

- Flick:** A double whammy. Very well. You have performed admirably, Helga. I will reward you.
- Helga:** Thank you, Herr Flick.
- Flick:** Your reward shall be an evening with me. I might take you to the movies.
- Helga:** What is showing?
- Flick:** Anything we want. I am Gestapo! Or we could stay here and amuse ourselves. I have a box of sharp needles somewhere.
- (Herr Flick rifles through a drawer on the desk or takes them from his pocket. Helga looks a little nervous.)**
- Flick:** **(Finding them.)** Ah, here they are.
- Helga:** **(Worriedly.)** What have you in mind Herr Flick?
- Flick:** I have an excellent gramophone, and many records of Hitler's speeches. They are quite amusing.
- Helga:** **(Surprised.)** Hitler's speeches, quite amusing?
- Flick:** Played at double speed, he sounds like Donald Duck.
- (Blackout.)**

ACT ONE SCENE FIVE RENÉ'S CAFÉ

(The next day. The Café René. Peasants are sitting at the tables at the front, making chit-chat with the serving girls. René and Edith are behind the bar.)

- Yvette:** **(To the peasants.)** And can I get you anything else?
- (A peasant whispers something in her ear.)**
- Yvette:** **(Slapping him.)** You naughty boy! **(Pause.)** Come back at eight o'clock. But the sugar tongs will cost you extra.
- (The Colonel, Geering and Grüber enter and stand in the middle of the café.)**
- Colonel:** Heil Hitler!
- Geering:** **(Late.)** 'Tler!

René: Ah! Good afternoon, gentlemen. I trust you, and indeed Hitler, are all well? Where would you like to sit? We have several tables available.

Colonel: You do. **(Indicating a table where the peasants are seated.)** We want this one.

René: Could I not press you to one with a better view? This one, for instance would put your back to my wife for your entire visit.

Colonel: If you do not remove these peasants immediately, I will have them shot.

René: That seems a fairly extreme method of clearing a table.

Colonel: Or, of course, I could have *you* shot.

René: Move over to this other table, peasant scum.

(René hustles the peasants over to another table whilst Mimi and Yvette bustle around the German officers as they take their seats. Yvette is very friendly, but Mimi is far frostier with the Germans. René stays in the background placating the peasants.)

Yvette: Please take a seat. If there is anything that I can do for you, please let me know.

Geering: **(Excitedly.)** Oh, we will, we will.

Grüber: I'm fine, thank you.

Colonel: Yvette, tell René that I must speak to him at once on urgent business.

Yvette: At once, Colonel.

(Edith comes across to the Germans at the table. Yvette goes across to René.)

Edith: You seem a little out-of-sorts today, Colonel.

Colonel: I apologise, Madame Edith. The pressures of command weigh heavily on me. I have brought my two comrades to partake in wine and women.

Edith: And song?

Colonel: **(Quickly.)** No! Just wine and women...

Grüber: Only wine for me.

Edith: I have all sorts of songs in my repertoire whatever the occasion. I can sing something special no matter what fate throws at me.

- René:** (**Approaching from behind.**) Usually onions or stale bread rolls. You have something you wish to discuss, Colonel?
- Colonel:** I do. René, times are not as they once were.
- René:** This I know. But I thought your war efforts were going your way?
- Geering:** We should have them more often, you know. We do them so well.
- Colonel:** Indeed, however, since the General thinks we lost his painting things have gotten very uncomfortable.
- Grüber:** He is making it very hard for us.
- René:** I can imagine that is not a problem for you at least, Lieutenant.
- Colonel:** I will be blunt. The General is demanding money from us to make up for the loss of the painting.
- René:** What? Well, I suppose we could have a whip round...
- Colonel:** I could have everyone in the town roundly whipped, but it will not raise the money required. René, unless you get us 50,000 francs I will have no choice but to drop you in it for hiding the British airmen.
- René:** But Colonel, I assure you they are long gone.
- Colonel:** René, do not play me for a fool. Union Jack underpants have been seen drying on the line in your back yard more than once this past month.
- René:** Is that so? (**To himself.**) They will be drying at half-mast when I speak to them later. Colonel! Be reasonable! Where am I going to get 50,000 francs?
- Geering:** This is not our problem.
- Colonel:** Hans is right. The how is not something I need to know - we just need the money. By Saturday night.
- René:** Saturday night? This is not possible. You might as well ask me to bring you the moon.
- (Leclerc enters, in no disguise this time! René spots him and needs to get across to him.)**
- René:** Oh my God. Excuse me, Colonel, I must set plans in motion.
- Colonel:** Saturday night, René. Or I'm afraid it's the firing squad for you.
- (René hot foots it across to the bar, to speak with Leclerc.)**

- René:** And what do you want?
- Leclerc:** **(Raising his glasses.)** It is I, Leclerc!
- René:** I know! You're not even in disguise!
- Leclerc:** I am dressed as a sad, confused elderly man.
- René:** Need I say more? What can I do for you?
- Leclerc:** I bring a message from Michelle of the Resistance.
- René:** Be quiet you old goat! People will hear and I will be shot!
- Leclerc:** **(Whispering.)** I bring a message from Michelle of the Resistance.
- René:** And now I can't hear a word. Can you not strike a happy medium?
- Leclerc:** I would never hit a cheerful Gypsy! The curse would be...
- René:** I mean talk at a normal volume. What is this message?
- Leclerc:** The message?
- René:** The one from Michelle.
- Leclerc:** You have a message from Michelle? So do I!
- René:** Oh for the love of... and what is this message that you have from Michelle?
- Leclerc:** It is this. Michelle is on her way here with a message for you.
- René:** Then why on earth have you come in here? Oh, never mind. It makes as much sense as anything else that happens with the Resistance.
- Leclerc:** I will tell her the coast is clear.
- René:** Tell her what you like, I'm going for a lie-down.
- (Leclerc exits, René starts to untie his apron and head off for a rest. As he turns with his back to the cafe patrons, Grüber comes to the bar.)**
- René:** **(Muttering to himself.)** What a predicament! What I wouldn't do for money right now.
- (Grüber gives a polite cough and René turns and sees him.)**
- René:** Although maybe not that. Can I help you, Lieutenant?

- Grüber:** I am sorry that the Colonel is taking such a tough line with you, René. It has left quite a bad taste in my mouth.
- René:** Perhaps a cognac, then? **(He pours a glass of cognac from a bottle.)**
- Grüber:** Thank you. As you know René, I have come to consider us very good friends. I would hate to see you lying on the ground riddled with bullets.
- René:** I can't say I'd enjoy it very much either. But I appreciate your words of kindness.
- Grüber:** If there is anything I can do to help, René? I relish these little chats. I often recall them fondly.
- René:** **(Quickly.)** We have never fondled, Lieutenant.
- Grüber:** Do you have any of those good cigars, René? I recall some finer ones kept under the counter for your better customers.
- René:** Sadly, they are all gone, Lieutenant. Although I am expecting a delivery fairly soon. Please excuse me, I am suddenly very tired and need a rest. If the delivery comes along later, and I have the energy, I will slip you one.
- Grüber:** **(With keen interest.)** I'll see you later then!
- (Grüber returns to the Colonel's table. René exits up the stairs. Edith is approached by Yvette and Mimi.)**
- Yvette:** René has left looking quite distressed. Is everything alright?
- Edith:** He has a lot to think about. The Germans will drop him right in it unless he can pay them 50,000 francs.
- Mimi:** 50,000 francs! How will he find such a sum?
- Edith:** I fear you girls might have to take your evening activities up a notch and put in a little overtime.
- Yvette:** Mon Dieu! I am working flat out as it is!
- Mimi:** I will do what it takes, Madam Edith. I am renowned for refreshing the parts that other women miss.
- Yvette:** You? You cannot even reach those parts!
- Mimi:** What? Why you stuck-up strumpet...
- (Yvette and Mimi begin to tussle. Edith breaks them up.)**

Edith: Girls! Girls! This is not the time to fight. There is a war on. We must think of a plan to help René.

(Michelle enters, dressed in a grubby shirt and dungarees, with oil marks on her face and a wrench in her hand. She ushers the three ladies to the bar.)

Michelle: Listen very carefully. I shall say this only once. The airmen were not picked up by the British planes. I have had to bring them back here.

Edith: Where are they?

Michelle: I snuck them in around the back. Fortunately, we have a new plan. Where is René?

Edith: He is having a well-deserved lie-down. Tell me the plan, Michelle, and I will see that he gets it.

Mimi: I will also see that he gets it.

Yvette: And I will give it to him better than anyone!

(Edith looks suspiciously at the two girls then shrugs it off.)

Michelle: Very well. On Saturday night we have a troupe of dancers coming to Nouvien to put on a free show for the townsfolk. After the show, we will disguise the airmen as dancers, and they will leave with the other performers.

Edith: Dancers? Performing here? But what about my cabaret! The cafe patrons will be devastated if I do not sing for them.

Michelle: There are more things at stake here than a bruised ego, Madam Edith! We must do our duty to France.

Edith: You are right, Michelle. And yet, the Resistance also has a duty to my husband, the brave war hero who often risks all to help you.

Michelle: And what is it he wants from me?

Edith: If René does not give the Germans 50,000 francs by Saturday night he will be shot.

Michelle: That would be a shame, but there are other cafe owners in Nouvien.

Edith: And what if he were to try to buy his freedom by revealing what he knows about the Resistance?

- Michelle:** Then I would shoot him myself! But this is too big a gamble to take... very well, we will assist him. I will get this money somehow. And how will he explain where he got the money without betraying us?
- Yvette:** Why do we not hold a fundraising night on Saturday? We could use your dancers, and Madam Edith's floorshow and pretend that we have raised all the money ourselves?
- Mimi:** Raise 50,000 francs with Madam Edith's singing? Are you mad?
- Edith:** It is an excellent plan. The Resistance gets what it wants, we get what we want, and everyone wins.
- Michelle:** And we will of course steal the money back from the Germans as soon as possible. I will send word when we have the money. Madam Edith, start practising for this entertainment spectacular.
- Edith:** Immediately. **(She opens her mouth and takes a breath to sing.)**
- Michelle:** But wait until I have left first.
- (Michelle exits. Madam Edith looks a tad put out.)**
- Yvette:** Madam Edith, Mimi and I must now start to raise what we can in case the Resistance are unsuccessful.
- Mimi:** **(Motioning towards the Colonel and Geering.)** And with the clientele we have to hand they will take a lot of raising.
- Edith:** Of course, girls, do what you must.
- (Yvette and Mimi approach the Colonel at his table.)**
- Yvette:** Colonel, how handsome you look tonight. Can I interest you in a little... dessert?
- Colonel:** And what is on the trolley?
- Mimi:** Us. But I must warn you, the prices have gone up due to inflation.
- Geering:** Who gets inflated?
- Yvette:** You naughty little man.
- Colonel:** Very well, ladies. But if we are to pay extra, I insist that I get to use not only the flying helmet and the egg whisk but also the wooden spoons.
- Mimi:** **(Aside to Yvette.)** My goodness! Whatever will they be doing with that?

Yvette: **(Aside to Mimi.)** I'm not sure, Mimi, but I can guarantee it won't be a piece of cake.

(The Colonel and Geering escort Yvette and Mimi upstairs, leaving Grüber to sit alone. Edith smiles at him.)

Edith: And now I must practise. This little number will bring the house down.

(Edith opens her mouth and draws her breath to sing. Blackout.)

ACT ONE SCENE SIX THE FUNERAL PARLOUR

(A few days later. The Undertaker's parlour. There is a single entrance / door. Monsieur Alphonse is counting out some money. There is a knock on the door and before he can hide the money, René and Edith enter. Monsieur Alphonse greets Edith, kissing her hand.)

Alphonse: Ah, Mademoiselle Edith, you are as beautiful as ever.

Edith: Oh, Monsieur Alphonse, ever the true gentleman.

(Edith casts a look at René, who studiously ignores it.)

Alphonse: And what can I do for you today, Madam?

René: Much as it saddens me to admit it, we need your help.

Alphonse: Good. Tell me, who is the recently departed? **(He picks up his tape measure lovingly.)**

René: No-one has died... yet...

Alphonse: Ah, it is expected soon is it? I will do a discount if it is money up front.

René: Oh, charming! And I suppose you get your money back if you don't die?

Alphonse: Certainly. After 100 years I will issue a full refund.

Edith: Monsieur Alphonse, no-one has died. It is on another matter we come. We are in need of some money and to that end we are putting on a variety night at the Cafe Artois, and we would...

Alphonse: Ah, Madam, you need say no more. You want me to play the spoons.

René: The spoons!

Alphonse: I was a spoonist in my youth and I carry them with me still, in case of emergency.