

REMEMBERING FLORENCE

Cast:

Students (and adult versions):

Flo (Florence).....17/18 and early 20s
Anton.....17/18 and early 20s
Valentine.....17/18 and early 20s
Eugenie.....17/18 and early 20s
Marta.....17/18 and early 20s
Marcus.....17/18 and early 20s
Eva.....17/18 and early 20s
Rosa.....17/18 and early 20s
Lottie.....17/18 and early 20s
Sofia.....17/18 and early 20s

Their teacher:

Mlle Lestrade.....40s/50s

Katrin (Valentine's sister)...early 20s
Pascal (Valentine's brother)..11-13

Leoni (a journalist).....early 20s

Petra (political 'fixer').....late 20s
Dominique (her PA).....early 20s

SCENE 1

AV TITLE: 'MIDDLE-EASTERN WAR-ZONE. 2015'

Darkness. SFX of jeep engine. Engine stops. Doors slamming. Distant Arabic voices. Pause. A light slowly fades up behind Anton and Flo, perched at height, dimly silhouetting them.

ANTON

Flo?

FLO

I'm here.

ANTON

This isn't the same place.

FLO

I know. I'm freezing. It must be higher up.

ANTON

Well where is it, then?

FLO

I don't know.

Pause

FLO (CONT'D)

Anton?

Pause

FLO (CONT'D)

Are you ok?

ANTON

Just- thirsty.

FLO

Yes.

ANTON

I'm fine.

FLO

Good.

ANTON

How's your leg?

FLO

I think it's still bleeding.

ANTON

How much?

FLO

I don't know. My sock feels wet. I don't know if it's blood or not. What time do you think it is.

ANTON

Nearly morning? Four, five?

FLO

You're sure you're all right?

ANTON

I'm fine. I just said. Thirsty. No big deal. I'll find some cloth for your leg, when they... you know.

SFX of a distant gun-shot, some laughter.

ANTON (CONT'D)

*(under, a terrified
whimper)*

Shit.

FLO

Anton-

ANTON

They'll have to give us a drink sooner or later. Won't they-

FLO

Anton-

ANTON

I'm fine. I said I'm fine, so I'm fine.

FLO

I wish I could hold your hand.

ANTON

Like a baby-

FLO

I don't mean that.

ANTON

I don't mind. Really I don't. I'd like you to be my mum. You'd be a fantastic mum. What a waste, eh?

FLO

Anton, shut up-

ANTON

I'd be a good mum, too. I'd learn how to lactate-

FLO

Anton-

ANTON

I'm sure I could manage it-

FLO

Anton-

ANTON

(becoming manic)

Probably just a matter of concentration-
Are you praying?- Probably a good idea-
Do you remember that day on the lake?-
When Pascal made his speech?- When we
decided- I do- like yesterday- I wish I
was there now, the water was so clear
wasn't it, so clean- I'd just jump in
and drink it- just jump right in- I've
never been this thirsty.

Pause

ANTON (CONT'D)

Will you pray for me as well.

Lights snap up bright to reveal Anton and Flo bound and hooded, bruised, bleeding, filthy. Nightmarish SFX, mixed with a distant helicopter, approaching, and distant gun-fire. Masked figures enter, pull Flo upright, drag her away. She screams.

ANTON (CONT'D)

(terrified)

Flo!

FLO

(over)

Anton! Anton!

ANTON

(over)

Flo what's happening- where are you?
Flo?

Screams. A gun-shot. Lights's change. SFX cross-fade to that of children playing. Anton stands up, removes his hood, washes off his bruises, combs his hair, transforms into a student. As he does so he talks to the audience:

ANTON (CONT'D)

You know the thing with butterflies.
You must do. It's an old... you know.
If a butterfly beats it's wings
somewhere, you know, a long way away,
you'll end up with a tidal wave
somewhere else. I mean I don't want to
bore you. It's a cliché.

(MORE)

ANTON (CONT'D)
Cliches are generally frowned upon.
Especially in Mademoiselle Lestrade's
politics class.

*Valentine enters, ignores Anton. Anton looks at him for a
moment, then back to the audience.*

ANTON (CONT'D)
I'm a bit of a cliché.

Pause

ANTON (CONT'D)
Sorry about that.

SFX of a school bell.

SCENE 2

AV TITLE: 'ACADEMY LE-ROI. SWITZERLAND. SIX YEARS EARLIER'

Anton finishes his transformation, approaches Valentine.

ANTON
Hello. Are you lost?

Valentine looks at him, looks away.

VALENTINE
(monotone)
Permanently.

ANTON
Ha. Right. Are you visiting someone?

VALENTINE
No.

ANTON
Ok.

Pause

ANTON (CONT'D)
So... are you a thief, or something?
Rapist?

VALENTINE
No.

ANTON
Right. Good. This is going well.

Pause

ANTON (CONT'D)
Would you like me to stop asking you
questions?

VALENTINE
I don't mind.

Mlle Lestrade enters at pace, with a file.

MLLE LESTRADE
(to Valentine)
There you are. I thought you'd wandered off.

VALENTINE
I sort of did.

MLLE LESTRADE
(thrown)
Right. So-
(handing him a sheet)
This is map of the school.
(pointing on the sheet)
You're here.
(pointing outwards)
You see? That's the art faculty. Before you do anything you have to go to the nurse, more forms I'm afraid. Just to warn you- there might be an issue with your hair. It's quite long, isn't it.

VALENTINE
I like it long.

Beat

MLLE LESTRADE
(thrown)
Right. Well as I say, it's not really my...
(regrouping)
Anyway. Can you find your way to medical wing.

VALENTINE
(with quiet irony)
With this map, I probably can.

Beat

MLLE LESTRADE
(hardening her tone)
I believe you'll be joining my politics module. Anton comes to it, don't you Anton.

ANTON
Yes, Mademoiselle.

MLLE LESTRADE

Anton will no doubt explain to you about the standards I set regarding simple courtesy. But just so we know where we stand- I argued quite strongly against you coming here.

Valentine looks at her.

MLLE LESTRADE (CONT'D)

It's nothing personal, you understand. In my experience this sort of slap-dash social engineering rarely works.

Pause

MLLE LESTRADE (CONT'D)

Of course, you could always prove me wrong.

Pause

MLLE LESTRADE (CONT'D)

Off you go then.

Valentine exits slowly.

ANTON

(overly loud and cheerful)

Bye!

Pause

ANTON (CONT'D)

(ironic)

He seems nice.

MLLE LESTRADE

(to Anton)

Were you talking to him?

ANTON

Kind of. It was a bit one-sided. Who is he?

MLLE LESTRADE

A new student. He'll be joining your class. From the village.

ANTON

(astonished)

From the *where*?

MLLE LESTRADE

The village.

ANTON

St. Therese?

MLLE LESTRADE

I believe that's what it's called.

ANTON

But no one comes from the village. They hate us.

MLLE LESTRADE

No they don't-

ANTON

But they're all... you know-

MLLE LESTRADE

Think about what you're saying, Anton-

ANTON

I know I know, but I mean- Have you been there?-

MLLE LESTRADE

Of course I've-

ANTON

Some of them don't have the right number of eyes-

MLLE LESTRADE

Anton-

ANTON

How can he even afford to-

MLLE LESTRADE

He's on a bursary.

ANTON

What for?

MLLE LESTRADE

It's actually none of your business.

Beat

ANTON

Well. Ok.

(after a thought)

He's pretty good at being rude.

MLLE LESTRADE

He's awkward. Obviously. Think what it must be like for him. He'll have seen the outside of this place all through his childhood, and now, suddenly, he's on the inside.

Flo and Eugenie enter at speed, followed by Marta.

EUGENIE
(out of breath, to Mlle
Lestrade)
Are we late?

MLLE LESTRADE
No, I am. Follow me.

Mlle Lestrade, Flo, and Eugenie move to exit.

ANTON
(to Eugenie)
Hey. Tell the others. There's a new
student. A boy.

EUGENIE
What's he like?

ANTON
Tall, exotic, sultry.

EUGENIE
Wow, will we have to start giggling and
flicking our hair around?

ANTON
Depends whether you like peasants or
not.

MLLE LESTRADE
(almost from off)
Anton! That's enough.

FLO
What do you mean peasant?

ANTON
He's from the village.

MLLE LESTRADE
Anton!-

EUGENIE
From the *village*?

ANTON
(calling after them)
It's ok, he's got both eyes!

Pause

ANTON (CONT'D)
(to Marta)
What are they doing with Mademoiselle
Le-Sadist?

MARTA
Something important.

ANTON

What?

MARTA

They wouldn't tell me.

She exits.

ANTON

(to audience)

We found out later his name was Valentine. A ridiculous name, I think you'll agree. But that was it. That was the beat of the butterfly wing, twenty-third of May, two thousand and nine, when I first set eyes on him standing in the yard outside the school's art faculty, part of what was formerly the Chateau Le Roi, near St. Therese, in the foot-hills of the Swiss Alps, where the cows wear bells, and wander through buttercups to the edge of Lake Brienz, in the spring-time. That's the wing-beat that eventually sends a bullet through the back of Florence Duval's head, high in a mountain, a thousand miles away, eight years later.

Pause

ANTON (CONT'D)

Told you I was a cliché.

SCENE 3

Mlle Lestrade, Flo and Eugenie. A class-room. Mlle Lestrade makes sure the door is closed.

MLLE LESTRADE

I'm sorry, this must seem a bit cloak and dagger.

Pause

MLLE LESTRADE (CONT'D)

My thinking is, that it's best to keep these conversations under wraps, just for the time being. Do we understand?

Flo and Eugenie exchange a small glance.

EUGENIE

Yes, Mademoiselle.

MLLE LESTRADE

The point is, you're both destined for something special, in my opinion. Don't get big-headed.

(MORE)

MLLE LESTRADE (CONT'D)

I'm offering private help if you put yourselves forward for the extended study program. The Geneva Summer School. Just for you. No one else. I'm letting the boys look after themselves.

Pause

MLLE LESTRADE (CONT'D)

Bear in mind that when you finish your education and get a job, your pay will be, on average, twenty-five per cent less than that of a man in an equivalent job. All your life. If you go into politics you will be judged on your ability to apply mascara and bake cup-cakes. Reporters will pay more attention to the depth of your cleavage than the words you speak. I'm just trying to give you an edge.

Pause

EUGENIE

Thank you, Mademoiselle.

MLLE LESTRADE

That's all right, Eugenie, I like to think of it as feminism by stealth.

Pause

MLLE LESTRADE (CONT'D)

Florence, you're very quiet.

Pause

MLLE LESTRADE (CONT'D)

Florence?

FLO

Yes, sorry.

MLLE LESTRADE

If you're uncomfortable with this-

FLO

Isn't it cheating? Offering us special help?

Pause

MLLE LESTRADE

Yes. Yes, it is. You don't have to take me up on my offer.

(standing)

You'll find that the world is not a particularly fair place.

(MORE)

MLLE LESTRADE (CONT'D)

Maybe one day it will be. And then we won't have to cheat, will we. The classes start at six, tonight. If you're coming.

She exits.

EUGENIE

What did you say that for? She's trying to help us.

FLO

By cheating.

EUGENIE

So what? You know if you get into the summer school?— You can get picked up. Head-hunted. The city boys. Political parties. It's a big deal.

FLO

If that's what you want.

EUGENIE

What do you mean by that?

FLO

Nothing—

EUGENIE

Are you saying I shouldn't do the classes?

FLO

No, it's fine, it's your choice.

Pause

EUGENIE

What does that mean?

FLO

I don't know. Nothing.

Pause

EUGENIE

Tell me—

FLO

It's nothing.

Pause

EUGENIE

Come on, Flo. Have we, or have we not always told each other everything?

Pause

EUGENIE (CONT'D)
Well then.

Pause. Flo moves to exit.

FLO
You do the classes.

EUGENIE
Flo- Don't just walk off-

FLO
They're taking the photograph. We're late.

She exits. Eugenie follows. School bell, underscore of hymn. Flo, Anton, Sofia, Eva, Rosa, Lottie, Marcus, Eugenie and Marta line up. They smile for a school photograph. SFX and LX of flash-bulb. They freeze as the lights fade on them.

SCENE 4

AV TITLE: 'GOVERNMENT OFFICE, GENEVA. 2015'

A smart office. Petra waits Dominique enters flustered.

PETRA
You're late.

DOMINIQUE
(handing Petra a file)
Sorry. This is for your eleven-thirty with the cabinet secretary.

PETRA
Where are we with the junior candidates?

DOMINIQUE
I've got one really strong one.

PETRA
Talk to me.

Dominique opens a lap-top.

DOMINIQUE
Eugenie Petit, Heidelberg graduate, first class honours, currently an intern in the State Department, diploma with honours from the Geneva Summer School, highest recorded scores, top-rated student-

PETRA
How old?

DOMINIQUE
Um- twenty-five-

PETRA
Looks?

Dominique clicks a button on her lap-top, scrolls her track-pad. As she does so the school photograph taken in the previous scene appears projected above. As she talks a cursor finds Eugenie, her image enlarges to fill the screen.

DOMINIQUE
This is from her school year-book.

PETRA
*(going round to look at
the lap-top screen)*
Nice.

DOMINIQUE
It's out of date, obviously-

PETRA
She won't have changed that much.

DOMINIQUE
Yes, it's a sweet face-

PETRA
Married?

DOMINIQUE
Engaged.

PETRA
To?

DOMINIQUE
Marcus Deschamps, went to the same
school-
*(scrolling across the
track-pad)*
Here.

On the projection Eugenie's image diminishes, the cursor moves around to find Marcus, his image enlarges.

PETRA
Childhood sweet-hearts.

DOMINIQUE
I suppose-

PETRA
That's very good. Where is he now?

DOMINIQUE
Rising star in Berg International,
tipped for greatness-

PETRA
Even better, when's the wedding?

DOMINIQUE
Um-

PETRA
Find out, we need to arrange the press-

DOMINIQUE
Right. I'll talk to her p.a.

PETRA
Who is?

DOMINIQUE
(scrolling again)
Actually another old school-friend.
Marta Heiseck.

On the projection Marcus's image diminishes, the cursor moves around, finds Marta, her image enlarges.

PETRA
How very cosy. Are they all hot-shots
at this school? Is that where you went?

DOMINIQUE
No- I-

PETRA
That was a joke.

DOMINIQUE
Oh. Right.

PETRA
*(reaching and scrolling
the lap-top track-pad)*
Why do I recognise these two?

On the projection Marta's image diminishes, the cursor finds Florence and Anton, sitting next to each other, their image enlarges.

DOMINIQUE
They're kidnap victims. Charity work
somewhere. They were in the papers a
few weeks ago.

PETRA

Well that's perfect. Eugenie Petit and Marcus Deschamps conduct desperate vigil over former school-friends. Ready-cooked head-line. It must be Christmas.

DOMINIQUE

Not yet, no.

PETRA

That was rhetorical.

DOMINIQUE

Right, sorry.

Petra scrolls, the cursor finds Eugenie again.

PETRA

She's the one. We're going to make her famous.

DOMINIQUE

You don't think she's too young?-

PETRA

That's why she's the one.

DOMINIQUE

Right-

PETRA

We need a face-to-face-

DOMINIQUE

Got it-

PETRA

(exiting)

Find a window for me.

DOMINIQUE

Are you too hot?

Beat

PETRA

I mean a diary window.

DOMINIQUE

Oh. Right. Sorry.

Dominique exits. Hymn fades back up. Lights fade back up on the class-group which disassembles, except for Anton. The projection fades out over the following:

ANTON

You can't tell much from a school photograph. Everyone looks the same.
(MORE)

ANTON (CONT'D)

You can't tell what they're going to turn into. You can't tell who's mad, who's normal, who's quiet, who's loud. Only the people in the photograph know the truth.

SCENE 5

School bell. Class-room. Marcus, Flo, Eugenie, Marta, Anton, Sofia sit, studying. Lottie paints her nails. Rosa checks her make-up in a mirror. Eva enters, strikes a vampish, glamorous pose.

EVA

(a husky drawl)

Morning children. Mother's home.

ROSA

(busy applying make-up)

Mummy, mummy, I missed you. How was your detention?

EVA

Riveting. What's happening here?

ROSA

People seem to be working. It's incredibly boring.

Eva crosses to Eugenie, who's working, pretends to read from her sheet, toys with her hair.

EVA

Good work, Evil-Genius, keep it up, well done. Loving all those long words. Shame it's not quite as good as little Flow-chart, here.

(to Rosa)

How many words per minute is Flow-chart mananging?

ROSA

Oh- I would say- roughly- six hundred and forty-nine point seven.

EVA

Is that a new record, Rosa?

ROSA

I believe it is, Eva.

EVA

And what's the average length of those words, Rosa?

ROSA

Eight hundred and twenty-three letters, Eva. Give or take.

EVA

Thank you, Rosa. Now over to Lottie with the weather. Lottie?

LOTTIE

(still painting her nails)

What?

EVA

Thank you, Lottie. Let's go back to Rosa for a quick update on how boring Flow-chart is. Rosa?

ROSA

It seems that as of this moment she's *very boring indeed*.

EVA

More or less boring than Evil-Genius, here, Rosa?

ROSA

About the same, Eva.

EVA

And how does that compare with the rest of the class, Rosa?

ROSA

About the same, Eva.

EVA

Thank you, Rosa. Lottie?

LOTTIE

What?

EVA

Thank you Lottie.

(approaching Marcus and Anton)

And moving over to the boys, is there any word on whether either of them have developed a personality yet, Rosa?

ROSA

Still no sign of one, Eva, but we're keeping our fingers crossed.

EVA

Surely hope must be fading by now, Rosa?

ROSA

Here at the Academy Le Roi, we never give up hoping that one day, a boy will develop a personality. Eva.

EVA
And what about a measurable sexual
identity, Rosa?

ROSA
One step at a time, Eva.

EVA
Thank you, Rosa. Wise words. Lottie?

LOTTIE
What?

EVA
Thank you, Lottie.

LOTTIE
Eva?

EVA
Yes, Lottie.

LOTTIE
Word's just coming in through my ear in
the side of my head that my new nail
varnish is extremely cool.

ROSA
Let's have a look.

EVA
Thank you, Lottie, that's incredibly
exciting news. Probably the most
exciting thing that's happened in this
class all year. I'm getting a report
from my knickers that a little bit of
wee just came out.

Pause. Eva sighs with boredom. Zeroes in on Eugenie.

EVA (CONT'D)
Isn't that exciting, Evil-Genius? About
Lottie's new nail varnish?

EUGENIE
(dead-pan, not looking up)
Yes. It's very exciting.

EVA
(poking Marta)
And what does Marta-No-mates think?

MARTA
(not looking up, calm)
Piss off, Eva.

ANTON
I've got something exciting to tell
you.

EVA
What's that?

Beat

ANTON
Actually maybe I'll keep it a secret.

EVA
Well, actually maybe I'll stamp on your
balls.

ANTON
Maybe you wouldn't dare-

EVA
Maybe I would-

EUGENIE
There's a new student. Joining our
class.

ANTON
Thanks a lot. That was going to be *my*
revelation.

EUGENIE
Anton's spoken to him.

EVA
(*to Anton*)
Well? What's he like?

ANTON
Out of your league.

EVA
Oh really?

ANTON
Yup. He's from the village.

EVA
He's from the *village*?

ANTON
Uh-huh.

EVA
Does he walk upright? On his hind-legs?

ANTON
Yup, like I said, he's out of your
league.

Pause

EVA

Well. I have to say, unbelievably, that that is actually quite exciting.

(to Florence)

Isn't that exciting, Flow-chart? Are you feeling a little bit *jujee* about all this. Your face is telling me yes.

Florence doesn't look up.

EVA (CONT'D)

Flow-chart's not responding. Did you notice, Rosa?

ROSA

I did notice, Eva, thank you.

EVA

I think her system's down. Perhaps she needs re-booting.

ROSA

I think she trying to pretend we don't exist.

LOTTIE

That's quite rude, isn't it, Eva.

EVA

Very rude indeed, Lottie.

ROSA

How rude exactly, Eva?

EVA

I think it's probably as rude as taking someone's exercise book and chucking it in the bin.

She snatches away Florence's work book, turns, starts flicking through it. Florence stands.

FLO

(quick)

Give it back.

EVA

Shush-shush-shush. I just want a little look. Here we are. Ooh, yes, this is good-

(pretending to read)

I have always loved Mucus.

(up)

Ahh. That's lovely, isn't that lovely, Lottie.

LOTTIE
(to Marcus)
It's really properly sweet.

MARCUS
You're all hilariously funny.

LOTTIE
You must be very thrilled, Mucus-

MARCUS
It's Marcus, my name's Marcus-

ROSA
You shouldn't hide your feelings.

LOTTIE
It's making me a bit emotional
actually.

ROSA
(to Lottie)
Are you all right?

LOTTIE
I think so- just, you know, a little
bit shaky?

EVA
No no but it goes all sad, listen-
(pretending to read)
I have always loved Mucus. But Mucus
doesn't love me.

LOTTIE
No-

ROSA
It's ok, it's ok-

FLO
(over)
I didn't write that-

LOTTIE
I don't think I can bear it-

ROSA
(embracing her)
Come here, sweetness.

*Mademoiselle Lestrade enters behind Eva, with Valentine. Eva
doesn't notice.*

EVA
(pretending to read)
Mucus loves Dancing girl.
(indicating Sofia)
(MORE)

EVA (CONT'D)
But Dancing girl doesn't love Mucus.
(*indicating Anton*)
Dancing girl loves Antsy pants-

ANTON
(*warning*)
Eva-

EVA
But Antsy pants doesn't love Dancing girl. Antsy pants loves Mademoiselle Le-Sadist, because Mademoiselle Le-Sadist is actually a man, who shaves twice a day and has a gigantic willy. On the weekends they go ball-room dancing. Afterwards they stop off for strudel and ice-cream, before finding a cheap hotel where they indulge in-

MLLE LESTRADE
Good morning class.

Eva whips round. Mademoiselle Lestrade holds out her hand. Eva gives her the book. Mademoiselle Lestrade flicks through it, looks at the name on the front, passes it back to Florence. She stares at Eva, who stares back.

MLLE LESTRADE (CONT'D)
Seats please.

The class sit.

MLLE LESTRADE (CONT'D)
This is Valentine. He's joining our politics module for the final year.
(*to Eva*)
For the record, Eva, I've never liked strudel. Too heavy.
(*to the class*)
Make room for him, please. Thank you.

LOTTIE
(*to Valentine*)
Do you like my nail varnish?

MLLE LESTRADE
Shut up, Lottie.

She finds a text book and an exercise book, sets them in front of Valentine.

MLLE LESTRADE (CONT'D)
These are yours. Name and form at the top left. Don't lose them. Now.

Mademoiselle Lestrade holds up some slips of paper.

MLLE LESTRADE (CONT'D)
Who knows what these are?

Eugenie puts up her hand.

MLLE LESTRADE (CONT'D)
Yes, Eugenie?

EUGENIE
Application forms for the Geneva Summer
School Extended Study Program.

MLLE LESTRADE
Correct. So. Competition time.

ROSA
Oh my God-

LOTTIE
Oh my very God-

MLLE LESTRADE
I will remind you of the rules. Two
pupils will make it through, based on
all collated internal test results and
merit marks, starting from now.
Academic ability is a sine qua non -
look it up, Eva. So if any of you have
the smallest desire to make something
of your pampered, blinkered lives, then
I suggest you apply.

EVA
Do you mean even me, Mademoiselle?

MLLE LESTRADE
That depends whether or not you believe
you have any redeeming features. I'll
leave that for you to decide, shall I,
Eva?

SFX school bell.

SCENE 6

A school corridor. Marcus and Anton.

MARCUS
Did you see Eva. With whatever-he's-
called.

ANTON
Valentine.

MARCUS
What kind of name *is* that?

ANTON
(*quiet*)
Huh.

MARCUS
She might as well have had her tongue hanging out. The point is, you know, she laughs at me, right, but what she doesn't understand is that I wouldn't go near her anyway.

ANTON
No way.

MARCUS
There's such a thing as class, right.

ANTON
Right-

MARCUS
Just 'cause he's got a stupid haircut and acts all enigmatic.

ANTON
Right-

MARCUS
If she wants to throw herself at some village low-life, then that's her funeral. And she knows I think that, right. Which is why she goes on at us, you know, all that gay stuff she does with you-

ANTON
(*over*)
Which is ridiculous-

MARCUS
Because she doesn't like the fact that some people have standards. I mean, I'm not going to jump into bed with just *any* girl-

ANTON
No way.

Valentine appears.

ANTON (CONT'D)
Hi.

VALENTINE
Hi.

Pause

ANTON
This is Marcus. Deschamps. You know?
The jewellers? Watch-makers?

Pause

MARCUS
You're from the village, then.

VALENTINE
Yes.

MARCUS
Right.

Pause

MARCUS (CONT'D)
Weird.

Valentine stares at him.

VALENTINE
Thanks.

He exits.

ANTON
(calling after him)
He didn't mean you're weird- he meant
it's weird.
(to Marcus)
Didn't you.

Eugenie and Marta enter, cross at speed.

ANTON (CONT'D)
(to Eugenie)
So what do you think of the new-boy,
then?

MARTA
She's got other things to think about.
Haven't you, Eugenie.

Flo enters. Eugenie and Marta stop.

EUGENIE
Hi. I'm just-

FLO
Yes.

Pause

MARTA
Eugenie. You'll be late.

Sudden LX change. Marta and Eugenie step into a pool of light. SFX/underscore. Others change them into older versions of themselves- helping them into sharp, tailored jackets, replacing school bags with hand-bags, adjusting hair etc.

SCENE 7

Smart office. Petra, Marta and Eugenie sit around the desk. Dominique takes a drinks order.

PETRA
Coffee?

EUGENIE
Yes, please.

PETRA
Latte?

EUGENIE
Er- yes.

PETRA
Same for you?

MARTA
Um-

PETRA
Great. Dominique? Could you action that? Two lattes, I'll have a detox, and whatever you want.

Dominique exits.

PETRA (CONT'D)
So. It's all good, we're really pleased, are you pleased? How's it going for you?

EUGENIE
I'm absolutely-

PETRA
You're very young.

EUGENIE
Yes.

PETRA
But then so am I.

EUGENIE
Yes I-

PETRA
And that's what makes us exciting.

EUGENIE

Right-

PETRA

And electable.

EUGENIE

Right-

PETRA

People are finally coming round the obvious fact that old men are dull.

EUGENIE

Yes.

PETRA

They don't care enough.

EUGENIE

No-

PETRA

The only thing they do care about is fanning the flickering embers of their libido. Remember Berlusconi.

EUGENIE

Yes-

PETRA

They get into trouble. Lap-dancers, prostitutes, God knows what else, and then people like-

(indicating Marta)

Um- sorry-

MARTA

Marta-

PETRA

Marcia here, have to sort it all out.

EUGENIE

Yes-

PETRA

You've got something else, though.

EUGENIE

Have I?

PETRA

It's been noticed. Up top. Looks.

EUGENIE

Oh.

PETRA

Bingo.

Dominique enters with a tray of drinks.

PETRA (CONT'D)

Great. Here we are.

DOMINIQUE

They'd run out of detox. Sorry.

PETRA

They've what?

DOMINIQUE

They've run out of detox.

PETRA

It was a simple enough request.

DOMINIQUE

I'm sorry.

Pause

PETRA

What did you get me?

DOMINIQUE

Camomile.

PETRA

Camomile?

DOMINIQUE

It's all they-

PETRA

I'm sorry, Dominique, perhaps you're unclear, Camomile is a warm infusion drunk by old ladies to help them go to sleep.

DOMINIQUE

Right-

PETRA

Do I look like an old lady who wants to go to sleep?

DOMINIQUE

No-

PETRA

No. I didn't think I did, but it's good to hear it. Could I ask you to action some detox.

DOMINIQUE

Right.

Beat

PETRA

Right now, thank you, Dominique.

DOMINIQUE

Right, sorry.

Dominique starts typing into her blackberry. The others drink.

PETRA

Where were we?

MARTA

Eugenie's looks.

PETRA

Bingo. Word from on high is that those looks say something, and what they say is - media-friendly commodity. Makes you sound like an object, doesn't it.

EUGENIE

Well I suppose-

PETRA

Guess what, you are. We all are. It's how the world is, no point wringing our hands, let's get on with it.

EUGENIE

Right-

PETRA

Bottom line is, there's a party conference in two months. Normally the key-note is by the head honcho. So will it be this time, but with a difference. You.

EUGENIE

Me?

PETRA

He's going to call you onstage, half-way through his speech.

EUGENIE

What?

PETRA

He's going to introduce you as the newest, youngest, shiniest, rising star in cabinet.

EUGENIE

Cabinet?-

MARTA

Are we talking ministerial?-

PETRA

And you're going to make a heartfelt, unaffected, spontaneous address, describing how being in this party is like Jesus giving you a back-rub, at which point the entire national media will fall very heavily in love with you, and yes- we are talking junior ministerial. Probably foreign policy, yet to be decided. It goes without saying that you will have to reference your missing friends.

EUGENIE

What?-

PETRA

In your speech. Florence Duval and Anton... someone. Your old class-mates. The more emotion the better. If you could squeeze out a tear, that would be the icing on the cake. This is your coronation, Eugenie Petit. You're the future. Don't blow it.

Pause

EUGENIE

Wow.

PETRA

Big wow.

EUGENIE

But... but why me?

PETRA

Everything's right about you. The schooling, the academic success, the thrusting, executive fiancée.

DOMINIQUE

And the looks.

PETRA

Thank you, Dominique. The looks. Need some time to think?

EUGENIE

Um-

PETRA
Time's up. Welcome to the world.
(standing)
Enjoy your coffee, I've got a twelve-
thirty. Dominique?

She holds out a hand, Dominique puts a file in it.

PETRA (CONT'D)
(rising, to Marta)
Help her with the speech, all right
Marcia? You look like you've got a
brain.

MARTA
Thank you. Yes. I will.

PETRA
Run it by me when you're ready, then
we'll start work on the delivery-

DOMINIQUE
(sudden)
It's Marta.

Beat

PETRA
What?

DOMINIQUE
Her name's Marta.

Beat

MARTA
It's fine-

PETRA
(going to exit)
Marta, right, whatever. Ciao for now.

DOMINIQUE
Bye.
(an afterthought)
Just leave the cups on the table-

PETRA
Dominique-

DOMINIQUE
Coming.

Petra and Dominique exit. Pause.

MARTA
Oh my God.

EUGENIE
Oh my very God.

MARTA
This is it. This is... everything.
You've done it.

Beat

EUGENIE
We've done it.

SFX school bell.

SCENE 8

School corridor. Anton finds Valentine. Flo enters, pulls back, eavesdrops.

ANTON
How's it going?

Valentine shrugs. Pause.

ANTON (CONT'D)
You've caused a bit of a stir.

VALENTINE
Have I.

ANTON
Yeah. You know what girls are like.

Pause

ANTON (CONT'D)
You know, all the gossipy stuff.

Pause

ANTON (CONT'D)
You know... stuff. About where you're from.

VALENTINE
What about where I'm from.

ANTON
You know... everybody... just making jokes.

VALENTINE
What about?

ANTON
You know... about the village being full of retards.

VALENTINE
They think I'm a retard?

ANTON
No- that's the point. You're so...
not... a retard. That's why it's... you
know. Funny.

VALENTINE
Right.

Pause

ANTON
Are you going to be boarding here?

VALENTINE
No.

ANTON
Lucky.

VALENTINE
Why?

ANTON
I'd like to able to go home. Every
night.

VALENTINE
(standing)
You wouldn't if you were me.

He exits.

ANTON
(calling after)
I'll see you around, ok?

He turns, bumps into Flo.

ANTON (CONT'D)
Hi.

She hesitates, rushes off.

SCENE 9

A village square. Anton talks to the audience.

ANTON
The beat of the butterfly wing causes a
tiny breath of wind, which joins with
another, and another, and then the wind
picks up. A breeze.

Pause

ANTON (CONT'D)

On Saturday afternoons and Sundays we're allowed out of the school. Mostly we don't bother. There's a bus which travels the winding lane down to St Therese and the lake. There's not much in St. Therese, to be honest. A furniture shop, a grocery store, a tobacconist with a top shelf full of pornography, two bars in a square with the same bunch of red-eyed, slab-faced old-timers drinking the same schnapps, and a few rows of stunted cottages and tiny new-build houses in the back lanes.

Pause

ANTON (CONT'D)

But in one of those houses there's Valentine.

Pause

ANTON (CONT'D)

I spend hours wandering around, but I don't see him. In the square there's a fountain that hasn't worked for years. I sit there. The wind rises.

Pascal enters, sits near Anton. He is young, his movements uncoordinated, beset with habituated tics and gestures. He carries a small, dirty blanket. He takes out a stick of fudge, starts eating, looks across at Anton, grins, sticky juice dribbling down his chin. Anton looks away.

PASCAL

*(holding up the fudge,
over-enunciating)*

I stole this.

ANTON

Mm?

PASCAL

This is fudge. I stole it.

ANTON

Right.

Pause

PASCAL

Do you want to know where I stole it from.

ANTON

Um... All right.

PASCAL
The tin above the kitchen cabinet.

ANTON
Right.

PASCAL
I'm not allowed to climb up there.

ANTON
Ok.

PASCAL
It's against the law.

ANTON
Right.

PASCAL
(suddenly loud)
Nee-naw, nee-naw.

ANTON
(embarrassed)
Ok.

PASCAL
(louder)
Nee-naw!-

ANTON
(quelling him)
Right. Right. The police are after you,
right?

PASCAL
No, my sister.

ANTON
Your sister.

PASCAL
She looks after me. I'm only allowed
one stick of fudge a day. If she found
me with this, she'd be mad. This is
stick number two.

ANTON
Stick number two.

PASCAL
That's right.

Pause

ANTON
How come your sister looks after you?

PASCAL
And my brother. He looks after me too.

ANTON
What about your parents? Why don't they
look after you?

PASCAL
They're not here.

ANTON
Where are they?

PASCAL
In heaven.

Beat

ANTON
My name's Pascal.

ANTON (CONT'D)
Ok.

PASCAL
My sister's called Katrin.

ANTON
Right.

PASCAL
And my brother's called Valentine.

Beat

ANTON
What?

PASCAL
What's *your* name?

ANTON
Did you say Valentine?

PASCAL
Yes. Valentine. What's your name?

ANTON
I know a Valentine. He goes to my
school.

PASCAL
My brother's very clever. He got all
the brains, and I didn't get any. He's
gone to a new school full of clever
people. What's your name?

ANTON
Um- Anton-

PASCAL
Hello Anton-

ANTON
Hello- Do you- do you live near here?

PASCAL
Yes.
(*pointing*)
Down there.

ANTON
Shall we- shall I take you home?

PASCAL
I'll get into trouble. I'm not meant to
run away. Nee-naw.

ANTON
What if I talk to your sister about it.
What if I replace the fudge? Huh? I'll
buy you another one. We'll put it back
in the tin. How about that?

PASCAL
Ok, then.

ANTON
Great.

PASCAL
(*standing*)
Come on, then.

SCENE 10

*Drab kitchen interior. Katrin enters, brings a mug of coffee
and sets it in front of Anton. Pascal sits to one side,
drawing.*

ANTON
Thanks.

KATRIN
You're welcome.

Pause

KATRIN (CONT'D)
Sorry about the mess.

ANTON
It's fine.

KATRIN
(*indicating Pascal*)
Was he a pain in the arse?

ANTON
No no.

PASCAL
I'm a pain in the arse.
(*sing-song*)
Ha ha.

Pause

KATRIN
Do you smoke?

ANTON
No.

KATRIN
Ok.

Pause

ANTON
Nice coffee.

KATRIN
Mm-hm. So how's my brother settling in
at your school?

ANTON
Oh fine. You know... fine.

KATRIN
Has he made friends?

ANTON
Well- yeah. I mean- you know. I mean he
hasn't been there long.

KATRIN
He's a weirdo.

ANTON
Right.

PASCAL
Weirdo.

KATRIN
(*to Pascal*)
Not like you. You're not a weirdo.

PASCAL
Yes I am. I'm a weirdo. Valentine says.

KATRIN
Well he shouldn't.

ANTON
How come he's actually, you know... I mean did he take an exam or something?

KATRIN
He was going to the state school in town. He kept getting the highest marks they'd ever recorded. They tested his I.Q., decided he was Einstein, someone spoke to the head of the Academy, some Governor, they were members of the same shooting club or something.

Pause

ANTON
What does he think about it all? Does he talk about us? You know?

KATRIN
He doesn't go in for talking much.

ANTON
No, I'd noticed that.

KATRIN
(indicating Pascal)
He's more of a kid than him.

ANTON
I suppose he'll have better prospects. Now that he's at the Academy.

KATRIN
Maybe. I guess you're all hot-shots up there, are you.

ANTON
Not all of us.

KATRIN
All being, you know, groomed for stuff.

ANTON
I don't know-

KATRIN
I guess he'll just go, same as you lot, when you're exams are finished. Earn lots of money.

PASCAL
Where's Valentine going?

KATRIN
It doesn't matter-

PASCAL
I don't want Valentine to go.

KATRIN
Forget it-

PASCAL
(worried)
I don't want Valentine to go!

KATRIN
It's all right! Jesus.

Valentine appears.

VALENTINE
Where am I going?

Pascal rushes to Valentine, hugs him.

PASCAL
Valentine! I stole a fudge.

VALENTINE
(smiling, spinning him
round)
You little fudge-stealing bastard.

PASCAL
(delighted)
Ha!

KATRIN
Don't use that language with him. He's
a parrot.

PASCAL
I'm a parrot!

Valentine notices Anton, lets Pascal go.

ANTON
Hi.

VALENTINE
(cold, to Anton)
You met the retard, then.

KATRIN
Don't call him that. Where have you
been?

VALENTINE
Out.

KATRIN

Pascal ran away again. Your friend brought him home.

VALENTINE

Did he.

ANTON

I was just in the... you know, I bumped into him. In the square.

VALENTINE

Right. Thanks.

ANTON

Don't worry.

KATRIN

(to Valentine)

It would help if you were here. Then we wouldn't have to rely on other people. It's enough that I have him all week.

VALENTINE

He's all right in the village. People know him.

KATRIN

It's embarrassing. They look at me like I can't cope. The old ladies in the store, you know? You don't have to deal with them. The whole false sympathy thing. They love that I'm screwing up.

VALENTINE

Ignore them, they're almost dead. Have a beer-

KATRIN

I don't want a beer. What if he went down to the lake?

VALENTINE

He's knows about the lake. I told him.
(to Pascal)
What did I tell you. What's in the lake.

PASCAL

The willy-biting sea-monster.

He makes a gnashing noise.

VALENTINE

There you are.

KATRIN

Everything's a joke isn't it.

VALENTINE

So what, if it keeps him out of the lake.

Katrin makes a sound of annoyance, turns away brusquely. Pause.

ANTON

I'm just going to...

Pause. He edges to the door.

ANTON (CONT'D)

I better get back-

VALENTINE

(quick, not looking)
Ok, bye.

PASCAL

Bye Anton! Bye-bye!

SCENE 11

Anton walks across stage. Katrin runs after.

KATRIN

Hey!

Anton stops, turns. Katrin reaches him.

KATRIN (CONT'D)

I'm sorry about that. I didn't say thank you properly. I get a bit... you know. Crazy.

ANTON

That's ok.

KATRIN

I don't see many people. Apart from Pascal. I used to go to college, but then... I mean we could move to the town, but he- he just wants to be near Valentine, you know? He misses him. It's typical, isn't it. I do all the work, but he just wants the one who's never there. You know that blanket of his?- it's one of Valentine's old T-shirts. He's like a- a puppy.

ANTON

Right.

KATRIN

It was really nice to talk to someone different. Even if I didn't make a very good job of it.

(MORE)

KATRIN (CONT'D)
I had this idea that the students up at
your place were all... you know...

ANTON
Wankers?

KATRIN
(a smile)
Yeah.

ANTON
Actually we probably are.

KATRIN
No you're not. You're not.

Pause

KATRIN (CONT'D)
You can come again. You know, if you
want.

ANTON
Ok. Great.

KATRIN
We could have a picnic or something.

ANTON
That'd be great.

KATRIN
Ok.

ANTON
Ok then.

KATRIN
(indicating back)
I better...

ANTON
Yeah. Sure.

KATRIN
Bye.

SCENE 12

*School corridor. SFX of a school bell. The class group
passes. Valentine finds Anton.*

VALENTINE
(quietly angry)
So. What were you doing?

ANTON
What do you mean?

VALENTINE

In my house.

ANTON

Nothing- I- found your brother.

VALENTINE

Did you.

ANTON

He told me where he lived. I took him home.

Pause

ANTON (CONT'D)

I thought it was the right thing to do.

VALENTINE

Right.

ANTON

Your sister said I could come back.

VALENTINE

Did she.

ANTON

Yes.

VALENTINE

So, are you going to?

ANTON

Well- yeah, if that's ok?

VALENTINE

Bring your friends? Have a laugh at us, maybe?

ANTON

What?- No. Why would we laugh at you?

VALENTINE

Laugh at the retard, in his shitty house-

ANTON

No-

VALENTINE

You said, that's what they think we're like, in the village. And guess what, they're right-

ANTON

I was just- it was just something to say. They don't think that. Not really. I was just making conversation.

VALENTINE

What's the point of that?

ANTON

To be sociable.

VALENTINE

Why would you want to socialise with me?

ANTON

Because... I don't know-

VALENTINE

You have nothing in common with me.

ANTON

Ok. Maybe. So?

VALENTINE

You've got some sort of social conscience? Is that it?

ANTON

Ok I get it, I'll leave you alone, I won't ever talk to you. I'm sorry I even bothered.

Anton moves to exit, turns.

ANTON (CONT'D)

As a matter of fact, I really like your brother. He's nice. You know, friendly.

Marcus passes by.

MARCUS

(on the move)

Lovers' tiff?

SCENE 13

AV TITLE: 'A PENT-HOUSE FLAT, GENEVA. 2015'

A well-appointed flat. Eugenie (adult clothes) applies make-up and hops around trying to slide on a pair of high-heels. Marcus (smart suit) enters, produces a small velvet box from his jacket.

EUGENIE

Where have you been? We're meant to be at the ballet. Sofia's dancing.

MARCUS
The ballet can wait.

He opens the box to reveal a large diamond ring. He holds it out.

MARCUS (CONT'D)
That's for you.

Beat. Eugenie stops, looks at the ring, stares at him.

MARCUS (CONT'D)
(a nonplussed smile)
It's my pleasure.

EUGENIE
But it's... it's... how much was it?

MARCUS
It was hideously expensive. I mean revoltingly.

EUGENIE
You know I can't wear this.

MARCUS
Because you're a socialist?

EUGENIE
Well- yes? How could you even afford it?

MARCUS
That would be telling.

EUGENIE
There is such a thing as the news media. They have cameras. They love shiny things.

MARCUS
You'll have to get used to it. This is just the beginning.

EUGENIE
What do you mean?

MARCUS
Well- it turns out I've made it. Bossman said. They're going to give me an office with my name on the door.

EUGENIE
What have you done?

MARCUS
If I tell you I'll have to kill you.

EUGENIE

Tell me.

MARCUS

Can I trust you?

EUGENIE

We're getting married, aren't we?

Pause

MARCUS

(pouring a drink)

Well, if you must know, I've recently secured the highest yield contract in the whole history of my company's fund management. Forget emerging economies. It's about the oil, stupid.

(taking a drink)

Cheers.

EUGENIE

What oil?

MARCUS

The oil that's currently sitting in the middle of a great big war-zone-

EUGENIE

You know what, don't tell me-

MARCUS

The thing is, though, it isn't a war-zone-

EUGENIE

(finding some more make-up)

I mean it, I don't want to know-

MARCUS

I mean yeah, people are being shot and everything, but it's actually a pretend war. The winners and losers swap over from time to time, people shout religious stuff at each other. Makes no difference. Underneath, everyone's an investor. Having a war just raises the value of the investment.

He drinks again.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

See. I've caught up with you.

EUGENIE

It's not a competition.

MARCUS

You wouldn't want me to be a weak link, though, would you. Think about it. In ten years time we'll be running the world. I'll make the money, and you can cut ribbons opening orphanages.

Pause

EUGENIE

If this got out, this deal you've just made- how much damage would it do me?

MARCUS

It's always me-me-me, isn't it-

EUGENIE

Seriously. Is it actually illegal?

MARCUS

It's beautiful. So beautiful that the normal rules don't apply. But if it makes you feel better, your party chairman is a trustee.

EUGENIE

My party?-

MARCUS

Everyone's in on it. Welcome to the world. And anyway, one day you'll be president of everything and you can change all the rules, so it won't be illegal. Have a drink. It's my big day.

Eugenie refuses his offer.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

What's the matter with you?

She puts a folded newspaper on his lap.

EUGENIE

Presumably you haven't read this.

Pause. He skims an article.

MARCUS

Is that?- That's Flo?

EUGENIE

They found her body.

MARCUS

What about Anton.

EUGENIE

No news.

Pause. Marcus exhales, his mood spoiled.

MARCUS
(irritable)
I mean what were they even doing out there?

EUGENIE
Medical care for refugees in war-zones. I think it's a Christian charity.

MARCUS
It would be, wouldn't it.

EUGENIE
Is that, by any chance, the same war-zone as *your* war-zone?

Pause

EUGENIE (CONT'D)
That's a yes, is it? How ironic.

MARCUS
What's that supposed to mean?

EUGENIE
You remember the last thing she ever said to you?

MARCUS
She was mad- it's ancient history, there's no point-

EUGENIE
Someone called, earlier. Some girl. Wants to talk to us about her. Research for a book about her, or something. She sounded about twelve.

MARCUS
I hope you told her to piss off.

EUGENIE
(sharp)
And how would that have looked?
(checking her watch)
Come on. We've still time. I want to see something beautiful. Take my mind off it all.

SFX of orchestra warming up, audience entering. Sofia (in ballet costume) appears. She steps into a pool of light. There is a silence, then music starts. She dances.

SCENE 14

LX change. School gym. Music becomes tinny, as if played on a cheap cd player. As she dances others change Sofia's plush ballet costume to practise clothes. Flo enters, watches. The music reaches its end, Sofia's dance finishes. As she breaks the spell of her dance, shakes it off/stretches out she sees Flo, stops.

FLO
(embarrassed)
Hi

SOFIA
How long have you been watching?

FLO
Not long. A few minutes.

Pause

FLO (CONT'D)
Do you mind?

SOFIA
I suppose not.

FLO
You're really good.

SOFIA
Thanks.

Pause. Sofia sorts out her kit, removes her pumps.

FLO
I wish I could dance like that.

SOFIA
It's just practice.

Pause

FLO
Are you doing the competition?

SOFIA
The summer school? I don't think they want dancers.

FLO
They would if I were in charge.

SOFIA
You probably will be, one day. You and Eugenie.

FLO
Probably Eugenie.

Pause

FLO (CONT'D)
What do you think of Valentine?

SOFIA
Why do you ask?

FLO
Just wondering.

SOFIA
Do you like him?

FLO
I don't even know him.

Pause

FLO (CONT'D)
Do you think he's lonely?

SOFIA
Maybe. Ask him.

FLO
How could I do that? He would think I was patronising him, or something. Probably.

Pause

SOFIA
You do like him, don't you.

Pause

FLO
(changing the subject)
You know when you're dancing. What are you thinking of?

SOFIA
I don't know. I don't know if I'm thinking at all.

FLO
Really? It looks like- With the music- I don't know.

SOFIA
What?

FLO
It looks like something's guiding you.

SOFIA
What do you mean?

Pause

FLO
Nothing.

Flo hesitates.

FLO (CONT'D)
(quick)
Do you believe in God?

Pause. Sofia looks at her.

FLO (CONT'D)
It's weird. Some times I think I can see Him. I don't mean see Him, not like... I...

Pause

FLO (CONT'D)
I know it's weird. Sorry.

Pause

SOFIA
(awkward)
I'm... you know- I'm just trying to get the moves right.

FLO
Yes. Sorry.

Sofia checks through her bag.

FLO (CONT'D)
Do you ever get lonely?

SOFIA
What, here?

FLO
Yes.

SOFIA
Sometimes. That's when I dance. My mother used to teach me. She was a prima ballerina. When I was tiny. When I dance it feels like being little again. In my living room. Then I don't feel lonely any more.

FLO
Do you mind if I come and watch you again?

Pause

SOFIA
Um- No. That's- that's fine.

SFX of a school bell. Flo exits.

SCENE 15

A school dormitory. Flo (in a dressing gown) appears, holding a bible. She whispers to herself. SFX of school hymn (quiet), cross-fading with the sound of an approaching helicopter.

FLO (V.O.)
(*Psalm twenty-three*)
The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not
want. He maketh me lie down in green
pastures; he leadeth me beside still
waters. He restoreth my soul; he
leadeth me in the paths of
righteousness for his name's sake. Yea,
though I walk through the valley of the
shadow of death, I will fear no evil.

Valentine enters. SFX snap off. She shuts the bible, hides it.

VALENTINE
Sorry. I was looking for the library.

FLO
Other end of the corridor.

VALENTINE
Right. Sorry.

Pause

VALENTINE (CONT'D)
I'll just... I'm going to the library.

FLO
Right.

They stare at each other. Pause. Valentine turns away, crosses the stage. As he does so Rosa, Eva, and Lottie walk past him, arm in arm. Eva turns to look at Valentine. Lottie notices, stops.

LOTTIE
(*to Valentine*)
Hey. We've been trying to work our what
to call you.

ROSA
Everyone has a name.
(*indicating Eva*)
She makes them up.

VALENTINE

Right.

EVA

(quiet)

No I don't.

LOTTIE

But then, maybe yours is silly enough already.

VALENTINE

Right.

LOTTIE

Joke.

VALENTINE

Right.

Mlle Lestrade enters.

MLLE LESTRADE

(to the girls)

Quiet study, ladies. Now.

Eva, Rosa and Lottie exit.

LOTTIE

(calling, as she exits)

Be my Valentine, Valentine.

MLLE LESTRADE

(to Valentine)

Shouldn't you be going home?

VALENTINE

I was going to do some work, in the library. It's a bit chaotic at home.

MLLE LESTRADE

I notice your hair is likewise still slightly chaotic.

VALENTINE

Yes. Sorry.

Beat

VALENTINE (CONT'D)

Mademoiselle.

Pause

MLLE LESTRADE

There's something you should know about me. I take a perverse pleasure in being proved wrong about things.

(MORE)

MLLE LESTRADE (CONT'D)
Your work is very good. I shouldn't
tell you this but you're way ahead in
the Summer School competition.

VALENTINE
I didn't enter the competition.

MLLE LESTRADE
No. I entered it on your behalf. If
you're not careful there's a small risk
you might end up making something of
yourself.

She exits. Valentine stares after her. Eva reappears from the other side. He turns to her. As she takes a step forward, he turns, exits. Eva stops. Her move has taken her into a pool of light that fades up around her. She freezes. Underscore, SFX of traffic, small children in a play-ground. Others transform Eva into an adult, her clothes and appearance dowdy (a shapeless coat), her manner oppressed. A pram appears in front of her.

SCENE 16

AV TITLE: 'A PARK, GENEVA, 2015'

A park bench. Leoni sits to one side, prepares recording equipment. Eva sits nervously with the pram nearby.

LEONI
She's very beautiful.

EVA
They're always beautiful when they're
asleep.

LEONI
Is she your first?

Beat

EVA
(a lie)
Yes.

Pause

LEONI
Anyway. Thanks for sparing the time.
I'll try and be quick. I'm sorry that
the circumstances are... so sad.

EVA
Which paper do you work for?

LEONI
I'm freelance.

Pause

LEONI (CONT'D)

So. Could you tell me your name and date of birth, just to get a level?

EVA

Eva Sabonnier, fourth of March, nineteen-ninety.

LEONI

Thank you, that's great.

EVA

(indicating the recording equipment)

So which newspaper is this going to be in?

LEONI

It's for a book.

EVA

A book about Florence Duval.

LEONI

Yes. A biography. The full picture. What made her into the person she became. That's why I'm tracking down all her school-friends. Hopefully it'll be something to remember her by.

EVA

Who have you spoken to?

LEONI

You're the first.

EVA

I wasn't that close to her.

LEONI

No? But you were at school-

EVA

I didn't know her. No one did- I mean- it's odd, you writing a book. Because- she was like a closed book. It's like there's nothing to write.

Pause

EVA (CONT'D)

There are others who knew her better. I'm not trying to- I just don't think there's much I can tell you. Eugenie was her best friend. Eugenie Petit?

LEONI
Yes, she's on my list. And she's engaged to Marcus Deschamps? Who was also in your year?

Beat

EVA
Yes. I haven't... I haven't seen them. Not since school.

LEONI
Right.

EVA
They're doing well, though, I think. I think Eugenie went into politics.

LEONI
Right.

EVA
I mean, I haven't seen them, so...

Pause

EVA (CONT'D)
They were big competitors. Florence and Eugenie. Academically. You should talk to Eugenie. And Marcus. There's really not much I can-

LEONI
But there must be something-

SFX of snuffling and mewling from the pram.

EVA
(bending into the pram)
She's waking up. I'll have to feed her. You're best talking to Eugenie.

Pause

LEONI
What's her name?

EVA
Valentina.

LEONI
That's a pretty name.

Beat

EVA
Yes. After someone I knew.

Eva crosses. SFX/underscore. She freezes as the pool of light reappears around her. Eva's coat is removed, she transforms back into a student. The pram disappears.

SCENE 17

School library. Eva, Rosa and Lottie. Rosa and Lottie paint Eva's nails.

ROSA

Is anyone here doing the extended summer... whatever... competition. Thing. Where is it?

LOTTIE

Geneva.

EVA

Are you kidding. Le-Sadist hates my guts. She'd take marks off.

LOTTIE

That's unfair.

EVA

You know what's worse- My Dad won it when he was here.

ROSA

Seriously?

EVA

He's expecting me to walk it. Family honour.

LOTTIE

What'll you tell him?

EVA

That I went in for it and got beaten.

ROSA

What'll happen then?

EVA

The usual.

LOTTIE

What's the usual?

EVA

He'll make excuses for me. He'll probably buy me something to make up for what he believes to be my disappointment.

ROSA

What's so bad about that?

EVA

It's a game. We pretend I'm hard-working and sweet-natured. They're even lining up some dull son of one of my dad's dull work colleagues for me to marry. It's like they're from a different century.

ROSA

Talking of lining people up, how's the campaign going?

EVA

What campaign?

LOTTIE

Valentine, dummy.

EVA

Huh. Tactical retreat.

LOTTIE

What? Why? You so belong together.

EVA

I think the basic problem is he doesn't like me. I can't seem to be able to behave normally with him. I end up making more and more noise. Like an idiot.

Pause. Rosa and Lottie look at each other.

ROSA

Have you actually... fallen for him?

EVA

I- No, I- I don't know.

LOTTIE

You so have-

EVA

No I haven't-

LOTTIE

He's, like, from the *village*.

EVA

So?

ROSA

Oh my God-

LOTTIE

Oh my very God-

EVA

If you tell anybody I will personally
rip your intestines out.

A noise from off.

ROSA

Someone's coming.

*Lottie hides the bottle. Valentine enters. Lottie and Rosa
pinch each other.*

LOTTIE

Hello. Can we help you?

VALENTINE

This is the library, right.

LOTTIE

(looking around)

Oh, you mean the books. We just come
here to drink schnapps.

ROSA

You know I was wondering what they were
for.

Lottie takes out the bottle, holds it out.

LOTTIE

We're the bad girls, have you noticed.

Valentine takes the bottle, swigs it.

ROSA

Why are you here? At this school? I
mean, no offence, but you don't seem to
be enjoying yourself very much.

Pause

VALENTINE

I'm an experiment.

LOTTIE

What, like you mean in science?

VALENTINE

I guess.

ROSA

Are you like a robot? Have they fiddled
about in your brain?

(to Lottie)

What do they call them?

LOTTIE

Androids.

ROSA

That's it, one of them.

VALENTINE

It's more like being a rat. In a research laboratory.

ROSA

What are they researching?

VALENTINE

The rat never finds that out, does he.

LOTTIE

That's a bit deep, isn't it. You're deep aren't you, I can tell. People who don't say much are always deep. Have some more schnapps.

He takes another swig, looks at Eva.

VALENTINE

You look like a queen, sat there.

ROSA

She is our queen. We're her handmaidens. We anoint her with precious unguents.

LOTTIE

Precious what?

ROSA

Unguents. I read it in history. It's good isn't it.

LOTTIE

Unguents.

ROSA

It's like a liquid.

LOTTIE

Like nail-varnish?

ROSA

More like oils. When we've finished we bathe her in milk.

EVA

Shut up, Rosa.

ROSA

You're not allowed to watch, I'm afraid. It's private.

VALENTINE

Ok.

He goes to sit down.

EVA

Hey. What are you doing later?

VALENTINE

I've got to get back home. Why?

EVA

We thought we might break out of here.
Go to one of the bars in St. Therese.

VALENTINE

What if you get found out?

ROSA

We're so crazy we just don't care.

VALENTINE

I've... I've got to stay home. My
sister's going out.

LOTTIE

What about your parents?

VALENTINE

They're not around. Anyway, I've got to
look after my little brother. Anton's
probably told you.

ROSA

Told us what?

VALENTINE

About my brother.

LOTTIE

What about him?

VALENTINE

He didn't tell you?

LOTTIE

No?

Pause

VALENTINE

He's... he's got brain damage. He's a
pickle. So. I have to be with him.

ROSA

Well, why don't we come round to yours,
then.

VALENTINE

It probably wouldn't be a good idea.
It's not that big.

LOTTIE
You don't need big for a party. You
just need schnapps.

Pause

LOTTIE (CONT'D)
You know what I'm thinking - your house
could be party central. It's like
Auschwitz here. Only, halfway up a
mountain. They think we don't want to
get out 'cause there's nothing to go
out to. Even the bars close early. It's
just fields and cows. But if we had
somewhere to go, a nice warm house...
With no teachers. Or parents.
(to the others)
You know what I'm saying?

Pause

EVA
It's up to him.

Anton and Marcus enter.

ANTON
What's up to him?

ROSA
Whether he invites us to his house or
not.

ANTON
His *house*?

ROSA
Would your sister be all right with it?
You know... with your brother and
everything?

ANTON
(to Valentine)
You told them about your-

VALENTINE
I thought you'd told them already-

ANTON
I didn't tell anyone anything.

Pause

VALENTINE
I know.

Pause

VALENTINE (CONT'D)
(awkward)
Thanks, anyway.

Pause

VALENTINE (CONT'D)
(to the others)
All right, then. I'll tell my sister.

ANTON
You mean we can visit? That's great.
(to Marcus)
Isn't that great?

MARCUS
(looking at Marcus)
Yeah, I'll probably... you know, pass.

Pause

MARCUS (CONT'D)
You know. The Summer School competition
and everything. Bit busy.

LOTTIE
Suit yourself, Mucus.

MARCUS
It's Marcus.

He exits.

SCENE 18

Eugenie and Marcus' pent-house flat. Eugenie sits on a sofa. Leoni fiddles with a recording device on a coffee table in front of them. Marcus enters, holding a beer, sits next to Eugenie.

LEONI
Sorry, I just need to get a level.
Would you mind just saying your name,
and your date of birth.

EUGENIE
Um... which of us?...

LEONI
I'll need both, why don't you go first.

EUGENIE
My name is Eugenie Petit, and... my
date of birth is the third of May,
nineteen-ninety.

LEONI
Thanks, that's fine-
(to Marcus)
And now you?...

MARCUS
(quick, almost
disinterested)
Marcus Deschamps, sixth of the fifth,
nineteen-ninety.

LEONI
Just once again?

MARCUS
Sorry?

LEONI
That was a bit quick, could I just hear
that again.

MARCUS
(with deliberate slowness)
Marcus Deschamps, sixth of the fifth,
nineteen-ninety.

LEONI
Thank you. So. Off we go. Let's...
let's start with you two, if that's all
right.

EUGENIE
Us?

LEONI
How you got together-

EUGENIE
I thought we talking about-

LEONI
Just for back-ground. I mean it's quite
interesting in itself.

EUGENIE
Why is it interesting?

Pause

LEONI
Well. I mean, you were school-friends.
And now you're getting married-

EUGENIE
It wasn't a childhood romance.

LEONI
Right-

EUGENIE

We weren't that close. We did the same politics module, we barely spoke. We went to different universities.

Pause

LEONI

So. Florence, then.

Pause

LEONI (CONT'D)

She was also at school with you.

EUGENIE

Yes.

LEONI

And how well did you-

EUGENIE

She was my best friend.

MARCUS

I thought you drifted apart, didn't you.

EUGENIE

That doesn't mean she wasn't my best friend. I knew her since kindergarten- You don't just dump all that in the bin, even if... even if your lives go in different directions.

LEONI

Why do you think she chose the path she ended up with.

EUGENIE

How would I know.

LEONI

Did she talk to you about it?-

EUGENIE

No.

LEONI

But you just said- Or had you already... um, drifted, when she took her decision?

EUGENIE

Not that I was aware of.

LEONI

So this was something she... kept hidden inside her.

EUGENIE

I suppose.

LEONI

There were no early signs of it?

EUGENIE

Not that I noticed.

Pause

LEONI

And you, Marcus, how well did you know her?

MARCUS

Not very. Her and Eugenie, were a... a sort of a pair, and then Florence got God and that was that.

LEONI

Was she always religious?

MARCUS

I don't know.

LEONI

It was a sudden thing? Like a conversion.

MARCUS

I said, I don't know.

Pause. Leoni checks down her notes, seems thrown.

LEONI

So, anyway... I suppose it must have been a shock to... when you, you know... when she- I suppose you saw it on the news. Did you? It must have been terrible.

Pause

MARCUS

Have you been a journalist long?

LEONI

What?

EUGENIE

Marcus, don't be a shit-

LEONI

I-

MARCUS

(to Eugenie)

I'm making conversation.

EUGENIE

(to Leoni)

My fiancé didn't want this interview.

MARCUS

(to Eugenie)

And you did?

EUGENIE

We owe it to Florence-

MARCUS

Really-

EUGENIE

Yes-

MARCUS

She goes nuts and we owe her... what, exactly?

EUGENIE

Let's not have this-

MARCUS

No, tell me, I'm interested-

EUGENIE

Marcus shut up.

Pause. Marcus stares at Eugenie, then smiles at Leoni with a shrug.

EUGENIE (CONT'D)

(ignoring him)

Florence was a good person, who wanted to make a difference in her own way. She was also much cleverer than me.

MARCUS

Wait a minute. Out of the two of you, aren't you the one who's alive. Doesn't that make you slightly cleverer than her.

Pause. Eugenie stands, exits abruptly. Pause.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

(a false smile)

Women.

Pause

Joke. MARCUS (CONT'D)