pray at a mountain so vast that it overtook his consciousness, and then she carried him to a garden where He was given the gift of a soul. At the end of the day, She sang only for him, and his dreams rose so bright and so full that the other stars in the sky paled by comparison, a light so bright that though the sun had been put to rest, there was no darkness.

Bonvin stops to dip her hands in the creek, splashing her face in the light of a bright full moon, reflected in the water.

BALASZ (V.O.)

(CONT'D)

Many days and dreaming-times slipped by. The shadow world beckoned to him and he begged the Cat to accompany his return, visiting upon her promises of new horizons to paint, and new dreams to be shaped. She trusted, that is all. She was not full of virtue or noble intent. She was drawn by his need, by his selfish desire to dream of his own design, to have her sing only for him.

Bonvin moves on down the road.

INT. GALLERIE MUSEE - NIGHT

Eduan is giving a tour of the gallery to a small group of Americans. They arrive at the Bonvin/Aubergine self-portrait and stop to admire it.

BALASZ (V.O.)

(continuous)

Though the songs She spun were held in the highest regard by the Man, after a time She realized that the dream stars seemed to have lost their lustre. As the nights passed, they were more difficult to see and She wondered why, going to Him to seek answers. His answers were vague as if he did not care, and soon She was made to feel as if She was perhaps not the only songstress in his world. In fact, there were so many others that the night sky was lit almost too brightly, thereby making it impossible to

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BALASZ (V.O.)
distinguish one perfect dream-star from
another.

Zoom in to Bonvin's face in the painting, her eyes, her pupil giving way to darkness and pinpoints of starlight, getting brighter and brighter.

BALASZ (V.O.)
(CONT'D)
She cried at night for her home, and could not sleep. The dreams faded and then disappeared. She continued to sing but softly, and only for herself, as She had no desire to sing where her voice could not be heard above the din of others. And what of He? If She were to just disappear, would He miss her? There were many more of her kind in this vast and confusing world. He would manage quite well. She was tired of singing for what seemed like deaf ears. There was adulation, but not for her. It was for him, for his genius at finding her and at his success in capturing and taming her. His pet. His toy. She was caged. He had brought her to live in a zoo.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT

The stars give way to the fullest of full moons. Angle on Bonvin trudging down the road purposefully.

BALASZ (V.O.)
(continuous)
One day, waking alone and cold in her gilded cage, She decided to set off. Resolving to find a place in a peaceful jungle where, once again, She could just be the weaver of dreams, lying with her fellows and painting the sky sans noblesse obligé. As She went, none gave her a second glance, for She was just one among many. They would not miss her, surely.

Lights of home in the distance, and the SOUND of distant bagpipes as Bonvin quickens her pace, smiling.

BALASZ (V.O.)
(CONT'D)
The journey ends where it began, in an ancient land, where She was welcomed as a fellow, which is all She ever asked.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Dogs BARK in the distance.

BALASZ (V.O.)
(CONT'D)

Ah, wait, my precious one. I think your mother has finally arrived.

Pull back to reveal Bonvin walking up a lane way through pristine vineyards. Soon three dogs come to happily greet her.

Title card reads:

FIVE YEARS LATER

BONVIN

My pets, hello! Where is your master?
Where is he? Tomas! Marthe!

There is a call from the house and soon, an older man and woman, TOMAS and MARTHE, run from the house towards Bonvin.

TOMAS

You look so tired, Aubergine. Come in quickly.

MARTHE

I know one or two people besides us that will be very happy to see you!

INT. CHATEAU DE CONDRA - NIGHT

Bonvin enters the Chateau, dropping her bags.

BONVIN

(shouting)

I am home! Come and greet me!

There is a moment of silence, then AURORE, a little girl of about four years runs to Bonvin.

AURORE

Mama! You're home, oh how we missed you!
Papa! Mama is home! He was just telling me a story. I was almost asleep.

Pull back to reveal Balasz in a doorway, watching.

BALASZ

I was not quite finished the story, little one. You can't sleep until I have finished.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BONVIN

What story was he telling you now,
Aurore? Can I guess?

AURORE

My favorite.

BONVIN

Well, I could finish it for you, if the
other storyteller doesn't mind.

BALASZ

I don't mind.

AURORE

Yes, yes, and yes! Come, now!

Aurore drags Bonvin by the hand to her room.

INT. AURORE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Aurore is in bed, Balasz on one side, Bonvin on the other.

BONVIN

Where did you leave off?

BALASZ

It was just at the part --

AURORE

Where the Cat was in a new land. Okay?

BONVIN

Okay. In her new land, which was actually
an old and ancient place of her
ancestors, She was finally at peace. In
the nights that followed, She found her
song once again, the song of her soul.
Once again, all the creatures dreamed the
dreams of the innocent. Yet they were
darker, and more sad than before.

AURORE

That's the part I don't like. Why do they
have to be sad, mama?

BONVIN

It is not to be helped, little one. She
could not try to brighten their twinkle.
It was, after all, a song from her soul,
which in its purity must reflect the
night from whence it came. The Cat found
a new purpose, and displayed to all the

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BONVIN (cont'd)
dangers of indulging in the whims of
another. And though none listened closely
enough to heed, the message was clear.
Her color-music-magic spread to the
corners of this new jungle and it was
enough.

Close on Aurore, whose eyes become heavy and finally fall
shut. Balasz and Bonvin quietly exit the room.

INT. CHATEAU DE CONDRA KITCHEN - NIGHT

Bonvin and Balasz share a drink by candlelight.

BONVIN
(choking)
It's not bad grappa, really. Good for the
blood!

BALASZ
It is good to have you back. I was afraid
Aurore would ask me something I could not
answer.

BONVIN
Like what?

BALASZ
Like, when is mama coming home? I never
know what to say. Her concept of time is
much more precise than either of ours.

BONVIN
She will correct all of our sins.

BALASZ
Sins are for Christians. You are my
religion, sweet Aubergine.

They kiss.

BONVIN
Oh, I almost forgot. There was a message
at the Western Union for us when I left
Cognac.

She pulls an envelope from her pocket and passes it to
Balasz.

BALASZ
From Claudine. Well, well. He wants to
visit. What should we say?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BONVIN

Blindfold him and bring him the long way around. I don't trust him too much. But I miss him, for sure. And Eduan. Even little Brulette.

BALASZ

All right. Perhaps a trip to Paris is in order then.

BONVIN

Not for me, sweet. I am home now.

BALASZ

Then I will bring Paris to us. Ah! I have an idea.

INT. CAFE DE SOL - DAY

Brulette takes a telegram from a delivery man, signing for it.

BRULETTE

(reading aloud)

'You are invited to a party. Two weeks of festivities and deluxe accommodation. Your travel arrangements have been made.'

EXT. PARK - DAY

Claude, Tiamat and the dog sit on a bench, reading the telegram.

CLAUDE

(reading aloud)

'Pick up your tickets at Grande Centre, and pack for warmth.'

TIAMAT

You sure my name is on that too?

CLAUDE

Right here, silly. Should we go?

TIAMAT

Two weeks of no bills, free wine and parties? I don't care where it is. We should definitely go.

CLAUDE

All right, then. Allons-y!

INT. GALLERIE MUSEE - DAY

Eduan reads his telegram with great joy.

EDUAN

Ah, my cher Bonvin. You did not forget
your old friend after all.

EXT. CHATEAU DE CONDRA - DAY

As the four travellers walk up the drive, Bonvin and Balasz
come to greet them, a deliriously happy reunion.

EXT. VINEYARD - NIGHT

In a clearing, a bonfire has been lit. Balasz plays the
bagpipes as the friends laugh and dance and make merry.

BONVIN

I have only one thing left undone, my
friends, and that is to toast your
friendship and your presence. I hope that
if you want to stay here, you will.
Forever, if you like. I don't want to say
good-bye anymore.

CLAUDE

You didn't say good-bye last time.

TIAMAT

Good-bye is for sad people. I shall never
again be sad.

BRULETTE

Good-bye is only for the ones you love
the most. You should have at least said
good-bye to --

EDUAN

(interrupting her)

There will be no good-byes. Only more
ways to be welcome. I propose a toast. To
this time, to Bonvin, to Balasz. Santé!

They all raise their glasses, drink and cheer, Balasz winding
into another raucous jig, sending them all dancing again.
Pull back until the bonfire is as another star in the sky.

BALASZ (V.O.)

Finally, she sleeps.

BONVIN (V.O.)

And will dream of her own design.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BALASZ (V.O.)

And they all lived happily ever after.

BONVIN (V.O.)

The end.

FADE OUT