

France erupts. The politicians can only bicker amongst themselves.

France is desperate for a real leader to emerge.

Meanwhile, Claude de Chaumont (the one man who will save France) visits the other side of the world, retracing the fateful voyage of d'Entrecasteaux.

The seafaring French explorers of Terra Australis must never be forgotten.



## PROLOGUE

### Aix-en-Provence, 1791

*The actor who plays Bruni also plays Brownie.*

*The prologue is used here to establish the narrative: that Antoine Bruni d'Entrecasteaux will speak to camera (that is to Colonel Claude de Chaumont, who is reading about him). The narrative of Bruni (speaking direct to de Chaumont) will reappear throughout the film as a plot device.*

*So the prologue opens with a stately hall (more of a portrait gallery really) hung with huge portraits and filled with superb velvet covered furniture and statuary. Circa 1780-1790 French.*

Long, Long View Of Hall.
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*A dandified gentleman (Bruni) in full regalia tittups from the far end of the hall towards the camera. He has a rolling gait, carries a beribboned cane and lace handkerchief and is dressed to the nines in silken knee breaches, complete with bejewelled garter and powdered wig.*

*Bruni continues in his movement as he speaks, with head turned to the camera (on his left).*

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*Bruni direct to camera* I glide along (amidst a dazzling collection of statues, frescoes and colossal portraits) in hand-made slippers.

I dress in the costumes made for me by bespoke tailors: all kitted-out in Chinese silk I am.

A peruquier visits me daily to coiffe my poor head.

And could you but sniff the air as I waft by you, your nostrils would glory in the transient scent of my perfume.

*Bruni gestures in an affected way with his delicate lace handkerchief.*

*Bruni direct to camera* Look here! A handkerchief of fine lace tatted for my personal use by the nuns at the nearby Sacre Coeur convent.

See how I dab at my aristocratic schnoz with it. How refined and elegant a gent am I!

~~~~~ Break ~~~~~

*Bruni sits at his ease with others (equally well-turned-out), listening to late 18th century chamber music.*

*Bruni direct to camera* I am as you find me: a French gentleman of the higher-than-middling classes, complete with every comfort and luxury to be imagined.

*As the music continues, Bruni gestures negligently towards a large painting depicting a valley positioned between two hills. Each of the hills sports a small castle.*

*Bruni direct to camera* I am Antoine Bruni whose family hails from the vale between castles in rural France.

I was pushed into the Navy at the age of 15 by my much-loved father.

So this life of splendid ease to which I am introducing you is not

mine for every hour of every day of every year.

*Close-up of Bruni.*

Bruni *direct to camera* No, no ... not when I am at sea. Not when I am aboard my ship.

END OF PROLOGUE

## **TITLES ROLL THROUGH NOW**

*The music swells into something really grand and wonderful as the titles roll through.*

*The titles appear on top of large rolling waves and a sailing ship (the recreation of La Recherche) which Bruni d'Entrecastaux commanded.*

*That then blends beautifully into the first scene of ACT I.*

END OF TITLES

*Colonel Claude de Charmont is 195 cm tall (which translates to 6 feet and 4 inches).*

*He is slim, straight-backed, square-shouldered and has a magnificent aquiline nose.*

*De Charmont appears as haughty, single-minded and determined.*

*The reason that this high-ranking French Army officer is in Australia revolves around certain inquiries being made regarding the maritime journeys of the explorer La Pérouse.*

## ACT I Stand! Who's There?

### **I, Scene i:** Bare Island Near La Perouse, 1932 -- Like Hamlet's Opening Scene

*Night. The suburb of La Perouse near Sydney. A coastal lookout associated with rocky cliffs. The wind is strong. The sound of waves crashing is loud.*

*Englishman Major Grahame Glover of the Royal Armed Forces holds a large torch. He is stationed on the lookout. Jeff Challon is an Australian civilian, assisting the Major.*

*The scene is highly reminiscent of the very beginning of Hamlet.*

*Major Glover leans over the rampart, trying to seek out someone or something with his torch.*

*Our camera closes-in on Glover's face.*

Glover *to himself*,                      I might as well be up in the battlements as "Hamlet" begins.  
*musng*                                      Bloody cold enough!

*Glover becomes aware of Jeff Challon to his left. Challon gustily mounts the rock stairs up to the lookout. Glover glances towards Challon, then smirks a little.*

Glover *enjoying a*                      Angels and ministers of grace defend us.  
*private joke*                              Who goes there? Friend to the Dane?

Challon *breathless*                      What's up? What are you doing?

Glover *theatrical*                      Nay, answer me: stand, and unfold yourself. You come most  
carefully upon your hour.

Challon *confused*                      What?

Glover *amused at his*                'Tis now struck twelve; get thee to bed, Francisco.  
*jape*                                        *[As if another character adopts a deeper voice]*

For this relief much thanks: 'tis bitter cold, And I am sick at heart.

Challon *squinting,*                Hey?  
*frowning*

Glover *himself, lacking*        And no, I haven't had "quiet guard" -- there *is* a mouse stirring --  
*theatrics*                                a very large rodent. He's down there ... searching for some  
intangible something.

Challon *totally at sea*            I don't savvy a word you're saying, mate.

Glover                                    That's probably for the best. Can't remember much more ...

And before you ask, "mate", I am no liegeman to the Dane. He's  
French, my liege down there ...

*Glover calls down, moving the light of his torch about.*

Glover *calling down to*        Are you winning? Perhaps try again tomorrow ...  
*his companion*

*There is a distant voice (some indistinct words) from below.*

*Challon looks even more confused and scratches his head.*

END OF SCENE

## **I, Scene ii:** Finn and Glenys Cobey's Swanky Dinner Party, 1932 Sydney

*Finn and Glenys Cobey own a palatial mansion overlooking Sydney Harbour.*

*Their offspring are: Polly (married to Lloyd Wetherby), Catherine and James (an accomplished musician).*

*Finn's brother Gil Cobey is a widower.*

*His children are: Michael, Grace and Alex. The two young men are studying at Sydney University; they are not present in this scene.*

*There is a bustle of people gathering to go into dinner. They sip cocktails. The chatter and laughter is loud and enjoyable. We see Major Glover leading de Chaumont into the throng. The gentlemen wear formal black suit and tie. De Chaumont is not at all ill at ease upon confronting so many strangers. In fact, he appears his usually composed, haughty self.*

James                                      Major Glover! Don't you have a home to go to?

*The men shake hands.*

Glover                                      Not lately. I'm back to scum another hearty meal from your family.

Oh! This is Colonel Claude de Chaumont, of the French Land Army.

Sir, please allow me to introduce you to James Cobey. He is the son of our host.

James                                      How do you do?

*More hand-shaking. De Chaumont makes a grunting sound.*

Glover                                      Oh, and don't shake his hand too hard, will you? He's the talented, glorious snare drummer in the National Broadcasting Symphony Orchestra's latest offering: the Bolero. It's an avant-garde piece by Ravel (a compatriot of yours, Claude).

James *warming to his theme*                                      It's comprised of an eternal, infinite ostinato rhythm which --

De Chaumont *off-hand*                                      Ah, *oui*. I know it.

*This pronouncement deflates James.*

Catherine                                      Jamie, how on earth do you manage it? Doesn't your mind turn to jelly?

Ah, Colonel! How lovely to meet you.

Glover *murmurs in the background* Miss Catherine Cobey. Colonel Claude de Chaumont.

And her sister Mrs Polly Wetherby. And their cousin Miss Grace Cobey.

De Chaumont Charmed, most charmed, my ladies.

*De Chaumont takes Catherine's hand and kisses it as the conversation proceeds. Likewise for Polly and Grace.*

James *firmly* It's my training. My brain is hardened to it.

Polly But my hands would give me away. They'd act of their own volition.

Good evening, Colonel.

James *adamant* Mine do not.

*Grace and Glover shake hands.*

Glover *aside to Grace* Jean-François de Galaup (better known as La Pérouse) has drawn the Colonel to your shores. And I follow in his train as his native bearer and general factotum.

Grace *low voice, amused* It's quite scandalous to admit this but we weren't taught **anything** at all about French explorers at school. The authorities only approved of the English ones.

Isn't that deplorable?

Finn *calling* Ladies and Gentlemen! Dinner is on the table. Let's dig in!

~~~~~ Break ~~~~~

*During the main course, conversation is desultory. Grace leans towards Catherine, speaking around Lloyd.*



Grace *under voice*            The tall man is rather arresting.

Catherine *feigning world-weariness*            The Frenchie? In a nutshell: arrogant, conceited, rude and self-important.

Lloyd            You can tell all that from one kiss on the hand, can you?

Catherine            Phrenology. I'm never wrong.

Lloyd            Besides, he's married. A medieval arranged marriage to the lady of his father's choice, it was. Dinkum.

                                 Still, all is not lost. They **do** have children.

Catherine            As I was saying, Lloyd Wetherby: A poor conversationalist and --

Lloyd            And a fine warrior and strategist. That's why I adopted him.

Grace *amused*            Why? Because he makes you look good?

Lloyd *sighing*            Prestige, Grace, prestige. It adds to my cachet, having a high-ranking French colonel amongst my acquaintance.

Catherine            You said that he is married. So, does that make him a ladies' man?

Lloyd            Not at all.

Catherine            Ah! The opposite, then?

Lloyd            No, not that neither.

Catherine            As I said, he only loves himself.

*James leans over the table to join in.*

James *showing-off*            De Chaumont spoke with me at length regarding my performance of Ravel.

Grace *waspish*            Yes, the beat of a drum formed a common bond.

~~~~~ Break ~~~~~

*The main course is completed. People loll about making conversation in under-voices. Dessert is being served. Colonel de Chaumont's voice appears to boom out. He is apparently following some thought of his own. Up to now, the French colonel has been heard to make mere grunts. This is a surprise, that he is now speaking out to the entire assemblage.*

De Chaumont *outburst* I met him once.

*With an evident éclat, all conversation at the table ceases. Every eye turns toward De Chaumont, who is oblivious to the effect of his words and continues as he navigates his dessert.*

De Chaumont Joseph-Maurice Ravel ...

I met him once.

*There is a frisson of speculation and interest. The French officer has captured the general attention of the table. He does not lift his eyes from the dessert but appears to speak to a disembodied audience.*

De Chaumont An idiot of a woman backstage, prior to his performance, spilled some Indian ink over his ...

*[Searches for the word]*

... over his ... er ... *le pantalon*. How do you say that? Ah! I've gone quite blank ...

Lloyd *confused* His underpants?

Glover Trousers!

*A riffle of light amusement suffuses the guests.*

De Chaumont *Vraiment.*

A borrowed outfit had to be obtained. Of course, my legs are too long for the maestro to have borrowed my attire. And during the frantic search, with several gentlemen stripping off, he spoke to me, *moi-même*.

Grace *whispers* But surely they were black anyway?

Polly A hue and cry.

Catherine Fascinating!

Lloyd Might you indulge us with --

De Chaumont He had a hobby, Ravel. He collected the signatures of great men.  
People do that: in a book specific to that purpose.

Polly Oh, you mean "autographs"?

Catherine *to her immediate neighbour* My favourite is: "By hook or by crook, I'll be last in this book".

Polly Lloyd only writes rude verse!

De Chaumont *ignoring the interchange* And so did the idiot woman collect these signatures.  
I had gone there, to that theatre on that fateful night to buy from her (this clucking, flapping hen) a letter of Antoine Bruni d'Entrecasteaux. Of course, it contained his signature. Naturally!

*Now the dinner guests glance at each other. It is James who first lands on his feet.*

James I know of him. The famed explorer of Western Australia.

Lloyd *musings* And Tasmania as well, I seem to remember ... Am I right there?  
Tazzie, too?

De Chaumont *ignoring the interruptions* I had imagined a polite scene whereby Monsieur Ravel and I  
would toss about the supposed value of the object with what I  
hoped would be a charming lady. And then a sale would be  
effected: dignified and sophisticated and tactful. That was my  
plan, in my head.  
But, not so!  
This was ... how is it to say "*chicaner sur le prix*"?

Glover Um ... well, to haggle over the price, I suppose?

De Chaumont *grunts* Uh.  
But no lady, this one.

She was a low creature with hungry eyes, but fat and unlovely with it. To cap it all, she proceeded to spill the ink onto the Great Man. A fountain pen without its cap was the ultimate villain. But ***she*** wielded it.

Polly *fascinated*

So ... Who won the autograph, Sir? You or Ravel?

De Chaumont *blunt*

He did.

I am here in the South to retrace the steps of my hero.

That is why I am here.

Solely for that purpose.

And so ... This is my "Ravel" anecdote for your delight.

*De Chaumont surprises James by turning directly towards him and nodding quickly.*

Polly *very confused*

So ... then ... Your hero is Maurice Ravel, is he?

De Chaumont *firmly*

*Non.*

When but a child I was taken to Versailles. It was there that I viewed a superb painting of the Comte de Lapérouse receiving his instructions from the King. And I could not but adore him. Such a commission: to voyage to the other side of the Earth to emulate James Cook.

You might wonder, then, why (if this august seafarer is my idol) – why it is that I became a land-based warrior and why I did not cleave to the sea as my profession. But ... That was not to be my calling.

*De Chaumont shrugs.*

Polly *wondering*

Nobody knows what happened to Lapérouse, do they? He just sort of disappeared ...

De Chaumont

You are in the right, Madame.

An acquaintance has loaned to me a volume dedicated to Antoine

Bruni d'Entrecasteaux. It was Bruni who was sent out by the Republic to retrace the steps of Lapérouse. Thus, I will retrace **his** steps.

Lloyd                    You're a bit too far east for D'Entrecasteaux, however. Take the train to Perth. Cross the Great Australian Bight.

Grace                    No, no. That's not how it goes.

The train to Perth crosses the Nullarbor Plain. The Great Australian Bight is way to the South.

*De Chaumont still addresses James, ignoring both Lloyd and Grace.*

De Chaumont            Ravel spoke to me, during the *brouhaha* (finding the replacement pant, you know?). He said something so hypnotic ...

Catherine *enthralled*    Yes?

De Chaumont            In a lateral reference to the illustrious seafarer.

*There is a pregnant lull.*

Polly *intrigued*            What ... What did he say?

*De Chaumont breathes in, looking over at the wall without seeing it.*

De Chaumont            *Rara avis in terris nigroque simillima cygno.*

This was of course a reference to the native bird of this country. D'Entrecasteaux was captivated by the newly-discovered fauna of the Great South Land.

*On seeing the discomfiture of the guests (who shuffle in their seats), Glover explains.*

Glover                    Forgive me, Sir, but the illusion may be lost in some measure.

*[To the assembled guests, by way of explanation]*

For thousands of years, the European metaphor for a non-existent entity was the black swan, until (that is) such time as these splendid birds were found in profusion here in Australia.

Juvenal's words (which translate as something like "a rare bird in

the lands, and like a black swan") would appear to encapsulate this metaphor.

*Judging by the demeanour of the dinner guests, it is evident that further investigation is required.*

Glover *smiling slightly* One is forced to understand the context: here was a place (long undiscovered but much sought-after) said to be brimming with gold and other precious commodities. A place of mystery and fear.

And what did the early explorers find?

Why, the swans were all black, which destroyed at a stroke their established axiom (held for over 1000 years). Think of the ballet "Swan Lake" ...

Not only that, but huge rats bounded about on their hind legs and stowed their offspring in furry pouches. An otter-like beast with the bill of a duck laid eggs yet lactated to feed the hatchlings.

It was all too preposterous and --

Grace *whispers* What a shame that Alex and Michael aren't here to add their tuppence worth.

De Chaumont It is so very absurd, no?

And thus, here I am!

END OF SCENE

### **I, Scene iii:** External, Sydney University 1932

*Alex, Ernie, Droop and Barry walk (in the grounds of Sydney University) in a purposeful manner directly toward the camera.*

*They are thin and wiry, dressed in shabby suits (with ties) and robust leather shoes. Droop perpetually has a roll-your-own hanging from the corner of his mouth (except in lecture theatres).*

*Barry has a pencil tucked behind his ear. They are intense about whatever happens to be the subject matter but also know how to play up.*

*With an array of books clutched in their arms, the young men march towards their next lecture.*

Barry *angry* I wish I'd been there. I would have given the Frenchie something to go on with.

Alex *frowning heavily* Well, Uncle Finn (who's a good sort of a bloke at heart) couldn't believe it.  
  
Here's a bloke sails over from France (of all places) to ponder the colour of Australian swans. It's bullshit. Has to be!

Droop But not just a "bloke": this gent is a highly-decorated warrior and budding statesman. It's a complete furphy if you ask me.

Ernie *reasonable* He's probably wondering about the same thing that's been needling me for years.

Droop What's that?

Ernie Well, everybody and their dog was sent down to this part of the world to find *Terra Australis*. And they kept missing it (all but the North and West coasts, that is). How the hell was that possible?  
It's as big as Brazil!

Alex That's occurred to me in my darker moments. But then, basically -  
- who cares, mate?

Barry *argumentative* No it's not! It's smaller than Brazil, in land area. Where did you go to school: the Gore Street State School?

Alex Point is: a Frenchie who's seen war service and is trying to get a foothold into Government circles doesn't bugger off Down Under to sort out why the swans are black and how platypuses manage to feed their young.

And the codswallop about Jean-François de Galaup is a pack of tripe, too.

Nobody's ever **heard** of him, let alone made him their hero.

END OF SCENE

### **I, Scene iv:** Michael Cobey's Room At Sydney University 1932

*The location here is Michael Cobey's tutoring room.*

*There is a loud knock at the door. Michael does not look up from his work (correcting papers).*

Michael                      Come!

Alex                         What d'ya find out?

*Michael slowly raises his eyes to look his brother (Alex) over, in a tired fashion.*

Michael *wearily*            Aren't you supposed to bow to your tutor?

*Alex flops untidily into a nearby chair.*

Alex                         Not if he's my big brother.

Well?

*Michael leans back in his chair.*

Michael *sighs*              His name is Colonel Claude de Chaumont. A very formidable warrior of exceptional cunning and insight: a dangerous adversary. And has a political bent. Tipped to do extremely well in that direction.

His companion on this great journey Down South is one Major Grahame Glover of the British Army. A matriculant and scholar who gave his Responsions at Oxford.

Alex *impressed*            Really? The Little Go.

Hmmm ...



Michael And an Australian chap is with them. Don't know his mono.

Alex *very interested* A learned British Major, a fire-eater of a French Colonel and an Aussie hanger-on. In Sydney.

What do you make of that, Micky?

Michael *shrugs* Whatever their mission, no-one is aware.

Alex *snorting disparagingly* You heard about the cock-and-bull yarn he spun at Uncle Finn's, didn't you? Gracie told me all about it.

Hmph! Swans, marsupials and monotremes! Don't make me laugh!

Michael However, the part about the French explorer is spot-on.

Furthermore, Professor Daniel Hill is joining the Army men to put them in the picture. In Fremantle. Hill is a high-ranking RC Monsignor to boot. That will go down well with the Frenchie. I gather that he's a card-carrying Catholic who'd rather have his throat slit than miss mass.

Alex *laughs loudly* So they have to chunder off to the other side of the continent! T'riffic!

Michael Alright. That's all I can give you. Crumbs to the starving.

Now, buzz off and keep your nose clean.

*Alex swiftly and noisily rises, striding quickly from the room. He closes the door. Michael smiles, shakes his head and resumes his work. The door reopens and Alex pokes his head back.*

Alex How much is a ticket on the train to Perth?

END OF SCENE

**I, Scene v:** Finn Cobey's Back Yard Overlooking Sydney Harbour 1932

*Brothers Finn and Gil Cobey sit on Finn's balcony. There is a marvellous view of some of Sydney Harbour (between the trees). [Caution: there was no bridge nor opera house back in 1932].*

*The brothers drink beer negligently. Gil does not look very well.*

Finn                      No, I liked him, as a matter of fact ... In spite of all the rocking horse poop he waffled on about.

Gil                        Grace let slip that he was not everyone's idea of a suave dinner guest.

Finn                      Oh, totally the gent. Very correct and "the-done-thing".  
  
But I know what Gracie is referring to. He had everybody's jaw dropping a mile with his outlandish conversation. He's a bloody strange coot, I'll tell you straight.

Gill *shrugs*              How many Frenchies have you ever met? Maybe they're all like that ...

END OF SCENE

**I, Scene vi:** Paris, The Office of the Prime Minister of France 1932

|                       |
|-----------------------|
| Important Background. |
|-----------------------|

*PRESIDENT:*

*Georges d'Anvire-Egret leads the Legion of France party, which is in a coalition government with the Parti d'Accord (PDA). The President does not appear in this scene.*

*PRIME MINISTER:*

*Terence Orgivie.*

OTHERS:

*Other Legion of France ministers include Louis-France Belmont & Ignace Lorimal.*

*The other party in the coalition is here represented by Jean-Marc Trubille (deputy PM and leader of the PDA), Paul Gambonet and Lance Yves Quinne.*

|                       |
|-----------------------|
| Seating Arrangements. |
|-----------------------|

*Seated at his desk is Orgivie. Standing on either side of him and slightly to the rear of Orgivie are Belmont and Lorimal.*

*On a chair before Orgivie and facing him sits Trubille. Standing on either side of him and slightly to the rear of Trubille are Gambonet and Yves Quinne.*

|            |
|------------|
| The Scene. |
|------------|

*A superb clock ticks from the mantelpiece.*

*This scene is very taut. The characters are stiff, grim-faced, and polite.*

*Watched by Trubille, Gambonet and Yves Quinne, Orgivie peruses an official paper held in his hand.*

*Belmont and Lorimal watch Trubille, Gambonet and Yves Quinne as Orgivie reads.*

*Orgivie looks up under his brows, speaking to Trubille.*

Orgivie                      And you say that this perpetrator ... er ...

*Orgivie glances back at the paper, trying to discover a name. Belmont steps forward to discreetly tap his fountain pen on the page for the benefit of the Prime Minister.*

Orgivie                      ... Ah yes! This Tobolic fellow. *Merci.*

*[Raises head to speak again to Trubille]*

You are telling me that this Nicolai Tobolic is now dead?

Trubille *smugly smiling,*    Precisely.  
*nodding*

Orgivie *twitching the paper*                      And according to this, by his own hand?

Trubille *sage*                      That would appear to be the case, Prime Minister.

*There is a slight pause during which Orgivie (frowning) taps the paper idly with his fountain pen.*

Orgivie                      The National Guard fellows who discovered his corpse – How reliable are they?

Yves Quinne                      Mr Prime Minister, is it that you are intimating that the incident might well be an assassination framed to resemble a suicide?

*Terence Orgivie is much surprised by this question.*

Orgivie                      Obviously! That has to be a possibility, surely.

Lorimal *abruptly*                      Does the manner of his death matter? Really? Do we care? I mean, so long as this creature **is** dead?

*Another pause ensues as all in the room look in an interested fashion at Ignace Lorimal. Orgivie returns to his examination of the paper: but is now fidgety. He nods unthinkingly.*

Lorimal *pushing on*                      You know ... A "nine-day-wonder" to be put behind us as soon as decency allows.

Yves Quinne                      I hardly think --

Orgivie                      Ignace is to some extent correct, gentlemen. Except that whereas **we** care not how the enigmatic and fascinating fraudster met his demise, a sizable portion of the population --

Belmont *snorts*                      The red-raggers and their fascist pals!

Orgivie *nods*                      Mmmm ... *oui*.

These citizens will undoubtedly find hidden meaning here and use it as a capital offence that the government inspired and so on and so forth.

Trubille *smooth*                      And make of it a *cause celebre*.

Orgivie                      Exactly.

Do any of us have acquaintance with somebody at the National Guard who might be considered "sound"?

*[Looks about at the other men]*

A reliable officer?

Lorimal

But yes! Captain Mouillain is an old school chum of mine. I will definitely vouch for him.

Orgivie *to Lorimal*

Then Ignace, will you be so good as to contact the captain immediately.

Ask him (as politely as you dare, will you?) to issue a statement to the Press detailing their finding of the body face-down on a hotel bed in a pool of blood with a loaded handgun found nearby. One bullet spent. You and the captain may embellish the story such as to make it believable.

Hopefully it's the truth anyway. However, if not ...

*[Shrugs and pouts]*

*[To the 3 PDA men]*

Thank you, my dear gentlemen. That will do for now.

*Orgivie nods his dismissal and the 3 men bow as they leave the room.*

~~~~~ Break ~~~~~

*The 3 PDA men discuss the conversation as they walk smartly away from the PM's office.*

Gambonet

I despise cover-ups.

Yves Quinne

Because they are liable to become too complicated, eh?

Gambonet *nods*

Of course.

The pigeons plucked by Nicolai Tobolic represent some of our

most illustrious and respected personages. They fell into his hands as do ripe plums – so thoroughly credible was he, I believe.

That means, then, that many high-flyers will be agog to recover their investments *and* to comprehend why they were tricked by such a smooth fellow.

*There is a short silence as they continue to walk along. Gambonet is consumed in his own thoughts.*

Gambonet *to no-one in* ... their investments ...

*particular*

This sham (if it proves to be a sham and even if not!) will force people to think. And I loathe that possibility.

*Trubille stops suddenly, caught by this ludicrous pronouncement.*

Trubille *laughing aloud* An electorate that thinks! What a horrible concept!

*The three men now laugh. But when they resume their walking, a more sombre mood descends on them.*

Trubille You are looking for problems.

Lorimal has it right. The "nine-day-wonder" will dissolve into the ether and bother us no more. Time to step forward.

END OF SCENE

## **I, Scene vii:** Sydney, The Home of Gil Cobey 1932

*The scene begins with a close-up of a sulphur-crested cockatoo (Ophelia) in a cage. The bird is nodding its head and sidling back and forth along its perch. Grace is seen close-by, attempting to encourage the bird to talk.*

Grace Pretty Polly ... Gorgeous Grace ...

*The cockatoo manages: "Hello Cocky". It continues bobbing and sidling.*

Grace Yes, "Hello Cocky".

*Once again, the cockatoo intones: "Hello Cocky".*

Grace Come on Ophelia ... Say "Pretty Polly".

*Once again, the cockatoo intones: "Hello Cocky".*

Grace Pretty Polly.

Come on you stupid bird.

*The bird sidles and nods. Grace sighs in frustration.*

Grace *giving up* Get thee to a nunnery.

*Gil arrives, diverting Grace from the bird, which interjects "Hello Cocky" at intervals in the background.*

Grace Oh, hello.

You've been gone for ages. No problems?

*Gil shakes his head as he painfully lowers himself into a kitchen chair.*

Grace How's Uncle Finn?

Gil Alright.

Grace Did they feed you? Are you hungry --

Gil Listen! I got talking to the girls (your cousins) ... They're choofing off to Perth.

Grace Polly and Catherine?

*The walking has obviously given him pain. He winces and looks harried.*

Gil No, no. The other buggers.

Grace *half laughing* Who's choofing off to Perth, then?

Gil Aw that French bloke with the double-barrelled surname. The one who made you all gag with his wonky anecdotes.

Grace You mean Colonel de Chaumont. That's hardly double-barrelled.

Gil And with him that Pommy officer who was giving you the eye.

Grace *shocked* What?!

Gil *determined* Your Auntie Glenys is never wrong in the "affairs-of-the-heart" department.

Grace *really shocked* I hardly spoke to him.

Gil And it's been decided amongst your loved ones that it's been a bit crook for you having to nurse me all the time. You've been tied to me for years – and to the boys.

Anyway, the long and the short of it is that you're going with them.

Grace You're joking!

Gil It was the English Major's idea. He's finding that bloke that our endearing government saddled him with is a bit of a nong – not much help to him at all. No, he'd rather have one of us (he said) if anyone could be spared. Straightaway, your Uncle and Auntie thought of you.

Grace But --

Gil *firmly* They've all decided that you will go along to "escort" the English bloke and the French chappie.

Grace A holiday?

Gil More or less.

Grace In Perth?

Gil Yep, sounds like it.

Grace But who --

Gil Don't you worry about me. Cath and Poll are going to look after me and the boys can manage for themselves for once. Do them good.



*Grace wanders about the kitchen watched by Gil. She is reflecting.*

Grace                      That ... That will be lovely. A trip to Perth ... In the train ...  
  
                                  *[Swings about and is now forceful]*  
  
                                  But I'm not one bit in love with the Major and I'll tell him that  
                                  straight when I next see him.

Gil                         That's up to you.

*Gil watches as Grace adopts a determined demeanour.*

Gil                         That's up to you ...

END OF SCENE

## **I, Scene viii: Paris, The Office of Jean-Marc Trubille 1932**

*Trubille is seated at his desk working on papers as Lance Yves Quinne bursts into the office. Trubille looks up. Yves Quinne is upset and agitated.*

Yves Quinne *breathless*   Our friend Paul Gambonet has a finger on the pulse, I find.  
  
                                  The pathologist who examined the body questions Captain  
                                  Mouillain's story. Something about the angle of the bullet's entry is  
                                  to blame.  
  
                                  He has had to be paid off.

Trubille *somewhat*       Er ... Whose body is that?  
*confused*

Yves Quinne *exploding*   The Tobolic creature of course!  
  
                                  So does the concierge who claims to have been peeking from  
                                  between the louvres of a window just as the National Guard  
                                  gorillas arrived at his hotel.

He watched the frantic and irrational Tobolic pacing about in his hotel room ... In much despair, so this chatelaine claims – and not a sign of a firearm of any kind.

Then POW! Dead! This man (who is designated to have shot himself to death) does not have recourse to a gun of any description.

*There is a very taut silence during which both men stare at each other. Yves Quinne breathes very fast.*

Yves Quinne                      Again, a witness has to be paid off. Ah! If only we had listened to Paul.

Trubille                          Only two people have come forward?

Yves Quinne                      So far.

Trubille                          Has our Prime Minister been informed of this ... er ... unwelcome development?

Yves Quinne                      *Oui.* Ignace Lorimal took off like a rabbit – running at full tilt along the corridors of power – to bring the PM up to date.

What a mess!

Trubille                          Nonsense. I half expected such an outcome.

Yves Quinne *warning*            There may be more.

Trubille                          We'll simply tough it out. And then it goes away. God knows that we have so many other difficulties ahead of us.

I advise you to be calm, Lance Yves. Stand firm.

This will prove to be a minor annoyance, not a Shakespearian tragedy, as you seem to imagine.

*Trubille shrugs expansively. Yves Quinne shakes his head.*

END OF SCENE

END OF ACT I

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## ACT II The Play's The Thing ...

### II, Scene i: A Beer Garden In Sydney 1932

*It is a Saturday afternoon and the hotel to which the beer garden belongs is thronging with male patrons. They laugh and talk loudly, jostling each other as they carry pots of beer clenched between their fingers.*

*The boys (Alex, Droop, Ernie and Barry) have managed to grab a table. It is now covered with glasses (some containing beer) and other impedimenta. In front of Ernie stands a tin money-box shaped like an important edifice (to wit, a bank). Ernie is sedulously attempting to open same with a tin opener.*

*In front of Alex are small piles of money (shillings, florins, pennies and halfpennies) and some folding money. Along with the money, Alex has a slip of paper and a pencil.*

Alex *savagely*                      Well what **else** are we going to do with our holidays? Spend 7 weeks dragging ourselves over to Her Majesty's to see Gilbert and Sullivan in between fishing off the rocks?

Ernie *through clenched teeth*    It's a study break ... Not "holidays" at all ...

Droop *apologetic*                Actually, I quite like fishing.

Barry                                      And I don't mind a bit of G & S. Some of it's very entertaining.

Alex *irritated*                            Not for 7 weeks you don't! Besides, there may be another war at any tick of the clock and we'll all die.

*[Savagely to Ernie]*

Come on, Ernie. Can't you get that bloody thing open?

*Ernie (teeth desperately clenched) tries to murmur something. Alex (frustrated and feisty) reaches over and reefs money box and can opener from Ernie (who sags back in relief). As the conversation proceeds, Alex forces open the recalcitrant money box.*

Barry                                      Why don't you just open the thing with the key?

Droop *musings*                           My Dad died in the last war. I hardly knew him ...

Ernie                                        They don't give you a key. They keep it at the bank, so as you don't break into their money-box and take out your hard-won savings and blue them on smokes and grog.

*Ernie shrugs for extra emphasis.*

*Barry gives Droop a kindly pat on the shoulder. Alex (not so sympathetic) has no time for condolences.*

Alex                                        Yeah, Droop -- your Dad died defending the country and being a glorious hero.

But what will **our** tombstones say? Did nothing (except for building a train and a couple of gantry cranes out of a meccano set) and went nowhere.

Droop *confused*                           So ... Are you suggesting that we spend our holidays joining up? What ... Chuck in our studies?

Ernie                                        Against whom? This proposed war that you mentioned ...

Alex                                        Oh, I dunno ... Prussia or Africa or someone ... There!

*Alex pours Ernie's money onto the table in front of Ernie.*

Alex                      Count that!

*Alex then resorts to the pencil and paper, and fiddles with the piles of money as he counts. He points to each man in turn with his pencil.*

Alex                      Droop: 9 and 6. Barry: 4 pounds 6 shillings. Me: 11 and thruppence-ha'penny. Ernie --

Droop *to Alex*            Hey, don't you owe me 2 bob for --

*Alex rounding on Droop*      Doesn't matter, does it? What I say – we're pooling our resources together for the common good.

Droop *sullen*, to  
*himself*

*As the other men drink and bicker, Ernie is becoming flustered.*

Alex *annoyed*                      Come on!

Ernie                      It's just that it's hard to manage under pressure.

Droop                      You'll never make a bank teller, then.

Ernie *relieved* Rightio! I make it 1 pound 8 and tuppence-ha'penny. Plus 1 commemorative sovereign that I'm not parting with.

*Alex quickly tots up the total as Ernie shoves the money towards Alex.*

Alex All up, I make it 6 pound, 14 shillings and 11 pence ha’penny.

But that’s plenty of spon. We’ll get our kits together and billow over to the railway station. Fremantle – here we come!

Barry I thought you said "Perth"?

Alex *dismissive*                      Same thing.

And when we get there, we'll sort out this explorer business in between working as deck hands on a fishing boat or something up that alley.

*Alex sculls the rest of his beer.*

Ernie *wistful* And experience rough living, meet desperate characters and have a great adventure to rival anything served up in the Boys' Own Annual.

Barry *amused* And sing the songs from "HMS Pinafore" as we swab the --

*Alex suddenly stands.*

Alex *scathing* Dry up, you two! I want to get to the bottom of this French Army bloke and his long-forgotten explorer.

END OF SCENE

## **II, Scene ii:** Memoirs of Bruni d'Entrecasteaux, Brest 1791

*In this scene, Bruni is dressed in the correct uniform of a French Rear Admiral. His ship (La Recherche) is at anchor in the harbour at Brest. From the bow to the stern, Bruni d'Entrecasteaux is now going to point out to his audience (that is to say, to de Chaumont himself) the configuration of his charge and the reason for the impending adventure.*

Bruni *direct to camera* My very dear reader, when last I spoke to you, it was in my guise as a distinguished fop who looked as if a puff of wind would blow him over.

But now the real Antoine Bruni reveals to you those attributes which constitute a courageous and skilled seaman of longstanding.

*In the background, we can make out lighters filled with uniformed sailors heading towards La Recherche.*

Bruni *direct to camera* I am now made a Rear-Admiral by the Assembly which commands me to search for the whereabouts of that gallant explorer Jean-François de Galaup, Count La Pérouse. And I am thereby given command of this ship: La Recherche.

*Bruni swells with pride as he gazes about.*

Bruni *pointing as appropriate to parts of the ship*

So, knowing that you are a mere landlubber and know nothing of these matters, I shall introduce you to my vessel.

She is a frigate (of the Porpoise class) armed with 12 guns. Her length is measured just short of 120 feet, she is of width 30 feet across the beam, and her draught is 13 feet. She displaces some 500 tons. Those, Mr Landlubber, are her vital statistics.

*Now the lighters have reached La Recherche and the seamen and officers are coming aboard. They salute Bruni who gives a short nod and touches his hat. Their work begins immediately they are on board ship.*

Bruni *earnestly, speaking direct to camera*

You must realize, Sir, that this is not a pleasurable junket nor does our impending voyage constitute a wartime strike.

This is a humane undertaking in search of a lost and valued comrade.

However, should we be put under fire by those rascalion English matelots or by pirates of any description, my men are fully trained to handle that situation and will protect my ship with their lives.

*Here, Bruni glances about him to see more men clambering up the rope ladders from the lighters.*

Bruni *pointing as appropriate to parts of the ship*

When they all grace us with their presence, my crew will number 200 male souls (that is of naval officers and sailors along with our doctor and diverse tradesmen, you understand).

And here is *le mâât de misaine* that the English call the foremast. And this: the main mast, of course, with *le mâât d'artimon* (that the English would refer to as the mizzen) right here.

*The officers and sailors take position on board as if ready to set sail. The huge canvas sails billow out as Bruni continues to speak.*

Bruni *pointing as appropriate to parts of*

The masts are secured by *les haubans*, and my sailors clamber about as do monkeys via *les enfléchures*. And you (being a



*the ship* discerning reader, no doubt) will want to discover that the little construction at the stern is *le kiosque de navigation*, whereas that perch up so high is *la hune de vigie*. Those English rogues would say "crows nest" for that lookout. How quaint!

*Bruni is approached by a junior officer, who expresses his subordination by bowing and touching his hat deferentially. Bruni nods dismissively, and the officer then gives orders to weigh anchor and set sail. A burst of vigorous activity follows that order.*

*Bruni direct to camera* And so, we now take our leave of Brest, bound for New Caledonia where we shall rendezvous with La Pérouse and escort him and his crew back to Civilization. They will be most thankful, I believe, to return to the Motherland and its many riches and delights.

So, thank you, Monsieur, for your time and attention.

I doubt not that we shall meet each other in your lovely little book again and again.

*Bruni turns and wanders off to supervise the exit from Brest.*

END OF SCENE

## **II, Scene iii:** Paris, The Office of the Prime Minister of France 1932

|   |
|---|
| The Seating Arrangements In The Office Of The Prime Minister Of France. |
|---|

*Seated at his desk is Terence Orgivie. Standing to his left are Louis-France Belmont and Ignace Lorimal.*

*Before Orgivie and facing him stand Jean-Marc Trubille, Paul Gambonet and Lance Yves Quinne.*

The Scene.

*A superb Louis XV clock ticks from the mantelpiece.*

*This scene is fraught with emotion, especially as concerns the Prime Minister, Terence Orgivie.*

*In fact, our scene begins just as a shouting match is already in progress. All the men in the Prime Minister's office appear taut and shaken. Orgivie himself is red-faced and shaking with fury.*

Orgivie *explodes*                      I've lost patience with you, Gambonet!

You are wasting my time. Get out! Get out!

*Gambonet stands his ground: red-faced and shocked.*

Gambonet As to that, Sir --

Orgivie *frustrated and* Your utterances are without direction and most ill-timed.

*angry*      I want the latest report in bald words and without embroidery.

The latest report on the situation. Would you provide me with that now, if you please?

Trubille *coldly* Treasury workers are striking, the coal miners have set down the tools of their trade and our train drivers even now prepare --

Orgivie *agitated*      Where is this happening? Locally? Just Paris only? Or widespread:  
in all of France?

*The other five men in the room appear stunned: they cannot believe that the Prime Minister would ask such a question (that indicates his loss of understanding of the gravity of the situation).*

Belmont All of France, Prime Minister. The whole country – in entirety.

Lorimal                      So grave a position ... A state of emergency must be declared –  
and soon.

*The five men nod as they look about at each other.*

*Distracted, Orgivie shuffles the papers on his desk as if trying to look busy.*

Orgivie                      Are they Leftists or Rightists?

*Again, the Prime Minister's failure to grasp the current political realities appals the other men.*

*Trubille gives a despairing sigh.*

Orgivie *looks up*                      Well?

Trubille                                  Both sides have melded into a Cartel des Gauches.

Orgivie *aghast*                      How can that be? That is anarchy, surely?

Trubille                                  They retain the support of honest grass roots Frenchmen. They have inflamed the hearts, minds and souls of city and province alike. Town and country flock to their cause.

The core values of the Cartel are enshrined in solid, robust dedication to a strong, unshakeable patriotism. This fervour exudes like blood from their manifesto.

Yves Quinne                          We cannot fight that! But we must do so!  
*passionate*

*In uncontrolled fury, Orgivie stands and then charges over to the window. The other 5 men move about such that they now stand in a united fashion, rather than as 2 separate factions.*

*Orgivie now attempts to explain what he does not know, dismissively.*

Orgivie *ranting*                      Bah! This Cartel is no more than a dirty liaison between corrupt radicals who were rightly purged from the system and now attempt to rehabilitate themselves at our expense.

Yves Quinne                          But this is to downplay the threat with old-fashioned platitudes, Sir.

*Orgivie is insulted. He rounds on Yves Quinne, even to the extent of jabbing a forefinger into the chest of Yves Quinne. At which point, Yves Quinne seems ready to throw a punch at the Prime Minister.*

Orgivie *wildly*                      Old fashioned? Old fashioned?

So what are **you** doing to shore-up the government's fortunes, eh?

*The physicality alarms the other men, as it would appear that a punch-up is brewing. They rush forward to pull Yves Quinne back.*

Yves Quinne *shouting angrily* What time do I have to do other than bribe this one or that one?  
We are haemorrhaging money on a daily basis to pay off those who are questioning the fall-out from the Tobolic Affair. I find --

Orgivie *snappy and dismissive* Ah! I've put that squalid episode concerning the nefarious Tobolic behind me.

Yves Quinne *gritted teeth* But so many of our worthy citizens have **not!**  
I find them queued up outside my office every morning, each one expressing his or her real concern as to some aspects of the affair.  
Why, we are running out of envelopes with which to despatch the pay-offs!

Gambonet And so you must see, Monsieur Prime Minister, that our parties in coalition are becoming a standing joke.

Trubille Except that it's not funny. None of this is remotely funny.

Orgivie This stuff that you are jabbering to me ... It is simply an over-reaction to a case of a trickster or fraudster being --

Lorimal Sir, there is no simplicity now.  
In reality, we have been caught with our pants down around our ankles. We must quickly hitch them up.

Belmont We are enmeshed in this nascent threat to the Republic. Our enclave is now a battleground, Monsieur Prime Minister.

Trubille We all hoped that it would blow away and be forgotten, but quite the opposite has happened, and you must declare a state of emergency. Call out the troops to --

Orgivie *again infuriated* No, no! I shall never cave-in to those affected by the ethereal withies.  
These deluded souls are the victims of a concentrated attack by ...  
by ...

*[Snatches at an idea]*

... by mysterious foreign gentlemen!

Yes, foreign gentlemen who are fostering ... No, no! ... Who are fomenting discontent in our backyard.

Trubille *appalled*                      Terence!

*The other men roll their eyes in disbelief.*

Orgivie *on a roll*                      The wise and the good will see through the Cartel des Gauches; see it for what it is.

Trubille *concerned*                      Terence, my dear chap, it is evident that you do not --

Orgivie *with finality*                      This interview is at an end. Leave my office immediately, all of you.

And take **no action** of any kind until advised to do so by myself.

*Orgivie marches to the door, reefs it open and stands there such that he is able to usher the very surprised men from his office. When they exit, he slams the door shut with force.*

END OF SCENE

### *Explanation of why we need three steam trains:*

*At some nebulous time, each Australian state decided to build railway lines that would link up towns and cities within that state.*

*There was no reference to other states, and thus, different rail gauges cropped-up, making interstate journeys fraught. So, when you arrived at (say) Albury from Melbourne (bound for Sydney), you had to bail out of the train and get onto another one due to the mismatch of gauges.*

### **Sydney-BH**

*In this tale (whatever the true situation was), to fit my plot progression, I have the passengers travelling from Sydney to Broken Hill on the "Sydney-BH" steam train. This train provides the most*

*Spartan conditions of the three trains.*

**The Guster**

*At Broken Hill, the passengers will disembark at platform 2 and meander across to platform 1 where another train will take them to Port Augusta. I've named this steam train "The Guster". It is a cracking train which rattles along, providing very comfortable accommodation for first class and rubbish conditions for everyone else.*

**John Forrest**

*Finally, the Port Augusta-to-Perth leg of the trip (which is excruciatingly long) is accomplished in the "John Forrest" steam train. This is the newest and most elegant of the trains. It is named after the first Premier of Western Australia, John Forrest.*

**Basic travelling conditions:**

*The first class carriage provides luxurious transport for 36 passengers per trip: a spacious lounge, a stylish dinette and private bed compartments are provided. Uniformed waiters ply the clients with food and beverages, the meals in the dinette are first-rate and guards wander about during the night ensuring the safety and privacy of the sleeping guests.*

*Everybody else is bundled into the many second-class carriages where he or she is assigned a cramped seat (doubling as a bed), no luxuries whatsoever and a heavily-laden trolley appears in the aisles at meal times.*

*For "The Guster" and "John Forrest", the many other carriages not devoted to human beings carry large machinery, a few cars, some coal and live cattle.*

## **II, Scene iv: The First-Class Carriage, The Sydney-BH Train 1932**

*Seated in the first-class carriage on the journey from Sydney to Broken Hill are Colonel de Chaumont and his party (Major Grahame Glover, Jeff Challon and Grace Cobey). The train rocks along during daylight hours with the usual "clicketty-clack, clicketty-clack".*

*Colonel de Chaumont reads his Bruni d'Entrecasteaux book and Jeff Challon dozes beside his window. Grace sits on her own, quietly watching the countryside flick by through the windows. Major Glover*

*looks towards her, hesitates and then strolls up to sit beside her. They smile at each other. Grace's smile evidently puts the Major at his ease.*

Glover I know that you said that we must maintain a platonic friendship and nothing stronger. However, that should not preclude us sitting together admiring your beautiful country, mmm?

Grace You may not eulogize quite so fervently once we reach Port Augusta, Major. After that, it'll be desert, desert and more desert. You'd better get hold of a gripping detective novel to get you over the Nullarbor. That's my advice anyway.

Glover I'll bear that in mind. And I notice that **you** keep a copy of "Hamlet" in your handbag.

Grace *surprised* Yes, I do. And a very battered "Julius Caesar" as well. You can pick up Shakespeare and then put it down again, or dip into it at any stage without spoiling it. Like doing a "Topcliffe's Torture" cryptic crossword puzzle.

Glover Ah, yes! A good Topcliffe can keep you going for days – Like aging something in oak.

Grace Exactly.

But ... But how did you know what's in my bag? I hope you haven't been prying.

*Glover shifts a little and gazes off into the distance.*

Glover Well, yes and no ...

I was surreptitiously watching you applying some scent to your neck. Your bag was open and ... Well the red cover of your "Hamlet" shone like a beacon.

Grace *smiles naughtily* Ah, ha! Wrong, wrong, wrong. The red cloth cover is "Julius Caesar". "Hamlet" is blue.

Glover *diverted* But the thing is, "Hamlet" is utterly my favourite of Billy's plays. I

lug my copy with me whenever I'm shipped-off anywhere.

*Glover dives into one of the pockets of his uniform jacket. He drags out a red-covered edition of "Hamlet".*

Glover                      See!

*Glover riffles through the pages of his small volume.*

Glover                      Tell me, which is your favourite scene. Mine is the very opening: the guards on the battlements meeting the ghost of Hamlet's father.

Grace *thinking*              It's evocative, certainly ... But ... No ... I vote for "Alas poor Yorick" ... Very ironic ... When the gravedigger hoicks up Yorick's skull and Hamlet gets nostalgic, only to find that the new grave is meant for his girlfriend, Ophelia.

*Glover nods. He continues to run his thumb along the edges of the closed book.*

Grace *in a rush*              We have to change trains at Broken Hill and then again at Port Augusta.

*Glover is confused.*

Glover                      Um ... I'm sorry ... What was that?

Grace                      I said: we have to change trains at Broken Hill and then again at Port Augusta.

*Glover appears to play her words back in his mind. He is evidently still not sure.*

Grace *laughing,*              Owing to different railway line gauges, we are required to leave  
*speaking in English*          this train at Broken Hill and then --  
*twee accent*

Glover *laughs*              Sorry! I see! You know, sometimes I find the Australian accent very difficult to decipher.

*Grace glances back to check on de Chaumont, who is still avidly reading his book.*

Grace *sotto voce*              By the time you and Colonel Claude are ready to drag yourselves



back to Europe, you'll both have fine Aussie accents! What's the bet?

END OF SCENE

## II, Scene v: Finn Cobey's Garage 1932

*Even in 1932, this is still a very old-fashioned garage which also encompasses a carpentry bench and tools. James has seconded a small corner of the garage wherein he practices with his drum kit. Being a classically trained musician, he also uses an ornate music stand.*

*James flicks through a musical score which he then places on the music stand, just as Polly enters the garage. Throughout the scene, Polly will pull down cardboard boxes from a high shelf and search for a small leather case which she will discover at the end of the scene, prior to her exit.*

Polly                      Don't mind me. I'm looking for the Mah-jongg set.

James                     Yes, it's up there. You're getting warmer.

Hey! Is that English soldier popping by for dinner again? He makes me laugh with his badly-recited Shakespearian quotes.

Polly                     Strictly speaking, he's an "officer" rather than a "soldier".

And no. He's bailed-out. Gone to Perth.

James *appalled*        What for? Perth? It's 1000s of miles away.

He didn't go just for the black swans, I hope. We have a decent flock of them at the local Botanical Gardens. He could have just nipped over there.

Polly                     He went for La Pérouse and d'Entrecasteaux. **God** knows why!

He's gone with that haughty French bloke who insisted on kissing my hand. And a local hanger-on (whose name escapes me) along

with our cousin Grace. They've all cleared-off bound for Perth.

James *knowingly* They're trying to marry Grace off to that English chap. "The Officer". That makes sense.

*Polly is unsure as to her brother's meaning: is he being facetious?*

Polly Yes, it does!

So Cath and I are on duty looking after Uncle Gil in her absence.

James And Mikey and Alex.

Polly No ... Just Michael. Alex has popped off to Perth as well, but with his Uni chums and not with the official party.

James *astounded* Cripes! What ails everyone?

Polly Ah! Found it.

What ails everyone? Who knows! I certainly don't.

I'm off. Ooroo. Back soon. You know where to reach me ...

*Polly quickly leaves the garage, with the leather case tucked under her arm.*

James Yes ... Bye-zee-byes.

*James is now settled on a stool, with his snare drum and the music stand before him. James uses one of his drumsticks to imagine that he is the conductor using his baton to capture the rapt attention of every member of his orchestra.*

James *sotto voce* Alright ladies and gents: every eye!

*Nodding his head twice, James then begins to practise the long and arduous ostinato rhythm which comprises the backbone of Ravel's Bolero.*

*This beat (perfectly executed) will continue well into the next scene until Orgivie, as if set off by a rocket, jumps up and tears angrily out of the box (in the theatre).*

END OF SCENE

## II, Scene vi: Le Meridien Theatre, Paris 1932

*Although small and cosy, Le Meridien Theatre is comprised of a noble exterior and a marvellous rococo interior. Above the stalls there is a small dress circle, and then above that, 6 private boxes.*

*On this particular evening the patrons of the theatre have dressed in evening attire. The play is a brand-new drama by a very prominent French playwright (La Salles) and is entitled “The King’s Conscience”.*

*Most of the action in this scene takes place in the very meagre but well-presented foyer (not much more than a foothold) behind the boxes, whereby access to the boxes is obtained through thick doors. The seating arrangements are as follows:*

|         |   |
|---------|---|
| BOX I   | Some unnamed aristocrats and plutocrats   |
| BOX II  | Louis-France <b>Belmont</b> and Madame Belmont and 2 male aides (political)                 |
| BOX III | Terence <b>Orgivie</b> and Madame Orgivie<br>Jean-Marc <b>Trubille</b> and Madame Trubille  |
| BOX IV  | Lance Yves <b>Quinne</b> and Madame Yves Quinne<br>Ignace <b>Lorimal</b> and Madame Lorimal |
| BOX V   | Some unnamed aristocrats and plutocrats   |
| BOX VI  | Some unnamed aristocrats and plutocrats   |

*During the scene, the occupants of the boxes (when in the foyer) will yell, shout and speak over one another.*

On The Stage.

*Throughout this scene, there is continuous and uninterrupted activity on the stage.*

*The play represents a rehash of the Tobolic Affair.*

*The following action takes place on stage and may (or may not) be picked-up by our camera (depending on where our political characters are located). However, there will be some audible reminders of the play's progression, even during the noise of the action in the foyer.*

- *A tortured man is having a mental attack as he wobbles back and forth in his hotel room having a complete meltdown. He yabbers on frenetically.*
- *Police car lights reflect at his hotel window. The man screams and is then shot: he falls dramatically to the floor. [This is Point \*\*\*.]*
- *Armed police (a SWAT team) burst into the hotel room and dispose of the body exactly as suggested by Orgivie in ACT I, scene vi.*
- *The armed police disappear.*
- *Media people swarm into the room and begin to scribble into shorthand notebooks and take photos with flash cameras (old-fashioned).*
- *A large contingent of Press people fire difficult questions at the solemn politicians (as they squirm uncomfortably).*
- *Then the action becomes balletic and surreal as the consciences of the politicians are flogged by devils and imps.*

**[At Point \*\*\*]**

*Our camera now deserts the activities on stage to pan over the theatre patrons. Those in the stalls and dress circle look about them (even craning their necks and pointing) to see the reaction of the guests seated in the boxes. There is concerned, interested and embarrassed whispering amongst the patrons.*

*The camera focuses on BOX III, where Orgivie can be seen to be quietly fuming under Trubille's concerned glances.*

*Suddenly, as if set off by a rocket, Orgivie jumps up and tears angrily out of the box. As already indicated at the end of the previous scene, James's ostinato rhythm on the snare drum ceases abruptly here.*

*Madame Orgivie looks about her, stunned and confused. Now the audience (who are no longer attentive to the play) are excited and thrilled that the Prime Minister has reacted in this way. Some men in the stalls hiss audibly.*

*Steel-jawed, Trubille quietly excuses himself to the ladies and swiftly leaves the box, closing the door after him.*

|                                     |
|-------------------------------------|
| In The Miniscule Third Level Foyer. |
|-------------------------------------|

*There is a lot going on at the same time.*

- *Orgivie paces about as best he can in the confined space, fuming and desperate.*
- *Both Madame Orgivie and Madame Trubille open the door at the back of BOX III and peer out. They are both frightened and concerned.*
- *The 2 aides from BOX II dash into the foyer, seemingly intent on providing support but neither being sure how to accomplish this.*
- *Belmont, Lorimal and Yves Quinne join in (breathless and concerned).*
- *Trubille confronts Orgivie. In this scene, these men tend to speak at the same time, trying to drown each other out.*

*Both men speak at the same time: Trubille is coldly angry, filled with contempt; and Orgivie is frantic as he speaks to one of the aides.*

| <i>Trubille</i>   | <i>Orgivie</i>  |
|---|---|
| <p>Sir, you absolutely cannot walk out on this performance ... It throws the worst possible slant on the situation.</p> <p>You play directly into the hands of the enemy.</p> <p>Can you not understand that?</p> | <p>Barrass!</p> <p>Take Madame Trubille and my wife down to the cars and get them home.</p> <p>Now! Now! Immediately!</p> <p>In fact, the other ladies too ... <i>Vite!</i></p> <p><i>Vite!</i></p> |

*There is a flurry of activity in the cramped foyer behind the boxes as beautifully-gowned wives (startled and confused) are shepherded away by equally shocked and confused aides.*

*The doors to BOX II, BOX III and BOX IV swing open, and the occupants of the other 3 boxes peek out to witness the “entertainment”. All of the boxes remain with doors open.*

*Now joined by Belmont, Lorimal and Yves Quinne, Orgivie can let rip as to his emotions, even though he is making a huge attempt to control himself.*

*Both men speak at the same time: Trubille is very angry and Orgivie is furious and spitting with rage.*

| <i>Trubille</i>   | <i>Orgivie</i>   |
|---|--|
| Monsieur le Prime Minister, you are<br>(after the President) our most senior<br>dignitary and this reaction ill-befits<br>your high office. | This outrage! Where is that snake<br>Gambonet? Why is he not in<br>attendance this evening? Is he the<br>traitorous dog? |

*During a couple of seconds, along with the drama on stage can be heard random boos and hisses from the men in the stalls.*

*Both men speak at the same time: Trubille appealing for common sense to prevail and Orgivie to all who are assembled.*

| <i>Trubille</i>  | <i>Orgivie</i>   |
|--|--|
| Listen to that!<br><br>You must resume your seat with all<br>haste. We all must go back and<br>present a united front. | Tell to me the name of the gutless<br>coward who orchestrated this<br>traitorous farce in La Salles’s name!<br>Is it indeed our “friend” Gambonet? |

*Not only have the occupants of the other boxes taken up strategic positions in order to witness this fracas, but other patrons have crept up the stairs. Apparently, the show in this tiny foyer is more entertaining than that for which they have paid good money. Belmont tries to herd them away in the manner of someone trying to corral an escaped horse.*

Yves Quinne                      Please, please Prime Minister. You can be heard by the audience

*attempting calm* in the theatre.

Orgivie *beside himself* His name! I want his name! His head will rest on the block whilst I wield a meat cleaver onto his neck!

Lorimal *pleading* You must desist!

Trubille We'll put it about that Madame Orgivie has been struck down by a migraine or some such malady ... She suffered and --

Orgivie *ranting* What must I do, eh?

March into the President's office and spill my guts to him?

*Both men speak at the same time: Trubille to Yves Quinne and Orgivie crying out in real anguish.*

| <i>Trubille</i>  | <i>Orgivie</i>   |
|--|--|
| Find a doctor in the audience ...<br>There ought to be at least 6 or 7 out there ... But do it quietly and be unobserved ... The PM should be sedated for his own safety ... | And what then, eh?<br><br>He will demand that I fall on my sword as my punishment. |

*Yves Quinne dashes off, demanding of the gathering crowd that they immediately resume their seats.*

*Orgivie once again tries for self-control and once again loses it. He turns on Lorimal, painfully gripping his shoulders.*

Orgivie *savage, imploring, crying* Ignace! Ignace! We have been betrayed by a filthy rat!

This country that we so love has become a rats' nest of subversion and deceit!

Lorimal *shaking* Prime Minister – Can you not return to the box and --

Orgivie *shouting hysterically* Don't you hear me? Ignace, we are **destroyed** by this!

*Trubille lunges forward to pull Orgivie away from the hapless Lorimal. Trubille pushes Orgivie into a handy chair then proceeds to tower over him.*

Trubille *very stern*            What destroys us, Orgivie, is that you are playing into their hands with this petulant rant.

I've asked for a doctor to dose you ... to settle you down. And then it will be imperative that you return to the box and sit out what is left of this seditious drama.

*There is a ghastly pause, as Trubille steps back. Once again, voices from the play seep up to the foyer.*

*Yves Quinne arrives with a fussy, elderly doctor, who carries the usual doctor's black bag.*

*Yves Quinne gestures wordlessly to the Prime Minister, and the doctor makes several disjointed yet soothing pronouncements ("all will be well", "just something to calm the nerves", "such bad weather as we've had", "here, swallow this down").*

*The tonic is presented to the unwilling Orgivie. Between them, Yves Quinne and the doctor manage to urge and force Orgivie to drink the medicine. Orgivie displays his disgust with the taste.*

*Under Turbille's stern and disapproving gaze, Orgivie is tidied up by the onlookers as the doctor toddles off (thanked briefly by Lorimal and Yves Quinne).*

*The men hoick Orgivie to his feet and navigate him back into BOX III. There is an audible gasp from the crowd.*

|                    |
|--------------------|
| Back Into The Box. |
|--------------------|

*Orgivie sits with as much dignity as he can muster. The other politicians sit with him in BOX III.*

*Below, the play continues to the accompaniment of hissing and booing from some members of the audience.*

*Orgivie begins to weep with tears and ragged sobs. Orgivie's head is to remain in shot for the remainder of this scene.*

*Trubille leans unobtrusively towards Lorimal.*

Trubille *low-voiced*            Our best hope is to produce de Chaumont for public gaze. He is



the man to bring some semblance of order to this horrible catastrophe.

Lorimal *whispers*

Yes, but ...

He is not in France just now.

*Taken aback, Trubille glances at Lorimal with a lift of his eyebrow.*

Lorimal *whispers*

*Australie.* He is in the Southern Hemisphere: *Australie.*

*Trubille sits back, open-mouthed, dumbfounded and very surprised at this news. Lorimal nods and pouts by way of confirmation.*

END OF SCENE

END OF ACT II



### ACT III Springs To Catch Woodcocks

#### III, Scene i: Standing About At The Broken Hill Railway Station, 1932

*Accompanied by their luggage and other belongings, the passengers continuing on to Port Augusta have gathered on Broken Hill station in the twilight. The guards stand about waiting for the changeover of trains, and in order to keep the “lower-class” passengers annoying the “upper-class” ones.*

*A 16-year-old clerk from the railway office struts up to one of the guards. He holds an envelope containing a telegram in his hand and this gives him a cocky importance.*

Clerk                                      I’ve got an important telegram for one of the first class passengers.

*The guard looks at the boy with complete lack of interest and simply nods towards the first-class passengers. The boy struts off.*

Clerk *calling out*                      Paging Colonel Chow-Mont. Paging Colonel Chow-Mont.

*Another guard pricks up his ears and calls the clerk over to him by means of a shrill whistle.*

Guard                                      Who’s that you’re after?

Clerk                                      An urgent telegram for Colonel Chow-Mont.

Guard Is he French? Is it for the French Colonel?

Clerk *shrugs* Um ... Might be ... Dunno ...  
*negligently*

Guard *beckoning* Let me see it.

*The clerk shows the envelope to the guard but does not let go of it.*

Guard *lightening* Ah yes! That's our famous French Colonel. I'll take it to him.

*The boy reacts by snatching back the telegram in its envelop.*

Clerk *irate* No you won't! There's a tip in this! I always get a tip but I gotta deliver it meself!

*The guard is both surprised and amused.*

Guard Oh ... Right you are! He'll be just over there with the First-Class folk. Or in the tearoom.

And he's easy to spot: you can't miss him. Taller than 6 foot 4 and with a very prominent beak (like an eagle). And his name's "de Chaumont". Pronunciation, boy.

Clerk Yeah, well I dunno ... That's not how they spell it.

*The boy nods and then continues to strut about, looking for the tallest man on the platform. He approaches de Chaumont a little warily.*

Clerk Colonel D. Showman?

*De Chaumont nods and beckons. The clerk smartly approaches and hands over the telegram. He waits patiently.*

*De Chaumont ignores the clerk as he carefully opens the envelope containing the telegram. Major Glover (seeing that the clerk is waiting expectantly for his tip) coughs slightly. Colonel de Chaumont looks up. With "Mmm?" and "Ah!" he dives into his trouser pocket and extracts a sixpence. He flips this to the clerk (the coin spins through the air). The clerk (on catching his tip) exclaims on seeing this largesse.*

Clerk *wide-eyed* Jeez! Thank you, Sir.

*The clerk gives de Chaumont a mock salute and then marches off, full of his own importance.*

*Meanwhile, de Chaumont has sidled under a lamp such that he can read his telegram in the gloom.*

Grace *blushing*                      Oh, dear! I'm not much of a chaperone, am I? That was way too big a tip for that messenger boy.

*De Chaumont looks up, surprised.*

De Chaumont                      Was it?

Glover *jovial*                      Do you want me to tear after him and demand some change?

*They all laugh. And then de Chaumont becomes stern as he tries to read the telegram.*

Glover                              What is it, Sir? Not bad news ...

De Chaumont *reading*           It is written with a minimum of information (as are all telegrams), but from what I can make out, there has been a coup at the Hôtel Matignon.

That is to say, my country has been saddled with a new Prime Minister, now that the old one has decided that (in the best interests of his ailing wife (who is fitter than I am, by the way)), he would prefer to move aside from his arduous duties and demanding role and return to the peace of his vineyards.

*De Chaumont looks at his audience. They are all shocked by this news. Major Glover recovers first.*

Glover                              What devotion!

De Chaumont *snorting*           Ha! Devotion? Ha!

*De Chaumont returns again to reading from the telegram and inserting his own "take" on the subject matter therein.*

De Chaumont *reading*           The new man is one Jean-Marc Trubille and it is **he** who telegrams me here in this place: Broken Hill.

I know him. I know him well.

*[Raises voice for dramatic effect]*

The streets of Paris are about to be submerged in a sea of blood,

he claims. *Une affaire sanguine.*

And I'm to return at once to my Motherland in order to assist him in restoring calm.

As the British would have it: "Well, well!"

Glover Will you obey him? I suppose that you have no choice.

De Chaumont *clipped* Will I obey him? No! Emphatically "*non*!"

*De Chaumont screws up the telegram and chucks it on the railway line. This action shocks and discomforts his audience.*

Grace *laughs awkwardly* You ... You threw it away ...

De Chaumont *surprised* What?

Grace *blushing* Heavens! I don't mean to be rude or to embarrass you, Colonel de Chaumont. But one day that telegram which was delivered to you on the Broken Hill railway station (Platform 1) – of all spots on Earth! – might be worth a fortune.

It's likely that you'll become famous, and then in some mythical London auction house ... Well, that slip of paper that you've just chucked on the railway line might have brought astounding bids ...

*Colonel de Chaumont is utterly arrested by that thought, staring at Grace wordlessly. Jeff Challon appears to be about to jump off the platform but is detained by Major Glover grabbing his arm.*

Glover *flippant* That's an interesting concept, Miss Cobey. Should that messenger boy, then, stash away the sixpence on the same principle?

Grace *smiling* Of course!

De Chaumont *caustic* But you know, it would not shock me one tiny piece to find out that the nefarious Trubille actually master-minded the palace coup **himself**. That would come as no surprise at all.

The English language contains a marvellous word for it: when the

punishment is doled out to the villain.

Glover "Comeuppance" is a marvellous word which might fit the bill.

De Chaumont *pleased* That's it! That's it!

"Comeuppance" is the very word for this.

The clever Monsieur Trubille will get his comeuppance, and besides him, his faithful *copain* Louis-France Belmont (who wantonly plays the double-game).

*[Disgusted]*

Politicians! Why do we keep them? Better to dote on tropical fish.

I have come to the conclusion that politics are too serious a matter to be left to the politicians.

~~~~~ Break ~~~~~

*It is now dark enough to be called night.*

*The Guster pulls up at Platform 1 such that passengers and luggage can be loaded aboard, with many porters to assist the first-class passengers.*

*Our camera pans down the long, long platform to another lamp, under which Alex, Droop, Ernie and Barry have been assiduously working on their university studies. The 4 young men squat under the lamp, heads buried in large tomes. All of them smoke.*

*The other second-class passengers pour onto the train, struggling in the very cramped conditions.*

*The 4 young men close their books, gather up their meagre possessions and casually step on board the train, all still smoking.*

*They look about in disappointment and disgust as it is evident that they won't be able to sit together. So they simply plonk themselves and their belongings onto the floor in a corner of the carriage and get back into their books.*

*A very common looking middle-aged woman screws up her mouth as she stares malevolently at the NO SMOKING signs inside the carriage, and at the four young men.*

Loud woman *nasty tone*      Oy! Can't you read? It says "No Smoking" up there.

*The young men look about and discover that all eyes are riveted on them and their outlawed cigarettes. They extinguish their fags by various means, Alex making a defiant show of taking a last puff. And then, with an ill grace they resume their studies.*

~~~~~ Break ~~~~~

*Apparently, unseen by us, one of the guards has sorted-out the seating arrangements such that the four young men sit together in the seats nearest to where they had been sitting on the floor. They are still swotting away.*

*The dinner carts trundle through, causing chaos and congestion as hungry passengers cannot wait until the carts reach their seats. With much mumbling and pointing, our friends choose and pay for some sustenance, but seem to be very focused on their books.*

~~~~~ Break ~~~~~

*Our camera now turns to the first-class carriage, which shows the de Chaumont party of 4 dining a la carte in ornate splendour. The 4 members of the group (including Jeff, who now seems very pleased with himself) clink champagne glasses and drink toasts to Jean-François de Galaup (Comte de Lapérouse) and to Antoine Bruni d'Entrecasteaux.*

*They smile and continue conversing, unheard by us.*

END OF SCENE

**III, Scene ii: The President's Private Office, Elysee Palace 1932**

*The camera pans about for 20 seconds, taking in the glorious objects surrounding the President of France. As this happens, the President himself works steadily at his desk.*

*There is a brisk knock at the door. The President looks up.*

D'Anvire-Egret                      Yes?

*A presidential aide steps into the room, bowing quickly. The aide is dressed in a barrister's black jacket and crisp white flap collar. He wears black knee breeches, black hose and stout black shoes. On his head is an 18<sup>th</sup> century powdered wig.*

Aide                                      Sir, the Prime Minister is here as requested.

*The President grunts. He looks thoughtfully towards the window. The aide stands in the doorway, very calm, with hands folded.*

*The President glances at the aide, and then beckons him to approach the desk. As the aide obeys, he closes the door behind him.*

D'Anvire-Egret                      Just remind me ... There are armed troops stalking the streets of Paris, jumping on any random outbreaks of violence as they occur? Is that so?

Aide *nods politely*                      Yes, Sir.

D'Anvire-Egret                      And I shall be meeting with the leaders of the striking unionists at 3 o'clock this afternoon?

Aide *nods politely*                      Yes, Sir.

D'Anvire-Egret                      And will you please confirm that the new Prime Minister Jean-Marc Trubille is not known to be affiliated with these Cartel des Gauches creatures?

Aide                                      Not to my knowledge, President D'Anvire-Egret.



*The President grunts again, and slowly stands. He strolls over to the window, hands deep in his trouser pockets. The aide watches him, still standing calmly. We see (from the other side of the window) that the President is looking out, deep in thought.*

Aide *clears throat*      Monsieur le President?

*Without looking at the aide, D'Anvire-Egret raises a finger. He continues to stare out of the window.*

D'Anvire-Egret            Would you be so good as to explain to the dear Prime Minister that I will be free to welcome him in 3 minutes. And then (when that time elapses), please usher him into this room.

*The President nods dismissal to the aide, who bows and exits.*

*The President remains at the window, drumming his fingers on the windowsill, very deep in thought.*

Break

*Outside the President's private room, in a very ornate straight-backed chair sits Jean-Marc Trubille. He is utterly ill-at-ease, and squirms slightly as he watches the soldierly aide go about his business.*

*The aide glances at one of the superb antique clocks in the waiting area, and then steps up to the new Prime Minister. He gives the tiniest of bows.*

Aide Monsieur le President will see you now. Please follow me.

*In a very stately manner, the bewigged aide walks to the forbidding door and knocks quickly, listening for a response from inside the room. Then he opens the door and steps inside. He bows.*

Aide Monsieur le President, I have the pleasure to present Monsieur Jean-Marc Trubille, your Prime Minister.

*The aide turns to Trubille (who fidgets nervously) and with a half-smile ushers Trubille into the vast room. The President is now seated at his desk. Trubille bows.*

D'Anvire-Egret *to the aide*      Thank you. We are not to be disturbed for any reason.

*The aide bows and exits the room quietly, closing the door behind him. This leaves Trubille standing like a shag on a rock. And this is exactly the effect that the President desired. He stares at Trubille for a fraction too long and then gestures wordlessly to a chair facing him. Trubille steps forward and sits.*

Trubille *smiling in spite of his nervousness*      Thank you, Monsieur le President for this interview. I've been looking forward to meeting with you again since my swearing-in.

*The President does not answer. He rests his elbows on his desk and massages his hands and fingers, appearing to be deep in thought. His eyes continue to bore into Trubille, who is now more nervous and tries to cover by making ingratiating conversation.*

Trubille *inveigling*      Such a beautiful day. The gardens are ... Are lovely now.  
  
And your family? I hope that Madame D'Anvire-Egret is well and your lovely --

*President D'Anvire-Egret holds up his hand. When he speaks, it is in the most shatteringly cold, frightening tone.*

D'Anvire-Egret *low and menacing*      It is my destiny to rule France with uniform fairness to all. I do not bend to the will of vested interests and I shall not be forced to act out of fear.

Given this, I beg that you will disport yourself as a statesman rather than as a politician, Prime Minister.

It is my absolute wish that you will do nothing to denigrate my power nor my authority, no matter what atrocities might be perpetrated by the fringe groups abounding in our country.

*Trubille (utterly gutted) opens his mouth and makes some strangled ferret noises in his throat. Again, President D'Anvire-Egret holds up his hand.*

D'Anvire-Egret *low and menacing*      The office of President of France is inviolable. You will remember that at every minute of every day.

*There is a long pause. Trubille swallows and wriggles in his seat.*

D'Anvire-Egret *low and menacing*      I do not expect to have to summon you to my office again.

My sincere words, hopefully, have not fallen on barren soil.

Trubille *whispers*

Ah ... Thank you, Monsieur le President.

*The President nods dismissively. Totally relieved that the interview is over, Trubille bows and then turns to leave. The President has pressed a button and the aide has opened the door. Just as Trubille reaches the door, he is called back.*

D'Anvire-Egret

Oh, Prime Minister ... There was one other thing.

*speaking naturally*

Did you manage to contact Colonel Claude de Chaumont?

Trubille *shaken by the question*

Er ... Sir, I ... Yes! I telegrammed to the Colonel in a very remote outpost in the state of New South Wales in Australia. I have explicitly instructed the Colonel to return to France at once.

*The President looks at Trubille with a half-smirk on his face.*

D'Anvire-Egret

If he is travelling from a "remote outpost in the state of New South Wales in Australia" then I doubt very much of his expediency in returning to us.

However, you will please advise my secretary by telephone when he is back in France so that I may set up an urgent meeting with him.

*Trubille's jaw drops. The President nods his dismissal and returns to his paperwork.*

*As if turned to stone, Trubille stares at the President. The aide is trying to shepherd Trubille out of the office.*

Aide *whispers*

Prime Minister ... This way please.

*Lips trembling, Trubille bows quickly and then promptly follows the aide. The door closes behind the two men. The President continues to work as if nothing had happened.*

END OF SCENE

**III, Scene iii: The Gun Deck Aboard The Recherche, 1791**

*The camera is now stationed on the deck below the main deck of the Recherche. This is the gundeck.*

*Bruni will explain (to de Chaumont, the camera) the salient points of the gundeck.*

*When Bruni realizes that his captive audience (that is, de Chaumont) has zoned-out, he will try for a more personal contact.*

*The scene begins with Bruni wandering about alone (hands behind his back) in daylight hours. Bruni swings around to face the camera, as if expecting de Chaumont's company.*

Bruni *pleased*

You have returned ...

This then is the gun deck where I am able to house most of my crew. They sleep here in hammocks slung from this low ceiling. In addition, they receive their rations of food on this deck.

*Bruni makes a sweeping gesture towards the bank of 6 guns located on the port side, and then another sweeping gesture towards that on the starboard side.*

Bruni

But now look you!

Under attack, the small hatches to larboard and starboard are opened, and each gun is dragged forward by its particular crew.

You may be able to see that each gun bears a name.

*[Clears his throat]*

I blush to reveal to you some of these indelicate words inscribed on the cannons. But you know only too well that ... *les garçons* will be boyish ...

*Bruni gives a short titter of laughter and then recovers his poise.*

Bruni

At any rate, you can see (Monsieur Landlubber) that with economy of space and minimum of effort, my guns can be primed and readied by the crews at any time during attack.

I have two special men: sharp shooters, crack shots, dead-eyes ...

Their specific job is to walk quickly along the row of guns (to

larboard or starboard as designated), aiming each gun in turn at the target, after the gun deck officer shouts his commands.

Is this not a master stroke, even accounting for the roll of the waves?

*Bruni appears smug and self-assured.*

Bruni *smug*                      And that forethought and cunning explains why France's sea-power is second to none.

(Not even to the English.)

~~~~~ Break ~~~~~

*In 1932, Colonel de Chaumont sits in dudgeon in the train. He has almost closed his thin aged book, but not quite: a finger still marks the place where he has abandoned his reading. We study his face. The drum beat of Ravel's "Bolero" becomes evident. The camera closes-in on his distinctive features. He appears to be utterly sad.*

~~~~~ Break ~~~~~

*The hypnotic drumbeat stops abruptly.*

*We have returned to the gun deck on the Recherche (1791).*

*Bruni frowns, realizing that de Chaumont is no longer paying attention. Bruni appears to be very cross. He clicks his thumb and finger several times.*

Bruni *very much put-out, accusing*                      Hello! Hello!  
I have lost your concentration, have I not? You are under the spell of your past and are wholly inattentive to my narrative.

*Bruni makes a disgusted sound, almost like a spitting action.*

*Bruni then approaches the camera. He is suddenly sympathetic.*

Bruni *softer tone*      Ah!

I comprehend, me.

*As Bruni speaks, our camera moves out of the confines of the gun deck and out to sea. Unlike the serenity and quiet majesty of the seas off the southern coast of Western Australia, these waves are grey, demonic and angry. The sky also features dark clouds.*

Bruni *voice-off, low-voiced* Your lost comrades ... The senseless slaughter of war ... Those idiots in high command espoused trench warfare, marching infantrymen, bayonet charges and all manner of outdated military methods which even **my** contemporaries understood.

*As Bruni speaks, the camera turns away from the sea to show sailors battling the elements.*

Bruni *voice-off*      Poor landlubber ...

You who shout eloquently and with righteous passion from the highest steeple want your countrymen to be armed: well-protected in armour-plated tanks (is that not what you call them?)

*The camera has now returned to the gun deck, and Bruni is in shot.*

Bruni *soft-voiced*      But they did not listen to you ...

Break

*In 1932, in the first-class carriage of the steam train, de Chaumont slams shut the old book. He tries to master his feelings. His face trembles: he is close to tears.*

*Shifting about in his seat, de Chaumont opens the book again.*

Break

*On the gun deck of the Recherche in 1791, the gun crews are drilling. The waves roll relentlessly, making the sailors' work very difficult. Bruni stands at a distance, watching the practice with interest.*

*One of the sharpshooters marches quickly along the starboard side, aiming then firing the guns in quick succession. A dummy ship at some distance is blasted with cannon fire.*

*Bruni looks about, and nods to the camera.*

Bruni                      You are back. I'm glad to see it. There is something serious that I must convey to you. To your advantage, of course.

*[Looks about, somewhat furtively]*

Perhaps we will wait until we are alone ...

*Bruni looks back at the practising crews and makes a face. The noise of the cannon-fire will preclude Bruni conversing with de Chaumont. So he gestures to camera that they should move away from the gun-deck.*

*Bruni climbs half-way up a ladder and then turns, speaking to camera.*

Bruni *sympathetic*              When **my** comrades die in battle, the highest chance is that we shall all perish together. That is the nature of life at sea ...

*Bruni begins to climb again. He stops and takes a long breath. He no longer talks directly to camera, but up to some location in the sky.*

Bruni *kindly*                      You are a warrior, a great soldier.

Do not let these others see you weep for the departed friends.

For a Frenchman may weep: it is natural and cathartic.

But these companions of yours are not French. These foreigners have subscribed to Stoicism. They will not take kindly to your unmanly tears.

*With tears in his eyes, Bruni looks at the camera.*

Bruni *almost crying*              Me ... I understand the heartbreak well.

*Bruni slowly reaches out to the camera lens and touches it with his fingertips.*

END OF SCENE

### III, Scene iv: Travelling On The Guster Steam Train 1932

*The Colonel is no longer reading. He forces himself to be calm and still.*

*Meanwhile, Glover has been sitting in a seat near Grace. His crossword puzzle has become boring.*

*Glover yawns and stretches.*

Glover                      This is a particularly long train. Thus, to get some excellent exercise, all one has to do is to walk from end to end ... Like a promenade.

Grace *looking about*      Can you do that? Can you get from carriage to carriage?

Glover                      I don't see why not. The conductor and all those waiters do it.

Grace                      It'll feel like doing laps on board ship.

*At the word "ship", de Chaumont's head whips around. Glover instantly misinterprets the head movement as interest in his schemes.*

Glover *to de Chaumont*   I've just been saying to Miss Cobey that I'd welcome a long stroll from end to end of the train.

It should be feasible (apart from the goods carriages, of course).  
Care to accompany me, Sir?

*The Colonel emits one of his grunts of assent, stands and the two head off.*

~~~~~ Break ~~~~~

*The two first class passengers have strolled to the last passenger carriage, and then stroll back. We see the passengers in the cheap seats packed-in like sardines. Women chat loudly and men laugh loudly. The Colonel and the Major look about: a smile here, a nod there.*

*When they come abreast of the Ernie and Barry (heads buried in legal tomes), Glover is brought up short and stares down in disbelief.*

Glover *to himself*              I don't believe it. This is too good a chance to miss.

*Glover catches Barry's attention and then launches into part of a speech from Hamlet.*



Glover *reciting from memory [and muffing some of it]* "There's another: why may not that be the skull of a lawyer? Where be his quiddits now, his quillets, his cases, his tenures, and his tricks? Why does he suffer this rude knave to knock him on the sconce with a dirty shovel ... er ... a case of assault and battery ..."

No ... It's gone ...

Something about vouchers and conveyances ...

I'm sorry lads, but I've apparently run out of steam.

Barry *grinning* That was excellent! My Dad read that one out to me once. I could never forget the "quiddits" and "quilletts".

Ernie Probably why you turned to the Law.

Who is it? Hamlet?

*Major Glover smiles broadly and nods. He is pleased to have been appreciated and not told (for once) to put a sock in it.*

Alex *putting his oar in* Did old Bill have anything on engineers?

Glover *laughing* I know that The Bard penned some salacious prose dedicated to most of the trades; however, I believe that the engineers were spared his caustic wit.

Alex *grinning* Oh, that's not too good ...

Glover We're interrupting you ... Better push on ... Have a pleasant evening.

De Chaumont Good evening to you, young fellows. And good luck with your studies. *Bon chance!*

*The Colonel and the Major head off back to the First Class carriage.*

*Droop, Ernie and Barry watch the two men disappear. They then look at each other, frowning and doubtful.*

Barry *thoughtful* I've just had a brainwave. Those two gents might just as well be

the French Colonel and the English Major. If they were going to Perth they might well be on this train.

Ernie *excited*

Yes, I wondered about that, too.

Droop *excited*

Isn't that funny? That's what I thought.

Alex *after little  
deliberation*

Hardly likely. I'd say "no".

Ernie

Are you sure?

Alex *shakes head*

No possible way. The Pommy bloke was a ponce trying to bung on side. He was out to impress (although why anybody would bother to try to impress us is beyond me). And the tall peanut with him was trying to get a rise from us, otherwise why bother to stop and talk to us.

Spouting Shakespeare! Give it a break!

Barry *frowning*

A tall foreign chap with a beaky beak ... And accompanying him, an English scholar. There's every chance ...

Alex *with finality*

Nah, it's not him. He's totally different to that.

Droop *persisting*

But you never got to meet him, didja?

Alex *definite*

No. But they told me what he was like. That's not him, not by a long chalk.

Droop *unconvinced*

Aw ... I dunno ... That's a tall bloke with a funny accent that could be French ...

*Alex slaps the pages of Droop's engineering book and dives back into his own.*

*Droop shakes his head, doubtful.*

END OF SCENE

### III, Scene v: Protecting The Occupants Of The Hôtel Matignon 1932

*Jean-Marc Trubille is in his office at the Hôtel Matignon, in company with Paul Gambonet and Lance Yves Quinne. In the background, a street demonstration and scuffles can be heard.*

Trubille *furious, filled with wrath*      I don't relish being smacked around by that arrogant D'Anvire-Egret. I felt dirty: filthy! Besmirched I was.

*Trubille slams his hand down onto his desk. In the background, street noise (the noise of a scuffle) can be heard.*

Yves Quinne *alarmed*      Never mind that, Jean-Marc. We are to some extent under attack here. I'm worried that incendiary devices will be launched into the Hôtel Matignon. What if these villains were able to set fire to this premises? Are we all aware of the escape routes?

*Gambonet gestures in the direction of a glass framed floor plan which is propped on a chair.*

Gambonet *bitter*      I found **that** down in the dungeon, discarded with all the old lumber from past decades. Ruled lines in Indian ink: a layout of the 3rd floor. A "floor plan" they call it these days.

Yves Quinne *concerned*      But ... But why is that not on the wall out in the corridor? That's where it should be situated.

*More alarming sounds are heard from outside. All three men flinch.*

Gambonet *bitter*      Why? Because the precautions taken to protect us are so lax that nobody cares. Why else would it have been lobbed into a cellar?

Trubille *frustrated*      Stop whining, Paul, that we are defenceless and helpless. I am the Prime Minister: I'll simply call in some armed troops to guard us here.

*[Calling out]*

Lucas! Lucas!

*Angrily, Trubille flicks a button on his desk and then looks towards the door.*

Gambonet *shrugs*      He can't hear you, with all this confusion outside.

*Trubille storms to the door and then exits. As we hear snatches of his rant to his underling (the hapless Lucas), we see Gambonet pick up the framed floor plan. Yves Quinne strolls to his side and they glance at the plan together. We see Yves Quinne run his finger over the glass, evidently pointing to some salient point.*

*Trubille returns to his office, slamming the door.*

Trubille *wound-up*            So, I'll have a dozen armed soldiers at my beck and call. They will patrol the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of the Hôtel Matignon for so long as I choose that they do so. And they will have the authority to stop (with force wherever necessary) **any** intruders on this floor. It's some comfort, at least.

Yves Quinne                But then, may we not leave to go home at night? What will be our safety then?

Trubille *full of business*    There can be no question that we must all bunker-down here for the time being.

**And** that fool Lucas is to send **another** telegram to the other side of the world in order to retrieve Colonel de Chaumont.

Gambonet *explodes*            I told you --

Trubille *loudly so as to drown out Gambonet*    It is the President's wish, expressed to me clearly and unequivocally. Leave there be **no doubt** that de Chaumont **must** return!

END OF SCENE

**III, Scene vi: Major Glover's Telegram 1932**

*The location is platform 2 of the Port Augusta railway station.*

*The Guster pulls slowly into the platform. On the other side of this platform awaits the John Forrest steam train. This allows the passengers to move from one train to the next with the minimum of fuss. Guards and porters assist the first-class passengers to achieve this.*

*So, as The Guster slows to a halt, the doors swing open. A very loud message soon blasts out over the platform, crackling over the tannoy.*

Station announcement      Could Major Grahame Glover from Great Britain please make your way immediately to the Station Master's office.

Could Major Grahame Glover from Great Britain please make your way immediately to the Station Master's office.

Major Grahame Glover.

Grace *alarmed*              Grahame! That's your name they're announcing. Gosh, I hope it's not bad news ...

*Glover jogs quickly to the hub of activity and thence to the Station Master's busy quarters.*

~~~~~ Break ~~~~~

*Glover stands outside the Station Master's office reading his telegram. He is so puzzled by the matter in the telegram that he rakes his fingers through his hair. He looks around and gives a self-deprecating laugh, shaking his head.*

~~~~~ Break ~~~~~

*In the luxurious lounge of the John Forrest steam train, de Chaumont, Grace and Challon stand about, wondering about the Glover telegram. When Glover strolls into the lounge, their eyes are on him, expectantly. Glover holds the telegram in his fingers and raises it slightly.*

Glover *to de Chaumont* This comes from High Command. London.

*As the other three members of the party stare at Glover (mystified), Glover shakes his head, and again rakes his fingers through his hair. He then lets out a long sigh.*

Glover *whimsical* "There's a divinity that shapes our ends, Rough-hew them how we will."

*De Chaumont raises his eyebrows and Grace puts a hand over her mouth. Challon is simply puzzled.*

Challon *at sea* So ...

Is that the message they sent you? What does it –

I certainly hope you'll jump the right way, Major Glover.

*De Chaumont and Grace glance at each other and grin. Glover shrugs and once again, rakes his hair. Then he takes another big breath.*

Glover *to de Chaumont* I am to ensure your immediate return to Paris with all possible speed, Sir, and I am instructed to use all possible means.

*De Chaumont's slight smile (which softens his autocratic features) broadens as he looks straight at Glover.*

Glover They seem to be giving me explicit permission to rough you up a bit, Sir.

*Grace is appalled (thinking that Glover is serious) whereas the three men see the situation as absurd (which it is). Challon points from the Colonel to the Major, looking askance.*

Challon *slyly to Glover* You'd be punching above your weight, mate.

De Chaumont *to Glover* You may try but I believe that I'm too beefy for you to take on.

Glover *sighs* "O heavy deed!"

*Glover screws up the telegram and throws it out of the train. A station attendant shakes his head at such littering. Meanwhile, the others have taken seats. A waiter approaches to take their drink orders.*

Glover Jeff, you're my witness. It was a no-go.

*Challon gives to Glover a mock salute.*

~~~~~ Break ~~~~~

*Glover has taken a seat next to Grace, and the party enjoy their drinks. The train is now moving towards Perth.*

Grace                      My turn. What about:  
                                  “My soul is full of discord and dismay.”

*Glover at first seems puzzled and then the penny drops. He chuckles and nods.*

Grace                      Or there’s:  
                                  “Ah, my good lord, what have I seen tonight.”

*Grace and Glover evidence pleasure in each other’s company.*

Glover *whispers*              If we were one-and-one, I’d hold your hand until we arrive in  
                                  Perth.

*Glover looks out of the window for a couple of seconds. Grace fiddles with her drink, not really knowing what to do or say. Glover turns back to her.*

Glover *low-voiced*              And I’m sorry – ***darned*** sorry – that I sealed that bargain with  
                                  you.

Grace *at sea*                      Bargain?

*Glover raises his drink to his lips, raises his eyebrows significantly and then drinks.*

END OF SCENE

END OF ACT III



## ACT IV Rich Gifts Wax Poor

### IV, Scene i: In Perth, Jeff Challon Receives A Message 1932

*On Friday evening, the four members of the de Chaumont party register at their comfortable hotel.*

*Around about the front desk, porters and guests bustle about.*

*A male clerk approaches Challon. The clerk presents to Challon a slip of paper, then guides him to a very tiny room in which a candlestick telephone is installed on a coffee table with single chair. On the table lies a very slim phone book (leather-bound) and a flyer advertising exciting events in Perth.*

*The clerk closes the door leaving Challon alone in the tiny room. He lowers himself into the chair as he reaches for the telephone.*

*He lifts the earpiece and tweaks the fork of the switch hook twice to establish a connection with the exchange.*

Challon                      I want a Canberra number: 4-4-2, please.

                                    Rightio.

*Challon then hangs up the phone.*

*Seated at the table, Challon glances at the Perth flyer, quickly loses interest, and then begins to sing to himself in a very weak baritone voice.*



Challon                                There's a track winding back  
                                             To an old-fashioned shack.  
                                             Along the road to Gundagai.  
                                             Where the gum trees are growin' --

*The phone rings. Challon answers it.*

Challon                                Hello, this is Jeffrey Challon speaking.

*After listening for a couple of seconds, Jeff jumps to his feet.*

Challon                                Yes ... Yes ... Yes ...

*Challon dives into his pocket for his handkerchief and mops his brow.*

Challon                                That's going to be a bit hard, you see ...

Well ... You **have** seen the gentleman in question, haven't you?

I know that I'm handy in a fight, but this man is as big and as fit  
as a Mallee scrub bull.

*There is a pause, during which Challon resumes his seat.*

Challon                                What do you expect me to do? Slip him a Mickey Finn and then  
me and the Pommie Major have to shanghai him? What! Carry him  
bodily (while he's out to it) onto a ship bound for Europe at  
midnight and then lock him in his cabin?

Is that your top-notch plan, is it?

*There is a pause. Challon looks very displeased and disgusted.*

Challon *snarls*                        Don't give me grief!

Aw, behave yourself!

*Challon slams the earpiece into the fork switch, replaces the telephone on the coffee table and then  
exits the room (closing the door behind him).*

*Our camera remains in the room. From without, we suddenly hear de Chaumont, Glover, Grace and  
Challon set off in a peal of laughter.*

END OF SCENE

#### **IV, Scene ii:** The Fremantle Men's Club Cricket Eleven, 1932

*It is a glorious Saturday afternoon in Fremantle.*

*The four young men (Alex, Droop, Barry and Ernie) loll about on a grassy bank waiting for a cricket game to start. To begin with, the four friends are puzzled: the cricket season has not yet begun in New South Wales. Further, there seems to be some sort of problem: the men are evidencing (via their body language and head scratching) that something is seriously wrong.*

Droop                      Cricket? This is eerie ... We're not playing yet in Sydney ... Season hasn't started ...

Barry                      Friend of a friend who lived up North in Brisbane for a while told me that they play all year round up there.

Ernie *amazed*              That's almost irreligious. Start of season ... End of season ... Can't play all year. Not possible.

*Alex is frowning as he watches the bother and bustle beside the club house.*

Barry                      Well, it's obvious that they can't get their finger out.  
  
Shall we wander off? Being as it's Saturday, there's bound to be some horse racing on somewhere.

Ernie                      No. I vote that we stay put. Look, if we want to find work on a fishing boat (which I understand is the latest idea for our continued sustenance) ... Well, some of these chaps might have a lead for us.

Droop                      Good thinking, Ernie. What a mind!

Alex *deeply frowning*      Am I grossly mistaken, or are those blokes pointing at us?

*Just then, a very harassed man runs up.*

Cricketer                      Hello chaps!

Look, I'm sorry to put this on you blokes, but there's been a bit of a calamity.

Some of the boys went out on the tiles last night and they've stupidly developed food poisoning. Tummy bug. Can't play. We can't field a team.

*The cricketer makes a defeatist attitude.*

Cricketer                      You blokes wouldn't be able to fill-in for our missing batsmen, would you? Only for today.

*The boys glance at each other. They all agree that they would enjoy that.*

Alex                              Yes, if you like. Why not?

Barry                             I don't mind a game.

Ernie                             I could swan about on the pitch to no mean purpose.

Cricketer *wary*                You're not locals, are you?

Barry                             We're all from Sydney ... From the University.

Ernie                             On holiday. Swot vac.

Cricketer *relieved*            Bewt! That covers the bona fides. Can't play for us if you're already signed-up for another local team. (You know those antiquated rules they have).

Terrific! I just need one more man (and I'm certain that I have a decent middle-order batsman lined-up).

I'm sure it'll be alright with the opposing captain. Ask him now. Terrific! Thanks.

*The man turns to leave and then doubles back.*

Cricketer                      Oh ...

And I'll get hold of some cricket kit for you. You won't mind

sharing someone else's kit, will you?

*With head shakes and dismissive gestures, the boys indicate to the cricketer that his suggestion suits them fine. But Alex cannot help making a joke about it.*

Alex *suave* Ernest McIlwraith: are you averse to sharing a sweaty, smelly box with yours truly?

*Ernie picks up the joke. He bows solemnly and adopts a very snobby, twee accent.*

Ernie *pompous* Not at all, dear fellow. 'T all.  
Sharing a box with you (the sweatier and smellier the better)  
would be my absolute pleasure and delight, 'pon me soul 'twill!

~~~~~ Break ~~~~~

*The game is now in progress. We see a few glimpses of the boys hitting the ball about. The small crowd claps.*

~~~~~ Break ~~~~~

*After hitting a four, Droop and the wicketkeeper are in shot. Droop taps the end of the bat on the ground. The keeper jumps about a bit and does some high knee jogging on the spot. Droop speaks without looking at the keeper (as his eyes are forward, waiting for the next delivery).*

Droop Would you happen to know of any fishing boats needing a 4-man crew? We'd rather stay together, if possible.

*Before he can answer, the keeper squats down into the habitual frog-like posture as the next ball comes spinning down the pitch. Droop smacks it and then takes off, running out 2 more runs.*

*This brings him back to the keeper. Again, Droop looks ahead rather than at the keeper.*

Wicketkeeper Yes, I do, as a matter of fact. First thing on Monday morning, get yourselves down to the dock and ask for Syd Mullens. All the

blokes down there know Syd. Syd Mullens.

*Droop whacks the ball and takes off down the pitch, calling out "Thanks!" as he does so.*

END OF SCENE

#### **IV, Scene iii: A Vice-Regal Performance Of Ravel's Masterpiece, 1932**

##### *Background note:*

*The King and Queen hardly ever made it to Australia, thus Australia is blessed with pretend royals, that is a Governor-General and his good lady. To all intents and purposes, the Governor-General and his wife are treated in the same manner as British royalty. Audiences stand and God Save The King is played in their presence. People therefore dressed for a vice-regal event in their very best formal attire, considering their invitation to be a decided honour.*

##### *The Bolero:*

*This is one of the greatest pieces of music ever written but it CANNOT (repeat CANNOT!!) be used in this part of the film as it is inappropriate to the nth degree.*

*However, just the drum beat works. It can double as a military theme. So, even though we may see the other instruments, it is only the drumbeats that we hear.*

*The scene opens with five concertgoers gathering at Finn Cobey's mansion. The ladies wear superb expensive floor-length frocks, their hair is adorned with glittering jewellery and their shoulders swathed in sables.*

*As they pile into the Cobey limousine (Lloyd and Polly Wetherby, Catherine and her parents), we hear snatches of conversation.*

Polly                                      A Vice-Regal gala ... What an honour!

Finn                                        Command performance for the Governor-General, no less.

~~~~~ Break ~~~~~

*We take a quick view of a crowd of well-heeled Sydneysiders in a crush outside the Queen Victoria Theatre. They are attending the Vice-Regal gala performance that the 5 Cobey/Wetherbys are attending.*

~~~~~ Break ~~~~~

*The crowd have now moved into the theatre and everyone stands when the Governor-General and his wife step into the Imperial Box. The Governor-General and party look about below them and nod to several acquaintances. The orchestra quickly goes into "God Save The King", of which we will only hear the opening few bars.*

~~~~~ Break ~~~~~

*Each of the ladies (Polly, Catherine and their mother Glenys) has a large box of chocolates on her knee. They pick at each other's selection like spoiled schoolgirls, giggling and whispering.*

*They also have programmes to which they refer. When the ladies speak to each other, they lean in such that they can speak sotto voce.*

Catherine                      Good! They're doing Glinka as a warm-up. It's usually "William Tell" or the Dvorak "Carnival" thing.

Glenys *very low*              Have we heard from the intrepid adventurers?

Catherine *wide-eyed*        Yes, Grace telephoned. They are all sick to death of trains, she said. They might go out on the town tonight: dancing and what have you.

Polly *naughtily*              Can you just imagine that stuck-up French fellow dancing with his straight back and every step 100% correct? What a hoot!

*The girls roll about giggling, and nearly spill their chocolates.*

*The conductor returns to the podium to a burst of applause. The opening item is Glinka's Ruslan and Ludmilla. We only savour the opening few bars.*

~~~~~ Break ~~~~~

*Again, the conductor returns to the podium to a burst of applause. The full symphony orchestra is set for the Bolero, with James and his snare drum moved downstage, closer to the leader of the orchestra.*

*Our camera now takes James's view. We watch the conductor silently demand that every member watches him, and then he looks directly at James and nods twice. Into the hollow silence of the theatre, James begins the hypnotic drumbeat (very softly to start with) which he will continue relentlessly for some 16 minutes (only a tiny fraction of that will we see, however).*

*We see Polly, Catherine and Glenys gripping each other's hands, looking girlishly excited.*

END OF SCENE

#### **IV, Scene iv: Dawn At The Docks, Fremantle, 1932**

*The scene is the dock where fishing boats are tied up. There is a lot of bustle, commotion and engine noise in this scene. It is extremely murky, being dawn on Monday.*

Syd                                      What's your names? Write them down: an "X" will do if you can't write.

Ernie *affronted, snorts*              We're all undergraduates at Sydney Uni, mate.

Syd *growls*                              Sydney Uni-bloody-versity! What are you wanting to take up professional fishing for in Fremantle then?

Ernie Well, we --

Alex *crisp* We are attempting to undertake some deep research into the French explorers who navigated these waters prior to the Revolution. So we're throwing ourselves into the breach ... Getting local colour ... Setting the mood ...

*There is a telling pause.*

Syd *gobsmacked* All you'll be doing is fishing ... I dunno about any explorers ...

Barry I realize that it would seem to be infra dig for us to --

Droop *laughing* That's right! That's the one I couldn't remember "N for a dig".

Alex *appalled* What?

Droop *reciting from memory* "A for 'orses", "B for mutton", "C forth Highlanders", "D for ential", "Eve or Adam", "F for vescent" --

I couldn't remember what was for "N".

*The boys nudge Droop and tell him to shoosh. Again, there is a telling pause.*

Syd *black voice* What are yer names?

Alex I'm Alex Cobey (Alexander Peter), and this bloke is called Droop (Sydney Strudwick). And these two gentlemen are Barry Clive-Dent and Ernie (Ernest Jamison McIllwraith).

Syd *morose* I don't own this boat: a bloke called Tony Brown (everyone calls him "Brownie") does. And he's gonna expect work – **real work** – from youse blokes. In my opinion, uni-bloody-versity students don't make good workers, but I reckon I'm open to convincing.

END OF SCENE



**IV, Scene v: The Reviews Of The Gala Performance, 1932**

*The location is Finn Cobey's Sydney home.*

*It is very early on Monday morning. James is unshaven, tousled and wears pyjamas and dressing gown. Likewise, Catherine has obviously just dragged herself out of bed.*

*Brother and sister are engaged in finding the printed review of the Saturday night performance. Catherine is thrilled; James keeps his pride in check.*

Catherine *reading*        "The National Broadcasting Symphony Orchestra (under the baton of Mr Gregory Hoarsfell) played to rapturous applause on Saturday night at the Queen Victoria Theatre's gala vice-regal command performance.

"The concert was of the highest standard, with –"

Blah, blah, blah ...

Glinka's Ruslan and Ludmilla overture gets a mention – "an all-time favourite" --

James *grinning*        An old war horse!

Catherine *reading*        Yes, the reviewer is pretty cool about the soprano. She wasn't much chop ...

Ah! Here it is! Here it is! Here it is!

"The final item was Maurice Ravel's 'Bolero', a new inclusion to this orchestra's repertoire.

"In this work, absolutely everything hangs on the dedication and concentration of the snare drummer, and Mr James Cobey's playing was faultless."

*Catherine leaves off reading to give James an enormous hug. She jumps up and down, filled with joy.*

James *squirming*        Is that all?

Catherine *reading*        That's all about you, I'm afraid.

"In fact, so excellent was the rendition of this piece by all soloists

that the orchestra received three standing ovations. I recommend any –"

Oh, Jamie! This is wonderful; what a boost to your career.

James Cobey, you are a national treasure.

END OF SCENE

***Interlude.***

*We hear the final few bars of the "Bolero" where (after the key change) the music wildly swirls about towards the crescendo.*

*At the same time as the music crashes onto our senses, we see snippets of old footage of the Parisian streets filled with angry crowds and mobs of ruffians, smashing shop windows and beating soldiers or police.*

**IV, Scene vi: The Streets Of Paris Explode Into Violence, 1932**

*It is night time. The Parisian streets are well-lit, but also feature flares and spot fires.*

*Dressed for the opera, Jean-Marc Trubille and Madame Trubille are being driven through the "better" areas by their chauffeur, but still they are fearful (especially the woman). The chauffeur is grim-faced but determined. Throughout the scene we will hear the sounds of mob violence and disorder.*

Trubille *wary, to his wife*

My government has paid a small fortune for bullet proof glass to be installed in these official automobiles. Please do not insinuate Virginie that we have wasted our money.

*Eyes goggling with fear, Madame Trubille clings to her husband. She screams as some external threat alarms her.*

Madame Trubille

Jean-Marc! God in Heaven! Is this how Marie Antoinette felt when

the mob raised its ugly head?

*We see outraged citizens flock to the bonnet of the car to impede its progress.*

Trubille *very angry*, Drive on, Auguste! Mow them down if there is no other way.

*shouts*

We are already late for the opera.

*Setting his mouth and jaw, the obedient chauffeur squares his shoulders and appears to edge the car forward into the throng of resisting people.*

END OF SCENE

#### **IV, Scene vii:** The French Colonel Versus The English Major, 1932

*It is a glorious, sunny day in Fremantle not long after breakfast time.*

*Jeff Challon stands at the bus stop outside the hotel, awaiting a bus which will take the 3 men to the museum.*

*Glover and de Chaumont sit on the front porch and glance idly at local Fremantle newspapers which contain nothing to interest them.*

De Chaumont *matter-of-fact* Perhaps this evening you will manage to couch a woman, or even more than one.

Glover *astounded* What a suggestion! No, Sir, I won't be doing that.

De Chaumont You will be quite safe. I'm positive that such a smart, well-run establishment as this hotel can provide you with female entertainment of the most exquisite standard.

Glover *appalled* No! I ... That really is quite antediluvian ...

When I feel like making love to a woman, I'll organize that for myself. I'd hardly call in hotel staff to manage such a ...

Really, no! Thanks all the same, but ...

*[Snorts]*

"Couch a woman" ... Good God!

De Chaumont *shrugs*  
*indifferently*

Oh, well, if you'd rather not.

But there is always much discretion. A gentleman's needs are understood and the staff here will no doubt be used to such arrangements.

Glover

You can fix yourself up, if you wish, but I'm rather not in the mood.

De Chaumont *firm*

Ah no! I am faithful to the death to my wife. I shall never sully our marriage-bed.

I just happened to be au fait with these matters owing to some fellow officers with whom I've bivouacked in the past ... That's all.

*There is a pause. Major Glover is still unsettled by this conversation and absent-mindedly draws a gold cigarette case from his pocket and goes to extract a cigarette there-from. However, he has second thoughts and stows the case again. He looks out over the scene, frowning.*

De Chaumont *sagely*

You're already married, are you not?

Glover *shocked*

No! God no! Whatever gave you that idea?

De Chaumont *half-smile*

I've noticed over the length of our acquaintance that you possess a formidable knowledge of females. And when I was about your age, I was both repelled and fascinated by the shapely penis-free ones of our genus and understood them not at all.

Glover *squirms*

Well ... I'm nearly 32, you know. How old did you think I was?

De Chaumont

**And** you are English. The English men normally know nothing of women.

Glover

Ah! But you're quite wrong there, if I may say so. It's "romance" that we chaps know absolutely nothing about – not the ladies. We don't live in cocoons, you know.

De Chaumont                    She is charming, elegant, filled with wisdom and lovely on the eye.  
Yet you do not appear to make a play for her.

Glover                         Do you refer to Grace? To Miss Cobey? But we agreed (she and I)  
that we'd be merely friends and enjoy each other's company.

*Claude de Chaumont snorts loudly and rolls his eyes.*

Glover *explaining*            A single man is beset by eager single females and their mothers,  
especially if (you'll pardon my frankness and lack of modesty) ...  
but especially if the gentleman is "marriageable".

Look, the basic reason that Grace and I have hit it off so well is  
that I don't feel as if I have to fend her off. Likewise for her (I'd  
imagine). She can relax and be herself in my company without  
thinking that I'm about to ... What was your way of putting it?  
Without trying to "couch" her.

De Chaumont *shakes head*    I am quite at a loss then, Grahame. This is all so indescribably  
confusing.

You cannot see yourself being happy with this girl? You cannot  
imagine lying in bed with her, warm and naked? You cannot see  
yourself going out to dinner with friends and proudly introducing  
to them your wife?

Glover *blushes*                I ... No, no ... That's not how I see her.

De Chaumont                    Very well. I'll turn the map over and attack the defile from the  
other angle. Is it that you can look forward to living **without**  
Mademoiselle Cobey for your remaining days? To go into battle  
and not have her photograph touching your heart? To never  
receive letters from her, for which you wait impatiently and then  
almost swoon at the scent on the page – her favourite perfume?

*Major Glover is unable to speak.*

De Chaumont                    That's not going to happen for you?

*persisting*

*Major Glover quickly stands and walks over to the painted wooden railing. He looks out over the garden, obviously put out by the conversation. But the Colonel is not to be put off. He joins his friend at the railing.*

De Chaumont *quietly*      Listen to me, *moi-même*.

My mother and father told me in a formal way that I was to be married to a young lady whom I had never met. Her name is Émile. We were permitted to speak to each other once or twice (always in company) and then betrothed. At our wedding, a trembling figure in white (heavily veiled) became my wife, and the priest instructed me to lift the veil. I cannot begin to describe to you the warmth and beauty that I saw there in my bride's face. And I need hardly tell you that our first night together as man and wife was for me my most superb night ever, when I stole from Émile her maidenhead ...

*There is a taut silence. Major Glover is overcome and cannot answer. With a sigh, the Colonel resumes his seat and continues to glance at the local newspaper.*

De Chaumont *crisp*      But you and Miss Cobey have vowed not to live in each other's arms and so that is that. I'll harry you no more on that subject.

*Glover gulps as he tries to find words to cover up his emotions. He is spared when Challon calls out.*

Challon *calling out*      Gents, the bus is coming up the road.

*As Glover and de Chaumont descend the steps, de Chaumont changes plans with the ease and sureness of one accustomed to command.*

De Chaumont      No! This will be our new tactic.

I shall travel alone to the museum and meet Monsignor Daniel Hill.  
You and this Australian man will make your way to the best radio station in this city: one that is able to provide the means for me to make a broadcast (by relay if necessary) to the French people.

Today, this afternoon. Or at least as soon as possible.

Let us put an end to these bothersome telegrams, mmm?

*The bus stops. De Chaumont nods to both of his companions, steps aboard and disappears behind the closing door. The bus takes off watched by Glover and Challon.*

Glover *wondering*                      The best radio station?

Challon                                      That will be the one run by the government. They're likely to have all the equipment at hand since they broadcast all over this gigantic state.

Glover *impressed*                      Well thought out! And where will they be located?

Challon *shrugs*                              What we can do is to grab a taxicab from here (outside the hotel) and let the driver work it out.

*Major Glover pats Challon on the shoulder.*

Glover                                      "A hit! A very palpable hit!"

END OF SCENE

#### **IV, Scene viii:** The Existence Of A Letter 1792

*This scene takes place in Bruni's cabin aboard La Recherche. It is a major scene (from the point of view of plot progression) as the existence of the letter from Louis XVI to La Pérouse is now revealed as the raison d'être for de Chaumont's trip to Australia.*

*Three of the officers have gathered in the cabin to study maps and logbooks.*

*Bruni turns to camera and introduces each man in turn, and as his name is spoken, the man bows to camera. The officers are embarrassed and fidgety throughout.*

Bruni *to camera*                              My cabin is tiny but well-appointed, when compared to some others in the fleet. My officers and I have been working to some

purpose on these charts ...

This gentleman is my 2<sup>nd</sup> in command: Lieutenant Jean-Louis d'Hesmity-d'Auribeau.

And this is Lieutenant Paul de Rossel.

This fine gentleman is the celebrated hydrographer Charles Beautemps-Beaupré.

There are many other officers, a chaplain, doctor and so on and so on.

And also, there is a sister ship to sail with us: L'Espérance, under the command of Jean-Michel Huon de Kermadec.

There! That's a bagful of names for you to conjure with.

Break

*The officers have vacated the cabin and left Bruni alone. He is found to be in the act of closing the door. He now appears to be distracted.*

*During the scene, Bruni will be active in certain ways such that this scene will not appear lifeless, dull and boring.*

Bruni *mutters,*  
*frowning*

I hope that these men and I have cleared up certain matters ... It is extremely difficult to retrace the steps of one who preceded one ... We are constantly searching for clues as to the exact route taken by La Pérouse ... But you can imagine how difficult! There are no footprints, of course.

*Bruni ponders his shoes and then looks up, direct to camera.*

Bruni *flustered*

I must talk to you alone. This is of such importance ...

*Bruni walks about a bit, even in spite of the cramped space in his cabin.*

Bruni *remorseful*

I cannot help thinking about the botched and blundered royal



escape to Varennes. Things have become decidedly worse during these intervening two years.

Oh! Why did the King and his party hesitate? They might have escaped the mob.

A tragedy ... I fear for the King's life: I really do!

*Bruni sits at the table, tidying the maps as he speaks.*

*Bruni urgent under voice*

There is in my possession a letter written by our dearly loved King Louis. It is not written to myself, but to Jean-François de Galaup (whom you would know better by his title, La Pérouse).

*[Takes a deep breath as if about to make a long speech]*

Monsiau painted the most beautiful work ... He himself was commissioned by His Majesty to preserve for posterity that meeting between explorer, King and Minister for Maritime Affairs ... His Majesty gave his commands for a scientific expedition ... Ah! I only wish that I possessed a copy of that work to show to you ...

*Bruni goes to the door to listen at it. As he speaks, he returns to the table.*

*Bruni very upset under voice*

I am treading on egg-shells here ...

The crew (to a man) is inflamed with these ghastly Republican sentiments ...

The King wrote the letter whilst under house arrest in the Tuileries Palace – can you begin to contemplate the fears I have for that so loved man?

How it was smuggled out of his captivity I know not. I found the letter discreetly stowed amongst my possessions.

*Bruni (standing) leans forward, imploring.*

*Bruni tearful*

My dear Landlubber ...

We have become such boon companions ...

If anything were to befall myself, you must ensure that La Pérouse shall receive this letter.

No-one knows of it but four people: the King himself, and me, the wretched soul whose task it was to risk life and limb to transport the letter into my safe-keeping, and now you.

*Bruni resumes his seat at his table.*

Bruni *urgent under voice*

I am unable to trust any of these others. Those officers whom you met (and the rest of them, no doubt) of course cleave to the King but ...

These are bad times, my friend. You would do well to look to your own safety ... And God bless the King! And God speed you to La Pérouse.

END OF SCENE

#### **IV, Scene ix: An Explosive Warning 1932**

*At the opera, Trubille stands about with rich-looking French gentlemen who seem to toady him.*

*Then Trubille becomes aware that Gambonet hides in the shadows and urgently gestures to him.*

Trubille *annoyed*

What are you doing here, skulking about? If you want to imbibe some culture, then why not purchase a ticket like an honest man?

Gambonet *appalled*

You're not serious, are you? In summoning de Chaumont back to France?

Trubille *haughty*

Of course I am serious.

*Gambonet evidences fear and frustration at that admission.*

Gambonet *imploring*      Monsieur Prime Minister, you and the President are wrong to trust de Chaumont. He is not your friend. He will work against you.

I foresee an impending doom here.

*Trubille makes a deprecating noise and prepares to turn away. Gambonet grabs Trubille's forearm firmly.*

Gambonet *frantic*      Expect something to drop from the clouds.

Trubille *appalled*      Have you been drinking? Go to your home and sober up.

Gambonet      Listen to me!

De Chaumont marches to the beat of his own drum. Nobody leads him: he himself orchestrates how he will bend and sway.

Believe me! You put your head on the block in calling for this man to return to our country. Better to order him into exile in this so distant *Australie* than have him sapping your blood in France.

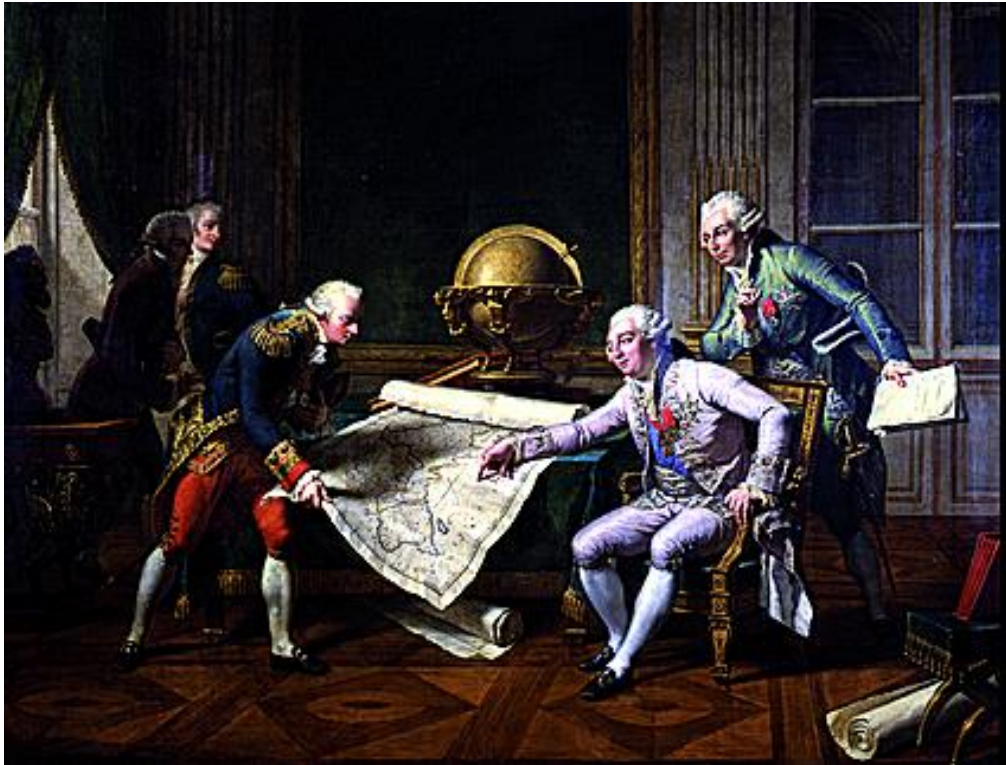
Trubille *outraged*      This is --

Gambonet      Please! I know him ... his methods are self-serving. Colonel Claude de Chaumont is only fighting for Colonel Claude de Chaumont: the rest of us can jump off a cliff.

Be warned Trubille!

*Gambonet promptly disappears into the crowd, leaving Trubille grim-faced.*

END OF SCENE



#### **IV, Scene x:** The Museum Of Maritime History, Fremantle 1932

*On Monday morning, in a small enclave of the museum, Colonel Claude de Chaumont stands before the painting mentioned in the previous scene. Said painting hangs prominently on a wall and bears a brass plate: La Pérouse receives his instructions from Louis XVI.*

*Monsignor Professor Daniel Hill approaches the Colonel. The Monsignor wears purple robes.*

Monsignor Hill                      Yes, we only permit viewing by private invitation. But in your case, that was understood. Of course.

Unfortunately, your average Australian is as keen as mustard to learn about the English explorers. They are mostly Protestants, after all ...

The French ones (to which this gallery is devoted) hardly rate a glance. Bit sad, but ...

*The Colonel grunts and nods, still staring at the painting.*

Monsignor Hill                      I must tell you how surprised I was to have received your letter.

By "surprised" I mean pleased and surprised. I'm only sorry that you've come all this way for what may prove to be little reward.

De Chaumont *without emotion* I had to come.

Monsignor Hill As I wrote to you some weeks ago, I've combed through the various lists, inventories, logs, indices, folios ... There's no mention of such a letter as you've intimated.

And there's nowhere else likely to house such an object. Since the turn of the century, this very room has been the sole repository in the southern oceans for all things "French-explorer": from Bougainville, d'Entrecasteaux, La Pérouse ...

Monsignor Hill What is it that leads you to believe that such a letter ever existed, Colonel de Chaumont?

De Chaumont I've read Bruni's accounts again and again and again, and every time I am more sure than ever that when he speaks of the King, he intimates that such a letter was secretly passed to him.

It would be worth ... Ah! ... Who can put a monetary figure on such an object?

Monsignor Hill And yet you are the only one to have supposed this.

De Chaumont I am as certain as I can be.

Monsignor Hill *shrugs* Sorry ... But that's it.

*Monsignor Hill now refers to the painting which has so captivated the Colonel.*

Monsignor Hill Nicolas-André Monsiau. That's Louis XVI and his maritime minister with La Pérouse. Naturally, this is a copy.

De Chaumont Yes, I've viewed the original at Versailles many, many times.

Monsignor Hill For so distinguished an artist to have been commissioned to paint this work ... On this subject ... And then for Bruni d'Entrecasteaux et al to have been sent out to find him ... One feels that La

Pérouse must have been a very much loved and admired seaman.

De Chaumont            When first I arrived in Australia (in Sydney), they took me to a most beautiful suburb named after him. I was enchanted.

Monsignor Hill        Yes! Oh, yes, and there's all sorts of places named after La Pérouse hereabouts.

And d'Entrecasteaux and Bougainville are much commemorated, too.

The Recherche and the Esperance ... glorified in this region and in Tasmania.

The Huon River and the Huon Pine (native to Tasmania) are named for the commander of L'Esperance (the Recherche's sister ship).

Here is the map of Bruni d'Entrecasteaux's travels.

*On the wall, a large map of Oceania will feature dotted lines depicting each explorer's voyages.*

*Monsignor Hill will use his index finger to trace along the routes, such that we (the film's audience) get the general idea.*

De Chaumont            Bruni was devoted to La Pérouse.

And he loved the King and himself died only a few months previous to the evil execution.

Monsignor Hill        Yes ... Yes, so I understand ... Of scurvy. Quite horrible.

De Chaumont            La Pérouse has long been my hero, since boyhood. My country would have paid **any** amount to have that letter.

Monsignor Hill *sadly*    It's not to be ...

I only wish that more of your countrymen would visit this museum. However, I can well appreciate that taking such a long voyage cannot be easy. Or inexpensive.

De Chaumont            You'll let me know if anything rises up ...

It was an honour to meet you, Monsignor Hill.

*The two men shake hands. As de Chaumont strolls off, Monsignor Hill calls after him. We watch de Chaumont's face as Hill speaks.*

Monsignor Hill

The British seafarers Flinders and Bass achieved what Bruni d'Entrecasteaux was forced to abandon: that is, his navigation of the southern coast of New Holland. Had he continued, and not broken-off to head for Tasmania, in all probability I would now be speaking to you in your own tongue as my native language. It bears thinking about ...

Good-bye.

END OF SCENE

END OF ACT IV



## ACT V They Bleed On Both Sides

### V, Scene i: De Chaumont Records A Message In French 1932

*Grace, Glover and Challon stand about in a corridor at the National Broadcasting studio in Fremantle. Through a couple of glass windows, we are able to make out de Chaumont as he rants into a large microphone. He speaks from the heart, without notes. We can see the outrageous gestures which are part of de Chaumont's speeches. He speaks in French, but we are able to hear only quacks and rolling-Rs as he makes his speech.*

Grace *sighs*                      I simply can't believe that this is the same man I danced with on Saturday night. It's not possible.

Challon *amazed*                Look at him! He's doing it without any notes.

Glover *amazed*                Not one single aide-memoire. Amazing!

Grace *wistful*                  He will inflame the French. Can't help but inflame them. I only wish our politicians were half as good ...

END OF SCENE



**V, Scene ii: Time Passes In Fremantle And Sydney 1932**

*There now follows a collection of scenes indicating the passing of time. This allows us to quickly progress the plot with a minimum of time spent. We can mix up the snippets in such a way as to further enjoy Ravel's music, as instructed below.*

|                               |
|-------------------------------|
| The Four University Students. |
|-------------------------------|

*The four young men are seen playing cricket, working hard on the fishing boat and studying (as they smoke and drink) in the common room at the hotel.*

*There will be a couple of scattered scenes showing them referring to old maps while on board as they point to landmarks. Brownie appears to be a mine of information in this regard. Remember that we have not officially met Brownie yet, and so it might be politic if we overhear one of the young men shout out "Look lively, Brownie!" or some such thing.*

**Most importantly**, *the fishing boat will be seen to pass the launch which carries the de Chaumont party. We will vaguely hear one of the young men say:*

*"Hey! Isn't that the tall beaky French bloke we met in the train? See him? The tall bloke with the field glasses."*

*Obviously, Grace will not be spotted as Alex would recognize her.*

|                        |
|------------------------|
| The De Chaumont Party. |
|------------------------|

*Colonel Claude de Chaumont, Jeff Challon, Grace and Major Glover are seen aboard a sumptuous launch. They tour the southern coast of Western Australia and are seen to refer to a historic map detailing the voyages of all the French explorers in the region.*

*An excerpt from Ravel's "Une Barque Sur L'Ocean" is heard. As it plays, de Chaumont is seen to stand at the rail of the launch and stare out over the sea towards the land. Seagulls caw overhead and dolphins splash about beside the launch. Later, de Chaumont will describe this as one of his most*

*treasured moments. Note that the sea will be serene and majestic (unlike the huge angry waves filmed in ACT III scene iii).*

The Sydneysiders.

*In Sydney, Polly, Lloyd and Catherine are seen to amuse Gil in the garden with Michael studying as he relaxes in a deck chair.*

~~~~~ Break At A Teashop ~~~~~

*Colonel de Chaumont and his party sit in a very pleasant seaside tearoom where they are plied with tea (the old-fashioned teapot in tea cosy, milk jug and extra hot water such that Grace “plays mother”) along with delicious cream cakes and patisserie.*

Challon *sudden*                      Colonel de Chaumont, what do you think of Australia; what you’ve  
*onslaught*                              seen of it?

*This kind of jingoistic question demands a positive answer: de Chaumont provides it.*

De Chaumont                      This country is a man’s country. It is stark (beautifully stark),  
majestic and alluring. I should much like to travel further this land.

Glover *ironic*                      Even after having crossed the Nullarbor Plain, you’re still keen?

Challon *full of wisdom*              Aw, some of it’s much worse than the Nullarbor ... People go to  
some far-flung rock outcrops and then never come back. Never  
heard of again.

*An awkward silence falls. Grace smiles quietly at de Chaumont and Glover.*

*Suddenly, Challon leaps to his feet with a quick word of apology: he has seen an old acquaintance.*

*In the background for the rest of the scene, Challon will be in deep background talking in great  
pleasure with his hearty friend.*

*A sense of relief descends upon the remaining three at the table.*

De Chaumont                   And I must cross the great land once more, to get home. Which soon I must do.

Glover                         Yes, of course.

De Chaumont *twisted smile*     Have you run out of quotations from your much-loved tragedy, Major?

Glover *rueful*                 Er ... Sort of ... I'm no longer in the mood for them, I'm afraid.

Grace *grinning*             "For this relief, much thanks."

*[To de Chaumont, with caring sympathy]*

                                      Will you be able to return to France without the thing for which you voyaged all this way? It seems so very hard ...

De Chaumont *sadly*           Mademoiselle Cobey ... It would appear that the object that lured me so far south does not exist. It was a phantom only.

*[He reaches out and covers Grace's hand with his own]*

                                      You are concerned for me, my dear young lady, and that touches my heart.

*[Squares his shoulders to shrug off his maudlin mood; releases Grace's hand]*

                                      But, like so many Army officers before me, I close off the gate and take up my new orders. Do you follow that reasoning, Miss Cobey?

*Grace glances towards Glover whose jaw is set hard. It is as if this disappointment has spread to Glover, and Grace is sympathizing with Glover as well as with de Chaumont.*

Grace                         Yes, I do. Definitely.

De Chaumont                 Apart from that, I found a beautiful peace when out on the sea, partially retracing my hero's steps. This may sound very oblique, but ...

                                      Well, I am convinced that I can believe in myself again.

Glover                         And your words to the French people ... It would have been so

inspiring to hear them, Sir.

*[We shall not be privy to de Chaumont's speech. Refer "Special Notes".]*

*There is a telling silence. De Chaumont sips the remainder of his tea and sets the cup back in the saucer. He takes great pains to ensure that the cup is placed correctly. Then he sighs and again, squares his shoulders.*

De Chaumont *voice of command* I must return to my own country.

You will kindly book passage back to Sydney for the four of us, Grahame.

~~~~~ Break ~~~~~

*The camera backs away from the teashop and then goes into aerial shot.*

*The vision moves to the wharf, where the fishing boat is just now chugging into the dock. We can see the four young men (Droop et al) working hard on deck.*

~~~~~ Break ~~~~~

*The actor who plays Bruni also plays Brownie.*

*On the dock itself, the four young men continue to work: fish to box, nets to haul about, gear to stow, and so on. They are in fact quite busy.*

*Brownie hovers about, assisting with the organization.*

Brownie *loud, jovial* Syd reports that you blokes are doing a top-class job. Best crew he's ever had, he reckons.

*The boys grunt and continue to work.*

Brownie                      This is hard yakka. Is your pay enough to cover your needs? Do you need more moolah?

Droop *laughing*              It's never enough, is it? And you'll go broke if you start offering the takings to us.

Brownie *concerned*              Is young Syd looking after youse? No punch-ups or nothing?

*The boys laugh.*

Barry *reassuring*              If this is a play to get us to stay on and crew your boat, Brownie, then I'm afraid we'll have to disappoint you. We've got to get back to Sydney, to the University.

Brownie                      The uni-bloody-versity ...

                                      How long can you blokes stay in Fremantle? I wasn't joking when I said I'd pay you more money.

Alex                              Listen, mate. We learned more from you and Syd than we could possibly have picked-up any other way ... About the French explorers who came to these shores. That was worth any amount of money.

*Alex stops working to firmly shake hands with Brownie, who is very touched by the gesture.*

Ernie                              Yes, it was a very worthwhile experience, working with you and Syd.

Barry *under-voice to Droop and Alex*              We experienced rough living, sang snatches from G & S as we wiled away a weary hour, met desperate characters (such as you yourself Brownie!) and enjoyed a Boys' Own adventure. We're the envy of all!

*Droop and Alex laugh. Brownie grins, thinking that he has somehow made a funny joke. This pleases him.*

Brownie *flash of inspiration*                      Oh, and I remember what I had to ask youse ...

                                      Do any of you read Latin? There could be a dina in it for ya, I'd

reckon.

*The question astounds Brownie's audience.*

Ernie *surprised* Latin? Yes, I pride myself on being a bit of a Latinist. Not brilliant, of course, but --

Brownie *beaming* Bonza! I got some dusty old Latin stuff that I need to have read out in case it's worth a bob or two ... I'll write out me address and youse can come out this arvo ... On the bus. Stops just outside me house ...

END OF SCENE

### **V, Scene iii:** Brownie's Miserable Shack 1932

*Tony Brown's dilapidated house is just this side of being condemned.*

*The four young men reel back in disgust as they enter the squalid shack. To progress through the squalor, the men must step over copious piles of rubbish and other impedimenta.*

Brownie Now, now!

Don't get all girly on me.

It used to be much worse than this before me ex-missus cleaned me out.

*Brownie wanders about aimlessly as the young men look about them with distaste.*

Brownie And by "cleaned me out", I mean that she took all the good loot and left the shit. Pardon my French.

*Brownie then rifles about under the sink in a lopsided broken cupboard.*

Brownie *triumphant* ***Except*** for this!

*From a rusty biscuit tin under the sink, Brownie reefs out an extremely old and mouldy grey leather pouch.*

Brownie *to Ernie*                      So you reckon you can read Latin.

Ernie *blushing*                      Yes. I don't call myself a scholar, but it helps with being a law student.

Brownie *nods*                      My Ma raised me as Church of England so we never done Latin at school.

But some of that stuff looks important and might be worth a bob.

*Brownie hands Ernie the pouch, which Ernie takes from him gingerly.*

Ernie                      Where's it from?

*Brownie steps over piles of rubbish to reach a Coolgardie safe. From this he extracts 2 bottles of beer.*

Brownie                      Well, I'll tell ya. It's a longie, so's youse'll need a beer.

*On a filthy bench, Brownie rescues three jars, a glass and a small flower vase (all grimy). He flips open the bottles with a bottle-opener and pours beers. These he hands about. The boys take them, looking warily at the drinking equipment.*

Brownie                      Righto! This all happened about 20 years ago or so ...

I went to the trots one night and this old bloke comes running up – I knew him and that – and he hands me a bag of throopences.

*Everyone raises their "glasses" of beer in a mock toast, they all say "Cheers!" and then they drink.*

*Ernie and Barry appear very fastidious about the state of the jars in their hands.*

Droop                      What?

Brownie                      Yeah, a great big huge paper bag full of throopences.

And then he shoots through.

I thought: "This is good! I'm going to have to lug a bag of throopences around with me all night". Bugger!

*Brownie sculls his beer and then wanders about, refilling all the "glasses".*

Alex                                      How much did it weigh?

Brownie                                Oh, I dunno ... It was heavy, but ...

Any road, some coppers come rushing up and ask what's in the bag. So I told 'em: throopences.

So they drag me off to the police room and it was full of lost kids all crying and that, and then they ask me: "What'dya know?"

I wasn't going to dob this bloke in (do you know, I can't even remember his –)

*[Eureka moment]*

Stan! Stan Chalmers: that was it! Stan Chalmers ...

*Brownie staggers back to the Coolgardie safe and grabs more bottles of beer, which he opens and pours into each "glass".*

Brownie                                So, any road ... I just told 'em what happened but no names.

So they let me go but they kept the bag of throopences. So by now I'm thinkin' that the coins were filched. No ways unknown were they got by fair means.

Any road ... What d'ya know? Stan Chalmers comes running up and asks where the throopences are, so I told him.

He shoves that leather pouch at me and says: "Hold this for a minnie". And then he runs off.

*Brownie stops. All of a sudden, he seems to be in a confrontationist mood and puts his hands on his hips, looking aggressively at Ernie. He nods a couple of times, looking mulish.*

Brownie                                Are you gonna open that or stand around all day like a stale bottle of piss?

*Ernie (who had been transfixed hitherto) snaps out of his reverie and pulls out (one by one) the items stowed in the pouch. Barry assists him.*

*Brownie (as if by magic) returns to his usual relaxed self.*



Brownie

Do you know? I never saw him again.

Old Stan'd be dead now, for sure. He was way, way older than me back then and I'm on old codger now meself ...

So I kept that leather pouch and thought it might be trouble. So I hid it: after I checked there wasn't any money in it.

Then, after the ex-missus shot through with most of the stuff, I dug that out and had a look at it again. Properly this time.

Stone the crows, I thought. Most of this is in Latin.

Now, I know a few Micks ...

Sorry ... Catholics ... Mustn't offend nobody, eh?

... and asked them if they could read Latin, but they couldn't (except what they dole out to you at mass).

Most of 'em couldn't read full stop.

And then youse blokes showed up.

*Ernie and Barry have been frowning over the contents of the pouch, flick-reading page after page.*

Ernie *concerned*

No ... This isn't actually Latin ... It's more of an old style of French.

Barry *riveted*

These are old ship's logs ... or ...

*The other two young men join Barry and Ernie. Barry is wide-eyed over one particular page that he turns over and over. He touches his hair, doing a double-take.*

Barry *very excited*

These ... These are written instructions from the King of France to one of his captains. "*Mon cher Jean-François*" it starts. Jean-François ...

It's signed "Louis". Must be the one who was executed ... The King talks about his privations – and blood in the streets! This was written when he was about to be guillotined. Oh, my God! It's Louis XVI!

*A frisson of excitement extends over the group. Even Brownie looks interested.*

Alex But who could the captain be? I know that it's not that dodgy d'Entrecasteaux: he was named "Antoine" so it's not him.

Droop There were other ones ... Bougainville – what was his first name?

Alex Claude? Louis?

Barry *reading as he translates* Listen! This is what the King writes:

"These wretches ... wretched people who rise up against my consecrated body cannot but destroy France. God abom- ... abominates the spectre of the streets of Paris awash with her citizens' blood.

"You (my dear friend, supporter and loyal compatriot) were sent off to distant waters with the fervent wish that new lands (rich to be harvested) would shore-up the might of France.

"My delight will be to hear from your own lips that Terra Louis has been claimed for the Bourbons. My dread is that I shall no longer have breath in my body to receive your assurances, so desperate is my ... " Plight, is it? Plight.

"Until we embrace again (in Heaven or on this ground), God fare you well my friend. My most Christian Majesty Louis, King of France."

*Barry gulps. He looks about at the other three young men and Brownie. There is a taut silence.*

*Brownie begins to fidget.*

Brownie *lost in thought* Shit, eh? Poor bugger.

*Barry is so awestruck that he can hardly think.*

Ernie *aghast* It's like having an angel speaking ... All that time I've wondered why the French never laid claim to mainland Australia. And here is the King saying (from virtual imprisonment) that they really **wanted** to do that, but they just ...

Droop *in wonderment*      They just never got around to it. They took a rightie instead of a leftie and headed for Tazzie or Antarctica or somewhere else ...

Barry *agog*      But ... But ... Don't you realize ... ?

This must be worth an absolute **fortune** (whoever it's meant for.)

A letter like this ... It's like finding the Rosetta Stone. It's monumental! And I'm holding it in my hand ...

*Brownie evidences great pleasure in Barry's words. He dances about, rubbing his hands together and making noises reminiscent of rutting pigs.*

Alex *jumping into action*      If it's worth something (and I reckon Barry's right), then the first thing we have to do is to get it back to France for them to verify its authenticity. And then collect the reward.

*[To Ernie and Barry]*

You blokes know enough about the Law to get yourselves into trouble: if we hand this over to my Uncle Finn's French Colonel ... Then, can't he give us a receipt for it and then he can do all the leg work?

Ernie      Well ... Brownie must be able to claim ownership and we could put in for a spotter's fee.

Yes! That would work.

*Brownie does not understand and looks feisty.*

Droop *reassuring*      The money's **yours**, Brownie. We're not going to fleece you of your fortune. You see, we know this French bloke and --

Alex *fired-up*      No we don't! We don't know him at all! He's Uncle Finn's hanger-on. Him and the Pommie Major have been scumming meals off my rellies since they lobbed in Oz.

I'm gonna ring my uncle (collect) so as to get in touch with the French peanut. That's our absolute best plan.

Brownie *elated*                      You boys do whatever you want. I trust you with me Latin letters  
... No! Me *French* letters ... Ha! Ha! French letters ...

*Brownie rolls about laughing at his salacious joke.*

Droop                                  Too right!

But Jeez I'd love to see your ex-missus's face when she finds out  
that she missed the cream when she skinned you, Brownie.

END OF SCENE

## **V, Scene iv:** The End For Bruni, 1793

*We see a short replay of the Prologue, where Bruni totters along, a spoiled fop. And as we watch, Bruni morphs into a very sick man, whose face is swathed in bandages. His beautiful silken costume is now a "sackcloth-and-ashes" affair. He is hardly able to walk, and uses a bamboo cane for support. The lovely hall morphs back into the Rear-Admiral's cabin aboard the Recherche.*

Bruni *hardly able to speak*                      You see me now, no better than a despised leper.

I have succumbed (as did so many, many other mariners) to *le scorbout*.

Dear Friend, I have not much time. And there is no need to tell  
me that you were unable to reach my secret letter.

Me ... I know ...

It will be tossed-out with all my other effects, I do not doubt,  
upon my decease.

*Bruni stops exhausted.*

Bruni                                  The new thought is that we must all eat horse meat, and tough-  
skinned fruits such as lemons, limes and oranges. Also, some  
quick-mettled soul has set down his strictures that all the cooking

utensils aboard ship must be scrupulously cleaned.

All this to stop the scurvy ... Have you ever heard such nonsense?

The Devil is at work, I am sure ...

*Bruni leans heavily on his cane, head bowed. He fades slowly from the cabin.*

END OF SCENE

## **V, Scene v:** Changing Trains At Port Augusta, 1932

*This is a split screen as the two Cobey brothers converse using candlestick telephones.*

*Alex Cobey stands in the reception area at the Royal Gardens Hotel in Fremantle.*

*Michael Cobey lounges at home (suburb of Sydney).*

Alex                                      Hello, Micky. I've just been on the blower with Uncle Finn.

Gracie's not home yet ... from Perth, is she?

Michael                                  Alex! How are you going?

Er ... Grace is ... No, she rang two days ago. The intention was to leap back onto the train and make their way home ...

*Alex disappointed*                      Oh ... hmm ... It's just that I need to get hold of her.

*Michael concerned*                      Can I help?

Is it urgent that you contact Grace? Nothing gone amiss, I hope --

*Alex brightening*                      Telegram! I'll send Grace a telegram to one of the train stations she'll be passing through. By all accounts, that seems to work a treat.

If you give me the details of when she was heading off, I can work out where to get in touch with her.

Michael                                  Sure, I can do that.

But you're sure that it's not an emergency? You're not ill or in trouble, are you?

Alex *reassuring*

No, it's apples. Fire away: tell me what you know ...

~~~~~ Break ~~~~~

*This is a recap of ACT III Scene vi, except that the train is headed East rather than West.*

*The location is platform 1 at the Port Augusta railway station, where the east-bound stream train is taking on goods and passengers. It is early afternoon.*

Station announcement via scratchy tannoy      Could Miss Grace Cobey from Sydney please make your way immediately to the station master's office.

Could Miss Grace Cobey from Sydney please make your way immediately to the station master's office.

Grace Cobey from Sydney.

~~~~~ Break ~~~~~

*Grace and Glover jog along the platform towards the station master's office, as directed.*

Grace *panting*      I hope that this is not some nebulous group set on having **me** sort out the poor Colonel!

*Grace (somewhat breathless) approaches the counter and is immediately handed a telegram in an envelope. She rips the envelope open and reads the contents of the telegram to Glover.*

Grace *reading, breathless*      "Telephone Royal Gardens Hotel Fremantle ask Alex urgent".

*Grace is lost and looks imploringly at the Major who is grim-faced.*

Grace *woebegone*      It's from my brother. Oh, dear! I trust it's only a shout-out for

money.

Would you please ask the driver or someone to hold the train until I make a quick call to Alex? Surely they'll let me use their telephone ...

Glover *reassuring*

Of course they will. I'll make certain of it.

And don't fret: the train won't be ready to leave for some minutes yet ... All the cattle and engines and what have you aren't yet transferred across ... But I'll certainly keep an eye on the guard for you.

*The Major shepherds Grace back to the counter, and then firmly requests a telephone line. The man behind the counter swiftly passes the candlestick telephone to Glover. He lifts the earpiece and tweaks the fork of the switch hook twice to establish a connection with the exchange.*

Glover *into the phone*

Hello! Put me through to the Royal Gardens Hotel in Fremantle, please.

No I'm standing on the railway platform at –

*[Looks about]*

At Port Augusta. One of my party has just received an urgent telegram.

Thank you.

*[Pushes the mouthpiece against his chest and addresses the station master]*

I shall of course defray the costs of this call in hard cash, my good man.

*[Back to the phone call]*

To whom am I speaking? This is Major Glover calling on behalf of Miss Grace Cobey. Her brother (Alex Cobey) is a guest at your hotel and –

Ah! He's waiting there. Good! I'll just pass you over to Miss Cobey now.

*The Major passes the contraption to Grace and while she speaks, makes the payment (a few shillings only) to the station master.*

Grace *nervous*                      Alex? It's Grace. What's this all about?

What? Who? Yes, he's with me, yes.

Oh ... Well, it will take a minute ... Hold the line.

*Grace swings around and spots the Colonel chatting with some well-dressed people. She calls to him.*

Grace *calling out*                      Colonel! Colonel de Chaumont! My brother wishes to speak to you.

*The Colonel appears surprised. He excuses himself to his new acquaintances and then marches quickly to Grace's side. She explains the situation to the Colonel as she hands him the telephone.*

Grace                                      This is very extraordinary, Colonel. My brother Alex has some vital questions to ask you in relation to – Well, I'll let him explain.

*Grace and Glover glance at each other and then move forward towards the train. There is still much bustle and activity: many of the passengers have not yet boarded The Guster, but wander about in a leisurely way. Behind them, Grace and Glover are aware of the Colonel gesticulating with emotion and speaking very quickly.*

Grace                                      I don't mean to be rude but I'm instantly reminded of the broadcast he recorded for the French people. All that thrashing about in high alt.

Gosh, I hope he's not speaking in French to Alex: he won't understand a word of it.

Glover *rueful*                              One can never tell with the Colonel (when he's on song) whether he's close to sobbing with despair or shouting with élan. Yet most of the time, he's a cold fish wearing a haughty, severely aquiline expression.

A strange creature, is our Colonel ...



*The phone call has ended. De Chaumont touches his face with his hands, and then strides up to Grace and Glover. The Colonel is full of business. In the background, we are made aware (shots of steam and so on) that the steam train has a good head of steam and is ready to depart.*

De Chaumont *a trifle breathless*      We were on our way to the hill that is broken ... But of course I must cut my journey short and return to ... to ... to that place we left so far behind us.

Glover      Back to Perth? Of course, I'll back you up. But ... Miss Cobey and Challon ... ?

Station announcement via scratchy tannoy      Passengers bound for Broken Hill on The Guster are advised that the train is ready to depart from Platform 1. Could all passengers please make their way onto the train promptly.

De Chaumont *urgent to Grace*      Mademoiselle Cobey, I wish that you and Monsieur Challon continue your journey to Sydney in the train. I am returning to Perth with the Major.

Glover *full of action*      Right! Our bags will have to come off the train ... and Grace to board it.

*Glover shouts to Challon and between them, they manage to get most of the luggage belonging to the Colonel and the Major off the train. Meanwhile, de Chaumont is very gallant in kissing Grace on both cheeks in the Gallic manner.*

*Glover rushes up, as the train is slowly departing the platform and bodily puts Grace on the train. She stands on the step, gripping the railing and also the Major's lapel with the other hand such that she swiftly kisses his lips.*

*As the train takes off (bound for Broken Hill), the luggage belonging to the Colonel and the Major is now either scattered on the platform or actually being thrown from the train onto the platform by a harassed-looking Jeff Challon.*

Challon *calling out*      Look after yourselves ... See you back in Sydney!

*As de Chaumont and Glover gather up their belongings, Glover gives Challon a quick wave. Then, Glover (looking askance at the mess of baggage around him) makes a defeatist gesture. However, de Chaumont has already read his thoughts.*

De Chaumont                      We'll buy a motor car ... I assume that you are able to drive,  
*desperate*                      Glover? Then off we go!

END OF SCENE

## V, Scene vi: In Paris The Political Broth Clears, 1932

*This is a quick preliminary to the conversation between President and future Prime Minister.*

### **GUNFIRE:**

*On the 3<sup>d</sup> floor of the Hôtel Matignon a group of masked guerrillas burst into view. There are bursts of gunfire from both the policemen guarding the Prime Minister and the guerrillas.*

*This scene does not take place in a hospital, but in a bunker in the depths of the Elysee Palace.*

*Our camera is positioned as if it is a patient in a bed. We will discover that this patient is Jean-Marc Trubille. Our camera takes in the rise and fall of the patient's chest and the railing at the end of the hospital bed. That is all we shall see of Trubille.*

*Into our vision strolls Paul Gambonet. He has a huge flat box (black) of expensive chocolates under his wing and is bearing a large bunch of white flowers, which was obviously purchased at a florist shop. Apparently, a nurse approaches from the side. We hear her mutter something, and Gambonet looks at her, smiling. (We do not see the nurse: just her hands as she takes the flowers from him).*

Gambonet *to the*                      Thank you, my dear. This is very kind.  
*unseen nurse*                      And our patient? Is he coping with his confinement?

*Apparently, the nurse gives some sort of answer. We hear an indistinct murmur. Gambonet pretends to be glum. He nods sadly. He places the chocolates on the bed, such that he may easily reach them.*

Gambonet                      Yes, of course. I'll check with the doctor before I take my leave.  
    These are sad tidings, my dear. Sad for France ...

*Gambonet now stares at the patient. Once the nurse has exited, he is not showing any signs of grief or sympathy. The vase of flowers prepared by the nurse is placed on a tray-table and remains in view throughout the scene.*

*Georges D'Anvire-Egret steps into shot and stands beside Gambonet. D'Anvire-Egret looks at the patient in the same "divorced" manner assumed by Gambonet. When they speak, they adopt hushed tones. They look towards the camera/patient and not at each other when speaking.*

D'Anvire-Egret            Is it him? Are we sure that this is him? I mean, with all these bandages on his face ...

Gambonet                Oh, yes. This is what is left of the current Prime Minister.  
  
My information is that he has lost an eye and several vital organs. There is a list of his missing parts over on the nurse's desk if you require the exact prognosis.

And Louis-France Belmont is deceased. Sadly.

D'Anvire-Egret           You will be called to account for that. It was sheer negligence, on your part, surely.

Gambonet                Not at all, Monsieur le President.  
  
I took every care that Louis-France and Jean-Marc here would be in the firing line. And that Yves Quinne and Lorimal were called out to perform other duties. Er ... To save their bacon, as it were.  
  
Rather than describing me as a careless worker, my dear Georges, I am in reality prodigiously thorough and particular.

D'Anvire-Egret           Alright ... I suppose that that **was** thoughtful of you ... I'll admit it. There!

*There is an infinitesimal pause.*

D'Anvire-Egret           I do not often have the chance to drop by these underground rooms. They are quite Spartan and very small; quite unlike the rest of the Palace. However, if the Prime Minister is safe here then  
  
...

*Gambonet reaches for the box of chocolates and quickly removes the black lid. He opens the protective layers of thick, shiny paper and then gestures to the box.*

Gambonet *swarmy*      Would you care for a Belgian chocolate? They are of excellent quality.

D'Anvire-Egret      "The Black Swan" collection. Admirable. A present for the patient. How kind you are. I'll take a nougat, if I may.

Gambonet      You might as well. After all, he cannot eat them himself ...

*Both men quickly gorge on chocolates.*

D'Anvire-Egret      I admire you, Gambonet. I had no idea of the strength of character which you possess. A benevolent man and a most accomplished actor.

But Trubille ... He was protected by armed soldiers. How did you achieve this noble end?

Gambonet *shrugs*      I provided everyone with a fake floor plan which neglected to detail a couple of secret passages. My friends (the Guerrillas of the Cartel) found easy access to the so-well protected third floor. To them I gave the real 3<sup>rd</sup> floor plans.  
  
Nothing simpler.

D'Anvire-Egret      You've been busy to some purpose, Paul. I heard that you also found time (when not undermining your political leader) to become engaged to the youngest sister of Colonel Claude de Chaumont.

Gambonet      Yes. The beautiful Mimi. I am the luckiest man in Paris.

D'Anvire-Egret      And when your future brother-in-law returns from the far reaches of the Southern oceans?

Gambonet      His new Prime Minister (me!) and the President of France (you!) will rush to his arms to welcome him back.

D'Anvire-Egret                    And on that very moment, the whole of France will cease to show a warlike visage and will resume that peaceful demeanour for which France is famous.

Gambonet                        Forgive my frankness, my dear President, but there will never be peace in France so long as your ears remain unattached to your ankles. However, we may closely approach it ...

Now, we should meet with the doctor who is treating Trubille and express our fervent hopes that he will effect a full recovery, even though that is (sadly) a forlorn hope now.

D'Anvire-Egret                    Mmm ... A tragedy.

*The two men scoff more chocolates. They show no emotion as they come around to either side of the bed and simultaneously kiss the cheeks of the patient.*

*The screen blackens.*

END OF SCENE

## **V, Scene vii:** Returning To Fremantle, 1932

*De Chaumont and Glover have purchased a marvellous 1924 Roadster. Their luggage is piled into the back and one assumes that they have supplied themselves with spare petrol and spare water.*

*As the scene opens, the Roadster is driving through the night, with the Colonel at the wheel. Glover (his passenger) yawns prodigiously.*

Glover *savage outburst*    This is madness! Madness!

De Chaumont *very calm*                    You are implying that the steps we have taken are very unorthodox.

But there is nothing "mad" about our behaviour. What would have been mad would have been **not** to go back. Your lady-friend's

brother holds out to me the hope for which I thought there was no hope.

~~~~~ Break ~~~~~

*The car has stopped in a farming area on the far outskirts of Perth. De Chaumont (the driver) steps out of the car. Nearby is a large earthen dam filled with dirty brown water and a supply of reeds. A flock of black swans flies in to settle on the water. A slow smile stretches over de Chaumont's face.*

~~~~~ Break ~~~~~

*The motorcar which Major Glover bought in Port Augusta is now very dusty and dirty (covered in dead insects).*

*With Colonel de Chaumont asleep beside him, Major Glover pulls up in the driveway of the Royal Gardens Hotel. The two men are dishevelled (very tired, unshaven, dusty and tousled). Glover struggles out of the driver's seat and stands beside the car, stretching in discomfort. He is stiff and exhausted.*

*After checking that his companion is still asleep, Glover strides into the hotel and up to the desk.*

Glover                                      There are four young men residing here. They are currently crewing on a fishing boat. Would you please direct me to them?

Receptionist                              They'll be back soon. Just before lunch they usually show up.

*Glover is annoyed and impatient.*

Glover                                      Alright. While I'm waiting, I'll have a bath and change. You'd better give me two rooms: my companion is asleep in the car. We've driven across from South --

Receptionist                              Oh, no. I can't give you any rooms yet. You'll have to wait. The maids haven't finished their daily rounds.



*Glover marches back into the room carrying bed linen. He briskly makes the bed, talking as he does so.*

Glover                      Why don't you have a bath and a shave before you bed-in?  
                                    Hopefully, we can pick up some lunch here ... Or at least nearby.  
                                    The receptionist thinks that the men will return from their fishing  
                                    foray around lunchtime.

De Chaumont              Thank you, my friend. This is a very pleasant place. Thank you for  
                                    looking after me.

*Glover has finished making the bed. He stares at the Colonel with a half-smile on his face.*

Glover *shrewdly*              You firmly believe that this is it, don't you? That what you came all  
                                    this way for is about to fall into your hands?

De Chaumont              I believe it, yes. Miss Cobey's brother would not have gone to the  
                                    trouble (or expense) of telegramming her on a mere whim. I pin  
                                    my hopes on that.

                                    Now where is a towel, please, so that I may wash?

*Just as Glover goes to a set of drawers and pulls out a snowy white towel, much noise can be heard.*

*The four young men have arrived and they march up the stairs noisily.*

*Droop strides up to the doorway.*

Droop                        Here they are! But ... You're the chaps off the train!

*Ernie, Barry and Alex pull up beside Droop, and they stare at the officers. Likewise, the Colonel and the Major stare back at them.*

Glover *amazed*              And you are the engineering students and the budding lawyers.

*Barry smacks Alex on the chest.*

Barry *to Alex, justified*    I **told** you that they were the French bloke and the English side-  
                                    kick, but no! You had to be right!

Alex *blushing*              But you're not at all what I thought you'd be.



Ernie I'll shoot off to our room and grab the leather pouch.

*Ernie dashes off.*

Barry *cautious* The old coot who had the stuff wants to be paid for it. But if it comes to it, I'm not sure that he can prove ownership, unless we apply *animus possidendi*.

Glover *smiling at Alex* And you are Grace's brother? We left her in Challon's care ... To return her safely to Sydney.

Alex *nods airily* She'll be alright. But it must have been a gigantic bore for you to have to come all the way back from Port Augusta.

Glover *groans* Yes! A nightmare.

*Ernie returns with the grimy leather pouch.*

Barry *to Ernie* I was just saying that Brownie will have to prove ownership. We'll probably have to apply *animus possidendi*.

Ernie But I've been worried about that. The bloke at the trots gave this to Brownie. Was it to be kept in trust or was it an outright gift?  
And if the latter, did he indeed have ownership? Was it stolen goods?

De Chaumont *grinning* May I please see the letter which is at the root of this discussion?

*Ernie hands an old envelope over to de Chaumont.*

Ernie *absently* Er ... Certainly. Be my guest.

*De Chaumont extracts the letter and opens it.*

Barry Ern, you're thinking of *nemo plus iuris ad alium transferre potest quam ipse habet* or simply *nemo dat quod non habet*.

Brownie undertook to carry the goods. Bona fide. If the chap (and we're not even sure of his name) has then deceased, to whom next do the goods pass if not to Brownie under *animus possidendi*. Otherwise, it's *res nullius*.

Ernie *frowning*

The original owner of the *res* was French, and thus the lawyers may drag in Law French. Alternatively, if this is a case of goods recovered from a sea wreck (and I'm pretty sure it was), then we may have to deal with maritime law: *de bonis asportatis*.

*Colonel de Chaumont (holding the letter as if a religious relic) looks up, directly at Glover. He half-smiles and nods slightly. Major Glover looks utterly relieved.*

Barry

King Louis died in 1793. Then England and France were at war. So the law of *uti possidetis* will probably come into play.

Ernie

Yes, but you see --

Glover *authoritative*

Alright! Put away your wigs and gowns, gentlemen. You'll have your day in court.

The Colonel and I want to clean ourselves up and then devour a gargantuan lunch. My treat. So, we'll meet in the dining room in half-an-hour.

~~~~~ Break ~~~~~

*Happy and jolly, the boys and the two officers dine at the Royal Gardens Hotel. The table is covered in food and wine. Colonel de Chaumont smiles benignly over his fellow diners, pleased beyond words.*

END OF SCENE

## **V, Scene viii:** The Proposal, 1932

*Major Glover sneaks off to use a public telephone. At first, we cannot hear what Glover is saying.*

*We see him struggling with the handset and asking the exchange to dial a number for him.*

*Then his face beams.*

Glover *ecstatic*                    It's all worked out! I've met your brother and ...

It's all worked out!

*There is a slight pause. The Major listens intently.*

Glover *overwhelmed*            Grace! Grace! I'm missing you more than you could possibly imagine.

Oh how wonderful to hear your voice!

Listen! I quite realize that this must sound crazy but I want you to send me a photograph of yourself for me to keep in my breast pocket. And I want you to write to me every week, and dab some of your perfume on the pages. And I want to marry you and lift your veil and kiss you.

Does that sound crazy?

*Glover appears to listen intently. He is evidently inordinately pleased with what he hears.*

Glover *laughs*                    "Sweets to the sweet" indeed!

Look, my darling: it was wonderful with you: **not** being in love.

But it's terrible without you: **being** in love.

*There is a brief glimpse of Glover looking elated (enough so that we understand that they are probably in love).*

END OF SCENE

## **V, Scene ix:** De Chaumont's Triumph In Paris, 1932

*Claude de Chaumont returns to Paris in triumph. When he disembarks from the ship there are vast crowds to cheer him. He is driven through the streets of Paris on the back of an open truck to a ticker-tape welcome. Flowers are thrown onto the truck: he is adored.*

*At a formal ceremony, President Georges d'Anvire-Egret and new Prime Minister Paul Gambonet greet him warmly with kisses. Also very much in evidence are his wife and family (including his newly-betrothed sister Mimi).*

*They all turn to the crowd and wave.*

END OF SCENE

## **V, Scene x:** La Perouse, Sydney 1934

*Brownie turns up in a luxurious yacht: La Recherche II on a beautiful Sydney day.*

*He has sailed all the way from Fremantle.*

*Droop, Alex, Barry and Ernie cheer wildly from the shore then clamber aboard.*

*The five men drink beer and fish with rods over the side.*

END OF SCENE

END OF ACT V

END OF FILM SCRIPT

→ CREDITS ROLL THROUGH