The French Chair

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The French Chair

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the University of New Orleans in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts

In

Film, Theatre, and Communication Arts

Creative Writing

By

Roberta Grossi

B.A. University of Richmond, 1983
M.A. Oklahoma State University, 1987

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Acknowledgements

To everyone who always enjoyed reading me and encouraged me to pursue my dream.

To my dream of becoming a writer, to my dream of making people laugh, to my dream of obtaining an MFA degree in Creative Writing.
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Abstract

This play is a comedy, which revolves around the importance of a French Chair (Louis XIII) in the life of a family. A young newlywed woman discovers that her husband has a "secret" half sister born out of wedlock. Her mother-in-law has had an affair with a French man, but her husband always believed she had been abused. The young lady senses something is not clear and decides to look for her "half" sister-in-law. She does and manages to organize a get-together to bring everyone in the same place and finally understand what really happened. Eventually, her mother-in-law, now a widower, falls in love again with her ex-lover and they decide to marry. The French Chair was a reason of fights in the young couple and with the mother-in-law. But at the end we learn that young lady's half sister-in-law was conceived on this chair.

Keywords: play, French, Roberta, Grossi, international, culture
THE FRENCH CHAIR

DOROTHY A woman in her early 30’s, married to Brad

BRAD A man 34-years old

JUNE Brad’s mother, around 60 years old.

JULIE Brad’s half sister, June’s and Jacques’ daughter. She is 25 and an aspiring writer. She’s French and speaks with an accent.

JACQUES A Frenchman, 65 years old. He’s June’s ex-lover, Julie’s father.

Stage directions

In Act 2, the stage is cut in two parts, during this act, lights will go on the half where the scenes take place while on the other half the setup is made. This allows for characters going from one scene to another in a different setting to almost immediately appear in the following scene. Regarding clothes, they can wear clothes in layers and quickly transform their look by taking off one layer of clothes.
ACT I

Scene 1

A living room with a table set for two. The room is decorated with old furniture. There are pictures of older people on walls and on a large piano. There is a mixture of old and modern furniture. A large staircase decorated with brass in the corner leads to a second floor. The lights go on an old chair, Louis Treize style. A woman, JUNE, puts her hand on the back of the chair and slowly slides it down to the arm. She sits in it and stares at the pictures on the piano. She wipes a tear. Noise is heard from behind a door. June gets up and runs up the stairs while a young woman, DOROTHY, rushes in carrying a big salad bowl. She trips on a carpet. Her bowl falls on the Louis Treize chair. She takes the salad bowl, grabs the few leaves left on the chair and kicks the chair.

DOROTHY
That old chair! Should be in the fireplace!

A man, BRAD, walks in the apartment, coming from outside carrying a suitcase. Dorothy runs to the door to welcome him with a kiss. Dorothy wears a sexy dress and high heels. Brad has a bouquet of red roses in his hands. They sit at the table. They have a glass of wine in a fine crystal glass. They hold hands.
DOROTHY
This feels good after a long week of hard work.

BRAD
I hate being far from you.

DOROTHY
I do too. I wish your work didn’t take you away from me so often.

Dorothy moves towards him and gives him a short but passionate kiss. He runs his hand along her back.

BRAD
Will we get through dinner?

DOROTHY
(With a sensual tone) Maybe not.

Brad lets his hand go to her leg. She gets closer.

BRAD
Hmmm.

Dorothy slowly sits back. Brad tries to hold her. She lets out his grip. She takes a beautifully decorated dish from a nearby tray and hands it to him.

DOROTHY
Food first. I cooked all afternoon.

BRAD
You had time to do all this? This meal looks amazing. You’re amazing.

DOROTHY
I know.

Dorothy takes one shoe off and plays footsie with Brad.
BRAD  
(Giggling) I can’t concentrate on food.

DOROTHY
You shouldn’t.

BRAD
We’ll have dessert later?

DOROTHY
(Again, very sensual) Much later.

BRAD
When we have our house, we’ll have dinner by our very own fireplace.

DOROTHY
My dream.

BRAD
I want to find our house soon.

DOROTHY
I know. Three years is a long time to live with your mother.

BRAD
Well, it’s had its advantages. Cheap rent?

DOROTHY
Cheap? And we have to live with old furniture.

Dorothy gets up, points at some old armchair. She shakes it.

DOROTHY
That Trees chair is so old that if I sit in it I’ll become old, and you’ll have to cart me off to a nursing home.

BRAD
It’s a Louis XIII (treize) chair. Trees grow in the woods.

DOROTHY
That’s where it belongs. With the trees.

BRAD
Treize! The French king! My French great-grandmother left it...
DOROTHY
Your French great-grandmother left it for you. It’s worth ten thousand dollars, I know, but I’d rather have simple chairs and a new house with a nice swimming pool.

BRAD
What do you need a swimming pool for?

DOROTHY
To swim. I like swimming.

BRAD
You have one here and you never use it!

DOROTHY
I am afraid of getting a disease. We’re not the only ones who use it.

BRAD
That’s mean.

DOROTHY
Oh come on, there’s no intimacy. And when we have our home, I’ll do what I want in it.

BRAD
What are you going to do?

DOROTHY
Swim naked.

BRAD
I’m starting to like this idea.

Dorothy takes her glass of wine. She rubs it slightly against Brad’s hand. She then takes a sip and puts the glass down. She sends an air kiss to Brad.

DOROTHY
And swimming is not the only thing I have in mind.

BRAD
We’ll get a pool.

DOROTHY
(pointing to different directions in the room) Sell that chair. And the piano. And that old closet. And that old creepy scary statue.
BRAD
That’s twenty-thousand dollars worth of creepy. And Eisenhower
gave them to my cousin’s uncle.

DOROTHY
I don’t like museums, and I don’t want to live in one.

BRAD
And that picture, fifteen thousand dollars.

DOROTHY
We’re rich!

BRAD
We?

DOROTHY
If you sell everything, we can buy a house with a pool.

BRAD
I’m not selling off my family history.

DOROTHY
I’m your family.

BRAD
I want our kids to have all of this.

Dorothy gets closer to Brad.

DOROTHY
So we need money.

BRAD
Where we can keep these things for them.

DOROTHY
I didn’t marry your family history. I married you. I love
you.

BRAD
Love me, love my history.

DOROTHY
I’ll love your history, if it gives us a house with a pool.

BRAD
You really want to sell my stuff?

DOROTHY
We’ll take some pictures for the kids.
BRAD
No way!

DOROTHY
You prefer a bunch of old wood to my warm and wet naked body in a crystal-blue pool?

*Brad gets up. He walks around the room. He looks at all the furniture. He sits on the old Louis XIII chair. He gets up again and paces around the room. A piece of lettuce remains stuck on his trousers.*

BRAD
I can’t do this to my mother.

DOROTHY
Oh, not your mother again.

BRAD
I thought you liked this stuff.

DOROTHY
With this money we could get a bigger house.

*Brad gets closer to her. He pulls his chair and sits in front of her.*

BRAD
The houses we looked at were too cheap for you, weren’t they?

DOROTHY
What do you mean?

BRAD
We saw some good houses.

DOROTHY
Yes, we saw two. But one was in the middle of nowhere, and the other one was too dark.

BRAD
There will never be a perfect house.
DOROTHY
Why not?

BRAD
Nothing is perfect.

DOROTHY
(joking) Not even me?

BRAD
Sweetie, we’ll never find one this way.

DOROTHY
Why not?

BRAD
You say no for the smallest detail. And now you want a pool. And to sell my furniture.

DOROTHY
You are the one who gives in too easily. A house is a lifetime investment. Yes, the houses we saw are too cheap.

BRAD
If we go on this way we’ll never invest in anything, and we’ll keep wasting money on rent.

DOROTHY
You’re so impatient.

BRAD
I am not. We can’t afford the kind of house you want.

DOROTHY
When you don’t get what you want right away, you pout and give up.

BRAD
I do not!

DOROTHY
Yes you do. Remember when I wanted a blue car and the dealer didn’t have one at the time? You refused to wait a couple of months for one to come in. So we bought a white car because you couldn’t wait.

BRAD
And you’re happy with it.
I could have waited.

If it were up to you we would wait for everything. I bet you want to have kids when we turn 50.

Oh, please.

Dorothy takes her hand away from Brad’s. Brad with a gesture invites her to give him her hand again. She doesn’t.

Okay, now you’re turning this romantic dinner into a fight.

I’m turning this into a fight?

Yes.

How?

By accusing me of being impatient.

Is it my fault if I have a white car and will end up with a house that is dark, far from everything, without a pool, and this bunch of old furniture that falls into pieces? And you’re calling me a perfectionist?

I won’t wait ten years. In ten years, I’ll have wasted over two hundred thousand dollars!

Wasted?

What do you call rent?

A living expense.
BRAD
We can put the money into a mortgage.

DOROTHY
I know, I know. But the difference is, I want a perfect place for our family.

BRAD
So do I.

DOROTHY
Really? We’ve been sitting on a fortune. How much is this table worth? You’d settle for any kind of house. And this glass? How much for the glass?

BRAD
A couple of tiles for the pool.

Funny.

BRAD
What was wrong with the house we saw last Saturday?

DOROTHY
That’s the house in the middle of nothing. We only have one car. And it’s not a blue car.

See?

What?

BRAD
One small detail and you reject the whole house.

DOROTHY
What happens when we’re out of coffee and you have the car? Do you expect me to walk?

BRAD
No, I’ll go buy it myself.

DOROTHY
Like last week, when you laid on the couch and told me you had no energy to come to the table and eat.
Dorothy mocks Brad. She sits, casually imitating how tired and unwilling to move he is. Her legs are spread as if she were a man wearing jeans.

DOROTHY
Sweetie, can we eat in the living room?

BRAD
That was an unusual day.

DOROTHY
A couple of times a week?

BRAD
I have to get up at five every morning.

I know…

DOROTHY
You make it difficult.

BRAD
Oh, forgive me! I don’t want to make it difficult for you. I’ll look for a nice house, with a pool, on my own.

DOROTHY
Perfect. You look for your house and I’ll look for mine.

BRAD
Perfect. We’ll see who finds one first.

DOROTHY
I’ll find one next week and you’ll never find one and end up poor and homeless.

BRAD
Nonsense.

Noise coming from upstairs is heard. A door slams, JUNE, walks down the stairs and enters the living room in her nightgown.

JUNE
What the hell is going on here?

BRAD
Mom, what are you doing here?
What’s all this noise?

June, go back to sleep.

How can I sleep with all this fighting?

Mom, we’re sorry. Go back to bed.

This is my house, and I do what I want son. Got it?

This is also our house, we pay you a rent.

Dorothy gets up. Walks to the Louis XIII chair. Pointing to it with a disgusted expression.

We pay for sitting on this Louis trees things.

Treize. And you pay less than half of what is worth.

Mom, please.

(to Dorothy) See?

(to Brad) See what?

(to Dorothy) We need a house.

(Screaming) I know that!

Will you two stop screaming?

(screaming) I’m not screaming.
JUNE
I always told you this woman has no manners.

BRAD
Mom, please.

JUNE
Won’t you say anything?

BRAD
Dorothy.

DOROTHY
What? You let your mother talk about me that way? Won’t you say anything?

BRAD
Oh my God.

DOROTHY
You think God has time for you?

BRAD
I think you two need to talk.

DOROTHY
Now? You must be joking.

BRAD
I’m treating myself to a hot bath. Nice treat on a Valentine’s Day.

Dorothy takes another sip of wine. June tries to stop Brad who rushes out without a word. June sighs. Dorothy cries. June walks towards Dorothy. Dorothy turns away. The noise of water filling the bathtub is heard from behind the scene. June puts the chandelier from the table back on the fireplace.

What are you doing?

DOROTHY

It’s my chandelier.
It’s in my home.

JUNE

It’s my house.

DOROTHY

We pay rent.

JUNE

My son pays the rent.

DOROTHY

I pay my share.

JUNE

I can’t imagine very much.

DOROTHY

Don’t worry. We’re moving out soon.

JUNE

I hear you’re picky.

DOROTHY

Are you listening to our conversations?

JUNE

It’s not difficult, the whole neighborhood hears you.

Suddenly water starts coming through the ceiling.

JUNE

Oh my God. Brad, the water! Turn off the water! It’ll ruin the furniture!

Dorothy runs and grabs some blankets and tablecloths and tries to cover the furniture.

JUNE

Good thinking!

DOROTHY

Saving my pool...before this living room becomes one.

JUNE

What do you mean?
DOROTHY

Nothing.

Brad runs down all wet, wearing a towel around his waist.

BRAD

I can’t even take a bath in peace. What’s the matter?

JUNE

The ceiling is leaking. Hurry, turn off the faucet. Run!

BRAD

Oh God! What a mess! What happened?

DOROTHY

Stop asking questions, do something! Quick!

JUNE

Turn off the water.

DOROTHY/JUNE

Run!

Brad looks at the Louis XIII chair with hesitation.

BRAD

The chair is getting soaked.

DOROTHY

Oh no. Give me your towel!

She pulls the towel off of Brad. He is naked. June screams when she sees him naked. Dorothy puts her hands on her cheeks in embarrassment.

The lights flicker, short circuit and go out.

The characters are in darkness. Dorothy screams.

DOROTHY

What happened?
BRAD
The water...the electricity. Ladies, do not try to go anywhere.

JUNE
I’m glad the lights went out when they did. You have no decency, son.

BRAD
No what?

JUNE
Decency! Exposing yourself like that is not acceptable.

BRAD
Who gave birth to me? I was born this way.

JUNE
Everything was smaller then.

(Beat)

BRAD
Mom, you’ve seen naked men before.

JUNE
(sighing) It’s been a long time...

DOROTHY
Well...

JUNE
I would like to change the subject.

DOROTHY
Could someone do something about the lights?

JUNE
If it wasn’t for the two of you fighting, we wouldn’t be standing in the dark all wet and some of us acting indecently.

No response from either Dorothy or Brad.

BRAD
(to Dorothy) Hmm, sweetie, I love your touch...feels so good.

JUNE
What are you doing?
DOROTHY
Brad, stop that.

Silence. Then some noises of steps and movements on stage are heard.

JUNE
Whatever the two of you are doing, stop it!

Still silence and noises of steps are heard.

JUNE
Where are you?... Answer me or I will cut you off from your inheritance...Dorothy?...Say something, or I’ll evict you from this house.

DOROTHY
You can’t evict us. We have a lease.

Lights come back on. June is in a corner of the room. Dorothy is still covering Louis XIII chair with Brad’s towel and gigging to herself. Brad comes in through a door, now wearing a pair of jeans. His chest is bare. Dorothy laughs out loud.

BRAD
What’s funny?

DOROTHY
While you were gone...

She laughs so hard she can’t talk.

JUNE
Dorothy keeps laughing.

JUNE
Oh, stop that.
DOROTHY
She thought that you and I....(laughs), in the dark (laughs more)...naked... were...(laughing) doing it.

BRAD
What in the world...

JUNE
What else should I think?

BRAD
I shut off the water and put some pants on.

You forgot your shirt.

JUNE
I know, I didn’t have any hair either when you gave birth to me.

Let’s clean up the mess.

Dorothy is wiping the Louis XIII chair and June the statue. Brad goes to the table and starts eating the dessert that was left from their unfinished dinner.

DOROTHY
Brad, aen’t you going to help us?

BRAD
(speaking with a full mouth) I already have.

Taking a bath?

DOROTHY
Turning off the water.

JUNE
Stop eating and get us a bucket.

BRAD
I’m in my own house and I have two women yelling at me. Where did I go wrong?

DOROTHY and JUNE
(in unison)

Where you went wrong?
June and Dorothy exchange a look of complicity and half smile.

JUNE
This is not your house. You just live here.

DOROTHY
We also pay rent.

JUNE
Stay out of this. (To Brad) Maybe one day. And I say maybe, this house will be yours and Julie’s.

DOROTHY
Julie? Who’s Julie?

JUNE
His half sister.

DOROTHY
You never told me you have a half sister.

BRAD
There’s nothing to tell.

JUNE
Nice way to talk about your sister. She has your blood.

BRAD
She may have my blood, but she won’t get anything else.

DOROTHY
Why, I mean, what...where...

JUNE
(to Dorothy) Good. Finally the cat’s got your tongue.

DOROTHY
What’s wrong with Julie?

JUNE
Nothing’s wrong with Julie. Brad’s jealous of her.

BRAD
I’m not jealous of that insignificant little...woman who travels the world with your money.

JUNE
(to Dorothy)
See? Jealous.
Dorothy kneels down to wipe the floor.

BRAD
I’m not jealous. I’m angry. She’s a freeloader. You give her your money, and she does nothing with her life.

JUNE
She’s still so young and she is an artist. Difficult life. Poor child.

BRAD
How about me? I have to work hard to get the same money, and pay you rent.

JUNE
Your lifestyle choice. And you got married.

BRAD
What does marriage have to do with paying you rent?

I heard that.

DOROTHY
You always hear what you shouldn’t.

JUNE
If you had married Rose things would be different.

Who is Rose?

BRAD
Mom, why do you have to...

JUNE
(with a big smile) Rose was Brad’s college sweetheart.

BRAD
Mom, stop! This is personal. It’s not up to you, it’s up to me to explain these things.

DOROTHY
Indeed it is! But since you’ve kept this from me too, please June, I’m all ears.
JUNE
Rose was a beautiful, petite brunette. So well-educated, proper, always well-dressed. And nice. She loved me.

Dorothy smirks.

JUNE
(giggling) She was so cute. One day she asked is she could call me Mom.

DOROTHY
I would’ve called you Mom but you wouldn’t allow it.

JUNE
Only she could. She was perfect for my son.

DOROTHY
You mean perfect for you.

BRAD
Rose was crazy. She was possessive and controlling. I couldn’t go anywhere without her checking up on me. She called me at least ten times a day. It was suffocating. She wasn’t perfect for me.

JUNE
She really loved you.

BRAD
You call that love?

JUNE
She was very rich.

DOROTHY
Wonderful. The furniture, the money, the rent, the statue. Brad you should have married a real estate agent.

JUNE
Exactly. Rose has become a very successful real estate agent.

DOROTHY
Shit…

JUNE
I heard that.

BRAD
I don’t care about money. Rose is history and I didn’t love her. If you like her so much, mom, then you should marry her. I love Dorothy.
Dorothy smiles and gets close to Brad. She hugs him.

DOROTHY
I love you too, darling.

Dorothy and Brad kiss.

JUNE
Please, I’m standing right here. Control yourselves.

DOROTHY
We’re allowed to kiss, we’re in our home.

They kiss.

JUNE
It’s still my house.

Brad turns to her still holding tight to Dorothy.

BRAD
You’re being ridiculous, Mom. (to Dorothy, kissing her.) I don’t want to fight with you.

DOROTHY
Don’t stop.

They kiss.

JUNE
I’m standing right here. You’re not alone.

Both Dorothy and Brad look at her.

DOROTHY and BRAD
(in unison) Right, so (pause) leave us alone, will you?

They kiss passionately. June throws the sponge she had in her hand on the floor. She kicks the Louis XIII chair which falls and a
leg comes off. As she walks away
she stops and comes back and puts
the leg back. Then she leaves
with a loud sigh.

DOROTHY
Do I kiss better than Rose?

BRAD
No one can ever kiss better than you.

They kiss again. Then, suddenly,
she steps back.

DOROTHY
Why didn’t you tell me about Julie?

What for?

DOROTHY
What for? This is your family. Even if you don’t get along.

BRAD
She just doesn’t exist in my mind. When I think about her, I
feel sick.

Jealous?

DOROTHY
Not you too.

BRAD
So she doesn’t work and your mother supports her. So what? She
still has the same blood as you.

She has my Mom’s blood.

DOROTHY
And your stepfather’s.

BRAD
Exactly the problem. That dirty pig.

DOROTHY
What? I thought you were close to your stepfather.
BRAD
I don’t want to talk about him.

DOROTHY
Your half sister is not your stepfather’s?

Brad remains silent. He goes to the table and eats some leftovers with his hands. Dorothy moves closer to him. She puts a hand on his shoulder. Rubs his back a little.

DOROTHY
Tell me what’s going on?

BRAD
Don’t want to talk about it.

DOROTHY
Brad, I’m your wife. Don’t you think I should know?

BRAD
No.

Dorothy backs up. She stares at him. He turns around. Looks at her. He hugs her very strongly. He starts sobbing.

BRAD
That bastard!

Who?

DOROTHY
He seduced my mom.

BRAD
Who, what, to your mom?

DOROTHY
She was so young and beautiful and happily married to my stepfather. He saw her at the supermarket and told her she should be in movies.

Dorothy starts laughing trying not to be noticed.
BRAD
She went to the studios where he worked. No one was there but him.

DOROTHY
He raped her?

BRAD
No, but he auditioned her on his couch and told her that it was the only way to get into a movie. He promised her a leading role with Robert Redford.

DOROTHY
(holding her laughter) And she believed him?

BRAD
Yes. That Jerk. Taking advantage of her dream to be a movie star. With his stupid French accent, he played his role very well.

DOROTHY
Did she ever meet Robert Redford?

BRAD
No, Julie came instead.

Dorothy starts laughing but hides it coughing.

BRAD
Mom always felt guilty towards her. I’m not sure she loved her. I didn’t.

Silence

BRAD
I can’t accept her.

DOROTHY
It’s not her fault.

BRAD
Sometimes I wonder. She keeps spending mom’s money and doesn’t even try to make her own. Spoiled rotten girl. Taking advantage of mom’s guilty feelings. Just like her dad! Must be the French culture!

DOROTHY
French?
BRAD
He’s French, no morality, folies bergeres, French can can.

DOROTHY
French kiss?

BRAD
I don’t trust frogs.

DOROTHY
(whispering) She thinks she will inherit the house?

June slowly comes down the stairs. Brad and Dorothy look at her. June is angry.

JUNE
Why did you tell her?

BRAD
She’s my wife.

JUNE
It’s my life.

BRAD
It’s mine too.

JUNE
Not hers.

BRAD
She’s my life.

JUNE
Not mine.

BRAD
She’s in your life too.

JUNE
Just in my house.

DOROTHY
I’m sorry?

JUNE
My secrets belong to me.
DOROTHY
I would like to meet Julie.

JUNE
No you wouldn’t.

BRAD
No you wouldn’t.

JUNE
Finally, my son makes sense.

BRAD
I don’t want to see her either.

JUNE
You have no right to contact her.

DOROTHY
She’s my sister-in-law and I want to meet her.

JUNE
Don’t.

DOROTHY
I will.

JUNE
Stay away from her.

DOROTHY
I won’t.

JUNE
You will.

DOROTHY
No, I won’t.

June gets close to Dorothy in a threatening way. Dorothy remains still. Dorothy makes a disapproving face expression to her and goes to Brad.

JUNE
You knew very well this is a family secret.
She is family.

Not our blood.

Our kids will change this.

You don’t have kids.

But we will.

When you’re fifty.

Mom, you keep listening to our conversations.

It will happen sooner.

Yes of course it will.

Rose would have already given you babies.

Mom please don’t.

This one (pointing at Dorothy) will only give you trouble.

You can’t say that. You don’t know me well.

Oh, I sure do.

June points at the Louis XIII chair she had broken before leaving the scene earlier.

I prefer my chair broken than to be sold so you can buy her a pool...(to herself) swim naked...
You heard that too?

Walls have ears.

Very big ears.

Mother, I’m not a child, I’m old enough to make my own decisions.

You will always be my baby.

And when we have kids?

You won’t have kids.

Why not?

Because you’re a perfectionist, and the time will never be right for you.

That’s not fair Mom. Kids come when it’s time.

And at times when it’s not time.

Sorry.

Dorothy gets closer to Brad. She takes him by the arm. She looks at June. She rubs her stomach.

May be sooner than you thought.
Dorothy, you... you are...

I am!

You are?

You are what?

She is!

I sure am!

You are nuts!

We are not.

So what are you...

A baby!

What baby?

Our baby.

We’re having a baby.

We are?

You’re not. We are.

Yes we are... grandma.
June goes towards the couch. She lets herself drop on the couch, which is soaked. She is quickly wet. She screams.

Brad and Dorothy laugh and cry at the same time while looking at her.

END OF ACT ONE.
ACT II

Scene 1

Lights on.

A beautifully decorated living room. Soft inspirational music plays. JULIE smiles as she types at her computer. She stops to take a sip of tea. The door bell rings. Startled, she jumps up and walks to the door.

JULIE

Who is it? (She waits. Louder). Who is it? What? I can’t hear you.

Julie nervously opens the door. Dorothy stands in front of her.

DOROTHY

Julie?  

JULIE

Yes, and who are you?

DOROTHY

Sorry if I am disturbing you. Oh, you don’t know me.

JULIE

Why are you here if I don’t know you?

DOROTHY

Well, I know you.

JULIE

How can you know me if I don’t know you?

DOROTHY

This is a bit complicated. That’s why I am here.

JULIE

Oh la la, if this is a prank it’s not funny.
DOROTHY
No, no. I will explain. May I come in?

JULIE
Mon Dieu, why would I let someone I don’t know in my home?

Because we’re related.

DOROTHY
Julie quickly pushes Dorothy out and looks behind her.

What are you doing?

DOROTHY
Where are they?

Who?

JULIE
This is not one of those terrible and stupid tv shows where a secret sister appears thirty years later and all the cameras are there to film you in tears, and looking at family pictures and all that crap!!

DOROTHY
Oh no no, don’t worry. I’m not your sister! And there are no cameras!

Who are you then?

JULIE
Your sister-in-law!

DOROTHY
Ah! Dorothée, Voilà! You’re not my sister, no! You’re just my sister-in-law. God! And for your knowledge, Brad is not my brother, just my half brother, thank goodness. Spoiled rotten kid.

Dorothy finally pushes her way in but the door stays open.

DOROTHY
You’re speaking about my husband, please.
JULIE
And so you’re the one living at Mom’s house, and he’s little mama’s boy, who can’t leave the nest. Or just too stingy to get his own house.

DOROTHY
You don’t seem to know him very well. He’s a very mature man now, responsible, and we’re looking for our house.

JULIE
Ohh, Brad buying a house? Let me guess, he married rich. You’re the daughter of a famous entrepreneur.

DOROTHY
(giggling) No no, come on. I’m not rich. I wish.

JULIE
Bon, thank you for your visit. Say hello to my mom.

Are you kicking me out?

JULIE
Don’t tell me you want a cup of tea, do you?

I’d love to. Thank you!

JULIE
I just...

DOROTHY
With a slice of lemon, please.

But I...

DOROTHY
And a spoonful of sugar, please.

Julie leaves the room. Loud noises of slamming doors from the kitchen are heard. Dorothy walks around and looks at her typewriter trying to read what she was writing. Julie walks in with a tray and tea in her
hands. She puts it on a small table.

DOROTHY
Thank you. Beautiful tea set.

JULIE
(mumbling) I only have sweetener.

DOROTHY
That’ll be fine.

Julie sighs loudly, and she shows her an arm chair where to sit down. Julie goes to the one next to it. Julie screams.

JULIE
No not that one!

Dorothy jumps up scared.

JULIE
Mon Dieu! It’s a Louis quatorze (XIV).

DOROTHY
May I sit in this one?

They drink in silence. They don’t speak for some time.

DOROTHY
It was quite a surprise to hear you existed.

JULIE
Quoi? You never knew I existed?

DOROTHY
No, not until two days ago.

JULIE
Should have stayed that way.

DOROTHY
Why?
JULIE
What for?

DOROTHY
Family!

JULIE
My mom’s family. Only mom.

DOROTHY
Brad is also your mom’s son. He is family.

JULIE
I don’t like him.

DOROTHY
That’s not fair, he’s adorable, caring and generous.

JULIE
I told you that your little husband is a spoiled rotten kid.

DOROTHY
Who has a job, and who is going to buy a house with me. From what I hear, you cannot do that yourself without mama’s money.

JULIE
You have nothing to tell me about my mother.

DOROTHY
I sure do. She’s my mother-in-law.

Julie goes to a nearby table and takes a shot glass, she pours some cognac in and drinks it up, then she fills it up again.

DOROTHY
Cognac at this time of day?

JULIE
My French habit. Do you mind?

DOROTHY
Just trying to be nice. What have I done?

JULIE
You married Brad, you must be like him.
DOROTHY
Drinking is bad for your health.

JULIE
Would you please mind your own business and leave?

DOROTHY
I haven’t finished my tea.

JULIE
I asked you to leave.

DOROTHY
I’m trying to build a relationship with my mother-in-law. Suddenly, I find out you exist and I thought it would help to meet you. I’m sorry we didn’t start off on the right foot.

JULIE
Let’s make your departure more successful, please go.

DOROTHY
I suppose you don’t want to hear what I learned about you and your father.

JULIE
My father? You’re not related to my father. He’s not Brad’s father, so you have nothing to do with him. Got it?

DOROTHY
Brad is my husband. His happiness is important to me. How Brad feels about you and how Brad feels about your father affects him and therefore affects me. Got it?

JULIE
Oh la la, what is this, a tongue twister?

DOROTHY
Please give me five minutes to explain. Please!

JULIE
It’s been a long time I haven’t seen Brad. I doubt he changed. But I know I changed a lot.

DOROTHY
How?

JULIE
Je ne sais pas. I mellowed down. I cry when I see love comedies. I daydream a lot and I don’t get upset anymore.
You don’t?

As long as I’m not told what to do. I hate that!

Who doesn’t?

Dad. He’s been a doormat to every woman he has met.

Does this include your mother?

You know her, don’t you?

You bet.

How do you manage living in her house?

We’re moving out. I told you.

I can’t imagine Brad moving out. No way.

He changed I guess.

Maybe. Love can do miracles, L’amour! Ah l’amour!

How about you? You’re not married?

Oh la la. L’amour, what a pain!

What happened?


Julie gets up and takes another drink. She comes back
and sits down without looking at Dorothy. Dorothy leans towards her.

DOROTHY
I love your French accent! I could never learn French. Just took one year in college.

JULIE
My dad’s French but I lived all my life here, well almost. I was in Paris with him as a teenager. J’aime Paris!

DOROTHY
That’s exciting.

JULIE
Yes maybe, but I really didn’t have a family. I have two parents and I feel like an orphan.

DOROTHY
Wouldn’t it be nice for all of us to get together?

What for?

JULIE
Family! We’re family!

DOROTHY
Again? I told you we’re not.

JULIE
Some of us are 100%, some 75%, some 50%, so...

DOROTHY
Some are 5%.

JULIE
Who?

DOROTHY
Me!

JULIE
You’re more than that. Come on. It’ll be great to get together. We’re all so lonely. You live alone. Your mom will soon live alone. Your dad lives alone. Brad and I will also live alone. What kind of a life is that?

DOROTHY
A good life.
DOROTHY
Give it a try. Maybe some day we’ll have kids.

JULIE
I won’t.

DOROTHY
How do you know?

JULIE
I just do.

DOROTHY
Well, okay, I was going to wait. Brad and I are having a baby!!

JULIE
You are not!

DOROTHY
I am! It just doesn’t show yet. Two months only.

JULIE
Petit Brad a father? Oh la la. That’s a good one.

DOROTHY
You’re welcome to see the baby any time. Auntie Julie.

JULIE
Bon. You sure are more fun than Brad.

DOROTHY
He’s adorable…but so stubborn.

JULIE
Stubborn. Yes, that’s Brad, bien sûr.

Dorothy stands up and quickly grabs her purse.

DOROTHY
Let’s go auntie Julie.
JULIE
Where?

DOROTHY
Time to go home.

*Julie gets up, closes her computer, grabs a jacket, a purse.*

JULIE
Do I look okay? I haven’t been there in a while.

DOROTHY
You don’t go see your mom?

JULIE
We meet for coffee, go shopping, but I know Brad is there, so…

DOROTHY
You’ll see now how grown up he is!

*Julie puts a fancy hat on.*

JULIE
Voilà, let’s go see my little Brad brother.

*Lights off*

END OF SCENE
SCENE 2

_Lights on the other half of the stage._

_Brad and Dorothy’s apartment._

_Julie and Dorothy are talking around the Louis treize chair._

**JULIE**
I didn’t know mom still had this chair!

**DOROTHY**
She would kill for this chair.

_The doorbell is heard and the door opens. Brad walks in._

**BRAD**
It’s pouring. I ran from the bus station. I forgot my umbrella...What...what are you doing here?

**JULIE**
Oh la la! You look like you’ve seen an alien!

I have!

**BRAD**
Always so charming, petit rat.

**JULIE**
Don’t call me that!

**BRAD**
Petit rat?

**DOROTHY**
He always looked like a little rat.

**BRAD**
I am no “petit rat”!

**JULIE**
Oooh, sensitive.

**BRAD**
What the hell are you doing here?

    JULIE

She invited me.

    BRAD

Why in the world did you invite her?

    DOROTHY

Brad, she’s you sister.

    BRAD/JULIE

Half sister.

    DOROTHY

Sister, half sister. It doesn’t matter. She’s family. You’re family. Family is important, and I want to get to know her better. I want to get to know you better, Julie.

    BRAD

So get to know her better, without me.

    JULIE

Adorable.

    BRAD

Look Julie, I don’t want you in my home. Compris? Capich?

    JULIE

It’s my mother’s home.

    BRAD

She’s my “mother” too.

    JULIE

Yeah, petit rat cannot leave his petite maman.

    BRAD

Shut up. You do nothing except travel the world using her money.

    JULIE

I am an artist!

    BRAD

Ha! An Artist. Real artists are poor and live with a skinny cat. They don’t live in luxury and do nothing.
You know nothing about me. My book will be published next year.

DOROTHY
A book? Wow, that’s awesome.

BRAD
Don’t get involved, please.

DOROTHY
Brad, shut up, will you? What’s the book about?

JULIE
Uh, some sort of autobiography.

DOROTHY
Great. You can beef it up now that you’ve reunited with your family.

JULIE
It’s not that kind of autobiography.

What kind is it?

DOROTHY
A psychological autobiography.

JULIE
Have you got a publisher?

DOROTHY
Oui oui, it’s the Editions Lafarge.

JULIE
French editors?

DOROTHY
The biggest French editor. I’ll fly to Paris for the Salon du Livre, the biggest book fair in France.

DOROTHY
But then you’re writing your book in French.

JULIE
Bien sûr. What else?

DOROTHY
We won’t be able to read it!
JULIE
Pas de probleme, I plan to get a translator.

DOROTHY
Wow. Brad, your sister is about to become famous.

Brad gives Julie a nasty look.

BRAD
Ha! Don’t make me laugh.

JULIE
You are jealous. Petit rat has always been jealous.

BRAD
I’m not jealous, I’m upset!

DOROTHY
This is silly. You both have the same mother.

That’s the problem.

BRAD
What’s the problem?

DOROTHY
That we have the same mother.

That’s not her fault.

DOROTHY
What’s not my fault?

JULIE
That we have the same mother.

JULIE
I know we have the same mother, idiot.

BRAD
Don’t call me an idiot.

JULIE
Idiot.

BRAD
See Dorothy.
JULIE

Yes, see Dorothy.

BRAD

You don’t understand. You weren’t there when it all happened. It makes me sick to think about it.

When what happened?

DOROTHY

Your arrival on Earth.

JULIE

She knows my story?

BRAD

She’s my wife!

JULIE

Mon Dieu, why did you tell her?

She’s my wife.

JULIE

This is personal.

DOROTHY

It’s terrible how your father abused June. She was young and naïve.

JULIE

Naïve? My dad was the naïve one. He thought mom loved him. But she left my dad with his baby in her womb!

DOROTHY

He made her believe she would be in movies with Robert Redford!

BRAD

Yeah!!

JULIE

Mais non, who told you such idiocies?

BRAD

It’s true! My poor mother, she just wanted to be in movies! You know that.

JULIE

Oh la la, you must be joking! She lied to you.
BRAD
Why would she lie. Your father is the liar.

JULIE
The real story is that they met at the gym and fell madly in love. A year later maman got pregnant and she dumped him. (choking up)

I don’t believe you.

Mon papa is not a liar!

He is alright! Oui oui!

Non non!

DOROTHY
Stop it. You’re like two bratty little kids. (mocking them) Your Mom’s a liar. No, your Dad is. No, you’re wrong. No you are. (seriously) They need to meet and clarify all this.

Non non, stay out of it.

DOROTHY
You don’t want to know the real story?

I know the real story.

DOROTHY
Not again. Uh, Mon Dieu. It’s obvious one of you got the wrong version of the real story. Maybe both. Don’t you want to know the truth?

Petit rat should indeed know the truth, so he’ll finally understand.

BRAD
I cannot imagine that my mother would lie to me all my life.

JULIE
And I cannot imagine mon papa lying to me all my life.
DOROTHY
I’m sure their intentions were good. They didn’t want to hurt you. They each told a story that wouldn’t upset either of you.

BRAD
I don’t like how she was treated.

DOROTHY
Yes, but suppose Julie has the real story, your mom would have not told you. It’s a possibility.

Yeah, I guess.

BRAD
Julie, Brad. Why don’t we organize a surprise meeting.

JULIE
Mon Dieu, I am not sure he will accept.

DOROTHY
We won’t tell them. They’ll meet, it will be too late, and they’ll have to tell us exactly what happened.

BRAD
Mom could get very angry.

JULIE
I say yes, don’t worry petit rat.

DOROTHY
I’m used to her being upset. At least this is for a good cause.

BRAD
Gee, I had a nice life with my wife, about to buy a house, good career, preparing to raise a family. Why did you interfere with all this?

DOROTHY
(upset and raising her voice)
For our babies.

BRAD
Babies?

DOROTHY
We’re having twins!

Lights off
SCENE 3

Lights on the other half of the stage.

Dorothy and Brad are in their bedroom preparing to go to bed.

DOROTHY
What a day!

BRAD
I’m not sure about all this.

DOROTHY
Everything is going to work out.

DOROTHY
Why didn’t you ever tell me about Julie?

BRAD
I told you. That belongs to the past. And I don’t like what happened to my mother. Julie is the result of something just terrible. The less I think about it, the better.

DOROTHY
But it’s your sister.

BRAD
So what?

DOROTHY
She’s family. You know how I feel about family.

BRAD
Now you know how I feel. The worst things happen in families. Murder, sexual abuse, violence...

DOROTHY
That’s awful. What a terrible outlook you have?

BRAD
It happens a lot, Baby.

DOROTHY
Don’t Baby me.

BRAD

Jesus, you’re touchy about this.

DOROTHY

Yes, because my family should be a harbor of peace.

A harbor of peace?

BRAD

What’s wrong with that?

DOROTHY

Yes, let’s pretend we’re the cute little perfect American family. We’ll call ourselves...let’s see...The Brady Bunch!

I’m not pretending.

DOROTHY

Sweetheart, be real. Let’s drop the whole idea. It’s upsetting us. For the baby’s sake, you need to rest.

DOROTHY

I can’t rest in such a messy family. And the babies can’t either.

BRAD

Let’s go to sleep. I’m done talking about it.

DOROTHY

You drive me crazy sometimes. Done talking. Such a typical male. You’re so boring.

BRAD

Thank you. Can I go to sleep now?

DOROTHY

No. I want to know what other secrets you have.

BRAD

We had a normal life until a few weeks ago. Can’t we go back there, look for our house, get our pool?

DOROTHY

Oh Brad, yes of course. But first I want to meet Julie’s father, and understand what happened with your mother. It doesn’t bother you that Julie’s story is different than yours?
No.

BRAD

DOROTHY

How come you and Julie have the same Mother and not the same story?

BRAD

Don’t know. Don’t care.

Brad gets close to Dorothy and starts touching her hair, giving her small kisses on the neck.

DOROTHY

Julie’s heard the Robert Redford Story.

BRAD

Robert who?

DOROTHY

Robert Redford. Brad stop. I’m not in the mood. How could your Mom make up a story like this, and–

I love your body.

BRAD

DOROTHY

How could Julie not believe her but believe her father?

I love your body in all its shapes.

BRAD

And sizes?

DOROTHY

All sizes.

BRAD

Soon I’ll have a big tummy.

DOROTHY

I love big tummies.

BRAD

We need to be careful.
BRAD
Don’t worry, I won’t wake the babies

DOROTHY
Come on. I don’t feel like it. I’m serious.

BRAD
I’m serious too.

DOROTHY
I won’t have sex if you don’t listen to me!

*Brad sighs and sits on the bed, looking at her faking patience.*

BRAD
After I listen can we have sex?

DOROTHY
Yes, after you listen and agree with me.

BRAD
Ha! So you only want me to agree with your silly ideas.

DOROTHY
They’re not silly. I want to have a big family.

BRAD
Good. That means we have to have lots of sex. (He pulls her to him until she falls over him on the bed). Come here, Babe.

DOROTHY
Why don’t you love your sister?

BRAD
I love you. I love your body. I love making love. Let’s make love.

DOROTHY
No, because you’ll fall asleep. And we won’t talk about this.

BRAD
Okay, I’ll agree to organize the surprise party.

DOROTHY
You will?

BRAD
Yes, I think it’s a brilliant idea. Can we have sex now?
DOROTHY

You’re just saying that.

BRAD

I’ll do whatever you say, sweetie. I’ll help you set everything up and make sure mom does not suspect anything.

DOROTHY

Oh sweetheart, you’re wonderful.

Brad starts kissing her and the lights go off.

END OF SCENE
SCENE 4

Lights on the other half of the stage.

In the street, in front of a building. Julie is walking in the street with her father JACQUES, grey hair, tall, thin, elegant.

JULIE

Thank you for coming papa.

JACQUES

Why are we not having dinner at the restaurant chérie?

JULIE

I have a little surprise.

JACQUES

Chérie, I love surprises.

Jacques gives her a hug.

JULIE

Papa, you haven’t seen the surprise yet.

JACQUES

Maybe you autograph your first book?

JULIE

I wish! Soon, hopefully.

JACQUES

Chérie, tu parles trop anglais, tu es française, speak our beautiful language.

JULIE

Lazy, and then people think I’m snobbish. Everyone tells me I fake the accent to sound interesting. C’est pas vrai!

JACQUES

Oui ma chérie, not true.

JULIE

I miss France. Remember when we lived on the French Riviera?

JACQUES
Saint Tropez.

JULIE
Going to the beach every day after school.

JACQUES
Sailing to the islands.

JULIE
Singing La Vie en rose.

JACQUES
Eating baguette bread.

JULIE
Sipping champagne.

JACQUES
Letting the stars wish us good night.

JULIE
Looking for love.

JACQUES
Not finding any.

JULIE
Not letting go.

JACQUES
Feeling cheated.

JULIE
Being cheated.

JACQUES
You deserve better than that Stephane.

JULIE
Made me believe he was in love.

JACQUES
And just wanted your money.

JULIE
Your money.

JACQUES
Our money.

JULIE
You should have re-married.

JACQUES

How could I?

JULIE

All those women running after you.

JACQUES

Couldn’t cheat.

JULIE

She was married papa!

JACQUES

Not in my heart.

JULIE

Celine was such a nice woman. I could see her as my step-mother.

JACQUES

Couldn’t stand her dog.

JULIE

Foufou?

JACQUES

Foufou, calling your dog pussy, mon Dieu.

JULIE

Everyone stopped staring at her when, in the street, she’d scream Foufou, come here!

JACQUES

Come here…

JULIE

(laughing very loud) Come here…pussy!

JACQUES

And he would pee on my shoes every time we met.

JULIE

Jealous.

JACQUES

Julie, you want to go back to France?

JULIE
Oui papa. As my book will be published there, maybe I will stay in Paris for some time.

JACQUES
I come with you. I miss France and we can get a flat in Montmartre. You’ll be in the artist area.

JULIE
Oh papa! Will I meet love some day?

JACQUES
Ma petite. You are all I have in life. Je t’aime.

JULIE
Moi aussi je t’aime. But I meant love like I get married and have kids.

JACQUES
Oui Julie. You deserve an intelligent French gentleman.

JULIE
You’ll meet a nice elegant madame yourself papa.

JACQUES is walking along the street next to Julie. Julie puts her arm under his. They walk silently into a building. The stage goes dark and lights come back on in Brad’s and Dorothy’s living room. Brad and June are setting the table.

JUNE
Why all these secrets? Who is coming for dinner?

BRAD
If I told you, it wouldn’t be a secret.

JUNE
Why can’t you tell me?

BRAD
Because there is something I want to know.

JUNE
What?

BRAD
We’ll find out soon.

JUNE

We?

The doorbell rings. Brad nervously sets the last glass on the table. He runs to the door. June rushes out of the room and goes upstairs.

JUNE

I’ll go get my evening shoes.

June runs up the stairs and Brad puts his jacket on. He opens the door.

Good evening.

BRAD

Good evening...sir.

JACQUES

Brad, my name is Brad.

BRAD

Oh mon Dieu, you are Brad, the Brad?

JACQUES

The Brad.

JACQUES

Cherie, if this is the surprise I don’t like it.

Julie walks in. Dorothy enters the room. Jacques looks at her with admiration and smiles politely.

JACQUES

Bonsoir Mademoiselle.

DOROTHY

Bonsoir.

JACQUES

Oh, vous parlez français?

DOROTHY
No no. I just took one year of French in college and got a C-. Couldn’t pronounce the r, I spit instead.

JACQUES
Cherie, what are we doing here?

DOROTHY
It was my idea. I am Brad’s wife. Please come in. I will explain.

Jacques hesitantly walks in, he looks around,

DOROTHY
I’ve been married to Brad for three years, and I wanted to meet everyone related to him.

JACQUES
I am not related to him.

JULIE
Papa, have a seat.

Jacques gets closer to the Louis XIII chair which is in pieces.

JACQUES
Mon Dieu, the Louis XIII chair! I knew it would not be taken good care of.

DOROTHY
You know the chair?

JACQUES
(embarrassed) Well, oui, yes, it was mine. A rarity.

Jacques picks up the pieces and tries to put them back together. He shakes his head in a clear disappointment.

JACQUES
This chair has been murdered!

June storms into the room.

JUNE
I will murder you!
Jacques drops the chair and one arm falls off. He’s shocked.

JACQUES

June!

JUNE

Get out of my house, get out, now!

JACQUES

I...I... mon Dieu, but...I...

DOROTHY and JULIE

(to June) Calm down, we invited him.

JUNE

You (to Dorothy), since you came to this house you have only created trouble!

JACQUES

June, I promise I did not know you were here. Julie said there was a surprise. And I thought that meeting Brad and his wife was the surprise.

JUNE

You know you are not welcome here.

JACQUES

I understand. But Julie is here. Oh la la, we have never been together all the three of us! It’s the first time.

JUNE

And the last time, too!

JACQUES

Well, we...

JUNE

I said out!

JACQUES

I apologize for my presence. I shall go now.

JUNE

Good.

JULIE

(to Jacques) Please don’t go. Mom. It’s important.
DOROTHY
Please June, give us a chance to explain.

JUNE
Explain what? There’s nothing to explain. Out!

JULIE
I never saw you in the same place at the same time. Mom, I need this. Papa, please sit down.

JUNE
There’s nothing to say. I have nothing to say.

JULIE
Of course. But papa will.

JACQUES
I will?

JULIE
Papa, I need to know more about my parents, you two. But with both of you in the same room.

JUNE
Not with Brad and Dorothy here.

JULIE
They’re family, mom.


JULIE
Papa, you didn’t promise mom that she would play in a movie with Robert Redford, did you?

JACQUES
I did what?

BRAD
You tricked my mom into that stupid lie just to seduce her.

JUNE
Stop it. Everyone out of here. Now!

JACQUES
Pardon? What’s this all about?
Mom believed you. You took advantage of her innocence.

Jacques starts laughing out loud, in a very French way (with a snoring noise).

Mais ça va pas! What is this, a joke?

You stop it and get out I said! Will no one listen to me? This is my house!

No, you listen. What have you told the kids?

Brad, Julie, and Dorothy gather around her, next to Jacques. They stare at her. June looks very embarrassed.

The truth.

Which is?

You promised I would act in a movie with Robert Redford.

And?

I never did, but I was pregnant with Julie.

Why?

Why. What do you mean, why? Why do you think? You made me believe I would be in movies with Robert Redford, and become rich and famous. And you, you....

June starts crying.

Mom...
Brad gets close to June, he hugs her. He gives a nasty look at Jacques.

BRAD
You should be ashamed of yourself.

JACQUES
June, I truly loved you.

BRAD
Don’t. Jerk!

JACQUES
I did! I wanted to have our baby and live with you.

BRAD
Bastard! She was married to my dad!

JACQUES
I didn’t know.

Jacques frowns in pain. Julie goes near him and hugs him. Now Jacques is facing June. Julie comforts Jacques. Brad comforts June. Dorothy looks at both sides as if she was watching a ping-pong match.

BRAD
What a jerk. How dare you?

JUNE
Brad.

DOROTHY
Jacques.

JULIE
Papa.

JACQUES
Sorry.

JUNE
Jacques.

JACQUES
June...when you left with unborn Julie, I felt the world was falling apart.

*June stares at him and tears come down her cheeks.*

JUNE

I didn’t...

JACQUES

I started to drink...lost my job... attempted suicide...

BRAD

What...

JUNE

I..I..didn’t know...

JACQUES

How could you know?

JUNE

I know.

BRAD

You know...what?

JUNE

I was in love with you too.

*Brad lets go of his mother. Dorothy opens her mouth with surprise. Julie scratches her head. Jacques stares at her.*

BRAD

But you told me that he...

JUNE

(sighing) I was married, you were a little boy.

BRAD

So what?

JUNE

I would not leave you and your dad. How could I?

BRAD
But did you love dad and...(pointing at Jacques) him?

JUNE
I was confused.

DOROTHY
I’m confused now.

JULIE
(lying down on the couch) Wake me up when you’re done. Then give me a summary of the story.

BRAD
What about the Robert Redford story?

JACQUES
It’s true that I tried to give her the leading role in Out of Africa.

BRAD
See?

JACQUES
But the producer decided that she was too tall and Robert Redford would have looked bad, being shorter than her.

Dorothy laughs out loud.
Everyone stares at her in disapproval. She stops.

DOROTHY
(whispering) He must be a dwarf.

JUNE
I heard that.

Brad goes to a closet, takes a coat and puts it on.

BRAD
I’m going for a walk.

June runs towards Brad trying to stop him. He pulls away. She pulls him back.

JUNE
Brad, I did it for you. Because I loved you.

BRAD
You cheated on dad because you loved me. That’s interesting mom. And you lied to me for thirty some years. Very interesting, indeed.

JUNE
I stopped cheating on your father because I loved you and wanted to keep our family together.

DOROTHY
You loved a lot of people.

JACQUES
Your graceful walk, your sparkling eyes, and your sweet voice never left my heart.

BRAD
Gross!

*Brad looks at him in complete disapproval, he walks out the door and slams it loudly.*
*Julie gets up.*

JULIE
Poor papa.

DOROTHY
Sorry, Jacques.

JUNE
Poor papa and sorry Jacques? What do you think? He saw me at the supermarket, I was shopping for diapers, he invited me for an audition, he suggested I take the main role in a movie with Robert Redford, he promised to make me rich. Poor papa and sorry Jacques? And what did I get?

JULIE
Me.

*June gives Julie a big hug.*

JUNE
I love you, you’re my baby girl. You know I love you so much. I am so sorry for all this.

JULIE
Why haven’t you told me this?

JUNE

My dear, how could I ever?

JULIE

I have been in therapy for the past twenty years. I never understood what happened. My real dad was my ‘uncle’ when I was with you. And the man I called ‘dad’ at home was not my real dad. And when speaking of him to my real dad I should make sure not to say he was my dad.

DOROTHY

My head is spinning.

JUNE

I know it wasn’t easy. I know so well, my dear.

JULIE

My book is my therapy. Trying to put all this in words. So hard.

JUNE

I wish I could have given you a better life. You’re my only daughter.

JACQUES

My only child.

_June looks at him surprised._

JUNE

You had no other children?

JACQUES

I couldn’t.

JUNE

You never married?

JACQUES

I couldn’t.

_June lets go of Julie. Dorothy gets close to Julie, whispers in her ear. They slowly walk away from Jacques and June who do not notice that._
JUNE
You could have had any woman you wanted. How...

JACQUES
Could but didn’t.

JUNE
Why?

JACQUES
I never stopped thinking about you and never being able to see Julie, until she was eight, killed me a little every day.

JUNE
I’m sorry. I didn’t know. I thought you had many women. All those girls in love with you.

JACQUES
Just wanting to get in pictures. They’d sell their mother to be in movies.

JUNE
I couldn’t tell my husband what happened, may his soul rest in peace.

JACQUES
He died?

JUNE
Ten years ago.

JACQUES
And you did not re-marry?

JUNE
What for? The kids were growing, keeping me busy, and...

And...

JACQUES
And what?

Jacques gets closer to her attempting to take her hand. She doesn’t reject him.

JUNE
I was... alone too.
I didn’t know. What if you had known?

I don’t know. I wish I had known.

(softly) So do I. But...

I couldn’t forget that night when you ran after me trying to catch me.

You took my shoe and promised to throw it in the river. Their tone starts becoming joyous and they laugh.

You were so funny (mimicking him) Arrete arrete whatever that was...

That meant stop, stop.

Oh, and you took off the other shoe, then your socks and threatened to make me eat them.

They were new shoes, I had just bought them.

Not sure about the socks...

(giggling) they smelled?
JUNE
And then you grabbed my sleeve.

JACQUES
How did you ever do that? I fell down and found your blazer in my hands without you inside.

JUNE
You pulled it so hard.

Jacques pulls her sleeve and they are now very close. He brings his lips next to hers. She remains still.

JACQUES
I finally grabbed you.

JUNE
It was the most sensual moment of my life.

JACQUES
I was trembling when I felt you close to my body.

JUNE
I could hardly breathe.

JACQUES
Your eyes were glowing.

JUNE
We held each other very tight.

JACQUES
And our lips started to dance.

Jacques starts singing La Vie en Rose. They kiss. The music continues in the background. The kiss lasts the time of the entire song.

JUNE
And our story began.

JACQUES
But the end came too early.

JUNE
It never ended for me.
JACQUES

For me either.

JUNE

Remember that ring you gave me?

JACQUES

I thought you’d thrown it away.

JUNE

I didn’t.

She shows it on one of her fingers. Jacques holds her hand for a while.

JACQUES

Je t’aime.

JUNE

Moi aussi.

They kiss.

JUNE

I sat on your Louis XIII chair whenever I thought about you.

Jacques gently takes her close to the chair.

JACQUES

Remember when we made love in it?

JUNE

It was the beginning of Julie.

Jacques picks June up. He sits on the chair and they both fall while the chair is now scattered around the room in many small pieces. They both look at the pieces. They look at each other. They laugh out loud. They start kissing and rolling on the floor like teenagers. Julie and Dorothy run on to see what the crash was all about. June and Jacques do not see them.
Brad returns from his walk. Jacques and June still don’t see anyone. But as Brad gets closer he trips on the carpet and a glass from the top of the table falls and breaks. Jacques and June stop and look at them. They remain on the floor.

JUNE

It’s not what you think!

JACQUES

Yes it is... children.

Lights off

END OF SCENE
SCENE 5

Lights on the other half of the stage.

A few moths later. Dorothy and Brad are in June’s living room. Lots of packed boxes around a sofa where they sit. The Louis Treize chair is repaired.

DOROTHY
I never thought we’d make it.

BRAD
Our new house! The most beautiful thing I’ve ever seen.

DOROTHY
I told you we’d find it.

BRAD
Yes, you were right. I must say I was skeptical.

DOROTHY
I knew the right house was somewhere waiting for us.

BRAD
Well, we saw seventy-eight houses before we found it, and we’re spending sixty percent more than we thought.

DOROTHY
There you go, we were not looking for the right one.

BRAD
We’ll have to live for twenty-five years on a small budget.

DOROTHY
I’ll get a job after the babies are a bit grown. Don’t worry. You’re such a good engineer.

BRAD
It may not be so simple. We’ll see.

DOROTHY
I’ll get another degree while I take care of the twins.

BRAD
In what?
DOROTHY
I was fascinated by Julie’s writing. What a talent she has! I’d love to learn how to write.

BRAD
It’s difficult to break in.

DOROTHY
She did it. Did you hear about the Lumiere Films being interested in her story?

BRAD
I still don’t know what her book is about.

Julie comes down the stairs.

JULIE
Little rat, so you are interested in my book?

BRAD
Where are you coming from?

JULIE
Helping mom pack.

DOROTHY
Pack?

June comes down the stairs.

JUNE
Paris! Je vais a Paris!! La Tour Eiffel, l’arc de triomphe, les folies bergeres!

BRAD
Mom, are you alright?

JUNE
Je suis heureuse. Je suis, tu es, il est, nous sommes...

BRAD
What is she saying?

DOROTHY
Sounds like my French class in college. I should have studied it more seriously. My father told me I would regret it some day. But how could I guess I would be surrounded by French speaking people? How did he know that? Freaky.
June takes the Louis treize chair and starts dancing with it singing La Vie en Rose with a very bad accent.

BRAD

Mom.

DOROTHY

That’s cute.

BRAD

Silly.

DOROTHY

Brad, aren’t you happy to see your mom happy?

BRAD

Well, knowing why she is happy, I’m not sure.

Jacques walks in from the main door.

JACQUES

Bonjour tout le monde.

DOROTHY

Why do I feel like I was abducted by aliens while driving home and woke up in France?

JACQUES

Cherie, you should come to France and visit us.

BRAD

Are you moving there?

JACQUES

Non non, just for the honeymoon.

Honeymoon?

DOROTHY

Oh congratulations! I’m so happy.

BRAD

Happy? Mom, what in the world are you...

JUNE

I’m in love.
JACQUES
Always have been with you my darling.

BRAD
You’re going to be my stepfather?

JACQUES
Oui, isn’t that fantastique my little boy?

BRAD
I don’t think....

Dorothy gives him a kick.

BRAD
Ow! I hope you’re both happy.

JACQUES
Merci mon petit.

BRAD
Oh, please.

JACQUES
We’ll be back before our little grandchildren are born!

BRAD
Your what?

DOROTHY
Brad, give him a chance. Jacques, vous etes tres gentil.

JACQUES
Ma cherie, you are adorable. What a lovely young lady. June you must be so happy your son married this gorgeous and well-mannered, intelligent young girl.

(Beat)

JUNE
Hum...yeah...oui...yes, she’s a doll. She is. No, really. Such a lovely young woman.

DOROTHY
You mean it?

JUNE
I...guess so. See, I mean, well. Thank you for doing all this. Thanks to your stubborn... I mean, thanks to your persistence, I feel twenty years younger now.
June hugs Dorothy. She gives her a kiss.

JULIE
Thank you Dorothy. And to think I was about to kick you out of my apartment.

DOROTHY
You did!

JULIE
But you sure were tough enough to refuse. Well done. Petit rat needs a woman like you.

JACQUES
Ma petite Dorothee, you made a miracle happen.

DOROTHY
Well, it was just...

BRAD
Sounds like you got what you wanted darling.

DOROTHY
Are you not happy about it?

BRAD
Of course I’m happy. If you’re happy, and mom’s happy, then I’m happy.

JULIE
Petit rat?

BRAD
And if Julie’s happy, then I’m happy.

DOROTHY
This is the best day of my life.

JUNE
Vive la France.

DOROTHY
Vive les bébés.

JACQUES
Vive l’amour!

JULIE
Vive la vie!
Brad takes the keys out of his pocket. They’re glittering as they’re brand new. He shakes them in front of Dorothy’s eyes.

BRAD

Vive la swimming pool and our maison.

June and Jacques pull out a big box from a closet.

JUNE

Jacques and I want to give you this gift for your new house.

DOROTHY

Oh, thank you. What is it?

BRAD

Open it.

Dorothy and Brad open the bog and they pull out two very old-looking not so nice-looking chairs. They look at each other puzzled.

DOROTHY

(Politely) How nice, thank you.

JACQUES

Two original Louis Treize chairs, for your living room!

Dorothy and Brad look at each other. They sit in the chairs, next to each other, they kiss, they hug, they fall out of the chairs as these come apart. June and Jacques scream picking up the pieces.

Lights off

THE END
VITA

Roberta Grossi is an Italian writer and playwright living in Paris, France. She is fluent in ten languages and works as a trainer in communication skills in multinational companies and teaches in international universities. She has studied in the USA and where she earned an MA in Speech Communication, an MBA in International Marketing, an MA in Adult Education and a BA in journalism. Roberta has written and produced many short plays, contributed to cross-cultural publications, and wrote several papers, which she presented at international conferences in the fields of communication and cultural differences.