

Spring 5-18-2014

Tango in Solitude

Maria Hinterkoerner
film and theater arts, mhinterk@uno.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.uno.edu/td>



Part of the [Creative Writing Commons](#), [Film and Media Studies Commons](#), and the [Fine Arts Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Hinterkoerner, Maria, "Tango in Solitude" (2014). *University of New Orleans Theses and Dissertations*. 1808.

<https://scholarworks.uno.edu/td/1808>

This Thesis is protected by copyright and/or related rights. It has been brought to you by ScholarWorks@UNO with permission from the rights-holder(s). You are free to use this Thesis in any way that is permitted by the copyright and related rights legislation that applies to your use. For other uses you need to obtain permission from the rights-holder(s) directly, unless additional rights are indicated by a Creative Commons license in the record and/or on the work itself.

This Thesis has been accepted for inclusion in University of New Orleans Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@UNO. For more information, please contact scholarworks@uno.edu.

Tango in Solitude

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 and Theatre Arts
Creative Writing

by

Maria Hinterkoerner

Mag.^a phil. University of Vienna, 2006

Mag.^a phil. University of Vienna, 2006

Dr.ⁱⁿ phil. University of Vienna, 2012

May, 2014

Acknowledgments

My thanks go to Rick Barton, the director of the Creative Writing Workshop at the University of New Orleans. Mister Barton fought to make it possible for me to even consider MFA studies abroad by most generously offering me a graduate assistantship. I also thank David Hoover, head of the Film and Theatre department at UNO, for allowing me into his realm and what was to become my box office for three years.

I am indebted to my two screenwriting professors Henry Griffin and Erik Hansen. Through their wisdom and generosity, I could become the screenwriter that I am today, find my strengths, and face my weaknesses. Thanks also go to all my wonderful colleagues at the CWW who so graciously gave their time to workshop my scripts and offer useful advice and encouragement whenever needed.

I am tremendously grateful to Marina Mazzotti at the Créteil Films des Femmes Festival who granted me access to Maria Schneider's master class from 2001.

Lastly, I bow in gratitude to my family and friends, old and new, in Austria and around the world, who did not think me mad when I turned thirty and announced I was going to be a screenwriter. My family at home has supported me in every way possible through my years as a graduate student in America – through financial strains, emotional lows, and times of creative despair and exhaustion. They were always with me and strengthened me with their belief in me and my work.

FADE IN:

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

A stony staircase from imperial Europe.

SUPER: "PARIS, 1971"

An apartment door opens.

A young, slender MARIA SCHNEIDER, 20, with dark curls hitting her shoulder, stumbles out. She thrusts her arms in the air. Her pouty lips tremble, frustrated, and she speaks with a heavy French accent.

MARIA

I WON'T DO IT! Not now! Not in a million years! You cannot keep adding scenes and not tell me! I will no longer tolerate this!

MAN

(American)

Calm down for a moment, Maria, and let's talk about this.

A MAN comes out of the apartment behind her, his back to us, closing the door behind him. Broad shoulders but he has run to fat. His hair is gray and thinning, a grown out haircut.

MARIA

There is nothing to talk about!
This goes too far, I will not do it!

The man turns to Maria - it is MARLON BRANDO, late 40's. His broad frame towers over Maria as he looks down into Maria's furious eyes. He trusts his disarming smile.

BRANDO

With reason, Maria. You're being very emotional at the moment.

(beat)

You signed up to star in this movie, didn't you? You read the script. You knew what it was about.

Maria clenches her fists.

MARIA

This has nothing to do with the script!

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARIA (CONT'D)

Day after day, I come to set
thinking, all right I will do this
and I will do that, because that's
what it takes. But this, this
isn't what we agreed on.

Her eyes fill with angry tears.

MARIA

Nobody has ever put a hand on
me... like that.

Brando lays a hand on Maria's shoulder.

BRANDO

Maria. Listen.

Maria shakes his hand off and swallows her tears.

MARIA

Me, I'm tired of listening!

She folds her arms.

MARIA

And you're telling me now? Ten
minutes before we shoot the scene
so I cannot say no?

BRANDO

You can't say no, you know that.

Maria studies Brando's face, flabbergasted.

MARIA

Do you even know what you ask of
me, Marlon? Do you have any
understanding what this means and
how... humiliating it is?

Maria growls and sits down on the stairs.

BRANDO

Look, Maria, I know this is an
intense scene that's difficult to
shoot, especially for an
inexperienced actress like you.

Brando sits down next to her.

BRANDO

We have a great rapport, you and
I. You've followed me this far.

Maria breathes in and out.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BRANDO

(soft)

We don't mean to violate you in any way, Maria. I certainly don't. I just wanna make a good film. Don't you?

MARIA

A good film. What's good about that?

Brando shrugs.

BRANDO

Good is if Bernardo gets what he wants for his film, if you give him what he thinks is best for his film.

MARIA

He wouldn't do this to me if I was a Bardot.

Brando loses his patience.

BRANDO

Fine. You wanna be an actress so badly, Maria? Then be an actress and do your job.

Maria and Brando's eyes meet. A moment of silence.

BRANDO

It's only a movie, Maria, but it's the movie you want to be in. Your life will never be the same. Walk off set now, and you'll regret it for the rest of your life.

Brando stands up, offers Maria his hand.

BRANDO

No regrets.

Maria's eyes are hard when she puts her hand in Brando's.

MARIA

(whispers)

No regrets...

Brando pulls her up and directs Maria into the apartment.

Inside a MAN in his 30's turns his head around. He wears a sweater, a fedora, and a viewfinder around the neck. This is BERNARDO BERTOLUCCI.

Brando follows Maria into the apartment. He pulls the door shut.

[NOTE: THE CHARACTERS IN THIS STORY SPEAK ENGLISH, AND FRENCH AND ITALIAN WITH SUBTITLES. FOR EASE OF READING, ALL DIALOGUE WILL BE IN ENGLISH.]

INT. PARLOR, DOMINIQUE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

A bohemian party. Artistic FOLK in their 20's and 30's sit, linger and stand about, laughing, drinking, making out. Psychedelic MUSIC accompanies their party, as do drugs and other intoxicating substances.

SUPER: "1976"

Maria, in a dangerously short dress, sits on a faded green couch, holding an empty glass. She doesn't pay attention to the flirting and chirping around her. Stares blankly at the coffee table in front of her.

A blonde belle in her late 20's, DOMINIQUE SANDA, eyes Maria, nips from her glass of champagne. She whispers to PIA, 30's with a pageboy.

Maria shudders, as if awaking from a dream, gets up and tumbles out of the room.

DOMINIQUE

Maria!

INT. HALLWAY, DOMINIQUE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Maria's feet in tights, no shoes, sink into the fluffy carpet.

She rattles at the bathroom door, as a 30-year-old, sideburned, TURTLENECK MAN intercepts. His belt sits a little too tight.

MARIA

Yes? What?

Turtleneck looks at her through big round glasses.

MARIA

What do you want?

TURTLENECK

(American)

Aren't you the babe from *Last Tango*?

MARIA

Eh? So?

TURTLENECK

Hicks, producer. What's your name again?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARIA

Queen of Sheba.

Turtleneck laughs.

TURTLENECK

I'm starting to enjoy Paris.
Perhaps I should move here. What
d'you think?

MARIA

What do you want?

Turtleneck has patience. He studies Maria from head to
toe.

TURTLENECK

As I said. I'm a producer. You,
Maria, are an *actrice*.

MARIA

Am I? And what? Do you expect me
to kneel down? Call you sugar? You
tell me now that you will take me
places? Give me glamour?

Maria uses the French pronunciation: "glamoor."
Turtleneck fastens his hands around Maria's slender
waist.

TURTLENECK

I like the way you say "glamoor,"
Maria. That's your name, right?

MARIA

Sadly, me, I do not like the way
you say anything.

Turtleneck kisses her. At first, Maria responds. As
Turtleneck gets more forceful, she retracts.

TURTLENECK

Come on, Queen of Sheba!

Maria pushes him away.

MARIA

Don't touch me.

She staggers off, dizzy from the alcohol, and feels her
way down the corridor.

TURTLENECK

Suit yourself. Girls like you just
don't have what it takes! Dream
about glamour, girl, that's the
closest you'll ever get.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Maria rips a door open and stumbles into a

INT. NURSERY - CONTINUOUS

A little girl's room. Pink and white, unicorns, pixies, a chubby, glittery angel figurine. A picture of Dominique, a handsome MAN and a little GIRL on a mantelpiece.

Maria drops on the plush carpet, kicks the door shut with her foot. She sobs silently. The angel figurine stares down at her with clinical eyes.

MARIA

(whispers)

Where are you, my angel?

Her fingers dig deep into the carpet.

MARIA

Where is your hand to lead me back
into the light?

She curls up into a fetal position. Cries.

INT. FRONT DOOR - NIGHT

Turtleneck rips the door open, two EMTs rush in.
Turtleneck leads them down the hallway.

TURTLENECK

She collapsed about ten minutes
ago. Shooting star, huh?

He chuckles. The two EMTs don't. The three burst into the

INT. NURSERY - CONTINUOUS

Maria lies on the carpet with eyes open in shock. Her nose bleeds. White powder next to her on the carpet. The two EMTs tend to her, murmur to her in French, look into her eyes with a flashlight. Her pupils don't react.

Dominique and Pia come rushing in. Pia kneels down to grab Maria's hand. Dominique remains standing.

While the EMTs see to Maria, Pia strokes Maria's hair.

DOMINIQUE

Unbelievable.

Dominique shakes her head, turns around, leaves the room.

PIA

Dominique!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The sound fades into a thick numbness on Maria's white face.

MARIA (V.O.)

"I once went into a little house.
It was on a morning jellied with
white frost. I saw a very
beautiful fairy. Perhaps she
possessed the clarity of a star.
She asked me if I wanted to stay
with her. I told her no, for I
wanted to be near my own kind."

Maria's eyes close.

O.S. the lyrical rhythm of hardcover books being stamped:
book opens, stamp thumps, book snaps shut.

INT. BOOKSHOP - DAY

Dusty books crammed in shelves.

At a desk, MARIE-CHRISTINE SCHNEIDER, in her early 30's and owner of the bookshop, shifts and stamps books in different piles. She wears a black Coco Chanel costume.

Behind a bookshelf sitting on the floor, a 5-year-old MARIA browses through a picture book and listens to her mother's stamping rhythm. Maria hums to embellish the orchestration. Her hair curls wildly around her head.

SUPER: "PARIS, 1957"

O.S. the door jingles, and the book stamping pauses.

Maria continues to hum and browse. Two female voices WHISPER, incomprehensibly. Someone BANGS a book down. Maria stops humming. She puts her book down, slowly inches forward to peep out from behind the bookshelf.

A WOMAN in a tweed suit, planted in front of Schneider, fixes her bucket hat.

TWEED WOMAN

You will be hearing from me!

Tweed Woman turns on her heels and jingles the door on her way out.

Schneider resumes stamping books around, now frustrated. She spots Maria spying.

SCHNEIDER

WHAT?

Maria scoots back. Clasps the picture book against her chest.

EXT. BOOKSHOP - DAY

Schneider locks the glass door of the shop. A sign dangles inside reading "FERMÉ."

She pulls the key out, snatches Maria's hand and hurries down the Parisian street.

Maria whines, tugs at her mother's tight grip.

MARIA

I need to pee.

SCHNEIDER

Maria! We're nearly home.

MARIA

Maman! I really have to go!

Maria hops on one leg. Schneider sighs, drags Maria into

INT. LOWER CLASS BAR - CONTINUOUS

Scruffy MEN scattered across dingy interior. Schneider pushes Maria towards a door that reads "TOILETTES."

SCHNEIDER

Go ahead!

MARIA

Maman!

SCHNEIDER

Don't be such a baby. You can do it yourself.

Maria reaches high up to the handle of the bathroom door. Pushes her full weight against the door and squeezes in.

Schneider sighs, leans on the counter, pulls a cigarette out of a silver holder. Feels for a lighter.

O.S. somebody SCRATCHES a match. A HAND with a lit match offers Schneider a light.

A MAN with a wide grin and dirty stubble studies Schneider openly from head to toe.

MAN

Good day, butterfly!

SCHNEIDER

Good day.

MAN

I like your dress.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SCHNEIDER

Me too.

MAN

You are as pretty as those women
in the movies.

SCHNEIDER

What movies?

MAN

You know, blue flicks.

He bares his teeth in a grin.

SCHNEIDER

Am I?

She takes her cigarette out of her mouth, smiles, waits.
The fire of the match burns the man's thumb.

MAN

Shit.

Schneider smiles. Puts the cigarette back in the holder,
snaps it shut.

SCHNEIDER

Maria!

Maria struggles her way out of the restroom.

SCHNEIDER

Let's go.

She grabs Maria's hand, turns on her heel and strides
out.

MAN

Whore!

INT. KITCHEN, SCHNEIDER'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Schneider smokes at the window, looking down in the
street, immersed in thoughts.

Maria sits at the kitchen table, stuffing mashed potatoes
in her mouth with a spoon too big for children. Munching,
she turns around to face her mother.

Schneider exhales a smoke cloud and puts her cigarette
out in an overflowing ashtray.

She moves past Maria, snatches the receiver off the
rotary telephone on the wall.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARIA

Maman?

Schneider dials a number, pulls the curly phone cord straight and slips out of the kitchen, closing the sliding door.

Maria stares at the closed door.

INT. HALLWAY, SCHNEIDER'S APARTMENT

Schneider listens to the phone ringing.

INT. RITZY LOUNGE, GÉLIN'S HOUSE - EVENING

A shiny rotary phone rings. LAUGHTER and upper-class PARTY MUSIC in the background.

A WOMAN approaches in a silk two-piece suit, lifts the receiver. She is DANIELÉ DELORME, in her 40's, and wears her hair in an elegant bun.

DELORME

Yes?

Listens intently.

DELORME

Who is this?

As she gets the answer, she quickly puts the receiver down on the side table.

INT. HALLWAY, SCHNEIDER'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Schneider rubs her head; perhaps it's aching.

INT. RITZY LOUNGE, GÉLIN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Danièle Delorme approaches a 40-year-old man with brown, wavy hair, DANIEL GÉLIN, who jokes with three other snazzy PARTY GUESTS. She puts a hand on his shoulder, whispers something in his ear. Daniel stops laughing.

Danièle Delorme shows off her bright, white teeth.

DELORME

Please excuse my husband for a moment.

She leads Daniel aside.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DELORME

How could you give her this number? Haven't you ruined enough already?

GÉLIN

Calm down. I'll handle this.

DELORME

You're asking a lot of me, Daniel.

Daniel turns away.

INT. HALLWAY, SCHNEIDER'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Schneider still waits on the phone. Finally, a voice on the other end.

SCHNEIDER

Hello? Daniel? Daniel, listen to me.

INTERCUT SCHNEIDER AND GÉLIN

GÉLIN

No, you listen. You cannot call here.

SCHNEIDER

Maria is your daughter too, Daniel! You cannot just stash her away whenever you feel like--

GÉLIN

I never made any promises, all right? It was a fling. I have a wife, for Christ's sake.

Schneider sobs.

IN THE KITCHEN, Maria grimaces as she hears her mother sobbing.

GÉLIN

And who knows, you know?

SCHNEIDER

No, I don't know. Who knows what?

GÉLIN

I don't even know if she's mine. For all I know--

SCHNEIDER

I can't believe you just said that.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SCHNEIDER (CONT'D)

Surely, you haven't forgotten...
Maria is your daughter!

GÉLIN

What do you want from me?

SCHNEIDER

What do I want? I want you to take
responsibility. I won't be a model
forever, and the store won't be
enough. I can't do this on my own.

She pauses.

SCHNEIDER

I need you.

Another pause.

SCHNEIDER

Maria needs you.

Daniel sighs.

GÉLIN

I'll come by when I find time, all
right? As a friend. Nothing more.

SCHNEIDER

Daniel...

GÉLIN

Don't call here anymore.

He hangs up, exhales, and walks away to join his party.

INT. HALLWAY, SCHNEIDER'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Schneider sobs; then her face hardens. She rips the
sliding door open, darts into the

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Maria looks up from the mashed potatoes, alarmed.

Schneider bangs the receiver on the wall. It doesn't
click in. Schneider smashes the receiver against the
phone, again and again.

Maria's eyes fill with fear. She grabs the spoon tighter
in her fist, presses her lips together.

Schneider breathes heavily as she turns around to Maria.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SCHNEIDER

Remember this day, Maria, when a
father didn't give a shit about
his daughter.

Turns around to Maria.

SCHNEIDER

Eat up.

She stumbles out of the kitchen, leaving Maria alone.

The spoon trembles in Maria's hand.

A late 1960s POP HYMN blasts out.

INT. PHOTO STUDIO - DAY

Fifteen-year-old Maria shakes her curls. She laughs.
Pretty make-up.

SUPER: 1967

Maria's body is pubescent, and she poses with two other
GIRLS. Big hair, bright lipstick, and short dresses with
flower prints.

Two umbrellas release flashes on the girls every three
seconds. The male PHOTOGRAPHER'S face is hidden behind a
Nikon F.

PHOTOGRAPHER

Excellent! Désirée, turn more into
the light.

The girl in orange does it.

PHOTOGRAPHER

That's good... Girl in green,
what's your name?

MARIA

Maria.

PHOTOGRAPHER

Maria, your hair is amazing... so
fluffy! I'd like to see you use
it. Put a hand on purple's
shoulder. Amélie, is it?

The girls do it.

PHOTOGRAPHER

Great... And smiles! Big smiles!
Yes! Perfect! Superb!

The girls' smile competition FLASHES into a FREEZE FRAME.

INT. MARIA'S BEDROOM - DAY

An open magazine shows Maria as a jeans model with two other girls. MUSIC blares from a record player in a messy room. Old *Vogues* and *Marie Claires* lie on the floor next to dirty underwear and jeans.

Posters from 1960s musical heroes on the wall: the Beatles, the Doors, Jimi, Janis, a couple of French Gallic girl pop stars.

In a full body mirror on the door, we see the reflection of Maria, only in panties and T-shirt. She smokes in bed.

Schneider bursts into the room.

SCHNEIDER

Turn that shit down!

Schneider darts to the record player, pulls the record off with a painful scratch and breaks it in two. Glabella wrinkles on her face.

MARIA

Maman!

Schneider moves to Maria, snatches the cigarette out of her hand.

SCHNEIDER

And how often do I have to tell you not to smoke in your bed! And put some clothes on... mooching around in underwear...

MARIA

Stop treating me like a child! I'm fifteen!

Schneider picks up the dirty laundry on the floor.

SCHNEIDER

Look at this mess. As long as you live under my roof you will comply, young lady, understand?

Her eyes fall on the picture of Maria in jeans in the magazine.

SCHNEIDER

Those god-awful jeans. You look like a construction worker.

Schneider turns on her heel to leave, when...

MARIA

You know, Maman, you're just jealous.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Schneider slowly turns to Maria.

SCHNEIDER

Excuse me?

MARIA

You're jealous because I'm growing up. You can't take the thought of me becoming a woman and being successful.

SCHNEIDER

Don't talk to me like that!

MARIA

Just look at yourself.

Schneider catches her reflection in the mirror.

MARIA

No wonder my father doesn't wanna have anything to do with you! You're turning into a haggard old bitch.

SCHNEIDER

MARIA--

MARIA

I'm sure I would have seen him by now if it wasn't for you!

SCHNEIDER

You don't know what you're saying! I loved Daniel, and he left me with nothing!

MARIA

Am I nothing? Am I nothing!

SCHNEIDER

Don't get hysterical. You know what I mean.

MARIA

No. You tell me now! Am I nothing? Am I nothing!

SCHNEIDER

Stop yelling.

MARIA

Why? I am NOTHING! How can I yell at you? How can you even hear me?

SCHNEIDER

Maria, stop yelling at me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MARIA

I am nothing! NOTHING!

SCHNEIDER

BE QUIET!

MARIA

I hate you. I HATE YOU!

Schneider takes a full grip of Maria's long curls, pulls her off the bed and out into the

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Maria screams and struggles. Hot tears.

Schneider drags her into the

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Schneider takes a pair of large scissors out of a kitchen drawer.

Curl after curl, she cuts off Maria's long hair. Maria, barefoot and unable to get a grip on the linoleum, screams at the top of her lungs.

Strand after strand of brown hair floats to Maria's trembling feet.

Maria screams and cries.

Schneider's face is hard.

Finally, it's done.

Schneider breathes heavily, drops the scissors on the counter top, shuffles out.

Maria remains on the floor, sobbing, feeling for her cut-off hair on the linoleum. The curls fall through her fingers. Maria weeps.

EXT. ROOFTOPS PARIS - DAY

Smog hangs over the grayness of Paris.

INT. HALLWAY, SCHNEIDER'S APARTMENT - DAY

Schneider stands in front of the door to Maria's room. She hesitates, knocks.

SCHNEIDER

Maria? Chérie?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She waits for an answer.

Nothing.

SCHNEIDER

Maria...

Schneider opens the door into

INT. MARIA'S ROOM

Schneider stares into the empty room, the empty bed, the floor clean.

Maria is gone.

EXT. IN THE STREETS OF PARIS - DAY

Maria, short but smart curls, strolls down a street. A big backpack rests on her shoulders.

She breathes in the air of freedom and confidence, smiles faintly. Nods at PEDESTRIANS passing her.

She comes to a halt in front of a high Parisian house. Looks up - not too sketchy and not too expensive. Maria nods.

She enters the house. The door falls shut behind her.

A sign next to the door reads:

APPARTEMENT Á LOUER (Apartment for rent)

SUPER: "1967"

SERIES OF SHOTS:

A) In her apartment, Maria nails a dusty mirror on the wall. In the bathroom, she turns the rusty tapware first into one direction, then the other. Water shoots down at her. Maria squeals and turns the knob until it break off.

B) In the cinema, Maria watches *Barbarella*. Jane Fonda in the orgasm machine. Maria laughs at the nonsense.

C) At a bar in a restaurant, Maria browses through a fashion magazine, bored. The BARTENDER dries a glass, leering at Maria. Maria looks up - a TV high up above the bar catches her eyes. She pushes the magazine aside.

D) On the mattress, Maria smokes and nips red wine directly from the bottle. Ash falls in her hair.

MARIA

Shit.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

E) In the cinema, Maria watches *Belle de Jour* with a ravishing Catherine Deneuve. Maria's eyes shine.

F) At the restaurant, the bartender smiles and focuses on Maria's bottom as she trudges out. Maria catches him, flips him off.

G) At a studio, Maria models. She poses with FRANCOISE (early 20's) for the camera in front of a white backdrop. Maria is pretty with her hair puffing up in the wind machine.

H) In the cinema, Maria watches *Shalako* with Sean Connery and Brigitte Bardot. Sean kisses Brigitte, who begs him to make love to her in the cave. Spellbound Maria forgets about her popcorn.

END SERIES OF SHOTS

INT. MARIA'S APARTMENT - DAY

Soft MUSIC from a record player.

Francoise and RENÉ, early 20's, sit on the mattress, leaning against the wall. Francoise rolls a joint and lights it.

Maria joins them, sits down with a bottle of wine and three glasses. Francoise offers her the joint. Maria takes it.

Above her on the wall: A poster of Brigitte Bardot in *Shalako* aiming a rifle.

INT. MARIA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Maria leans against the wall, draws smoke in her lungs, giggles as the smoke makes its way out in puffy coughs. Hands the joint over to René.

René sticks the lit end of the joint between his teeth and performs a shotgun on Francoise. Without turning his head, he hands the joint back to Maria and starts making out with Francoise.

Maria puts the joint out, grabs the wine bottle and takes a sip, ogling the couple from the corner of her eye.

René caresses Francoise's neck, whispers something in her ear. Francoise smiles, approaches Maria on all fours. She touches Maria's knee, moves her hand up under Maria's skirt.

Her lips seal Maria's. Maria kisses Francoise with her eyes closed, then opens them. She reaches out to sling her hand around René's neck and pulls him in to join.

INT. MARIA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Maria, curled up in a blanket, watches a film on her tiny TV. Enchanting monochrome.

Maria positions herself so she can see her reflection in the dusty mirror on the wall. She imitates the dramatic gestures of the female lead. Her eyes bounce back and forth between the TV and her reflection in the mirror.

INT/EXT. METRO STATION - DAY

Maria hops out of the Metro -

- rushes up the steps -

- exits the train station.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Looks left and right, crosses the street and enters a building.

A metallic plate next to the door reads:

ÉCOLE INTERNATIONALE DE THÉÂTRE JACQUES LECOQ

INT. ACTING SCHOOL - DAY

Maria marvels at the huge staircase. Her eyes glow.

STUDENTS are making their way to classes, pushing up and down the stairs.

MARIA

Salut!

They don't notice Maria.

MARIA

Salut! How are you?

A young FEMALE STUDENT frowns at Maria. Maria's smile vanishes. She tucks her head in and moves towards a blackboard in the hallway.

Maria browses over posted job announcements. Stops at pink fliers announcing a casting call for "COMPARSES" (EXTRAS).

She gently rips one of the fliers off, folds it neatly, puts it in her pocket and leaves.

EXT/INT. DRESSING ROOM - DAY

A HAND pushes open a door with the sign "COMPARSES."

SUPER: "1969"

The hand belongs to a female second ASSISTANT DIRECTOR.

2ND A.D.

Chop, chop, everyone! Remember, do not bother the stars! They need to concentrate and do their job.

WOMEN of all ages hurry to put on their shoes, hats and other accessories. The 2nd A.D. gives every one of them a tap on the shoulder on their way out of the dressing room.

Maria still fiddles with a strap of her pump.

2ND A.D.

Come on! Let's get going!

Maria sighs, gives up, brushes the flared trousers over her ankles and hurries out.

INT. TRAIN COMPARTMENT, SET "LES FEMMES" - DAY

Maria plops down into a cushioned train seat with a sigh.

A.D. (O.S.)

Everybody in position? We're ready for filming.

Maria smiles at the male EXTRA sitting opposite.

MALE EXTRA

Are you an acting student, too?

The first A.D., armed with a clipboard, glances through thick glasses. Next to him are the D.P., hiding behind the camera, and a middle aged MAN with a side parting, JEAN AUREL. Further in the back, a MAN with headphones, SOUND GUY, studies a recording device with blinking lights.

A.D.

Quiet please.

Maria gives her opposite an excited smile.

MARIA

(whispers)

Soon.

A.D. (O.S.)

Camera.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

D.P. (O.S.)

Speeding.

The A.D. turns around to face Sound Guy.

A.D.

Sound.

SOUND GUY

Speeding.

A.D.

Slate.

A young, thin A.C. cranes a blackboard slate in front of the lens.

A.C.

Les Femmes, scene one-three-four
B, take one. Marker.

The A.C. slates and withdraws.

A.D.

And extras wiggle into frame!
Remember, do not look at the
camera!

The EXTRAS, all seated, start to simulate the soft rocking of the train.

Maria covers her lips with her hand to muffle her giggle.

Aurel squints at the scenery.

AUREL

And action!

The door of the train compartment swings open. Maria turns her head.

Well manicured, slender fingers slide the door shut. Long pantyhosed legs lead to the dangerously short pleats of a dress.

A sexy mane of blonde hair flies around. Thick, black eyelashes open clear eyes shadowed into feline shape. A petite nose leads to sensually full lips. They part. BRIGITTE BARDOT, 35 and in her prime. The epitome of sex and beauty.

Maria stares as Bardot glides past her. Maria's eyes follow Bardot's movements. They are fixed on the pleats swirling around Bardot's hips.

MALE EXTRA (O.S.)

Oh là là! She is unearthly, isn't she?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Maria is still hypnotized.

MARIA

Yes.

ON SET "LES FEMMES" - SERIES OF SHOTS

A) Maria watches as Bardot swivels back into start position. Those hips!

B) Bardot's eyes wander and stop.

C) Maria looks away, embarrassed.

D) The A.C. snaps the slate into the camera for another take.

E) Maria studies every single one of Bardot's motions. She catches her own reflection in the window. Tries to pout her lips like Bardot.

END SERIES OF SHOTS

INT. DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

Among chatty EXTRAS, Maria slips out of her skirt, glances over her shoulder and studies her bottom in the mirror. Sways her hips.

INT. HALLWAY, SET - NIGHT

A strict CASHIER sits at a desk. Maria, bent down, scribbles her name on a white sheet of paper. The cashier studies the sheet and hands Maria a check, then another.

CASHIER

For the taxi.

MARIA

Thanks.

Maria turns around to leave, sees Bardot laughing and chatting with Aurel. The male extra walks up to Bardot with a pen and a paper, asking for an autograph. Maria walks out.

EXT. IN THE STREETS - NIGHT

It's raining.

Maria pulls her coat tighter, pops the collar. The rain makes her eyes squint. She looks into the dark street. No taxi as far as she can see.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARIA

Shit.

BARDOT (O.S.)

You're Gélín's daughter, aren't you?

Brigitte Bardot approaches Maria. Bardot wears a trench coat and boots, and her vast umbrella nearly covers her face.

MARIA

(coy)

Me? Oh. Yes.

Bardot lifts the umbrella to reveal a broad smile.

BARDOT

Not to worry, little Gélín, there are many well kept secrets in the industry. This is not one of them.

Bardot reaches out with a hand.

BARDOT

Brigitte.

Maria shakes Bardot's hand.

MARIA

Maria. Schneider is my mother's name and that's the one I use.

Bardot smiles.

A limousine rolls in through puddles. Bardot pulls her umbrella in, opens the car door and slides onto the back seat. Peeks out at Maria standing in the rain.

BARDOT

Do you need a lift?

MARIA

There should be an extras' taxi on its way.

BARDOT

Is that true?

(beat)

I'm not going to leave you here all by yourself. Hop in.

Maria casts a last glance into the dark street - still no taxi visible - and slips into the limousine.

The limousine pulls away.

INT. LIMOUSINE - NIGHT

BARDOT
Where are we going?

MARIA
You can drop me off at--

BARDOT
I am not gonna drop you off
anywhere in the middle of the
night. We're gonna take you right
to your door step. Won't we,
Pierre?

The CHAUFFEUR smiles at the two women in his mirror.

PIERRE
Of course, Madame.

Maria looks out the window.

EXT. IN THE STREETS OF PARIS - NIGHT

The limousine turns into Maria's street. It stops, Maria opens the door. Bardot leans over, frowns at the crumbling house facade.

BARDOT
You live here? Alone?

MARIA
Yes.

BARDOT
Aren't you a little young to live
by yourself, in such a district?
What does your mother think?

Bardot studies Maria's face, pondering only for a second.

BARDOT
Shut the door.

MARIA
What do you mean?

BARDOT
You're staying with me.

MARIA
But--

BARDOT
Don't argue with me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Maria catches a last glimpse of the window of her first apartment and pulls the door shut.

The gray, rainy misery of Paris gives way to

EXT. SAINT TROPEZ - DAY

A convertible turns into a pebbled driveway. Vast gardens left and right. Bardot's and Maria's hair flies in the wind. Maria's sunglasses are as big as her smile.

EXT. "LA MADRAGUE" BARDOT'S HOUSE - DAY

The convertible rolls towards a chalked country house with red shingles. Stops.

BARDOT
Welcome to "La Madrague."

Maria hops out of the car. Laughs and admires the house.

Bardot breathes in.

BARDOT
It's my little haven of
tranquility and solitude.

MARIA
May I?

BARDOT
It's your home now, too.

Maria prances up to the entrance door. Bardot smiles at Maria's excitement.

INT. "LA MADRAGUE" - DAY

Maria stumbles in, squints into the sun shining through the sky lights. Laughs.

MARIA
Wow. I want to be an actress, too.

BARDOT
You can live in a house without
having to become an actress.

INT. MARIA'S ROOM, "LA MADRAGUE" - DAY

The white double door opens. Bardot makes an inviting gesture. Maria drags a suitcase into her room.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BARDOT

Make yourself at home.

MARIA

Brigitte! I don't know what to say...

BARDOT

You don't always have to have something to say.

Bardot winks and pulls the doors shut.

Maria drops her suitcase, squeals, prances to a high, queen-size bed and throws herself on it.

Her eyes wander over the wooden country style furniture of the room, stop at a door.

Maria jumps up, dashes to the door, opens it with caution and peeks through the door. She grins.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Maria takes a bubble bath. Splashes the water and blows the foam into shapes. Sings a bawdy French chanson. Her toes play with the shiny faucet.

INT. MARIA'S ROOM - DAY

Maria, wrapped in a bathrobe, rubs her hair with a towel. Looks out the bedroom's window - a marvelous view over the extensive grounds.

She sees Bardot in riding gear kneeling down to pat a wagging dog.

Maria smiles. Falls back into her soft bed with a sigh. Closes her eyes.

AT "LA MADRAGUE" - SERIES OF SHOTS

A) Maria has difficulty mounting a horse. Bardot secures the reins and laughs.

B) From the pasture fence, Maria watches Bardot on horseback. Bardot's hair flows as the horse gallops elegantly.

C) Maria comes out of the bathroom and finds a short dress laid out on her bed. She picks it up, holds it to her body, and examines herself in a mirror.

D) Maria posts up and down on a trotting horse. Bardot works the lunge.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

E) Maria folds her jeans and T-shirt and stashes them away in a cupboard.

F) Bardot hands Maria boots to go with her short dress. Maria puts them on, likes them. She sits down next to Bardot on her bed, tries to mirror the way Bardot crosses her legs and points her toes. Puts her hands on her knee.

G) Maria and Bardot both on horseback gallop through the countryside. Their hair flows. Maria laughs, from the bottom of her heart.

END SERIES OF SHOTS

INT. "LA MADRAGUE" - DAY

Bardot lowers a French manual.

BARDOT

Let's see.

Bardot and Maria stare at a tape recorder next to the telephone on a table.

MARIA

It does what exactly?

BARDOT

It should answer the phone when we are not home, and people can leave a message that will be recorded on this tape. It's the latest fad.

MARIA

Wow.

BARDOT

Let's try this.

She looks at the manual, then at the machine and pushes the record button.

The tape starts running.

BARDOT

We have fifteen seconds.

MARIA

Is it recording?

BARDOT

I don't know. What should we say?

MARIA

If you hear this, we are not at home. Sorry.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BARDOT

But you can leave a message on the tape and we will listen to it or give you a call back.

MARIA

What now?

Bardot looks at the manual again.

BARDOT

After fifteen seconds there should be a--

BEEP. The tape comes to a halt. Maria and Bardot are baffled.

The phone rings.

They are startled.

BARDOT

My God, the nerves.

She picks up. Smiles and looks at Maria.

BARDOT

Hello, girls!

INT. KITCHEN, "LA MADRAGUE" - EVENING

A cosy country kitchen.

Maria, Bardot and two women, ALICE and PHILA, of Bardot's age and build, sit at the solid, wooden kitchen table.

Maria wears the dress Bardot gave her.

Salad, vegetables and steaks are in the middle of the table for everyone to dig in.

The women share a laugh.

ALICE

You take a measuring tape, put it around Brigitte's ass. Then you put it around your own ass. If the numbers match, voilà, you're Brigitte's body double.

MARIA

So your job is to have... Brigitte's ass?

ALICE

It's an easy life. We make money keeping *this*...

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ALICE (CONT'D)

(re: her body)
... in *her* sexy shape...
(re: Bardot)
... without anyone recognizing
this...
(re: her face)
... in the street. It's the best!

PHILA

... if you can live with the fact
that your face will never make a
poster.

MARIA

I couldn't be Brigitte's double. I
have more meat.
(points at her own
chest)
It's a little tight around here.

The women share a laugh.

MARIA

And I think I wouldn't like to be
only a body, without a face.

ALICE

What's wrong with telling your
Maman: "Go and watch this, there's
my ass in minute thirty-two"?

Alice and Phila laugh. Maria is serious.

MARIA

Me, I would like people to
recognize me in the street. I mean
strangers walking up to you,
asking for your autograph,
congratulating you on your
performance... Isn't that what
being a star is all about?

ALICE

I don't know. Maybe you should ask
the star in our midst.

Everybody looks at Bardot for an answer.

BARDOT

It's not as glamorous as it
sounds.

ALICE

Look at her, being miserable
living in this mansion of hers!

Alice bangs her hand on the table.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ALICE

You know what? I'm gonna get myself more beef. If I'm not mistaken I need to fill up a bit to match the great movie star's rear.

Bardot pinches Alice, playfully. They laugh.

Maria pushes the vegetables on the plate.

ALICE

I'd like my face on a poster.

PHILA

And a pretty poster face you'd be! Isn't that right, Brigitte?

Bardot sighs.

BARDOT

She certainly would.

Maria is already in thoughts.

INT. PARLOR, "LA MADRAGUE" - NIGHT

An elegant party is in full swing.

A WOMAN with supersized curls, 40's, holds a Polaroid camera in front of her face.

SUPERSIZED CURLS

Cheeeeeez!

Maria and Dominique, in evening gowns, pose and smile.

The camera flashes and a Polaroid purrs out of the camera. The woman pulls it out and hands it to Dominique.

SUPERSIZED CURLS

Voilà!

Dominique smiles and uses the Polaroid as a fan while it develops.

DOMINIQUE

So, I was introduced to this American.

MARIA

American?

DOMINIQUE

Yes. He is on a first-name basis with Jack Nicholson.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARIA
Jack Nicholson, huh?

Maria has no clue who this is.

MARIA
So, how is it?

DOMINIQUE
What?

MARIA
Your affair. Your seedy American
affair.

DOMINIQUE
Oh.

Dominique stops fanning. Pretends to ponder, then blurts
out.

DOMINIQUE
It's great. It's everything you
would expect.

Dominique looks at the Polaroid.

DOMINIQUE
Oh, we are cute.

She shows it to Maria.

AT THE FAR END of the parlor

Bardot's agent, a Croatian named DAVOR KOVAC, glances
over to Maria and Dominique giggling.

BARDOT
I didn't really have fun doing it,
you know. I'd love to do a film
where I don't have to wear a dress
that shows my ass.

Kovac doesn't really listen.

BARDOT
It can't be that there are no gigs
out there that challenge your
acting and not your ability to run
in heels.

KOVAC
Who's that young girl over there?
The one with the curls?

Bardot frowns but looks over to the girls.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BARDOT

Maria? Gélín's daughter. She stays with me. Does a bit of modeling.

KOVAC

She should make movies with that ass of hers.

Bardot sees Maria giggle.

BARDOT

She's only eighteen. She can't handle the industry.

BACK WITH Maria and Dominique

DOMINIQUE

He said he's got a new script and asked me if I was interested.

MARIA

And are you?

DOMINIQUE

Sure. We had a great collaboration on *The Conformist*. I think he's a wonderful director.

MARIA

Do you know what it's about?

DOMINIQUE

A young French woman who has an anonymous affair with a widowed American in an empty apartment. A whole box full of sexual perversion and pathos.

Maria knits her brows.

MARIA

Sounds...

They both burst into giggles.

DOMINIQUE

It's so Bernardo...

The girls calm down again.

MARIA

Dominique, another film with Bertolucci. I envy you.

DOMINIQUE

You'll get your chance, little Maria.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Maria shrugs.

MARIA

What's the title?

DOMINIQUE

Something Tango and Paris.

BERTOLUCCI (O.S.)

Dominique!

Dominique looks up.

INT. LIVING ROOM, DOMINIQUE SANDA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

A 31-year-old Bertolucci, in turtleneck and jacket, with a glass of white wine in his hand, gestures to the sky.

BERTOLUCCI

Why did you do this to me,
Dominique? Is it because
Trintignant quit?

Dominique, one hand on her pregnant belly, lifts her index finger, playfully reprimanding.

DOMINIQUE

I didn't do this to you on
purpose, Bernardo. And it's not
because of Jean-Louis.

BERTOLUCCI

I was relieved when we could
replace him... but then you! It
breaks my heart.
(whispers)
Marlon said yes.

DOMINIQUE

What?

BERTOLUCCI

Can you understand what this means
for the film? I thought you were
eager to work with him. Anybody
would be eager to work with him.

DOMINIQUE

I am. Under any other circumstance
I would have loved to work with
you again... and Marlon Brando.
You know that.

She sighs.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BERTOLUCCI
Every actress I've asked has
turned down the part.

DOMINIQUE
Too explicit?

Bertolucci shrugs and sighs.

BERTOLUCCI
I'll have to rewrite the script.
You were my leading lady.

DOMINIQUE
What can I do, Bernardo? I'm sure
you'll find a very lucky actress
to be your leading lady.

Dominique squeezes Bertolucci's arm and leaves to attend
to her guests.

Bertolucci moves towards the mantelpiece. Studies the
PHOTOS on display. Dominique is in all of them: as a
model; on holidays on the beach with a handsome man at
her side; arm in arm with Bertolucci.

Bertolucci reaches out and takes a little unframed
picture off the mantelpiece.

It is the Polaroid of Dominique and Maria taken at the
party.

Bertolucci studies the photo and Maria's features.

INT. LIVING ROOM, SANDA'S APARTMENT - DAY

Bertolucci is on the phone.

BERTOLUCCI
Fernand, I was thinking. Let's
cast Jeanne off the street. A non-
actress would do great next to
Marlon. I would like to have a
rough diamond, you understand,
with none of those acting tics.

He studies the picture of Dominique and Maria.

BERTOLUCCI
A Lolita, but much more perverse.
And I think I have just found the
perfect girl.

INT. "LA MADRAGUE" - DAY

Maria lounges on a couch, reading the script "Last Tango in Paris." Bardot walks past her, carrying a vase with garden flowers.

BARDOT

Any good?

Maria looks up, shrugs.

MARIA

A whole box full of sexual
perversion and pathos. Typical
Bernardo.

Bardot knits her brow but smiles.

INT. HALLWAY, OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

Maria, in Bardot's boots and dress and a knitted beret covering her hair, paces up and down in front of a white door. She fidgets the script.

The door opens. A CASTING WOMAN, 40's, pops her head out.

CASTING WOMAN

They're ready for you.

Maria enters into the

INT. AUDITION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Maria's swivelling hips move into the Spartan room.

Bertolucci and three other CASTING CREW sit at a long table. Bertolucci glances at Maria over the rim of his reading specs.

Maria comes to a halt next to a chair opposite the table. Her hands clench the script.

Bertolucci smiles.

BERTOLUCCI

Please. Sit down.

Maria obeys, crosses her legs like Bardot. She lifts her chin. She speaks a slow but assertive English.

MARIA

Would you like me to read?

Bertolucci smiles again.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BERTOLUCCI

Take your jacket off, Maria. I
would like to see your form.

Maria takes her jacket off.

BERTOLUCCI

Stand up and turn for me, please.

Maria does it. Bertolucci nods and Maria sits back down.

BERTOLUCCI

Take your beret off, Maria.

Maria hesitates.

MARIA

May I keep it on?

She giggles, embarrassed.

BERTOLUCCI

Have you familiarized yourself
with the script?

Maria nods.

BERTOLUCCI

Then you know you will have to
take off much more than your hat.

MARIA

I know.

BERTOLUCCI

If you have problems with nudity
we are wasting each other's time
here.

MARIA

I'm not a prude at all. I think
the human body is beautiful.

BERTOLUCCI

Please take your hat off.

MARIA

Mister Bertolucci--

BERTOLUCCI

Bernardo.

MARIA

Bernardo... My hair does what it
wants today. It's awful.

Bertolucci forces a smile.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BERTOLUCCI

Please, Maria.

Maria pouts her lips and pulls the beret off. Her dark curls fall on her shoulder and in her eyes. Untamed. Maria shakes her hair, fidgets, laughs.

MARIA

Will you ask me to shave, too?

A casting lady looks up from her papers.

Bertolucci laughs a husky laugh, shaking his head. He studies her wild curls, full lips, baby cheeks, and her big, dark eyes.

BERTOLUCCI

Perfetto, Maria, perfetto.

EXT. FRENCH COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

Maria and Bardot are on horseback, galloping past stone pines. They slow down to walk.

MARIA

Aren't you happy for me?

BARDOT

No, no, of course I am. It's a phenomenal opportunity.

She pats her horse's neck.

BARDOT

I just want you to be careful, you know. I know film. I don't trust film. You're... very young and inexperienced.

MARIA

I'm nineteen, Brigitte! I'm a grown-up!

BARDOT

That's not what I mean.

They ride a few feet without speaking.

BARDOT

I don't want you to get hurt.

MARIA

I won't. I promise.

BARDOT

Promise you'll be careful. You have to look out for yourself.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BARDOT (CONT'D)

Don't let them walk over you only
because you're a fledgling.

MARIA

Fledgling!

BARDOT

Promise me.

Maria smiles.

MARIA

I promise...

Maria pets her horse's mane.

MARIA

I will have to move back to Paris.

BARDOT

You can always come back for the
weekend. You're welcome whenever
you need a place to stay.

MARIA

What will you do?

BARDOT

I have thought about quitting for
quite some time. I'm tired. I
guess I will make another pile of
quick money and then call it a day
and be someone else.

MARIA

Who?

BARDOT

Me.

(beat)

Why don't I call you every Sunday?

Bardot touches Maria's shoulder, smiles, winks, whistles
through her teeth and gallops away. Maria laughs and
spurs her horse, too. Bardot shouts back at Maria.

BARDOT

Where are you, fledgling? Hurry
up. You have a big rendezvous!

INT. FANCY RESTAURANT - EVENING

Velvet T-strap pumps, legs in back-seam tights walk
through a swinging door being held open.

HOST (O.S.)

Mademoiselle. Good evening.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Maria stops in the doorway. She looks lovely in her dress. Her eyes graze the room, stop. She smiles, breathes in and out. Paces into the room. Some tables are still empty.

At a table, a broad shouldered, gray haired MAN rises, facing Maria approaching him.

Maria comes to a halt, smiles up at the tall man. She extends her little hand. A big male hand with a ring on the little finger reaches out, shakes Maria's.

Maria clears her throat.

MARIA

Mister Brando. Good evening.

Marlon Brando smiles his charming smile. He pulls Maria closer, kisses her on the left and the right cheek.

BRANDO

Hello, Maria.

He pulls out a chair.

BRANDO

Please, sit.

He scoots the chair in as Maria eases down. Maria's eyes follow Brando as he walks around to sit down opposite her. She opens her purse and pulls out the beat-up script for "Last Tango in Paris."

BRANDO

Oh, you brought the book?

MARIA

I thought we might want to talk about scenes... dialogues...

BRANDO

Put it away. This is not a business meeting. Tonight is only for us.

Maria puts the script on the ground.

They sigh and smile at each other.

BRANDO

It's lovely to finally meet you.

MARIA

It's such an honor.

BRANDO

Oh, please. Don't get too excited.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

A WAITER stops at their table.

WAITER

May I bring you something to
drink?

Brando answers in French.

BRANDO

Yes, we would like a bottle of the
'67 Château Mouton Rothschild. The
Bordeaux, not the Cabernet.

Brando winks at Maria.

WAITER

Right away, monsieur.

Maria stares at Brando.

MARIA

I didn't know you spoke French!

BRANDO

It's a secret.

Maria giggles.

BRANDO

Is there something funny?

MARIA

You have such a sweet accent...
like a hula-hula girl.

BRANDO

Thanks for the compliment.

The waiter arrives the bottle of wine. He pours into
Maria's glass. Maria nips from the red wine.

MARIA

Yes, this is good.

The waiter pours wine into Brando's glass, puts the
bottle on the table.

Brando opens the menu, studies it. His eyes wander to
Maria, eyeing her over the rim of the menu.

BRANDO

What shall we have? Escargots?
Grenouilles? Tetines? The old
lobster?

MARIA

Are you practicing your French?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

BRANDO

Get what you want. My treat.

INT. FANCY RESTAURANT - EVENING

Dinner at the restaurant is in full swing.

Brando and Maria eat their entrees: Maria uses the claw-cracker on her lobster. Brando has a filet.

They reach for the salt at the same time. Smile. Brando lets Maria go first. He studies her movements as she cracks another claw.

BRANDO

You are beautiful.

Maria breaks the claw in half with her hands.

MARIA

Thank you.

BRANDO

What's your sign of the zodiac?

MARIA

Um. The... goat with the horns, in a coil. Bélier?

She mimes the horns of a ram.

BRANDO

Oh, Aries! You are?

Maria nods.

BRANDO

Me too.

MARIA

Honestly?

BRANDO

We'll get along well. I'm sure.

Maria bites the lobster meat and pulls the cartilage out.

INT. FANCY RESTAURANT - NIGHT

The restaurant is nearly empty. It is getting late.

Brando and Maria still sit at the table. Maria holds on to her wine glass as she leans forward. She is tipsy.

MARIA

Can I tell you something?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BRANDO

Go ahead.

MARIA

But you cannot judge me!

BRANDO

I would never.

MARIA

Me, I... hated the script. No, I don't want to say hate. That's too strong. I still don't know what it is about. It's so...

She searches for words.

BRANDO

Can I tell you something, too? I don't know either.

MARIA

Can I tell you something else?

BRANDO

By all means, please put me out of my misery.

MARIA

I didn't want to do the movie. But, you know, everybody said "C'mon, with Brando! If you don't do it you're nobody."

BRANDO

Is that what everybody said?

MARIA

Everybody.

BRANDO

Everybody at William Morris?

MARIA

They told me I cannot refuse.

Maria puts the glass down.

MARIA

I'm sorry. I should have not said anything...

BRANDO

No, no, please, no inhibitions.

Brando pours more wine in her glass.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BRANDO

I think you are very charming.

Maria giggles. Brando stares at her. She falls silent. They stare into each other's eyes.

Brando's eye twitches.

Maria tries to hold back her laughing.

Brando's eye twitches again.

Maria breaks into a loud laugh.

Brando smiles.

BRANDO

You remind me of Cheyenne, my daughter.

Maria's eyes become dreamy with disbelief, then give way to sheer adoration.

INT. FANCY RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Brando stands at the bar alone.

The restroom door opens, and Maria stumbles out.

BRANDO

Everything all right, Maria?

MARIA

Too much Bordeaux.

Brando offers his arm. Maria links arms with him, relieved.

The host opens the entrance door to let them out.

HOST

Thank you and good night.

BRANDO

Thank you.

EXT. FANCY RESTAURANT - CONTINUOUS

Maria trips on the step. Brando catches her. Strong arms.

BRANDO

I gotcha... I gotcha...

Maria strokes the hair out of her face, looks up at Brando, smiles.

EXT. ROOFTOPS PARIS - MORNING

The sun rises above the city.

The river Seine meanders past Parisian architecture.

A metro train whooshes by.

INT. DRESSING ROOM, "LAST TANGO" SET PARIS - DAY

A telephone and a single rose in a glass next to a make-up mirror. A little handwritten note says:

"Bonne chance on your first day, Maria!"

SUPER: "JANUARY 31, 1972"

A make-up woman in her 40's, MAUD, finishes pulling Maria's curls out with a hair straightener. Then she twirls Maria's hair in a bun and fixes it with a hair pin.

She checks Maria's hairdo in the make-up mirror.

MAUD

Done!

Maria studies herself in the mirror: hair straight and tidy, thick black eyeliner and mascara.

MARIA

Oh my God, I look like death.

Maud rushes to a clothes rack, takes a broad, flower-covered hat out of a box.

Carefully sits the hat on Maria's head.

MAUD

Very chic.

Maria grabs the brim of the hat and pulls it into place.

MARIA

Shit. Now I look like my mother.

EXT. SET "PONT DE BIR-HAKEIM" - DAY

A walkway underneath Metro train tracks.

Maria in hat and a white coat with fur trimming stands behind the core crew:

Bertolucci, young Assistant Director FERNAND, 31-year-old Director of Photography VITTORIO STORARO, clean-shaven with a receding hairline.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Maria watches, and moves from one leg to the other.
Suppresses a yawn.

A camera crane pulls down to Brando, who covers his ears
with his hands as a train rattles past above him.

BRANDO

"FUCKING GOD!"

Maria covers her mouth and giggles into her hand. A SOUND
GUY with headphones turns around and frowns.

BERTOLUCCI

And cut. Good, Marlon! I think
that was it.

A.D. FERNAND

Everybody prep for one-eight.

CREW, ASSISTANTS and INTERNS rush to reposition the
camera.

Maria sees Bertolucci approach Brando. They whisper.
Bertolucci scans the set.

BERTOLUCCI

Where is Maria?

Maria clears her throat. Bertolucci smiles at her.

BERTOLUCCI

There she is. You are so small I
nearly didn't see you. Or were you
hiding from me?

He laughs and inspects Maria from head to toe. Nods.

BERTOLUCCI

Bene.

EXT. SET "PONT DE BIR-HAKEIM" - DAY

The camera is on tracks.

Brando stands on his mark.

Maria stands on her mark far behind him on the walkway.

A.D. FERNAND

Everybody in position!

Bertolucci rushes to Brando and instructs him. Maria
cannot make out their words. But she smiles, forces
herself to breathe slowly - she's excited.

Bertolucci turns to her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BERTOLUCCI
You're good to go?

MARIA
I think so.

BERTOLUCCI
You know what to do?

MARIA
I... think so.

BERTOLUCCI
Bene.

He turns and takes his position behind the camera.

A.D. FERNAND
Everybody ready? Good. Camera?

STORARO
Rolling.

A.D. FERNAND
Sound?

SOUND GUY
Speeding.

A.D. FERNAND
Slate.

A young intern, LUIGI, motions into the camera.

LUIGI
One-eight, take one. Marker.

He slates and motions away.

BERTOLUCCI
Action!

Both Marlon and Maria far behind him start to walk.

A GRIP pulls the camera-dolly down the tracks, following Brando trudging.

Maria paces up and passes Brando, looks back at him, turns around, then continues to hurry.

BERTOLUCCI
Cut! Marlon, good. Maria, I need to see more concern.

MARIA
Okay.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BERTOLUCCI

You're wondering what is wrong
with him, why he looks miserable.
You don't know him. Okay?

MARIA

Okay.

BERTOLUCCI

But then you remember you have
somewhere to be. Keep moving.

Maria nods.

A.D. FERNAND

Back to one!

Everybody hustles back: the grip pushes the dolly back to
top. Brando winks at Maria as they return to their start.

A.D. FERNAND

Everybody ready? Camera?

STORARO

Rolling. Speed.

A.D. FERNAND

Sound?

SOUND GUY

Speeding.

A.D. FERNAND

Slate.

LUIGI

One-eight, take two. Marker.

He slates and rushes out.

BERTOLUCCI

And action!

Maria pulls the coat tighter around her body, secures the
hat with one hand and speeds up.

BERTOLUCCI (O.S.)

Tonight I had a strange dream
about the first film I shot back
in Italy when I was fifteen...

INT. CANTEEN - DAY

Run down set canteen. The crew chat and laugh.

Bertolucci sits with A.D. Fernand and Storaro. Bertolucci
cuts his filet mignon.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BERTOLUCCI

... "The Death of the Pig".

STORARO

(winking)

I think I've heard that story before.

Bertolucci turns to Fernand.

BERTOLUCCI

The nocchini, the pork-butchers, arrived with capes and bags full of knives and entered the pigsty. They hid the knives behind their backs because they didn't want the pigs to know what was coming. Maybe because I was there with my camera, the nocchino made a mistake.

Fernand raises his eyebrow.

BERTOLUCCI

He had this long needle which was supposed to go into the heart of the pig. But he missed the heart and the pig ran out into the courtyard, leaving a red trail of blood in the snow.

Bertolucci laughs.

BERTOLUCCI

I remember shooting that. Everybody was on their feet trying to catch the pig. The needle was still sticking out.

Fernand and Storaro smile politely. Bertolucci stuffs pork in his mouth and chews. Smiles as he swallows.

BERTOLUCCI

Thank God, it was a black-and-white film with no sound. Otherwise, it would have been a horror movie. Unbearable! Those pigs, they never saw their fate coming.

AT A TABLE AT THE FAR END OF THE CANTEEN

Maria glances over to Bertolucci, laughing. She turns back to Brando. Blows in her hot soup.

There are cigarette burns in the checkered table cloth.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BRANDO

Don't worry. You're doing a great job!

MARIA

What's my job again?

BRANDO

Acting. It's called acting.

He grabs Maria's hand and squeezes it.

MARIA

Now that you say it.

Bertolucci nods at Fernando, who gets up and shouts over the laughing and cutlery clinking.

BERTOLUCCI

Crew back to set! We're shooting in fifteen.

Maria looks at her soup. She hasn't even eaten half. She sighs.

Brando dramatically rolls his eyes.

BRANDO

Slave driver...

Maria laughs.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

Maria removes her eye make-up with a wipe. One eye with, one eye without make-up. She takes a drag from a cigarette.

Somebody knocks on her door.

MARIA

Come in!

She smiles at the reflection in the mirror.

MARIA

Oh, it's you. Come in.

Brando comes in, leans down to her.

BRANDO

I just wanted to see how your first day went.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARIA

That's so kind of you! Thank you so much, it was good. More taxing than I expected.

BRANDO

Well, this is only the beginning, little Maria!

She laughs.

MARIA

I will need a vacation after this. But it will be the first one I earned with my own money.

They both laugh. Brando licks his thumb and approaches Maria's eye.

BRANDO

You've got a little something...

Maria slaps his hand away, laughing.

MARIA

Get out, you!

Brando leans down, kisses her on both cheeks.

BRANDO

Good night.

He closes the door behind him. Maria pulls another wipe out of the box and removes the make-up from the other eye. She looks at her fingertips. They are black with make-up.

MARIA

Shit.

The telephone next to her rings. She picks up.

MARIA

Yes?

She knits her brow.

MARIA

Who is this?

INT. HOTEL BAR - NIGHT

MUSIC comes from a BAND (piano, double bass, saxophone, and voice) playing on a tiny stage.

Maria, in a shimmering dress, fiddles with the martini glass in front of her on a round bar table.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARIA

Your call surprised me. To say the least.

Opposite in a pinstripe suit and tie sits her father, Daniel Gélín, now in his early 50's.

MARIA

After all these years... I never thought I would meet you.

GÉLIN

I had my share of sin and seediness. I want to make things right and support my daughter, who is doing so well without me!

MARIA

I had help.

GÉLIN

All the birds in Paris were whispering that Gélín's daughter was shooting with the great Brando. I couldn't believe it. My little Maria becoming an actress... And now look at you! All grown up and beautiful.

Maria smiles.

GÉLIN

Have you told your mother?

Maria looks in her glass.

MARIA

We haven't really been talking.

GÉLIN

Let's forget the past and move on. To an exciting future and many more evenings like this!

He raises his glass for a toast. Reconsiders.

GÉLIN

This is not the proper way to celebrate...

He raises his index finger and nods to the BARTENDER.

GÉLIN

CHAMPAGNE!

The bartender nods.

INT. HOTEL BAR - NIGHT

The bar is in full swing; the band keeps everybody on their feet.

Gélin and Maria foxtrot on the dance floor among other COUPLES. Maria laughs with her eyes closed and her mouth wide open.

The music piece ends. The couples on the dance floor pause and clap.

Gélin leads Maria back to their table. Pulls the bottle of champagne out of the cooler and tops Maria's glass up. The bottle is empty. Gélin shouts at the bartender.

GÉLIN

Another one for me and my sugar!

Maria laughs.

GÉLIN

Who would have known I could
produce someone so talented...
someone so beautiful...

MARIA

You have to say that because
you're my father...

Gélin flinches at the word.

GÉLIN

Call me Daniel.

Maria nips from her champagne.

INT. MARIA'S HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Lying on the bed, Maria talks on the phone.

MARIA

He was so nice. He paid for
everything. It's really strange to
have a father in my life now.

She sits up, getting excited.

MARIA

And Marlon? Marlon, I tell you, he
is incredible, supportive, just
wonderful. And to think that
everything happened by chance! If
you hadn't gotten yourself
pregnant...

She bites her lips.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARIA

How... how are you feeling?

Listens. Smiles.

MARIA

A girl? That's fantastic--

She is interrupted, looks at an alarm clock.

MARIA

Yeah, I know what time it is...
I'm sorry, Dominique. I just...
felt like I had to tell someone.
I'm so excited, I couldn't sleep.

Listens again.

MARIA

I see, I'm sorry. Bye.

Maria drops the receiver on the phone and frowns at the ceiling. Discards her doubts and snuggles into the sheets with a smile.

MAUD (O.S.)

Are you nervous?

INT. DRESSING ROOM - DAY

Maria is in her short yellow dress with boots, the white coat and the flower hat. She pulls the dress down and the pantyhose up.

MAUD

Don't wiggle so much around. The
pantyhose has a breaking point.

Maria remains still. She grabs her script from the dresser, reads out.

MARIA

"They make love violently, looking
for passages that don't exist
through their clothing, rushing
like dogs unable to stop, until
the end."

She lowers the script and studies herself in the mirror.

MARIA

Like dogs...

MAUD

Off you go! They're not going to
wait forever!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Maria frowns, puts the script away, and leaves.

INT. SET "THE APARTMENT", RUE JULES VERNE - DAY

Bertolucci in fedora and viewfinder and Brando look up as Maria enters the room. Bertolucci goes to instruct Storaro, using mainly his hands to simulate the frame.

Brando approaches Maria with arms wide open. He hugs her, kisses her on both cheeks. Holds her hands.

BRANDO

Your hands are cold. You're not scared, are you, little Maria?

MARIA

Just a bit nervous.

BRANDO

No need for that. Do you trust me?

MARIA

Of course.

BRANDO

And I trust you.

He smiles. Creeps closer.

BRANDO

(whispers)

Remember, it's only a movie. Movie love is never like real love.

Maria tries to understand, tilts her head.

Storaro watches his ASSISTANT heave the camera onto the dolly. Bertolucci looks through his viewfinder. Nods. Taps Storaro on the back and turns to Maria. Brando leaves as he sees Bertolucci approaching.

BERTOLUCCI

All right, Maria, this is your first sexual encounter with this man you just met. You have never seen him before, you don't know his name, but there is this electricity between the two of you. You are hungry for each other.

MARIA

Do we... do I come?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BERTOLUCCI

Yes, I would like a crescendo.
Afterwards, I want you to roll
into the camera. You know, once,
twice, another roll. Do you
understand?

Maria nods.

BERTOLUCCI

Bene.

Bertolucci turns around. Maria hurries after him, laying
her small hand on his arm.

MARIA

It says "like dogs" in the script
and I was wondering... what do you
mean, "like dogs?"

BERTOLUCCI

I explained everything to Marlon,
so you are free to follow his
pacing. He will lead you... be as
attentive as you can and you will
do just fine!

MARIA

Shouldn't I know what he will do?

A.D. FERNAND (O.S.)

Bernardo!

Bertolucci waves at his A.D. and pats Maria on the
shoulder.

BERTOLUCCI

You will do just fine.

He walks off, leaving Maria wondering.

INT. SET "THE APARTMENT" - DAY

The camera is rolling. Bertolucci concentrates, squints
his eyes.

In the middle of the room, Maria picks up her hat. She
turns to Brando, approaching her.

MARIA

"I thought you'd left."

He takes her hat and tosses it away. No smile on his lips
as he picks her up, hand between her legs, and carries
her to the window.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He puts her down like a doll. Maria wraps her little hands around his broad shoulders. They start kissing.

Brando pushes his hand under Maria's dress and rips the pantyhose in two.

For a split second there is fear in Maria's eyes.

Giving in, she closes her eyes, moans and holds on to Brando as he lifts her up. She wraps her legs around him.

Bertolucci observes the scene. Critical but content. He gives a cue to the grip, who starts to push the camera down the tracks.

The camera dolly moves in on Maria and Brando.

Brando grinds against Maria. She has her eyes tightly shut and moans. It could be pain, it could be pleasure.

The dolly creeps into a close-up.

Brando and Maria kiss violently as they both perform their orgasmic crescendo.

Bertolucci gives a second cue.

The dolly pulls away again.

Brando and Maria tumble to the ground. Both breathe heavily for a moment.

Brando falls off Maria. Maria rolls towards the camera, once, twice, flashing her pubic hair.

She rolls into a fetal position, clenching her hand between her thighs.

BERTOLUCCI

Cut! Let's do it again.

He turns around to shout into his background.

A.D. FERNAND

A new pantyhose, please!

Maria still lies on the floor, catching her breath. Turns her head to look at Brando lying on the floor. He breathes heavily and winks at her. Gives her an inquiring nod.

Maria smiles. Gives him an A-ok.

A.D. FERNAND

Let's get ready for another one.

Maria turns her head away, exhales.

INT. SET "THE APARTMENT" - EVENING

The camera rolls on a dolly track.

Bertolucci watches intently.

Maria, in her short dress and hat, walks over a mattress on the floor. Brando leans by the window.

BRANDO

"The bed is too big for the room."

MARIA

"I don't know what to call you."

BRANDO

"I don't have a name."

MARIA

"You want to know mine?"

Maria looks at Brando, flinches.

BERTOLUCCI

Cut! What was that, Maria?

Maria turns to Bertolucci.

MARIA

I thought Marlon was going to slap me.

BRANDO

Why would I do that?

MARIA

It says so in the script.

Both Brando and Bertolucci laugh.

BERTOLUCCI

Let's run again.

The crew gets into position. Maria seeks Brando's eye contact.

BRANDO

(whispers)

We decided to take the slap out, Maria. Don't take the script too literally. It's mostly a starting point for the actors.

(grins)

For the most part, I don't even bother studying the lines.

Maria looks sour.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARIA

Why didn't you tell me you were
changing the scene? Am I not
supposed to know these things?

Brando smirks.

BRANDO

If I was to slap you, you
shouldn't give it away as an
actress. Know what I mean?

Maria nods.

BERTOLUCCI

Again!

Maria exhales and turns to her start position.

EXT. PARIS - AFTERNOON

The sun hovers in the sky. The rays gild the roofs and
redden the horizon.

INT. SET "THE APARTMENT" - AFTERNOON

The camera rolls on the tracks.

Bertolucci observes.

Brando and Maria play their scene.

BRANDO

"I don't have a name."

MARIA

"You want to know mine?"

Brando pushes Maria against the wall, and covers her
mouth with his hand.

BRANDO

"No! No, I don't... I don't want
to know your name. You don't have
a name, and I don't have a name
either. No names here. Not one
name."

Maria pushes Brando away.

MARIA

"You're crazy!"

BRANDO

"Maybe I am. But I don't want to
know anything about you.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BRANDO (CONT'D)

I don't want to know where you live or where you come from. I want to know... nothing, nothing, nothing! You understand?"

MARIA

"I..."

BRANDO

"Nothing! You and I are going to meet here without knowing anything that goes on outside here. Okay?"

Maria, pressing her back against the wall, despairs.

MARIA

I... I... I--

Bertolucci jumps to his feet.

BERTOLUCCI

"You scared me!" That's the line.
"You scared me!" Only one line,
Maria!

Storaro straightens up from his camera. Luigi, sighs, erases something on the slate and writes something else with chalk.

BERTOLUCCI

You need to keep the energy up,
Maria. You let all the air out of
the scene.

Maria looks miserable.

MARIA

I'm sorry.

BERTOLUCCI

Again! From the top.

He sits back down.

MARIA

I'm sorry... I can't concentrate,
Bernardo.

Bertolucci turns around to exchange a word with Storaro.

MARIA

Can we please take a break?

Bertolucci's head shoots back.

BERTOLUCCI

I need to have this scene.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MARIA

My head is like a cotton ball.
I... I can't even think anymore.
If we could just get--

BRANDO

Bernardo, we've been slaving for
six hours straight. I think we can
all use a little breather. Don't
you?

Bertolucci stands up.

BERTOLUCCI

I give you ten. Then I want this
scene done.

BRANDO

Certainly, Maestro.

Bertolucci leaves the set. Storaro grins. The crew take a
deep breath.

Brando indicates to A.D. Fernand.

BRANDO

Can I borrow your walkie-talkie?

Fernand unclips his radio set and hands it to Brando.
Brando presses the switch on the side of the radio.

BRANDO

Hello. Hello, is there someone on
the other line?

The radio crackles.

SECOND A.D. (O.S.)

(surprised)

Yes. It's Jean-David.

BRANDO

Well hello, Jean-David. This is
Marlon. Can you please organize
sandwiches for everyone? Let's
see...

Brando looks at individual members of the crew.

BRANDO

Ham and cheese? Mozzarella and
tomatoes? Cucumbers?

He looks at Maria. She smiles and shrugs.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

BRANDO

No, forget the cucumbers. Egg.
Salmon. Roast beef! You got that,
Jean-David?

SECOND A.D. (O.S.)

Eh... yes, I think so--

BRANDO

And eight bottles of Bordeaux. I
think that'll be all.

Maria is stunned.

MARIA

What about--

BRANDO

He'll survive.

SECOND A.D. (O.S.)

Mister Brando... I will do my best
to organize this.

BRANDO

Thank you... oh, and Jean-David?
Let me know when everything is
here. I'll send someone with my
American Express. Brando, over and
out.

He releases the switch, hands the radio back to Fernand.

There is stunned silence for a moment.

Everybody claps and cheers.

Brando takes a dramatic bow and winks at Maria.

She smiles back.

MARIA (O.S.)

You should have seen him. He was
celebrated like a true star.

EXT. "LA MADRAGUE" - DAY

Maria and Bardot return from a ride. They lead their
horses across the courtyard.

BARDOT

Marlon *is* a true star.

MARIA

He was so... Hollywood.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BARDOT

This all sounds wonderful. I'm glad you're happy, Maria.

MARIA

Have I told you that the other night? After our first intimate scene, he came by my dressing room and made sure I was okay?

BARDOT

Yes, you told me on the phone.

MARIA

It was awfully sweet, no?

BARDOT

He surely has learned some manners over the years.

They tie the horses to a railing and unsaddle them.

MARIA

Is there something wrong?

BARDOT

Nothing's wrong. I'm just wary.

MARIA

Wary?

BARDOT

I'm afraid you will get hurt.

MARIA

Why would I get hurt?

Bardot ponders as she pulls off the saddle.

BARDOT

There are so many ways. So many snakes.

MARIA

Don't worry about me. I'll be fine!

BARDOT

How did those intimate scenes go?

MARIA

What do you mean?

BARDOT

Was Bertolucci professional about it?

Maria is silent.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BARDOT

Did they explain everything up-front so there wouldn't be any misunderstandings? Talk to you about the camera positions? Make sure every moment was controlled?

Maria pulls the saddle off.

MARIA

Marlon knew the scene so I didn't have to worry about anything. I could just react to what he did.

BARDOT

That sounds fishy, Maria.

MARIA

Haven't you done sexy scenes, too, *femme*?

BARDOT

I was always in charge. From what you have told me, *Tango* is miles away from anything sexy I've done.

Bardot pleads to Maria.

BARDOT

You really need to step up for yourself, you understand, keep your integrity intact.

MARIA

Well, Marl--

BARDOT

I don't want to hear another word about Marlon! I'm asking about you, how you are feeling about all this. I don't care about the great Brando. He can fend for himself. He is not a nineteen-year-old girl with stars in her eyes!

Maria pouts her lips.

MARIA

You know, you are starting to sound just like my mother.

Bardot sighs. Maria looks to the ground, embarrassed.

BARDOT

Perhaps this wasn't such a good idea...

Maria freezes with the saddle in her arms.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

MARIA

I finally do what I want to,
Brigitte. So what if there's one
or two things that I don't quite
understand... I want to be an
actress and I'm willing to do what
it takes. Can you please be happy
for me?

BARDOT

Mimi seems to be off on her front
left. Look after her until the vet
is here.

Bardot turns to leave.

MARIA

Are we not going to celebrate?

BARDOT

Rinse her foot with cold water
from the ankle down.

Bardot leaves Maria with the saddle in her hands.

EXT/INT. DRESSING ROOM - EVENING

Maria, in costume, opens the door to her dressing room.
Her chin drops.

The room is full of flowers, like at a florist's.
Colorful blossoms as far as the eye can see.

She skips into the room, spins around, laughing. She
spots a little card in one of the bouquets. She pulls it
out. Handwritten.

"From a secret admirer"

She laughs again.

MARIA

Oh, Marlon. You're crazy.

INT. POSH VENUE - NIGHT

CREW MEMBERS, Brando, and Dominique sit at a table.
Everybody is in semi-formal attire.

Maria stands at the head of the table in a glittery
dress, raising a glass of champagne.

MARIA

Thank you so much, everyone, for
coming out tonight to celebrate my
birthday!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A female CREW MEMBER cheers and everybody joins in. Maria smiles, embarrassed.

MARIA

I feel so honored to have all of
you as my colleagues and friends.
You guys are the best gift I could
wish for.

She faces Dominique, beautiful and heavily pregnant.

MARIA

Dominique, you look beautiful
tonight!

Dominique smiles and raises her glass to Maria.

MARIA

Well, everybody, thank you for
coming out and enjoy the party!

Everybody raises their glasses and cheers in three
different languages: "Cheers!" "Cin Cin!" "Santé!"

Maria laughs, sits down, leans over to Brando.

MARIA

Those flowers were crazy!

BRANDO

(winking)

I have no idea what you're talking
about!

They clink their glasses.

MARIA

Are you going to celebrate your
birthday next week?

BRANDO

I've had too many birthdays
already.

FEMALE CREW MEMBER

Men get better with age, no?

BRANDO

Do we?

FEMALE CREW MEMBER

But yes! It's the females that
stop celebrating their birthdays
at twenty-five! To hold up the
clock from ticking, you know?

Brando smiles at the crew member. Maria scowls at her.

INT. SET "LE SOUFFLE AU COEUR" - NIGHT

A male actor, THOMAS, late 40's, sits in his chair, reading a book. He is in a World War II uniform.

CREW MEMBERS rush past and go about their work.

Daniel Gélin eases down into the chair next to Thomas with a groan, also in uniform.

GÉLIN

Fuck these night shootings. I really need to talk to my agent about these shitty projects.

Thomas puts the book away. Sighs.

THOMAS

There are just not enough decent novels out there.

(beat)

What did she say?

GÉLIN

They are still out celebrating her birthday.

THOMAS

Celebrating with the big boys.

GÉLIN

The biggest boys. I really wonder.

THOMAS

About what?

GÉLIN

What she did to get the part. She's very pretty, no doubt. But I don't see any talent for acting.

THOMAS

Harsh.

GÉLIN

Reality. You know how far those young girls go to land a gig. They are desperate for attention.

THOMAS

Mhm.

A.D. (O.S.)

Daniel?

Gélin jumps up and leaves Thomas, who picks up the book.

INT. POSH VENUE - NIGHT

Maria leans on a stool among crew members and laughs.

Bardot enters, looking stunning, and scans the restaurant. She finds Maria and waits until Maria notices her. Maria slips off the stool, puts her cigarette out.

MARIA

Excuse me, please.

Maria and Bardot meet in the middle of the room..

BARDOT

Sorry I'm late.

Maria stares at her, then falls in her arms.

MARIA

I'm glad you came. I didn't know if you were going to make it.

BARDOT

Why wouldn't I?

Maria shrugs.

BARDOT

I have to apologize to you, Maria. I have no right to act like your mother.

MARIA

You have every right. I'm so thankful for everything you did for me. It was you who took me under her wings. I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for you. I should apologize to you!

Bardot smiles and touches Maria's ear, looks at her thumb, then holds it out.

BARDOT

See this?

Maria tilts her head.

BARDOT

Green.

Maria laughs. Brando approaches the two women, a glass in his hand.

BRANDO

If that's not the famous Bardot.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BARDOT

Marlon.

They kiss on both cheeks.

BRANDO

You look well. Better than ever.

BARDOT

(coolly)

You look slightly more
respectable. A little somebody has
been twittering wondrous stories
about you.

BRANDO

(acting surprised)

Wondrous stories, you say?

Brando's charm does nothing for Bardot.

BARDOT

Hardly believable, considering
that last I saw you, you didn't
make it out of the bed before the
evening... nor into trousers.

Bardot winks at Maria, who laughs.

BRANDO

Don't be so hard on the boy. He
ain't Stanley Kowalski anymore.

Bardot turns to Maria.

BARDOT

Enough of that. I just wanted to
wish you happy birthday.

MARIA

You don't have to leave, Brigitte.
The party just started.

BARDOT

I have things I have to take care
of. I'll give you a call on
Sunday?

Maria nods. Bardot hugs her.

BARDOT

Take care, Maria.

MARIA

Yes, Maman.

They smile at each other.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MARIA

It means a lot to me that you came. Thank you.

Bardot leaves. Brando looks after her in admiration.

BRANDO

The Bardot...

Maria raises her eyebrow, turns, scans the room. Everybody is in conversation. Nobody seems to pay attention to her.

MARIA

(across the room)
More champagne for my friends!

INT. SET "THE APARTMENT" - DAY

A.D. Fernand down looks at the ground, then up to the ceiling.

A.D. FERNAND

Yes, that's perfect. Right there.

An ASSISTANT on a ladder pulls cello tape from a roll and sticks a poster on the ceiling. He climbs back down and leaves the ladder leaning against the wall.

The words on the poster, written in capital letters with a thick marker, read:

"My father was a drunk, whore-fucker, bar fighter, super-masculine, and he was tough..."

It's a CUE CARD.

INT. SET "THE APARTMENT" - DAY

Brando and Maria are in position on the mattress. Maria is topless in jeans and a narrow scarf. She rubs her hands against her temples. Brando isn't looking at her naked breasts.

BRANDO

How are you feeling today?

MARIA

Headache.

BRANDO

We'll get you some aspirin after.

A.D. FERNAND

Everybody quiet please! We are shooting.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A bit of shuffling around. Maria takes position in the door, and Brando stretches on the mattress.

A.D. FERNAND

Camera.

STORARO

Rolling. Speed.

A.D. FERNAND

Sound.

SOUND GUY

Speeding.

A.D. FERNAND

Slate.

Luigi motions in.

LUIGI

Forty-three A, take one. Marker.

He slates and moves out.

BERTOLUCCI

And action, Marlon.

The camera is pushed towards Brando, who lies on the mattress playing the harmonica. Maria motions closer and sits down at the foot of the mattress.

The camera stays on Brando. Pulls in and out.

MARIA

"Why don't you go back in America?"

Brando stops playing. Leans on his elbow.

BRANDO

"I don't know. Bad memories I guess."

MARIA

"Of what?"

Brando rubs his eye, looks up at the cue card on the ceiling. Reads off.

BRANDO

"My father was a... a drunk, whore-fucker, bar fighter, super-masculine, and he was tough..."

His eyes move down to an INTERN standing behind Maria with more handwritten cue cards. He reads.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BRANDO

"My mother was... very poetic,
also drunk, and my memories 'bout
when I was a kid was of her being
arrested nude."

The intern stacks the first cue card back. Brando reads the second card.

BRANDO

"We lived in a small town. Farming
community. We lived on a farm.
Well, I'd come home from school
and she'd be gone on a..."

The intern stacks this card into the back. Maria rubs her temples and closes her eyes. Brando continues reading.

BRANDO

"... in jail or something."

EXT. IN THE STREETS OF PARIS - NIGHT

Maria stands on the sidewalk, squinting up and down the street for her ride. She looks grave, rubs her head.

LUIGI

Headache?

Maria nods.

He pulls a joint out of his pocket and offers it to Maria.

LUIGI

Looks like you need it more than I
do.

Maria hesitates.

MARIA

You are sure?

Luigi nods. Maria takes the joint.

BERTOLUCCI (O.S.)

And action.

INT. SET "THE APARTMENT" - DAY

In the bathroom, Maria sits in the bathtub. Brando, fully dressed, kneels at the back edge and plays with a washcloth. White shoes are placed on the rim.

BRANDO

"Give me the soap."

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Maria hands him the soap back, smiles.

MARIA

"I'm in love."

BRANDO

"You're in love? How delightful."

Brando pushes Maria's head under water. She resurfaces, gasping.

MARIA

"I'm in love! I'm in love, you understand?"

Brando slaps her with the washcloth. Maria turns to him, shouting.

MARIA

"I'm in love! I'm in l--"

Brando pushes her under water again, drowning Maria's voice. Maria fights for air, frustrated.

MARIA

"I'm in love!"

Brando grabs a shoe and hits it several times on Maria's head. She protects her head and groans. She turns around and hisses at Brando.

MARIA

"You know, you're old, and you're getting fat."

Brando smirks down at Maria.

BERTOLUCCI

Cut! Good. Again!

Maria pants, rubbing her eyes.

MARIA

Fucking hell...

INT. SET "THE APARTMENT" - DAY

In the bathroom, Maria and Brando stand in front of the mirror, both in bathrobes.

A.D. FERNAND

We're set. Bernardo?

Bertolucci eases down into his chair. Looks at Maria and Brando.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BERTOLUCCI

Are you two ready?

Maria nods. Maud motions to her. Maria takes the robe off, hands it to Maud. Maud looks at Brando.

MAUD

Can I take your robe, Mister Brando?

Brando grimaces as he takes off the robe and hands it to Maud. He covers his genitals with his hand.

BRANDO

Bernardo, it's freezing in here.

BERTOLUCCI

Is it?

BRANDO

Yes. It's very cold.

(to Maria)

Aren't you cold?

Maria shrugs. She is naked except for a scarf around her neck. She points at it and laughs.

MARIA

I'm wearing more than usual.

BERTOLUCCI

Can we get a heater in here?

A.D. FERNAND

A heater will interfere with sound and camera.

Bertolucci looks at Brando - he will have to deal with it.

Brando cups his genitals with his hand. Squeezes them in frustration.

BRANDO

Fucking God.

Maria looks where Brando's hand fidgets and gives a little smile. She folds her arms.

INT. BERTOLUCCI'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

In the kitchen, Bertolucci arranges stuffed grape leaves on a plate. He opens a bottle of red wine. The wine hisses through a aerator into a glass.

The phone rings.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BERTOLUCCI

Pronto?

He listens and looks at the clock on the wall. It's almost eleven.

BERTOLUCCI

Tonight? Can this not wait until tomorrow...

Bertolucci sighs as he looks at his untouched wine glass.

BERTOLUCCI

Naturally, Marlon.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - NIGHT

Historic interior, scarce HOTEL GUESTS and PERSONNEL at this hour.

Bertolucci tilts his head, studies Brando, seated in a regal armchair. Brando makes an inviting gesture - Bertolucci eases down on a chair.

BERTOLUCCI

Cut it? You're asking me to cut the scene?

BRANDO

Cut the shot. Or reshoot the scene.

BERTOLUCCI

Marlon, this is one scene where I really wanted you both nude. I know that you're not as comfortable as Maria--

BRANDO

My penis was the size of a peanut.

Bertolucci is speechless. Brando crosses his legs.

BRANDO

I wanna be frank here, Bernardo. I want you to cut the shot.

BERTOLUCCI

We can reshoot it.

BRANDO

I will be fully dressed.

Bertolucci nods.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BERTOLUCCI

There is still a scene where I
want you both nude. Topless, from
the waist up.

Brando nods, then laughs deeply.

BRANDO

You know what I thought the other
day? We could scribble my lines on
Maria's rear end.

Bertolucci smiles, politely.

BERTOLUCCI

That I cannot allow.

INT. SET "THE APARTMENT" - DAY

Maria and Brando, fully dressed, rehearse the Kama Sutra
scene. They sit on the mattress, legs intertwined.

They both make animal noises. Brando imitates an
orangutan. Maria laughs heartily.

She rolls R's with the tip of her tongue, rolls guttural
R's. Her animal noises sound like a bird.

Maria and Brando both laugh, holding on to each other.
The moment of levity passes.

Bertolucci shouts from the other end of the room.

BERTOLUCCI

Please go into make-up now, Maria.
We're setting up the picture.

Maria rolls her eyes, Marlon grimaces. Maria smiles and
gets up.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - DAY

Maria, with her hair in a bun, drops her bathrobe. She is
naked.

Maud starts to work on her torso.

MARIA

Is this how it's usually done?

Maud shakes her head.

MAUD

This is not usually done. Please
stand straight.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Maria pulls her shoulders back. Maud continues.

MARIA
So, this is an exception?

MAUD
It's Brando.

MARIA
It's ridiculous.

Maria watches Maud working on her body.

INT. SET "THE APARTMENT" - DAY

Storaro inches the camera forward, filming.

Bertolucci leans forward in his chair.

Maria and Brando sit opposite each other on the mattress
naked and legs intertwined. Tender stroking.

MARIA
"Maybe... maybe we can come
without touching."

BRANDO
"Come without touching? Okay."

Brando and Maria lift their chins, close their eyes and
open their mouths.

BRANDO
"You concentrating?"

MARIA
"Mhm."

BRANDO
"Did you come yet?"

Maria bursts into muffled laughing.

MARIA
"No. It's difficult."

BRANDO
"I didn't either yet. You're not
trying hard enough."

They laugh. Maria wraps her arms around Brando's neck.

MARIA
"I shall have to invent a name for
you."

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BRANDO

"A name? Oh, Jesus Christ!"

He shakes his head and looks down.

BRANDO

"Oh God, I've been called by a million names all my life. I don't want a name. I'm... I'm better off with a grunt or a groan for a name. Do you want to hear my name?"

Brando makes orangutan noises.

MARIA

"It's so masculine. Listen to mine."

Maria makes her bird rolling.

BRANDO

"I didn't get the last name."

They exchange more animal noises and laugh.

BERTOLUCCI

And cut! Thank you. From the top. Marlon, can you see everything?

BRANDO

It's a little dark down there.

BERTOLUCCI

Maria, sit upright.

She does it.

MARIA

Do you have any notes for me, Bernardo?

BERTOLUCCI

You are doing just fine.

MARIA

I don't want to be just fine. I want to be *perfetto*.

Luigi looks up from his slate.

BERTOLUCCI

Just remember to sit up straight.

Maria presses her lips together and turns back to Brando.

INT. HOTEL BATHROOM - NIGHT

Maria stands in front of the large mirror, naked. She is close to tears as she looks at her reflection:

Four scraps of paper have been taped to her chest and her stomach. There is one sentence written with a marker on each of the papers.

Maria starts to pull the tape off. Her skin is red and irritated underneath. She bites on her lips as she gets more violent.

Maria yanks the tape off her body, releasing a burst of pain and frustration.

A cue card soars to the ground.

INT. HOTEL BATHROOM - NIGHT

Maria lies in the bathtub. The water is clear; Maria hasn't added any bubble bath.

Her eyes are red, water drops cling to her eyelashes.

Her hand strokes over the red marks on her torso, rubbing them softly.

The other hand hangs over the rim of the tub, holding a joint between index and middle finger. Ashes falls on the pink bath mat.

Maria takes a deep draw from the joint. She holds the smoke in for a moment, then pushes it out.

A tear rolls down her cheek. Maria wipes it away with one brisk motion.

INT. MARIA'S HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Maria lies on the bed naked, with the telephone on her belly. Her eyes follow the slow ceiling fan.

She picks up the phone, dials a number. She waits as it rings once... twice. A click.

MARIA

Brigitte--

BARDOT (O.S.)

We have fifteen seconds.

It's the message they recorded on the answering machine.

MARIA (O.S.)

Is it recording?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BARDOT (O.S.)

I don't know. What should we say?

MARIA (O.S.)

If you hear this, we are not at home. Sorry.

BARDOT (O.S.)

But you can speak a message on the tape and we will listen to it or give you a call back--

Maria hangs up.

MARIA

Shit.

She dials another number. Waits for the ringing. Somebody picks up.

MARIA

Dominique?

She listens.

MARIA

Oh, really? I didn't know she was due already. She never told me... well, give her my best wishes. Can you tell her to call me back when she feels up for it?

Listens.

MARIA

My name is--

A soft CLICK in the line. Maria looks at the phone, hangs up gently. Places the telephone back on her nightstand.

She stares at the ceiling. Closes her eyes and covers her face with her palms.

INT. HOTEL BAR - NIGHT

Maria, spiffed up, strides into the bar.

Gélin, already sitting at a round table, rises.

GÉLIN

Sugar, you look charming!

He kisses her on both cheeks. Gestures the BARTENDER.

Maria eases down on her stool, puts her purse on the table.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GELIN

What can I get you to drink?

MARIA

A Coke.

GÉLIN

Coke?

He nods at the bartender.

GÉLIN

A bottle of champagne and two
flutes!

The bartender goes about his job.

MARIA

No, Daniel. I don't feel like
drinking tonight.

GÉLIN

What happened, sugar?

Maria sighs.

MARIA

I feel it's all slipping through
my fingers, out of my control.

The bartender pops the bottle open and brings the
glasses.

GÉLIN

Wonderful! Only the best for my
daughter!

Maria's lips smile for a second. The bartender fills the
glasses.

GÉLIN

Isn't she a dish?

The bartender nods, puts the bottle down and leaves.

GÉLIN

What were you saying?

MARIA

I was saying... I feel like I'm on
this train and it just keeps going
and going and I can't get off. I
know I bought my own ticket, and I
know why I'm doing this, but they
are not even asking me anymore
whether I am okay with things.
They exclude me from their
decisions.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

GELIN

What do you mean?

He holds out his glass, Maria raises hers, and they clink and drink.

MARIA

Have you never had the feeling of being ignored... overlooked?

GÉLIN

Thomas!

Gélin waves at his actor friend, who approaches the table.

GÉLIN

I hope you don't mind, Maria. I invited my colleague. I really wanted him to meet you.

Gélin stands up to greet Thomas. Maria looks in her glass and bites her lips.

INT. HOTEL BAR - NIGHT

The BAND plays slow dancing music. Gélin stands at the bar talking to an attractive WOMAN. Maria and Thomas are on the dance floor, swaying to the music. Maria looks tipsy.

THOMAS

Daniel hasn't promised too much.

MARIA

I don't know what you mean.

Thomas smiles, and they dance quietly for a moment.

THOMAS

How about we go to my place afterwards?

MARIA

And do what?

THOMAS

Get better acquainted.

Maria stops dancing, stares in Thomas' eyes. Her face hardens. She pushes Thomas away.

MARIA

What makes you think I would want to get better acquainted with you? I don't know you! You don't know me!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She storms off towards the exit.

Gélin looks at Thomas, who shrugs. He looks at the woman.

GÉLIN

Excuse me, Madame.

He grabs Maria's purse from the table and exits.

EXT. IN THE STREETS OF PARIS - NIGHT

Maria hastens down the sidewalk, arms wrapped around her torso. She shivers.

Gélin jogs after her.

GÉLIN

Maria!

She doesn't turn around to him.

GÉLIN

Maria, wait!

He catches up with her.

GÉLIN

What happened?

MARIA

Some friend you have!

Gélin sighs.

GÉLIN

Oh no. What did he do this time?

MARIA

What an asshole!

Maria wraps her arms tighter. Silence for a moment. Gélin looks back and shakes his head.

GÉLIN

Sugar, I'm sorry. I shouldn't have invited him. He's a mess. I was just so proud of you and wanted to show you off. You know how daddies like to brag.

Maria scoffs.

GÉLIN

Forgive me?

Maria says nothing.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Gélin hands Maria her purse.

MARIA

Thank you.

She shivers again.

GÉLIN

You're freezing.

Gélin hops out in the street and waves down a taxi. He opens the door and makes an inviting gesture.

GÉLIN

Let me take you home.

Maria hesitates, then slides into the

INT. TAXI - NIGHT

Maria scoots over to make space for Gélin on the backseat.

He slips in, closes the door. He takes her hand and squeezes it.

EXT. IN FRONT OF THE HOTEL - NIGHT

Gélin pays the taxi driver and slams the door shut.

Maria waits in front of the hotel.

GÉLIN

I'm really sorry about what happened.

Maria shakes her head.

MARIA

I just can't believe he would think that I would... I mean, what a sleazy asshole.

GÉLIN

I know. Come here.

Gélin pulls Maria in and hugs her. Maria stays stiff.

MARIA

I'm so angry.

Gélin strokes her hair.

GÉLIN

You are beautiful, Maria. Young and beautiful and made of sugar.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Maria tries to pull away.

MARIA
Please...

GÉLIN
You can't deny it!

Gélin doesn't let her go.

GÉLIN
I wonder.

MARIA
You wonder?

GÉLIN
You know, has the great Brando not
had a turn yet?

Maria pushes Gélin away, takes a step back.

MARIA
Excuse me?

GÉLIN
Come on, Maria. Let's be honest.
He has a reputation. And
considering the nature of your
little pornographic flick...

MARIA
You prick! I can't believe you
would make those assumptions.
Marlon and me? He is like a father
to me!

GÉLIN
Is he? Like a father?

MARIA
More than you've ever been!

She is close to tears.

GÉLIN
Little naive Maria. Do you really
think he cares about you? Do you
think he'll be there to catch you
when you fall flat on your face?

Maria doesn't know what to say. Gélin strokes her cheek.

GÉLIN
You still have so much to learn.

Maria back away.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MARIA

Don't touch me!

She turns around and leaves.

GÉLIN

Don't you want to kiss your daddy
good-night?

Maria turns back. She is sad.

MARIA

I don't have a daddy.

Through the revolving glass doors, she enters the

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Maria rushes in a few steps, then looks back through the revolving doors. Gélin is gone.

She wipes her tears off with the back of her hand.

INT. CAFÉ - MORNING

Brando and Bertolucci sit outside a café on the Seine, nipping from tiny espresso mugs.

It is a beautiful spring day and Brando wears sunglasses.

A WAITRESS brings two plates with croissants and bowls with slices of butter and jam.

BRANDO

I could use spit.

Brando and Bertolucci have a moment of silence, munching on their croissants.

BERTOLUCCI

It might not take matters far
enough. I want this to be a real
moment of pain and aggravation.

Brando smears more butter on his croissant, in thoughts.

He studies the buttered round softness of the croissant. Pushes the knife into the softness.

The corners of his mouth twitch.

INT. SET "THE APARTMENT" - DAY

Maria sits in a chair, fully dressed. Waits and smokes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Bertolucci and Storaro discuss the shot in Italian.

Brando arrives on set, kisses Maria on both cheeks. Eases down next to Maria into a chair.

BRANDO

Bernardo and I had breakfast this morning. And we had a little talk about today's scene.

MARIA

What about today's scene?

ANGLE ON Bertolucci and Storaro:

BERTOLUCCI

(in Italian)

She will be lying facing this direction. I'd like you to crawl in very slowly. We will do the scene in one shot if possible.

Vittorio nods, looks at the windows.

STORARO

Can I get a soft-box over there?

A.D. FERNAND

Bernardo, would you like a control monitor for this scene?

BERTOLUCCI

Yes--

MARIA (O.S.)

NO!

Bertolucci's and Vittorio's heads swirl around to look at Maria. She stares at Brando, her lips tremble.

MARIA

You cannot do this! This is not in the script!

Everybody in the crew stops what they are doing.

Maria turns her head to face Bertolucci. Her face is red with anger.

Brando and Bertolucci exchange a look.

MARIA

You cannot treat me like this! I am not a ball you can toss around whenever you feel! I'm an actress. I deserve to know what happens and how scenes are filmed!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Brando puts his hands on Maria's shoulders.

BRANDO

Let's take a walk. We don't want
to keep everybody from doing their
work.

He leads Maria out. She shakes his arm off.

Storaro and Bertolucci speak in Italian.

STORARO

Problems?

BERTOLUCCI

Brando has his ways.

STORARO

He will make her smile again?

BERTOLUCCI

I don't need her to smile.

INT. SET "THE APARTMENT" - DAY

Behind the camera, Storaro is set.

Brando rests over Maria on the carpet floor. Maria's eyes
are stony. Her breathing is flat and hectic. Brando winks
at her. Maria doesn't react.

Storaro signals Bertolucci. Bertolucci has his eyes fixed
on a tiny control monitor.

BERTOLUCCI

And action.

Marlon pushes a stick of butter closer with his foot.

BRANDO

"You afraid?"

MARIA

"No."

BRANDO

"No?"

He pulls her closer by her legs.

BRANDO

"You're always afraid."

MARIA

"No. But maybe there's some family
secrets inside."

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He forces Maria's body to turn over. Maria grimaces with dreadful anticipation. She pants.

BRANDO

"Family secrets?"

He yanks down her jeans in one motion. Maria groans, getting scared of what's about to come.

BRANDO

"I'll tell you about family secrets."

He pins her down on the floor. Digs the fingers of his right hand into the stick of butter.

MARIA

"Qu'est-ce que tu fais?"

Her lips tremble.

BRANDO

"I'm going to tell you about the family."

He forces his buttery fingers between Maria's buttocks.

BRANDO

"That holy institution..."

Maria whimpers in pain and presses her eyes shut. Brando's hand motions between her buttocks. Maria opens her mouth and lets out a sob.

Brando's eyes dart up to catch a glimpse of the cue card an intern is holding up for him.

BRANDO

"... meant to breed virtue into savages."

He forces his hand further between Maria's legs, hurting her. She lets out a painful groan.

BRANDO

"I want you to repeat it after me."

Maria, close to tears, bangs her fists on the ground in frustration.

MARIA

"No and no!"

She breathes heavily. He pushes his hand harder. Maria panics.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MARIA

"NO!"

BRANDO

(sweetly)

"Repeat it."

He rolls on her, hand still between her legs, pushing all air out of Maria's lungs.

BRANDO

(casually)

"Say 'Holy family.' Come on, say it! Go on."

Maria stretches her arms to steady herself on the carpet. Brando grabs her arms and pins them down.

Maria sobs. Brando starts to grind his body against hers.

BRANDO

"Holy family..."

He takes another quick look at the cue card.

BRANDO

"... the church of good citizens."

Maria starts to cry.

MARIA

"Ch-church... ch..."

BRANDO

"... of good citizens!"

MARIA

"G-good citizens..."

Maria screams out in pain. Sobs. Brando continues rubbing against her. Maria fights him, frees an arm. Brando grabs it and pushes it back on the ground.

BRANDO

"Say it. SAY IT! The children are tortured until they tell their first lie."

Maria's voice sounds flat under Brando's weight.

MARIA

"Ch-children... are tortured..."

She fights and weeps.

Bertolucci watches every move with intensity.

Storaro pushes the camera closer.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

On the ground, Brando whispers in Maria's ear.

BRANDO

"Where the will is broken by
repression."

MARIA

"Where the will is broken...
repression."

Brando breathes faster.

BRANDO

"Where freedom..."

MARIA

"Where f-freedom..."

She sobs.

MARIA

"Freedom!"

Tries to rip her arm out of Brando's grip. No chance.

BRANDO

"... is assassinated. Where
freedom is assassinated by
egotism..."

He breathes heavily.

BRANDO

"... family..."

Brando tries to lick Maria's neck. Her hair gets in the way.

MARIA

(crying)
"Family!"

Brando enters his sexual crescendo.

BRANDO

"You... you... you... you... f-...
you fucking... you fucking...
family..."

He moans as he pushes his hips against Maria's buttocks.
Maria weeps.

BRANDO

"You fucking family!"

Brando performs his orgasm.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

BRANDO

"OH GOD. JESUS."

He lies still. Maria sobs underneath him.

BRANDO

"Oh God."

The crew is silent. Storaro doesn't move behind his camera. Bertolucci waits. Satisfied.

Maria's whimpering muffles. Maria and Brando remain still, breathing heavily. Everybody is waiting for Bertolucci's "Cut!". It seems to take forever, until--

BERTOLUCCI

Cut! Bene.

Brando rolls off Maria. Her buttocks show red marks.

Maria pulls her jeans up. She snivels, wipes tears off her cheek. Her eyes meet Luigi's. He looks away.

A.D. FERNAND

Would you like another take?

An ASSISTANT hands Brando a towel. He wipes his buttery hand. Bertolucci looks from the monitor to Brando, then to Maria.

BERTOLUCCI

No, I think this was perfetto.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - DAY

Maria enters. Closes the door quietly.

She leans her back against the door. Stares at her reflection in the make-up mirror. The rose next to the mirror is dried up.

Maria approaches the vanity, pulls make-up wipes out of a box. She snaps her jeans open, pulls them down and squats.

She wipes the butter off her body, shaking with shame and embarrassment.

She tumbles and sits on the linoleum.

No more tears are left.

EXT. DRESSING ROOM - DAY

A door sign in the shape of a star, reading "MARIA SCHNEIDER."

EXT. PARIS - NIGHT

The sun rises over the rooftops of Paris. The golden rays kiss the city awake.

SERIES OF SHOTS - AROUND PARIS

A) A sightseeing boat chugs down the Seine river.

B) A bakery opens.

C) Bertolucci grabs fedora and viewfinder from a table and leaves his apartment.

D) Brando steps out of a hotel, smiles into the sun, puts sunglasses on. His pickup rolls in.

INT. MARIA'S HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Maria sits on the edge of the bed, in top and briefs. Dark shadows under her eyes. As the sun rays hit her face, she closes her eyes.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - DAY

Maud helps Maria into a tweed blazer. She watches Maria pushing the blouse into her trousers. Maud frowns.

MAUD

You have lost weight, Maria.

MARIA

No more fat baby cheeks.

INT. SET BATHROOM - DAY

Maria washes her face in the basin.

Dries it with a towel. She looks tired.

A moment passes.

Maria sits down on the toilet lid, looks at something next to her on the counter top of the vanity basin.

A folded flat paper. Maria unfolds it.

She stares at the Cocaine in the paper.

INT. SET "JEANNE'S APARTMENT" - DAY

Brando, sitting in a chair, sipping espresso, looks up as Maria walks in.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She hesitates, then bends down and kisses Brando on both cheeks.

MARIA
Bon jour, Marlon.

BRANDO
Good morning, Maria. You look
fresh today.

MARIA
It's my last day. I will shoot
you.

Maria smiles and walks off before Brando can get out of his chair.

INT. SET "JEANNE'S APARTMENT" - DAY

The room resembles a library - it's stacked up to the ceiling with books.

A PROP guy pulls the trigger of a stage gun, it clicks innocuously. He hands the gun to Maria.

PROP GUY
There you go. The sound comes in
post-production.

She smiles.

MARIA
Feels good.

Prop guy laughs.

PROP GUY
Your first movie kill?

Maria nods.

PROP GUY
Have fun.

INT. SET "JEANNE'S APARTMENT" - DAY

Bertolucci waits for the crew to settle down. He looks at Maria, who stands in position in front of an open drawer.

BERTOLUCCI
You know what to do, Maria?

MARIA
Yes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BERTOLUCCI

Bene. Let's go.

A.D. FERNAND

Camera.

STORARO

Rolling. Speed.

A.D. FERNAND

Sound.

SOUND GUY

Speeding.

A.D. FERNAND

Slate.

LUIGI

One-twenty-four, take one. Marker.

He slates and rushes behind the camera.

BERTOLUCCI

And action.

Brando walks into the room, plops a French colonel hat on his head, salutes Maria.

BRANDO

"Mademoiselle! How do you like your hero? Over easy or sunny-side up?"

He takes the hat off again, approaches Maria and stops only inches in front of her.

BRANDO

"You ran through Africa and Asia and Indonesia. Now I've found you. And I love you."

He takes her face between his hands. Maria's face is relaxed and unaffected.

BRANDO

"I want to know your name."

Maria pulls the trigger - CLICK. Brando plays being hit.

MARIA

"Jeanne."

Brando grimaces, lets go of Maria.

BRANDO

"Our children... our children..."

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BERTOLUCCI

Cut! Good. Let's do that again,
Maria.

A.D. FERNAND

Everybody back to one.

BERTOLUCCI

I like your expression, Maria.
It's very unsentimental.

Maria smiles.

A.D. FERNAND

Ready to go again?

MARIA

Yes.

INT. SET "JEANNE'S APARTMENT" - DAY

The French doors are open. Brando lies on the balcony.

Storaro pulls the camera back and up into a close-up of
Maria, standing in the room with the gun in her hand.

MARIA

(in French)

"I don't know who he is. He
followed me on the street. He
tried to rape me. He's a madman. I
don't know his name. I don't know
his name. I don't know who he is.
He wanted to rape me. I don't
know. I don't know him. I don't
know who he is. He's a madman. I
don't know his name."

BERTOLUCCI

And cut! Good. I'll take that.
Vittorio?

Storaro nods.

A.D. FERNAND

We're going to break for lunch!
And that's a wrap for Maria,
everyone!

Maria smiles.

The crew applauds and disperses, busy. Prop Guy takes the
gun from Maria's hand.

Brando gets up on the balcony and enters the room.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHEYENNE (O.S.)

Daddy!

A little toddler GIRL with apple cheeks stumbles towards Brando. He laughs, kneels down and hugs the girl, who falls into his embrace.

BRANDO

Cheyenne! What are you doing here, princess?

CHEYENNE

I missed you, daddy.

BRANDO

I missed you too, sweetheart!

Maria watches as Brando laughs with his daughter and blows a raspberry on her cheek.

Maria is both touched and wistful. Luigi pats her on her shoulder. Other crew members shake Maria's hand, hug her, and congratulate her, while she watches

Brando and his daughter laughing in adorable harmony.

Maria smiles, sadly, as we

FADE TO BLACK AND
OPEN TO

EXT. MOVIE THEATER, NEW YORK - NIGHT

The theater is plastered with posters of "Last Tango in Paris" and "New York Film Festival."

A huge crowd of REPORTERS, PHOTOGRAPHERS and PAPARAZZI and two cars wait outside at the bottom of the stairs.

SUPER: "OCTOBER 14, 1972"

Bertolucci and Brando push the doors open and stride out. They hold the reporters at a distance with their hands.

Maria slips out of the theater. She sees Brando already down at the bottom of the cinema steps.

MARIA

Marlon! MARLON!

He can't hear her. Brando and Bertolucci slide into a car waiting at the bottom of the stairs and drive off.

Maria remains on the stairs by herself.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Flashlights brighten her face. She smiles and poses. Photographers, reporters and paparazzi crowd around, closing in on her. She suddenly seems very small. Microphones are pushed in her face.

REPORTER #1

Is it true you are bisexual, Miss Schneider?

REPORTER #2

Was the sex between you and Marlon Brando real?

REPORTER #3

How do you feel when you see yourself naked on the big screen? Are you ashamed? What about your mother?

Somebody in the crowd throws a stick of butter at Maria.

VOICE (O.S.)

Whore!

She ducks. Her eyes widen with shock.

She pushes through the crowd and protects her head with her hand.

She reaches the bottom of the stairs.

The young male DRIVER of her car rushes to her, puts an arm around her and ushers her into the

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

The driver throws the door shut behind Maria. He runs around the car and hops into the driver's seat, fires up the engine.

A stick of soft butter smacks against the back seat window. Maria ducks away with a shriek.

Melting down on the glass, the butter leaves a slimy trace.

PAULINE Kael (V.O.)

Bernardo Bertolucci's *Last Tango in Paris* was presented for the first time on the closing night of the New York Film Festival, October 14, 1972. That date should become a landmark in movie history.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PAULINE KAEI (V.O.) (CONT'D)

There was no riot, and no one
threw anything at the screen, but
I think it's fair to say that the
audience was in a state of shock.
The movie breakthrough has finally
come.

MEDIA FRONT PAGES MONTAGE:

The Sunday Mirror "Marlon Brando Shocker"

Newsweek "The Hottest Movie"

Time "Sex and Death in Paris"

Playboy "Two to Tango"

EXT. HOTEL, PARIS - DAY

Maria, with big sunglasses, leaves the hotel and ushers
to a taxi. REPORTERS ambush her.

REPORTER #4

Maria! Maria, over here!

REPORTER #5

Maria! Is it true that you're a
sex addict?

MARIA

Sure, I slept with fifty-four men
and twenty-five women. And I take
it all, marijuana, LSD, cocaine,
heroin. What else would you like
to know?

She slips into the taxi and pulls the door shut.

INT. BATHROOM, COCKTAIL BAR - NIGHT

Maria unlocks the door and comes out of the cubicle.
Wipes her nose and leaves into the

INT. COCKTAIL BAR - NIGHT

Maria snatches a champagne flute and approaches
Dominique, back to her slender beauty. Dominique squints
at Maria, continues her conversation with actor JEAN-
LOUIS TRINTIGNANT.

DOMINIQUE

Are you all right?

MARIA

Yes, yes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TRINTIGNANT
Congratulations. Powerful
performance.

MARIA
Thank you.

TRINTIGNANT
Any new projects in sight?

MARIA
Not here. I will go to America.

TRINTIGNANT
America?

DOMINIQUE
That's a much bigger pond, Maria.

MARIA
I think I want to expand. Look for
good parts. I will probably do a
film with Antonioni... and Jack
Nicholson.

Maria grins in Dominique's face.

Trintignant finishes his champagne.

TRINTIGNANT
Anything from the bar, ladies?

DOMINIQUE
I'm coming with you.

Trintignant smiles at Maria.

TRINTIGNANT
A little butterscotch perhaps,
Maria?

He laughs and leaves with Dominique.

Maria sips from her champagne and looks around. The
spiffy GUESTS laugh and chat. Nobody notices Maria.

MARIA
I'd like to make a toast!

The guests become silent, turn around to stare at Maria.
Uncomfortable. Maria's eyes shift from unknown face to
unknown face.

MARIA
I'd like to toast to Dominique, my
friend. She is over there. Doesn't
she look stunning tonight?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Dominique looks to the ground embarrassed. Some guests start to clap.

DOMINIQUE

Please. This is not necessary.

MARIA

She always stood up for me when I
needed her. She is my good friend.
A toast to Dominique!

The guests raise their glasses to Dominique. Awkward silence.

Maria's eyes roll up, and she drops to the ground. Two guests rush to her help.

INT. AIRPORT - DAY

The busy and brand new Aéroport Paris-Charles de Gaulle.

PA ANNOUNCEMENT

Air France flight AF three-zero-
four-two to Los Angeles
International Airport is ready for
boarding at Gate fifty-seven.

Maria sways her hips down the terminal. She wears huge sunglasses and a floppy hat.

She passes a news agency and stops to take a closer look at the front page of "Le Monde" in a newspaper rack.

A smart-looking but oily business MAN stares at Maria.

She takes no notice, slips her glasses off and frowns.

INSERT "Le Monde" cover (in French): "Two Oscar nominations for 'Tango'"

Underneath the headline: a picture of Brando and Bertolucci on set of Last Tango.

Maria scoffs and puts the papers back into the rack.

MAN (O.S.)

It's you, isn't it?

MARIA

Excuse me?

MAN

The girl from *Tango*. It's you! Can
I get an autograph?

Maria smiles. The man pulls out a "Le Monde" from the stack and hands pen and papers to Maria.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARIA

Right there?

MAN

Right there.

MARIA

With pleasure.

Maria signs her name on the title page across the picture of Brando and Bertolucci. The man watches her like a hawk.

MAN

As soon as I saw your baby cheeks
I knew it was you. You look much
more beautiful in real life.

Maria hands pen and papers to him.

MARIA

Thank you. I'd love to talk, but I
have to catch a flight.

MAN

You don't even have five minutes
for a fan?

He steps closer.

MAN

We could make it count.

His hand reaches out and locks around Maria's waist.

MAN

I know what you like.

Maria rips away.

MARIA

Stay away or I'll call the police.

The man stares at her.

MARIA

I am not her! You understand me? I
am not that girl!

INT. AIRPLANE - DAY

Maria smokes in her window seat. She turns her head to
look out the window.

Nothing but the endless blue ocean.

EXT. RED CONVERTIBLE - DAY

JACK NICHOLSON, 38 and tanned, drives down a birch-lined avenue. Maria lolls on the red leather back seat. A camera is attached to a rig at the back of the car.

Maria leans forward. Nicholson flashes a smile. The sun sparkles in his sunglasses.

MARIA

"Can I ask you one question now?"

NICHOLSON

"One you can, yes."

MARIA

"Only one. Always the same."

Nicholson's eyes dart between the road and Maria.

MARIA

"What are you running away from?"

Nicholson's smiles vanishes.

NICHOLSON

"Turn your back to the front seat..."

Maria does. She kneels on the back seat, spreading her arms. The wind plays with her hair and her blouse. She laughs, looking back at the endless rows of trees.

Behind them, the CREW CAR.

SUPER: "1975"

INT. SET BEDROOM, VILLA "THE PASSENGER" - DAY

Maria, in a robe, stares down director MICHELANGELO ANTONIONI, haggard 63. Nicholson, in a robe as well, stands behind Maria.

MARIA

Tell me exactly how you will shoot this, or I will not take off a sock.

Although taken aback by Maria's defiance, Antonioni smiles and puts a hand on her shoulder.

ANTONIONI

You will be lying here in bed, next to each other on your stomachs. Jack will hold your hand. You can stroke his back if you like.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He pulls Maria around, gently, and points at the French doors at the other end of the room.

ANTONIONI

The camera will be out there on the terrace. It's a long shot. No close ups.

He waits for her approval. Maria looks at Nicholson, who studies her openly. She looks to the ground, nods.

INT. WILLIAM MORRIS AGENCY, BEVERLY HILLS - DAY

A secretary talks on the phone.

SECRETARY

Mr. Brown's office, how can I help?

Above her are the large letters "WILLIAM MORRIS AGENCY INC." and the agency's logo.

SECRETARY

He's with a client at the moment. Can I take a message?

INT. OFFICE, WILLIAM MORRIS AGENCY - DAY

A lovely bright office. Maria sits at a heavy wooden desk opposite HENRY BROWN, 50's with gray temples.

BROWN

There is an interesting project that might be up your alley. It's called *Caligula*, based on a script by Gore Vidal. They will start shooting August next year. And the best thing, it's co-financed by Penthouse.

MARIA

Penthouse... Mister Brown, I will not do scenes in the nude anymore. And no more sex scenes.

Brown leans back in his squeaky leather chair, studies Maria's defiant face.

BROWN

I think you should reconsider turning this offer down right off the bat. This is a heavy-calibered production and the producers are eager to work with you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARIA

Good. Me, I will work with them if
I can keep my clothes on.

Brown sighs.

BROWN

Miss Schneider. These people, they
wanna work with you because they
know you from *Tango*. You are a sex
symbol, Miss Schneider. Most girls
would give their right foot to be
in your place.

MARIA

I don't want to be a sex symbol.

She leans forward.

MARIA

You are my agent. I'm asking you
to do your job and find an acting
part for me. I'm through, no more
nude scenes.

BROWN

Quite frankly, with this attitude
it will be difficult to get you a
job.

His face lights up.

BROWN

There might be one other project
coming up. Have you been in touch
with Bertolucci?

Maria leans back in her seat.

INT. HOTEL ROOM, BEVERLY HILLS - NIGHT

The clock on the wall ticks loudly.

Maria sniffs cocaine.

She picks up the black telephone, dials a long number
from a paper slip. Her hands shake. Her eyes are
bloodshot and watery. Sweat on her forehead as she waits
for the ringtone.

Somebody picks up on the other line. Maria reads from the
paper slip.

MARIA

Room two-seven-nine. Bertolucci.

She waits. The phone rings once, twice.

INT. HOTEL ROOM, PARIS - NIGHT

A phone rings once, twice, three times.

Bertolucci rolls over in bed and reaches for the receiver.

BERTOLUCCI

Pronto?

INTERCUT MARIA AND BERTOLUCCI

MARIA

Bernardo.

BERTOLUCCI

Maria?

MARIA

I thought about your offer.

BERTOLUCCI

Good.

MARIA

I will do no more scenes in the nude.

BERTOLUCCI

There isn't any in the script.

Maria bites her lip. Looks at the ceiling fan.

MARIA

Maybe... maybe I shouldn't be in your film.

Bertolucci rubs his eyes. Exhales.

BERTOLUCCI

Maybe you're right.

Maria is quiet.

BERTOLUCCI

I will have to recast your part.

Maria hangs up.

Bertolucci lowers the receiver, shakes his head, eases the receiver onto the phone.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - DAY

Maria, in a toga and a Roman hairdo, shakes out five pills from a bottle. She tosses them in her mouth and swallows them with a sip of Evian from a glass bottle.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A KNOCK on the door.

INT. SET "CALIGULA" - DAY

Roman palace setting out of a phallic nightmare.

A young SECOND A.C. scribbles on a slate that states "CALIGULA."

Maria walks in, barefoot and wrapped in a bathrobe. Two CREW MEMBERS whisper to each other as Maria walks by.

CAST MEMBERS are in the massive love arena, intertwined. Their minimalistic togas leave nothing to the imagination. They look bored, eyeing Maria.

A female SET COSTUMER holds out her hand to Maria.

SET COSTUMER
Can I take your robe, Miss
Schneider?

Maria stares at the costumer's hand and pulls the bathrobe tighter around her shaking body.

INT. HOTEL ROOM, ROME - DAY

A black telephone.

Silence.

The curtains are closed.

Empty packaging of takeaway, Chinese, Burger Chef on the table.

Dirty clothes cover the carpet, form a track to the bed.

Maria lies on bed with eyes wide open. She is apathetic; her breaths are shallow.

A syringe is next to her.

The black telephone is quiet.

LAUGHING and psychedelic MUSIC fade into

INT. PARLOR, DOMINIQUE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Back at the bohemian party in 1976. Chatty, artistic FOLK laugh and pretend.

Maria sits on a faded green couch. Stares blankly at the table in front of her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Dominique squints at Maria, nips from her glass of champagne. Pia stands next to her.

DOMINIQUE

Bernardo asked me to be in his new film with Bob de Niro and Gérard Depardieu. Nobody in her right mind would say no to that.

PIA

Congratul--

Maria gets up abruptly and tumbles out of the room.

DOMINIQUE

(to Pia)

I'm so sick and tired of her escapades. It's about time she got a grip.

She lowers her voice.

DOMINIQUE SANDA

I heard she walked off the set of *Caligula*. Imagine what this means for her reputation. Nobody will want to work with her again. Nobody will trust her.

PIA

She looks sad.

Dominique rolls her eyes.

INT. NURSERY - NIGHT

Maria weeps on the carpet. The angel figurine stares down at her from the mantelpiece.

INT. PARLOR - NIGHT

Turtleneck stumbles in.

TURTLENECK

Somebody call an ambulance! I think the girl OD'd.

INT. NURSERY - NIGHT

Maria lies on the carpet in shock, her nose bleeding. White powder next to her on the carpet.

The two EMTs tend to her.

Pia strokes Maria's hair.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The sound fades into a thick numbness.

The dead eyes of the angel figurine.

MARIA (V.O.)
Where are you, my angel?

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

A control screen monitors vitals.

Clear liquid drips from a bottle into a medical hose.

Maria, small amongst the sterile whiteness of the room,
is in a coma.

A SILHOUETTE stands at the window, looking out.

Maria awakes. Her eyelids are heavy. It takes all her
strength to open them.

Maria's tired, bloodshot eyes look around in the room,
recognizing the silhouette.

Maria's hand creeps out from underneath the duvet,
reaching out.

Another hand touches Maria's. Squeezes it.

Pia smiles down at Maria.

Maria licks her dry lips. Manages a tired smile.

MARIA
It's you.

EXT. FARMER'S MARKET, PARIS - DAY

SUPER: "PARIS, 2000"

Maria, 48, with a wicker basket dangling at one arm
saunters through the market. She enjoys swaying her hips.
Stalls left and right sell fresh produce.

She wears a huge hat casting a shadow over her face.
Dark, long curls with grey streaks reach down to her
waist.

EXT. IN THE STREETS OF PARIS - DAY

The wicker basket is full of vegetables and a bundle of
flowers.

Maria reaches a red door, opens it and enters.

INT. MARIA'S HOUSE - DAY

Passing through a sun-flooded hallway, Maria swings her hat off, places both hat and basket on a counter. She goes through an open-plan kitchen-living room.

French doors are open and lead into a

SUNNY BACK GARDEN.

Maria leans against the door frame. Pia, now 40's with a sun hat on, grooms tomatoes in a bed outside.

Maria smiles. Her eyes are still big and childlike and her lips are still pouty. She lights a cigarette.

O.S. the phone RINGS.

Maria turns back into the house.

At the counter, she picks up the phone.

MARIA

Yes?

She knits her brow.

MARIA

Yes, speaking. Who is this?

She listens intently to the person on the other line.

MARIA

When will this be?

EXT. BACK GARDEN - DAY

Pia's experienced hands in gloves move a trowel in and out of the earth in the tomato bed.

INT./EXT. MARIA'S HOUSE - DAY

Maria leans in the door frame again, takes a deep drag from her cigarette.

MARIA

I just got a call from some
women's film festival in Créteil.
They want me to hold a master
class and do an interview for a
special on "Women in Hollywood."

Pia's hatted silhouette turns around, laughs.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PIA

Haven't you done everything you
could to get out of Hollywood?

MARIA

That's what I told them.

Maria takes another drag from her cigarette. Ponders.
Goes back to tend to her vegetables. Takes the flowers
out of the wicker basket. Fills a vase with water, drops
the flowers in, smells them with eyes closed.

EXT. GARDEN, MARIA'S HOUSE - DAY

Maria sits in a garden chair, sun hat and glasses. Pen
and notepad in hand.

PIA (O.S.)

Lemonade?

Maria sighs, puts pen and pad down on the table next to
her and grabs the glass of lemonade Pia offers her.

MARIA

I'm stuck.

Pia plops down in a garden chair next to Maria.

PIA

Maria, it's a women's film
festival! Horses for courses,
honey!

A moment of silence passes. Pia closes her eyes and
enjoys the sun. Maria twirls the pen.

MARIA

I could have never done it without
you, you know.

PIA

What?

MARIA

Life. I would have killed myself
sooner or later.

Pia, without opening her eyes, grabs the notepad and
hands it back to Maria.

PIA

Oh please. Are you trying to make
me cry, you drama queen? Get back
to work and save the pathos for
your master class.

Maria smiles. Sips from the lemonade.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARIA

I'm just trying to disguise the
fact that I'm a cynical bitch.

Pia smirks into the sun.

PIA

Don't.

INT. BACKSTAGE, FESTIVAL CRÉTEIL FILMS DE FEMMES - DAY

Maria sits on the modern dark blue leather couch, waits.

A door opens to let in the sound of an audience CLAPPING.

Maria looks up.

A young woman with a headset shuffles in. She smiles.

WOMAN

We are ready for you.

Maria breathes in and out, stands up.

INT. AUDITORIUM, FESTIVAL CRÉTEIL FILMS DE FEMMES - DAY

Maria waits on the side.

A female INTERVIEWER sits in the middle of the modest
stage. There is an empty seat next to her.

On the stage-filling screen behind her, the cover of the
23rd Festival Créteil Films de Femmes is projected.

ANNOUNCER

I am honored to announce this
year's master class. She is an
extraordinary woman with an
extraordinary life story. Please
give a warm welcome to Miss Maria
Schneider.

Maria folds her hands to keep them from shaking and steps
out on the stage.

Applause welcomes her. The audience is mostly female,
with the odd male filmmaker among them, and between 20
and 40.

Maria smiles, but only a little. She is still very
nervous.

She reaches the empty seat, thankfully eases down.

The cover poster of the festival changes and now shows a
picture of a 19-year-old Maria with a hat.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Maria turns around to see herself on the screen. Shakes her head and turns back.

MARIA

I am glad I'm not pretty anymore.
People have stopped asking me to
do nude scenes. Me, I can express
myself now without showing my ass.

Giggles in the audience. Maria looks into the open faces of young women.

MARIA

I have to admit that I have a deep
distrust in men. The film industry
is a gendered business. It's run
by men. They are the writers, the
directors, the agents, and they
create the industry according to
their rules. It can be a dangerous
ground for a young actress with
stars in her eyes.

Maria smiles at a young GIRL with curls. Perhaps she reminds Maria of herself.

MARIA

When I plunged into the film
industry, I was much too young. I
wasn't prepared for something like
Tango. I wish the beginning of my
career would have been sweeter,
quieter.

Her face gets serious.

MARIA

I started using drugs when I
became famous, and I would make up
stories for the press. I did not
like the celebrity, and especially
the image full of sexual innuendo,
naughty, that people had of me
after *Tango*. Me, I had no family
behind me to protect me, no
bodyguard like Sharon Stone. I was
exposed, felt hounded. Whereever I
went, people looked at me like an
animal, especially old men with
shiny eyes. Whenever people saw my
face, all they saw was Jeanne.

Empathy in young women's faces.

MARIA

As a woman in the industry, you
cannot survive being constantly
exposed.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MARIA (CONT'D)

Brigitte Bardot, my dear friend who still calls me every Sunday, is very bitter at the movie industry and did her last film in 1973. She said she didn't want to end up like Marilyn Monroe. I took pills to try and commit suicide, but I survived. I was lucky. I had an angel.

Sad faces. Maria smiles in more cheerful recollections.

MARIA

Marlon once told me that the way in Hollywood to say "fuck you" is "trust me." How are you supposed to understand this as a nineteen-year-old? I must say that the murder in the end of *Tango* did me much good.

Scattered laughter.

MARIA

After the Bertolucci film, I had golden bridges to sub-Tango. I was offered a plethora of roles of sex symbols. I ended it very quickly. I had problems getting acting jobs because I didn't want to undress and do love scenes anymore. I have starred in twenty-seven films since *Tango*, most of which I'm sure you've never heard of. They are smaller, gentler. I have managed to shift the focus away from my body to my persona.

Maria pauses and thinks for a moment.

MARIA

It's funny. I never had problems with nudity - I am the quintessential flower child!

She giggles.

MARIA

But I started to comprehend that my body in the nude was all people saw. They didn't care about the person inside the body. They didn't care about Maria the actress. They only wanted to see Maria the skin.

The young woman with the curls nods.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

MARIA

That's what they always ask young women, even in 2001, it hasn't changed one iota. I'm looking at all kinds of scripts. In most of them, women are just decoration.

Audience members nod in agreement.

MARIA

Cinema is archaic. Among men, there is a solidarity. They look out for each other, produce among themselves, give themselves a hand. It's great. It works. Men have a complicity that we for some reason do not. As women, we are isolated. If we don't look out for each other we will drown in the quicksand they call the industry.

Maria's face gets defiant.

MARIA

Bernardo told me during the shoot that exciting times lay ahead, because the sexual revolution had freed both genders, and that *Tango* represented this freedom. Me, I think he could have not been more wrong.

Maria makes eye contact with many of the young women in the audience, who hang on her words.

MARIA

I don't regret anything. I don't. I love the cinema. I love the idea that cinema draws a picture of our time. Cinema makes a memory. I believe that cinema has the power to make new memories. You should use this power and make new pictures of our time.

The girl with curls nods and smiles. Maria smiles and makes herself comfortable in her chair.

INT. TV STUDIO - DAY

The Omroep NTR (Nederlands Public Broadcasting) studio. The screens in the background read "CT" in big letters: "College Tours." One screen shows a still from *Last Tango*: Brando on top of Maria during the butter scene.

Bertolucci, 73, sits in a wheelchair, wearing hat and scarf.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SUPER: "Hilversum, 2013"

The interviewer TWAN HUYS, a handsome TV host in his 40's, speaks with a strong Dutch accent.

HUYS

One of the actors in the film, Maria Schneider, she was nineteen at the time when the film was recorded. It was apparently such a strong role for her and made such an impact on the audience that she was always associated with the *Last Tango in Paris*.

Bertolucci's voice is deep and raspy. He talks slowly, choosing his words carefully.

BERTOLUCCI

Poor Maria. She died two years ago, I think. And I was sad. After the movie we really didn't see each other because she was hating me. The scene you have just-

HUYS

Why did she hate you?

BERTOLUCCI

... The scene you have just seen before, which is called the "sequence of the butter", it's an idea that I had with Marlon in the morning before shooting it. It was in the script that he had to rape her in a way. We were having breakfast and there was a baguette and there was butter. And we looked at each other. And we didn't have to say anything. We knew what we wanted.

The young audience, STUDENTS, snicker--

BERTOLUCCI

But... but I have been in a way horrible to Maria because I didn't tell her what was going on. Because I wanted her reaction as a girl, not as an actress. I wanted her to react and feel humiliated.

He pauses for a moment. Huys rubs his chin.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BERTOLUCCI

She, I think, hated me and also Marlon because we didn't tell her that there was his detail of the butter used as a lubricant. I still feel very guilty for that.

Two young FEMALE STUDENTS listen and watch with serious faces. No more snickering.

HUYS

Do you regret the fact that you have shot the scene the way you did?

BERTOLUCCI

No, but I feel guilty. I feel guilty but I do not regret.

He looks into his young student audience.

BERTOLUCCI

To make movies and to obtain the performance you want as a filmmaker, I think you have to be completely free. I didn't want Maria to act her humiliation, her rage. I wanted Maria to *feel* the rage and the humiliation.

HUYS

And you never saw each other again?

BERTOLUCCI

In Tokyo, many years later, I saw her but I think she didn't see me.

Huys studies Bertolucci.

HUYS

What would you have said to her?

BERTOLUCCI

I would have given her a tender embrace. I would have told her I felt connected to her as on the first day. I would have, at least this one time, asked her to forgive me.

He looks away. The audience is quiet.

INT. BREAK ROOM, TOKYO ART EXPO 1990 - DAY

A buffet with snacks and drinks. ARTISTS talk shop, laugh, saunter around.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A banner sports the Tokyo Art Expo's logo.

Bertolucci, 50, talks to another turtleneck, laughs his deep-voiced whinny and swallows a sandwich.

INT. HALLWAY, EXPO - DAY

In no rush, Maria, 38, approaches the break room. She leans into the doorway, scans the room.

INT. BREAK ROOM

Bertolucci's chewing slows down. He spots Maria, standing in the doorway.

Bertolucci swallows, uncertain what to do.

Their eyes meet. Maria studies Bertolucci with cold eyes.

Bertolucci raises his hand to wave.

Maria declines a glass of champagne, that a WAITER offers to her, still staring Bertolucci down.

Bertolucci's view is obstructed by people shoving past him. He stretches to see Maria.

But the doorway is empty.

Lobster claw CRACKING (O.S.).

INT. FANCY RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Back in 1971, Maria, 19, and Brando, 48, sit at the table. Maria works her lobster.

BRANDO

So if I say "Trust me, Maria!",
you say...?

MARIA

Never!

BRANDO

Perfect.

They smile, are comfortable in each other's presence.

BRANDO

Are you in love?

Maria is a little surprised at this question.

MARIA

No. I can't say I am.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A moment passes.

MARIA
Are you in love?

BRANDO
Often. I'm always ready for it.

He leans forward, intimately.

BRANDO
You've got to have love, Maria,
because what else is there?
There's no other reason for
living.

He studies Maria's face.

She smiles and cracks a claw.

FADE OUT.

CARDS

Maria Schneider was awarded the medal of Chevalier, Ordre des Arts et des Lettres for her contributions to the arts in 2010. She made over 50 films in her career.

Maria Schneider and Marlon Brando reconnected after *Last Tango in Paris* and remained friends until Brando's death in 2004.

Maria Schneider died from cancer on 3 February, 2011, at the age of 58. Her ashes were scattered into the sea at the foot of the Rock of Virgin in Biarritz in the French Basque Country.

Vita

Maria Hinterkoerner was born in 1981 in Linz, Austria, and lived in Scotland and New Zealand before coming to New Orleans in 2011. She graduated with two M.A.s in English and American Studies, and Celtic Studies from the University of Vienna in 2006, and with a PhD in English and American Studies in 2012. She has worked as a costume design assistant with the *Burgtheater* (former Imperial Court Theatre) in Vienna for several years. She joined the University of New Orleans Creative Writing Workshop in 2011 and taught courses in Screenwriting and Script Analysis.