

|| PIAF ||

## || CHARACTERS ||

EDITH PIAF  
 TOINE  
 JOSEPHINE  
 MANAGER  
 LOUIS LEPLÉE  
 ÉMIL  
 LEGIONNAIRE  
 JACQUES  
 LOUIS  
 EDDIE  
 POLICE INSPECTOR  
 PAUL  
 2 GERMAN SOLDIERS  
 GEORGES  
 BUTCHER  
 PIERRE  
 SAILOR  
 MARCEL  
 2 AMERICAN SAILORS  
 BARMAN  
 MADELEINE  
 LUCIEN  
 JEAN  
 NURSE  
 DOCTOR  
 PIANIST  
 ANGELO  
 PHYSIOTHERAPIST  
 DOPE PUSHER  
 THEO

*Piaf* was first presented at The Other Place, Stratford-upon-Avon, by the Royal Shakespeare Company on 5 October 1978. It was directed by Howard Davies and designed by Douglas Heap.

The cast was as follows:

PIAF		Jane Lapotaire
TOINE		Zoe Wanamaker
MADELEINE		Carmen du Sautoy
NURSE		Susanna Bishop
INSPECTOR	}	Conrad Asquith
GEORGES		
BARMAN		
LOUIS	}	Bill Buffery
BUTCHER		
LUCIEN		
DOPE PUSHER		
MAN AT REHEARSAL	}	Ian Charleson
PIERRE		
MANAGER		Geoffrey Freshwater
LOUIS 'PAPA' LEPLÉE	}	James Griffiths
JEAN		
ÉMIL	}	Allan Hendrick
JACKO		
EDDIE		
ANGELO	}	Anthony Higgins
GERMAN SOLDIER		
PAUL	}	Ian Reddington
AMERICAN SAILOR		
PHYSIOTHERAPIST	}	Malcolm Storry
LEGIONNAIRE		
JACQUES		
GERMAN SOLDIER		
MARCEL		
AMERICAN SAILOR	}	Michael Tubs
THEO		
MUSIC/DIRECTOR		
PIANO		Roy Stelling
ACCORDION		

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT I

ACT I

- SCENE I: Piaf onstage  
 SCENE II: Outside the Cluny Club, and Piaf's apartment  
 SCENE III: The Cluny Club  
 SCENE IV: The street, and the Cluny Club  
 SCENE V: Police station, Piaf's flat and the club  
 SCENE VI: Piaf's new apartment and the street  
 SCENE VII: Piaf's apartment and the street  
 SCENE VIII: Josephine's nightclub and boxing ringside  
 SCENE IX: Piaf's bedroom

ACT II

- SCENE I: Piaf's dressing room  
 SCENE II: An American bar  
 SCENE III: Piaf's apartment in Paris  
 SCENE IV: A hospital waiting room  
 SCENE V: Rehearsal studio and Piaf's dressing room  
 SCENE VI: Piaf's apartment and dressing room  
 SCENE VII: A room at the Ritz  
 SCENE VIII: Onstage  
 SCENE IX: Nursing home and onstage  
 SCENE X: Piaf's room, south of France

Set and staging are non-naturalistic throughout, with scenes indicated by minimal prop and furnishing changes.

SCENE I

*The MANAGER enters, with a Thirties' floor microphone.*

MANAGER [*testing*]: One, two, three . . . [*To audience*] ladies and gentlemen . . . ladies and gentlemen . . . I give you . . . your own . . . Piaf!

[*Musical introduction: La goulante du pauvre Jean. He gestures, with a sharp glance off, and goes. A pause.*]

PIAF enters.

*She sings the first few lines of La goulante du pauvre Jean, falters and stops, swaying at the microphone.*

*The MANAGER runs on, and tries to assist her off. But PIAF resists. There is an undignified fight.]*

PIAF [*struggling*]: Get your fucking hands off me, I ain't done nothing yet . . .

[*Blackout. Straight into*]

SCENE II

*The young PIAF. She sings part of Les amants d'un jour, in French, artlessly, sans mike, in the street. LOUIS LEPLÉE, the club owner, arrives, in evening clothes, pauses to listen. She sees him.*

PIAF: Get your fucking hands off me, I ain't done nothing.

LEPLÉE: All right, kid . . . all right!

PIAF [*reassured*]: Oh, sorry guv. [*Cheeky*] What can I do you for?  
 [*This makes him laugh.*]

No, well, if I knew you was coming I'd have shaved me legs.  
 LEPLÉE: Never mind the legs . . . where did you get that big voice?  
 PIAF: It's only so's they can hear me over the traffic.  
 LEPLÉE: How long have you been singing?  
 PIAF: Coupla minutes, that's all.  
 LEPLÉE [*assessing her shrewdly*]: Extraordinary.  
 PIAF: I said sorry!  
     [*He takes out his wallet and gives her some money. She is dumbfounded.*]

*Light change.*  
 As LEPLÉE goes, PIAF turns towards her friend, TOINE, who enters, throws down her large Thirties' clutch bag, and sits heavily, taking off her shoes and massaging her feet, wincing.]

PIAF: Toine – here – guess what!  
 TOINE: Fuck off.  
 PIAF: Wassa matter with you?  
 TOINE: Fucking pimp's had me on that corner, I thought my bleeding toes would burst. I haven't seen more than a couple of fellers all night . . . he's gotta change my shift.  
 PIAF: Here, listen –  
 TOINE: Him with his bloody favourites, think I don't know?  
 PIAF: Listen! You're never going –  
 TOINE: That fat Hélène, sits in the fucking caff half the time, I'm not going to stand for it –  
 PIAF: This bloke . . . !  
 TOINE [*irritable*]: What?  
 PIAF: Me big chance! – you know, like on the movies.  
 TOINE [*baffled*]: Eh?  
 PIAF: This bloke comes up to me – hey! Remember what the fortune teller told us –!  
 TOINE: Hang on . . .  
 PIAF: You remember! I was standing outside the Cluny Club, singing –  
 TOINE: Singing?

PIAF: Yeah, you know . . . for a lark . . . I'm just getting going when up he comes . . . real swell . . . top hat, silk scarf, silver cane, the lot. Next thing I know he asks me inside.  
 TOINE: Iyiy!  
 PIAF: Toine, you've never seen nothink like it – white tablecloths, little velvet chairs with gold tassels, anything I wanted to drink –  
 TOINE: Hah, I get it – another fucking funny, Christ he must be hard up . . . here, can you see any crabs?  
 PIAF [*looks perfunctorily*]: No, listen! He says to me, he says 'You've got a good voice, kid . . .'  
 TOINE: Hah!  
 PIAF: Shut up . . . 'I want you . . .' [*She fixes TOINE with a magnetic stare.*] . . . 'I want you to star in my club!' Whatcha think of that!  
 TOINE: Oh Christ, she's away.  
 PIAF: It's true!  
 TOINE: Ede –  
 PIAF: Look, I'm not saying he's young or goodlooking or anything –  
 TOINE: Ede, have you gone off your head or something?  
 PIAF: I keep trying to tell you! [*Her rage subsides as she concedes the unlikeliness of the tale.*] He wants me to sing . . . in his show . . . Cluny Club.  
 TOINE: Where all the swells go? Get away.  
     [*But PIAF is counting the money.*]  
     Listen . . . where did you get that?  
 PIAF: He gave it me . . . honest. For nothing!  
     [*They both look at the money. TOINE shakes her head slowly.*]  
 TOINE: Nah.  
     [*PIAF waits patiently for the verdict.*]  
 Nah . . . sounds funny to me. Look, kid, I wouldn't have nothing to do wiv it. He's got a little business going, he's short of girls – [*she laughs*] haha, hahaha . . . he must be!  
 PIAF: Speak for your bloody self!  
 TOINE [*threatening*]: Get off.  
     [*PIAF backs away prudently.*]

*Hiatus.*

*She scuffs moodily . . . picks up the dress TOINE has taken off.]*

TOINE [*without raising her eyes from her magazine*]: It's too big for yuh.

[PIAF hums moodily, ruining TOINE's efforts to read. She puts down her book with a martyred sigh.]

Oh all right. You can have this. [*She proffers her long, thin, dark-purple Thirties-style scarf.*]

PIAF: Thanks! [*She arranges it around her neck.*] Here, don't laugh. He told me to have a bath . . . wash me hair.

[*They laugh, jeering.*]

TOINE: Tell you what, though. [*She finds a comb in her bag . . . tidies PIAF's hair, arranges a spicurl on her forehead.*] That's better – we-ell, you wanna look decent.

PIAF: Thanks. [*She makes to go . . . pauses.*]

TOINE [*without looking up from her book*]: OK, what is it now?

PIAF: Can I have a lend of your handbag?

TOINE: No.

[*But PIAF knows the value of fidgeting.*

TOINE grinds her teeth, hurls the bag at her.]

PIAF: Thanks! [*She tucks the unsuitably large poche under her arm and struts off proudly, causing TOINE to grin.*]

TOINE: Take it easy, squirt. [*To the audience, tired*] Well, can't be for the fucking singing, can it – he can hear that for nothing in the street. Be Tangier for you, I shouldn't doubt. [*She picks up her things and goes.*

*Music.*]

## SCENE III

*The Cluny Club. Chairs on tables. PIANIST strums, PAPA LEPLÉE waits with his MANAGER. PIAF runs on.*

LEPLÉE: You're late.

PIAF: Sorry.

LEPLÉE [*looks at her, then, to MANAGER*]: Ee-dith. We'll have to do better than that.

MANAGER: What about the one you said before?

LEPLÉE: Tich? . . . Nipper? . . . what was it?

MANAGER: Tich Sparrow.

[PIAF, now sprawled on the top of the piano, rears up in horror.]

LEPLÉE: What do you think?

MANAGER: 'S all right – no good going for something glamorous.

PIAF: Whaddya mean?

LEPLÉE [*musings*]: The little sparrow . . . La Môme Piaf . . . The Kid Sparrow . . . Piaf . . .

[PIAF mimes being sick over the keys.]

MANAGER: Piaf . . . Piaf . . .

PIAF: Piaf? What sort of a name's that?

LEPLÉE: Better than Edith Gassion – it's not a stage name, kid.

PIAF: Oh. Oh . . . well . . . I know, what about Lola Fairbanks?

MANAGER: Piaf – yeah, that's OK.

PIAF: Zozine Heliotrope . . . Claudette Cunningham . . .

LEPLÉE: Piaf . . . Piaf . . . Piaf . . . Piaf? [*With conviction*] Piaf!

PIAF [*desperate*]: Desirée de la Renta . . . Desirée!

LEPLÉE: Piaf!

PIAF [*leaps down in fury*]: Piaf? Where am I going to get with a name like that?

[*The MANAGER gestures to LEPLÉE . . . Who needs such a scruff? But LEPLÉE laughs.*]

LEPLÉE: Let her sing.

[PIAF sings *Les amants d'un jour*, in English. The MANAGER and LEPLÉE exchange a glance . . . the MANAGER shrugs – not bad, and goes. ÉMIL, the young waiter, sets a table.]

OK, kid. OK.

PIAF [*not sure what he means*]: Yeah?

LEPLÉE: Are you hungry?

PIAF: Not 'alf. [*She crosses to table, set for dinner, sits. Then she sips delicately from the finger bowl. ÉMIL guffaws.*]

What's the matter?

ÉMIL: That's the finger bowl, scruff – for washing yer 'ands.

PIAF: Where's the soap? All right, clever cock. Seen me drink – now you can watch me piss. [*She does so. And marches off, to PAPA LEPLÉE's laughter.*]

*Light change. Low light.*

LEPLÉE *stacks a last chair. A noise. He jumps, alarmed . . . and sees PIAF at a distance.*]

LEPLÉE: Oh, it's you. I thought you'd pushed off . . . what do you want?

PIAF: I thought you'd want to see me.

LEPLÉE: What for? Come on, I'm tired, I've had a long day.

PIAF: Up to you, innit?

LEPLÉE: What do you mean?

PIAF: I thought you might wanna – well, after all, I mean . . . you did give me my big break – I mean, it's OK by me.

LEPLÉE: What?

PIAF: Well you must have done it for something. If you want sucking off or anything, just say the word – no skin off my nose.

LEPLÉE [*dry*]: Oh . . . I see. Are you ready, my dear? [*But addressed to ÉMIL, who appears, bearing LEPLÉE's coat, hat, scarf. He robes him reverently.*]

LEPLÉE *puts his arm across the boy's shoulders. ÉMIL smiles, malevolent.*]

As you see . . . little fish.

PIAF: Oh. Oh! . . . why didn't you say! [*She gives him an affectionate and familiar dig in the ribs.*]

LEPLÉE [*to ÉMIL*]: What do you think?

ÉMIL [*shrugs*]: They seemed to like her – at least you can hear her over the cutlery.

[*LEPLÉE and ÉMIL leave . . . PIAF crosses.*]

## SCENE IV

*The street . . . The music is Un sale petit brouillard. PIAF is getting it from a LEGIONNAIRE.*

LEGIONNAIRE: And sun and sand and sea and sand and sand and sand and sand and sea . . .

[*PIAF simulates noisy and joyous ecstasy.*]

. . . and flies, flies, flies, flies, flies!

TOINE [*enters*]: Ede! Ede, is that you? We can hear you half way down the street, you're s'posed to be down the Club, Papa's screaming blue murder!

PIAF: Hey, Toine . . . cop on to this, will you? [*disengaging herself*]

TOINE: What, for nothing?

PIAF: Do us a favour . . . I'm pegged out.

TOINE: Oh all right. But not for nothing.

[*He pays. She takes over.*]

PIAF [*going*]: He's a legionnaire.

TOINE: Oh, why din't you say? [*She livens it up a bit.*]

LEGIONNAIRE: And sea and sand and sand and sea and sand and sand and . . .

TOINE: What's he on about?

PIAF: He's a fucking Algerian!

TOINE: Oh. Hang on . . . hang on . . . holdee on a bittee, matey – here, you wouldn't like to lie down, would you . . . only I got bad feet, see?

[*Lights down on TOINE and LEGIONNAIRE as PIAF crosses to PAPA LEPLÉE, who sits at a table drinking brandy. She throws herself on his lap.*]

LEPLÉE [*as he sees her*]: You're late! Steady on, my head's not too good.

PIAF: You know your trouble, too much of the other.

LEPLÉE: You're a familiar little devil. You're going to have to settle down, you know, if you want to make something of yourself . . . you won't always have me.

PIAF [*cheeky*]: Why, where you going?

LEPLÉE: I don't know, I've been feeling a little odd for the last two days.

PIAF: A little who?

LEPLÉE [*laughs*]: I should miss you. Ever get nightmares?

PIAF: Nah.

LEPLÉE: I had a funny dream about my mother last night. She seemed to be beckoning me.

PIAF: Lucky you. Mine took one look and pissed off.  
 LEPLÉE: All on your own, are you?  
 PIAF [*sturdy*]: Yeah. [*Casual afterthought*] I did have a little girl once.  
 LEPLÉE [*surprised*]: You?  
 PIAF: Yeah. Cunts.  
 LEPLÉE: I beg your pardon?  
 PIAF: The people looking after her. Only never told me! Somebody down the road said, 'Hey, d'you know your kid's ill?' I was round there the same week, they wouldn't let me in – 'Ew new, it's not convenient, anyway, she's dead, died six o'clock this morning.' I wasn't having that. [*Laughs, in fond reminiscence*] Nah, we had a real old punch-up. Hey, did you know something? When people die they go all *stiff*! She was sliding about the parquet in the end . . . talk about shove-ha'penny, we had a right old fracas! [*She laughs, in fond reminiscence.*  
*But he stumbles to his feet, almost backing away from her.*]  
 Look, it's not unreasonable. I only wanted a bit of her hair, for me locket.  
*[He looks down at her, then turns, moving even further away.]*

*Music . . . sombre. PIAF turns to her three friends, JACQUES and EDDIE, who look tough, and LOUIS, younger. PIAF throws her arms about JACQUES, who throws her off irritably.]*

JACQUES: Get him over here. [*He twists her arm cruelly.*]  
 PIAF: Ow! Hey, Papa, come and have a drink.  
*[PAPA approaches, genial.]*  
 PIAF: Jacques . . . Eddie . . . and little Louie.  
*[JACQUES digs her in the ribs.]*  
 PIAF: What do you think of little Louis?  
 LEPLÉE [*with a quick glance at LOUIS*]: Not just now. I'll get Émil to give you a drink.  
 JACQUES: Busy counting the takings, eh Papa?  
 LEPLÉE [*jovial*]: Never you mind about that.  
 EDDIE: Go on, you must be rolling in it.  
 LEPLÉE: That's what they all think.

*[LEPLÉE takes another look at LOUIS.  
 The others move away discreetly, but PIAF blows it, in a moment of panic.]*

PIAF [*returning*]: Hey . . . hey, d'you hear the story about the man with cock trouble?  
*[They turn on her murderously.]*

JACQUES [*to PIAF*]: Shut up.  
 PIAF [*unable to stop*]: He goes to the chemist and says, 'Look, there's something the matter with my cock' . . . no, listen and the chemist says, 'For fuck's sake, man, can't you see I got a shop full of ladies, you'll do me out of business.' Ah . . . 'Take these tablets three times a day and if you have to come back for Christ's sake call it your elbow.' So he comes back the next week and the chemist says, 'Tablets any good, how's your elbow?' And he says, 'Oh, much better, but I still can't piss out of it!' [*She shrieks with laughter.*  
*LEPLÉE laughs and goes . . . the moment has been lost.*  
*Music of La ville inconnue.]*

JACQUES [*grabbing her*]: You messed it up, didn't you?  
 PIAF: No I never.  
 JACQUES: All right, where'd you say he kept it?  
 PIAF: What?  
 JACQUES: His money, you twot . . . the cashbox!  
 EDDIE: Edie, look, why don't you and me get together . . . eh?  
 PIAF [*drunk*]: Yeah . . .  
 EDDIE: What about poor little Louis here, though?  
 JACQUES: Does he keep it in his room?  
 EDDIE: Little Louis could go up there, proposition him . . . you never know, might work out for them, then you and me can enjoy ourselves.  
 PIAF: Yeah.  
*[Music.]*  
 JACQUES: Where's the safe, you bitch?  
*[They cross, in the direction of LEPLÉE.  
 PIAF makes to follow but LOUIS puts out a restraining hand,  
 then melts away.  
 A shot.]*

PIAF *sits, white-faced, at the table.*

PIAF *sings* La ville inconnue.]

## SCENE V

PIAF and Police INSPECTOR.

INSPECTOR: Come and sit down. Let me see . . . ah . . . Edith.

[PIAF *fidgets, as he writes.*]

Name?

PIAF: You got it. [*nodding at his papers*]

INSPECTOR [*glares, and then decides to be foxy*]: That's right.

Edith Gassion . . . known as La Môme Piaf. [*writing it down*]

PIAF [*nervous*]: What am I supposed to have done . . . I ain't done nothing –

INSPECTOR: Address?

PIAF: Haven't got one.

INSPECTOR: No fixed address?

PIAF: I ain't *done* nothing –

INSPECTOR: Right. We will now proceed with your involvement in –

PIAF: Eh?

INSPECTOR [*sudden frontal bark*]: What was your involvement in the Leplée affair?

PIAF: What?

INSPECTOR: Name?

PIAF: Oh Christ.

INSPECTOR: I seriously advise you to co-operate.

PIAF: I ain't *done* nothing!

INSPECTOR: That is what I am here to find out. [*Slight pause*]

Father's occupation?

PIAF: Street acrobat. And businessman.

INSPECTOR: What was your relationship with the deceased?

PIAF: Who?

INSPECTOR: With Louis Leplée.

PIAF: Oh, he weren't no relation of mine. He was a big shot!

INSPECTOR: You were with Leplée the night he was murdered.

PIAF: Not only me . . . other people.

INSPECTOR: Including friends of yours.

PIAF: People I know, yes.

INSPECTOR [*showing her a paper*]: These names? You were seen together.

PIAF: Just having a laugh.

INSPECTOR: Planning to rob your patron, Louis Leplée.

PIAF: No!

INSPECTOR: You told them where he kept his money.

PIAF: No.

INSPECTOR: Where did he keep his money?

PIAF: In his room. [*And could bite her tongue out.*]

INSPECTOR: You told them.

PIAF: They ASKED me!

INSPECTOR: Edith Gassion, I ask you, formally . . . what was your implication in the Leplée affair? [*He stands over her, slapping his leg lightly with his right hand.*]

PIAF: I ain't done nothing!

[*He slaps her face.*]

Leave me alone . . . he was my guvnor . . . he give me my big break, I'm not gonna want to –

[*He hits her again.*]

. . . I'm . . . I'm not gonna do him in, am I?

[*He hits her again and this time she breaks down, sobbing noisily.*]

. . . I keep seeing him . . . with his face . . . all over his chops . . . all . . .

[*She continues to sob. Then it subsides. She pulls herself together with a tremendous effort, squints up at him mutinously.*]

I ain't done nothing.

[*He goes.*]

PIAF *relaxes in her chair. She hums snatches of Tu me fais tourner la tête . . . stretching out her legs, and then her arms.*]



[*murmurs to herself*]: Ah, what a shame . . . what a shame.  
 [TOINE *bursts in, carrying a newspaper.*]  
 TOINE: Ede, you're famous!  
 [*She is followed by the MANAGER.*]  
 PIAF: Eh, what's going on? [*bewildered*]  
 MANAGER: Piaf, I've got you a booking.  
 TOINE: Tonight!  
 PIAF: Eh?  
 MANAGER: You'll be doing a guest appearance at the Pickup Club . . . give her the piece to read over . . . it's all about your life with Papa, *ménage à trois*, that sort of thing.  
 TOINE [PIAF *leans over her shoulder*]: 'Club singer in Alleged Gangland Slaying' . . . they think you done him in!  
 MANAGER: But they can't prove anything, you're in the clear . . . sign there.  
 TOINE: Go on, Ede.  
 PIAF: What's he talking about . . . push off.  
 [*The MANAGER hits her in the face, just like the INSPECTOR.*]  
 MANAGER: Now listen, squirt. You – are money. And while you're money you'll do as I say. Here's five hundred. Get yourself toffed up . . . I want you *soignée*, sophisticated and elegant . . . oh, and get rid of that. [*pointing to TOINE*]  
 TOINE [*as he goes*]: What do you mean, I'm her partner – anyway, where's that fifty you promised me? [*To PIAF*] How much?  
 [*PIAF counts, then examines a note.*]  
 PIAF [*awed*]: Hey . . . hey . . . [*She suddenly smacks herself in the face with the money, letting it fly.*]  
 TOINE: What you doing! [*She grabs it up.*] What you wanna do that for?  
 PIAF: OK, quick, let's push off before he sobers up –  
 TOINE: No, look . . .  
 PIAF: You nuts? He's gonna be back, bloody cops on his tail –  
 TOINE: Neow! Didn't you get it? He's working for *you*! He's your agent – I mean, once he knows you can't sing . . . but while it lasts . . .  
 PIAF [*warming*]: Yeah . . .  
 TOINE: We could BUY things!

PIAF: Yeah . . . nah, he's gone daft, pinched it out the till . . . he'll be in the wagon by now.  
 TOINE: He bought me a brandy. For nothing. You're in the papers, Ede! You're famous!  
 PIAF: Yeah?  
 TOINE: Yeah.  
 PIAF: Right. In that case . . . I'm gonna get myself one of those little black skirts with the diamond panel down the front . . .  
 TOINE: Ooh . . . can I come?  
 PIAF: You found him, mate . . .  
 TOINE: Only I didn't know . . .  
 PIAF [*firmly halving the money and giving TOINE her share*]: We're in this together!  
 TOINE: Thanks! What about shoes?  
 PIAF: Five-inch courts . . . crocodile. We'll have to entertain, you know . . . soda syphon . . .  
 TOINE: Ice bucket . . .  
 PIAF: Toilet roll . . .  
 [*They caper, screaming with delight.*]  
 Proper furniture! Fridge . . . telephone . . .  
 TOINE: Telephone . . .  
 PIAF: Bar stools . . .  
 TOINE: Bar stools . . .  
 PIAF: With squashy seats . . .  
 TOINE: Made out of elephants' testicles . . .  
 PIAF: Eh?  
 TOINE: It's what I heard.  
 PIAF: Oh well, if it's the fashion.  
 TOINE: What about gloves?  
 PIAF: Gloves? What you want gloves for?  
 TOINE [*hard and bright with excitement, as always, a beat behind*]: Dunno!  
 PIAF: Waste of money innit, don't tell me you're gonna start using gloves – oh, I get it . . . you're getting classy ideas!  
 TOINE: All I need's the gear!  
 PIAF: Yeah, you could get one of those gold lamé skirts – hang on . . . you're working for me now . . .

TOINE: Yeah?

PIAF: Fuck the gloves!

TOINE: Yeah!

PIAF: Christ, kid, have you realized . . . we can have all the fellers we want . . . the ones we want.

TOINE [*sour*]: So what?

PIAF: There's the little guy down the garage. I could get him a lovely blue suit, camel coat, cuff-links, silk shirts – you could find him a coupla girls so's he can make a living, feel independent . . .

TOINE: Yeah.

PIAF: We could have a party! Whee! [*And she throws the money into the air again.*]

TOINE: Edith! [*She bends, groping.*] Oh, honest . . .

[*PAUL enters, handsome and well-dressed.*

[*PIAF looks across the room and falls in love.*]

TOINE [*scrabbling*]: Ooh, I do feel funny.

PIAF [*mutters*]: Shut up.

[*He takes her in his arms, and they dance. He bends her backwards, as in the movies, and kisses her. She totters as he releases her abruptly, moves away, turns, and throws the carnation from his buttonhole at her. She ducks, then grins soppily and bends to pick it up.*]

PAUL: You . . . you . . . only you. [*He returns, kisses the palm of her hand, the inside of her wrist.*

[*She comes on the spot, as he kisses up the inside of her forearm.*]

The Restaurant des Fleurs. Ten o'clock. I shall squeeze time till then. [*He kisses his hand at her and goes.*]

PIAF: Ooh!

TOINE: Oo-erh . . .

PIAF: Did you see him!

TOINE: My stomach feels like a box of budgies!

PIAF: Eyes like a shopful of irises . . .

TOINE: I'm a bit constipated.

PIAF: Oh Christ. Look at this place. Two squashed Gitanes and a packet of Cream Crackers! You're gonna have to pull your socks up, mate, I don't call this putting on the style.

TOINE: Sorry, Ede, I been a bit off-colour.

PIAF: All you do is let down the whole feel of it!

[*She grabs a wandering mike and breaks in Tu me fais tourner.*

[*PAUL sits, in white tie . . . and she crosses, and bends over the table, singing into his face. At the end of the song he rises to greet her. She gives him a quick feel.*

[*He extricates himself with a furious frown, looking to see if they have been observed.*]

PAUL [*furious hiss*]: Paf . . . !

PIAF [*innocence*]: What's the matter?

PAUL [*vicious mutter*]: You *know* how I hate to be touched.

PIAF [*slight pause*]: How about the song?

PAUL: I thought you were over the top a bit.

PIAF: Me . . . never!

PAUL: Paf, your private life is your private life. Don't mix it.

PIAF: Come on, they love me singing to yuh . . . everybody knows! [*She heaves a happy sigh.*] I used to see meself off every night on tour, dreaming about you in that blue dressing gown.

PAUL: Paf, your voice!

PIAF: Oh Christ, nothing's right. I wish I was back with Toine and the boys.

PAUL: You don't have to stay in the gutter just because you were born there.

PIAF: I feel out of place! I'm doing like what you said . . . trying to be a lady . . . [*She becomes aware of her own voice, and shrivels in her seat.*] . . . sorry, love . . .

PAUL: After all . . . [*takes a fastidious sip from his glass*] . . . after all, they don't want rubbish at the Palace.

PIAF [*screams*]: The Palace? The Palace? You rogue . . . you devil! He never said! He's bloody gone and done it and you never said! Is it true? Have I got it? The Palace? No . . . I don't believe it . . .

[*But he leads her to the microphone.*

[*She sings L'Accordéoniste.*

[*At the end, the MANAGER runs on and PIAF realizes that there is something wrong.*]

PIAF: Arrêtez . . . stop, stop the music.

[The MANAGER comes to the microphone.]

MANAGER: Ladies and gentlemen . . . ladies and gentlemen . . . countrymen . . . countrywomen . . . I have to tell you . . . it is war . . . war!

[He breaks momentarily into a large white handkerchief.

PIAF, excited, grabs the microphone.]

PIAF: Bloody Boche . . . not a good prick among 'em and I should know . . .

MANAGER: Piau, please! Ladies and gentlemen, in this solemn moment in the history of our –

PIAF [crowding the mike]: They do it all by numbers you know!

MANAGER: Piau, let go of the mike . . . ladies and gentlemen . . . our National Anthem . . .

PIAF [to the tune of King Farouk]: 'Make 'em squirt, make 'em puke, hang their bollocks on a hook . . .'

MANAGER [losing his cool]: Look, will you shut your fucking mouth . . . I've got the fucking King of Rumania over there! [And dies as he realizes that he is on sound.]

## SCENE VI

PIAF's apartment, sumptuous whorehouse furniture. TOINE enters, wearing clothes in the style of France in the Forties . . . huge hat, a sling bag, square-shouldered suit and wedge-heeled shoes. PIAF follows her on, removes a bottle of whisky from under her coat and puts it on a tray with two glasses.

TOINE: Yeah, he said he couldn't come on account of me not having big tits . . . he said if I had big tits he could come whenever he wanted.

PIAF: Give him the push.

TOINE: Funny, I like him. Usually I only like men with big feet . . . hey, that's real whisky, where'd you get it?

[PIAF gestures, tantalizing.]

TOINE: Is it a celebration or something . . . I know . . . somebody's having a birthday upstairs.

PIAF: It's nothing to do with Madame and the girls . . . [a knock] . . . listen . . . keep your trap shut and no messing about.

[Two GERMANS enter and click heels.]

PIAF: Help yourselves . . . [gestures at whisky] . . . make yourselves comfortable.

[The GERMANS fall with delight on the whisky.]

TOINE [cross]: I wondered what you wanted me for.

FIRST BOCHE: Mademozelle Piau, you are – gut singer!

SECOND BOCHE: Fabel hov! [He makes the girls jump.]

FIRST BOCHE: You are first wiz me. My friend also. We are seeing you in Amsterdam in '37.

PIAF [politely]: No shit?

[The SECOND BOCHE, having no French, murders a Piau song . . . the girls grimace puzzlement.]

PIAF [interrupting]: Yeah, well, wish we could offer you some grub . . . something to eat. Only we ain't got nothing. Nothing to eat . . . skint . . . hungry. [She makes chewing motions.

TOINE points graphically into her mouth.

PIAF digs in an elbow to quieten her.]

PIAF: Aren't you in the catering corps then? I thought you were in the catering corps . . . [She snatches the drink from him, gives it to TOINE, who knocks it back.] . . . share and share alike, that's our motto.

[The GERMANS confer hurriedly.]

FIRST BOCHE: Ach, I am the small gift forgetting.

[He lumbers off, returns staggering under an enormous crate of tins and bottles. TOINE is rabid with excitement, PIAF cool.]

SECOND BOCHE [plunging in and bringing out bottled fruit]: Gut? Gut?

PIAF: Gut.

TOINE: Gut!!

[The SECOND BOCHE takes off his belt and kneels to join TOINE, who is already at the bottled peaches.]

PIAF: Hey, tell you what . . . why don't you two boys nip upstairs? Madame and the girls are dying to give you a good time.

FIRST BOCHE [his jacket already unbuttoned]: Oh, but we was thinking –

PIAF [*with awesome dignity*]: Oh no. Me and my friend nottee whorees. We just live here because the old slag upstairs gets coal and grub from the Boche . . . I mean, our German allies . . .

TOINE: So's we don't freeze to death.

[*The disappointed GERMANS are thrust out, arguing to each other in German.*

*The girls shriek with laughter and fall on the tins.*]

[*mouth full*]: I've never seen so much grub in me life . . . peaches!

PIAF: Hey, hey . . . don't be so fucking greedy.

TOINE: I've only had two bits!

PIAF: You've had three!

TOINE: I haven't!

[*They pull the jar between them.*

GEORGES runs on, holding on to his trousers.]

GEORGES [*furious*]: Did you send those bloody Boche upstairs?

PIAF: Christ, I forgot it was Monday.

TOINE: What?

PIAF: She lets the Resistance in, for nothing.

TOINE: What's happened to your mates?

GEORGES: Gone out the window. I hope that bloody glass roof holds.

[*A sound of smashing glass . . . ending in a tinkle.*]

TOINE [*slight pause*]: They've fallen through.

GEORGES: Sharp as ever, Einstein.

PIAF: Oh, d'you want the photos?

GEORGES: What photos?

PIAF: The pictures . . . of me with the boys, you twit . . . from the prison camp. [*She hands them to him.*] You nearly got us into trouble . . . Jerry started getting nasty.

TOINE: Yeah, tell him where we hid the film! [*She cackles.*]

GEORGES [*riffling through shots*]: These are no fucking good.

PIAF: Why not?

GEORGES: They're all smiling, aren't they? We need mug shots.

You'll have to go again.

PIAF [*groans*]: Oh Christ.

GEORGES: Get your agent to fix another tour – as far as Jerry's

concerned you're clean. I want plenty of pictures with the boys, but steady face shots . . . and for Christ's sakes cut the funny stuff. There's half a million Frenchmen behind wire . . . how we s'posed to spring 'em without papers?

PIAF: All right, all right.

GEORGES: Well don't fuck about – it's people's lives!

PIAF: I know.

GEORGES: Fine bloody way to win a war.

TOINE: We got to eat.

PIAF [*giving him a generous bag of the tins*]: More than one way of winning, love.

GEORGES: Fuck 'em to death, you mean? [*He goes.*]

TOINE: How many you give him?

[*A man (BUTCHER) tries to enter.*]

BUTCHER: Hello, my lovelies . . . you gonna give me a good time?

PIAF [*laconic*]: Piss off.

TOINE [*laconic*]: You heard.

BUTCHER: I'm a wholesale butcher, love! Now you're not going to turn down a nice boy in the meat business, are you now?

TOINE [*helping herself liberally to tins*]: Oh well, time I was getting back anyway, Ede – you know, the war effort.

[*She goes off with the BUTCHER, his hand on her behind.*]

PIAF [*laughs*]: Honest, what you'll do for a bit of offal.

[*GEORGES enters.*]

PIAF: The answer's no – oh, it's you.

GEORGES: I thought, seeing as how I was here . . . one for the road?

PIAF: You gotta nerve.

GEORGES: Comforts for the troops, love. Don't want to go empty-handed, do I.

PIAF [*as they both begin to undress*]: Thought I was supposed to be rotten at the war effort.

GEORGES: Did I say that? [*He falls on her.*]

PIAF: Ouf . . . Christ . . . champagne and orchids with it!

[*They roll, laughing.*]

PIAF sings Hamburg.

*End of song. A young man, PIERRE, cycles across the stage.*

*He wheels, and calls to PIAF.]*

PIERRE: Hey . . .

PIAF: Yeah?

PIERRE: You're Edith Piaf, aren't you?

PIAF: D'you know, ever so many people say that!

PIERRE [*beginning to ride off*]: You really look like her . . . no kidding!

[PIAF laughs.]

PIERRE wheels round and skids back alongside her.]

You ARE Piaf!

PIAF: How d'you know?

PIERRE: The laugh!

PIAF [*worried*]: Here, what are you doing out on the streets?

PIERRE [*touching the side of his nose, conspiratorially*]: Ahah . . .

PIAF: You wanna be careful, kid. They'll pick you up.

PIERRE: I'm OK. [*Gets on his bike.*] Hey Piaf, after the war, can I be your agent?

PIAF [*laughs*]: What a nerve! Got any experience?

PIERRE: No, I've never worked . . . couldn't get a job. Does that rule me out?

PIAF: From being an agent? No.

PIERRE: Right then – see you after the war.

PIAF [*touching him up*]: Mind you, I got me own conditions.

PIERRE [*cheeky*]: Good! [*He goes.*]

PIAF: Bloody cheek.

## SCENE VII

PIAF's apartment. PIAF is on the phone.

PIAF: Look, I'm not touring with a bunch of hopheads . . . get a replacement!

[*She is distracted by TOINE who runs on, waving her arms.*]

What's the matter? – no, not you, hold on . . .

TOINE: Piaf, the war's over!

PIAF: No shit . . . [*Into the phone*] . . . and listen, I want a fire in

my dressing room . . . I'm getting those pains in my wrists again. Bad enough having to sit up all night in freezing cold trains. [*To TOINE, who stands in front of her, grinning foolishly*] What's the matter now? . . . not you, hang on . . .

TOINE: The war's over. Aren't you going to say nothing?

PIAF: What the fuck am I supposed to say? [*Into the phone*] Here, Henri, the war's over . . . so she says . . . [*To TOINE*] satisfied? [*To HENRI, on the phone*] Yeah, that's right, war's over – [*To TOINE*] Who's that little bloke plays sax . . .

[*TOINE shakes her head . . . PIAF speaks into phone.*]

Hullo . . . hullo . . . [*To TOINE*] . . . he's gone mad! Hullo . . .

Henri . . . what's the matter with you all? . . .

TOINE: Piaf, the –

PIAF: . . . did you get my fags?

TOINE: I was going to but I couldn't get through the crowds, they're all cheering and singing out there –

PIAF [*puzzled*]: Singing? Honest, fuck good you are . . . least thing and she sits on her ass – look, I'm trying to get a TOUR together! Why don't you just push off, you useless, washed-up whore?

TOINE: Edith . . .

PIAF: What?

TOINE: I don't want to say this, but you can be ever so rude sometimes.

PIAF: Oh Christ, now she's got the hump – and get my fags! [*Calls*] Singing? . . . who's singing?

TOINE: I keep trying to tell you . . . the WAR's over!

PIAF: No shit! Why ever didn't you say!

[*They run screaming into each other's arms . . . and then off. Sounds on the p/a . . . La Marseillaise . . . rifle shots . . . bells . . . singing and cheering.*]

Enter PIAF, GEORGES, MANAGER, TOINE, a SAILOR, arms linked . . . PIAF wears the SAILOR's hat. They sing Milord. At the last chorus they lurch off.

Their voices, off, on the fade to black.]

## SCENE VIII

*Josephine's nightclub. Placards, glamorous, of JOSEPHINE . . . one in army uniform. JOSEPHINE, in glamorous, narrow-skirted evening dress, appears at the microphone. She sings La petite Tonkinoise.*

*At the end of the song, she joins PIAF . . . PIAF pours her a drink.*

JOSEPHINE: OK?

PIAF: Fine, Dusky.

JOSEPHINE: Couldn't get above an E this morning.

PIAF: No, well, I've never believed in keeping the throat covered . . . weakens it.

JOSEPHINE: Can't say I've noticed!

PIAF [*laughs her throaty, inviting laugh*]: I can always make a sou fog-hailing, eh?

[*They laugh.*]

JOSEPHINE: So, how goes it?

PIAF: Great. Fine. [*But she is flat.*]

JOSEPHINE: I heard about your fee for the tour . . . good for us all, kid.

PIAF: When I get it.

JOSEPHINE: You'll love the States. [*No response.*] Wanna do a spot – come on, give me a break.

PIAF: Nah, you do your own singing.

JOSEPHINE: Like that, is it? [*Looks at PIAF shrewdly*] Uh-uh. I get it. Where's Gérard?

[*PIAF shrugs, pulling a face.*]

Look, I thought you two were supposed to be serious!

PIAF [*mutters*]: Who needs a fucking Duke?

JOSEPHINE: Don't be such an inverted snob! Listen, Gérard's good for you . . . you go to the country together, you're both off the juice, you were saying how much better you felt.

PIAF [*miserable*]: Well, you know how it is, Dusky.

JOSEPHINE: No, I don't . . . what you want to fuck up for? Look, PIAF, take it in your stride, girl. You're up there now. You've earned it . . . lie back and enjoy it.

[*PIAF shakes her head.*]

Look, you're not shit. Am I shit? When I first got taken to restaurants I'd piddle myself, *never* knew when they were gonna show me the door, you think *you've* had it rough . . . sister!

PIAF: Sure.

JOSEPHINE: Presidents . . . Princes . . . who gives a fuck, they're all made the same, I've known some serious men in my time, I'm telling you. Believe me, they appreciate being treated like human beings.

PIAF: Trouble with you, Dusk, is that you always see the best in people.

JOSEPHINE: Listen, Gérard's a great guy.

PIAF: Ever been to his place in the country – you've seen it . . . all the . . . books . . . furniture . . . paintings . . .

JOSEPHINE: Fantastic.

PIAF [*small pause*]: Most mornings . . . when we're down there . . . get up about two . . . he has some champagne and a shower . . . shaves himself. Then he comes down to the big drawing room, the one with the blue Aubusson . . . rings the bell – and I come in dressed as the housemaid with me tits hanging out.

JOSEPHINE: Sounds like fun.

PIAF: I give him his coffee. Then he craps on the carpet.

JOSEPHINE: You're kidding!

PIAF: No I'm not . . . big deal it's not on my face. Some poor sod of a gardener comes in to clean up after him, get the stains out . . . he spends the rest of the afternoon on his knees, praying. The maids Hoover round him.

JOSEPHINE: Is he nuts?

PIAF: You wouldn't think so, watch him playing the market. No, I've never been taken with the so-called aristocracy – not since an old mate of mine come up before a bloke she'd been with the night before and he gave her thirty days.

JOSEPHINE: You did the right thing. He should use the john.

PIAF: Yeah. I'm on me own again, though.

JOSEPHINE: Listen, who needs it?

PIAF: I do. You must have somebody – what's it all for?

JOSEPHINE: You wanna meet some real class?

PIAF: Who?

JOSEPHINE: Marcel.

PIAF: Marcel? Not Mar— you mean you know, him . . . you know the Champ?

[JOSEPHINE takes PIAF's wineglass from her, smiles and leaves.]

*Light change.*

PIAF, *downstage, on her feet, like a boxer.*

. . . kill him, kill him . . . give it to him, let him have it . . . oh no . . . oh no . . . stop him . . . Marcel! Come on . . . come on . . . get back in there . . . come on, love . . . let him have it . . . go on . . . go on! Ah! . . . that's it . . . that's it . . . you're on the way . . . the Champ! The Champ!!!

## SCENE IX

PIAF's bedroom. The music of Mon Dieu . . . soft. PIAF and MARCEL in friendly, post-coital mood.

PIAF: I wish you could have seen me when I was a kid, I had lovely little tits.

MARCEL: They look all right to me.

PIAF [*touching her jawline*]: I'm losing me teeth, too . . . and I'm going here . . . [*touches under her chin*]. Let's see yours. [*She inspects his mouth.*] Christ, Aladdin's cave! Ain't you got none of your own, Marce, must have cost you a fortune!

MARCEL: You're better without 'em . . . take 'em out, put 'em in a glass, I'm not going to get me cheeks cut, am I?

PIAF: Yeah, like the little daft kids, in the home I was in. They pull out all their teeth, so's they won't bite each other.

[*They nod, dwell for a beat.*]

They can't enjoy an apple, you know. [*She feels his arm.*] Champ.

MARCEL: I'm just a guy with a fist, Edith.

PIAF: No, you're not. You're the best — oh, I've helped fighters

spend it. Not you though, eh? We go shopping, it's for your old lady and the kids, I don't know why I put up with it.

MARCEL: I'd marry you if I could, Edie.

PIAF: You're the faithful sort, love.

MARCEL: I don't feel too good about it. Well, what sort of a life is it for her, stuck at home with the kids?

PIAF: Better than any woman in the world. Except me. I've got this, haven't I? I think I will have these lifted . . . all the stars are doing it.

MARCEL: What you want to get cut for, why take the risk?

PIAF: You do.

MARCEL: That's different. Mind you . . .

PIAF: Mmm?

MARCEL: We-ell, they think you don't give a bugger.

PIAF: What do you mean?

MARCEL: I had a guv'nor once . . . greedy bugger . . . I was only a lad . . . put you in anything. Somebody down the gym said . . . he'd fixed up this bout for me . . . 'his face is going to be plum jam, you know' — 'Oh, we don't care what we look like,' he says, 'just so long as the money's right.' 'We.'

PIAF: Christ.

MARCEL: He was right about the money.

[*She looks at him.*]

You don't do it for love, kiddo. On your own there all right . . . in the ring, I mean.

PIAF: Yeah, I know.

[*He looks at her.*]

Well, I don't mean I'm gonna get me head bashed in . . . not unless I'm dead unlucky . . . still . . . it's the same every time . . . just before you go on. Never mind what they've said to you in the dressing room — your mates . . . that walk to the fucking mike . . . it's from here to Rome. [*Slight pause*] And if you fuck it — well, you can't say . . . hang on, loves, mind if I have another go — well, I have been known to.

[*They laugh.*]

No. Even worse if it's gone off well.

MARCEL: How do you mean?

PIAF

PIAF: You don't want it to end. Show over . . . you're on your own again.

*[They have both expressed more than is usual for them. Baffled, they are silent. He plays with her fingers.]*

PIAF [*low*]: Don't go.

MARCEL: I must, love.

PIAF: Get an earlier plane back. For me. Please?

MARCEL [*kisses her*]: All right, kid. Just for you.

*[He kisses her again, a long, loving embrace.*

*The music of Mon Dieu becomes very loud, ending in a drumroll.*

MARCEL leaves abruptly.

*Light change.*

PIAF stands alone, to the reverberation of deep notes sustained on piano and accordion.]

PIAF [*dazed, as if waking from a dream*]: Marcel?

*[PIAF sings La belle histoire d'amour.]*

|| ACT II ||

SCENE I

PIAF's dressing room in New York. PIAF . . . off . . . singing Si tu partais. Some applause. Pause.

PIAF enters, fast, whisky bottle in one hand, slopping glass in the other.

PIAF [*on the move, muttering to herself*]: . . . fuck me . . . I don't fucking believe it – OUT! . . . oh, it's you.

*[PIERRE appears.]*

Don't say anything.

PIERRE: Piaf, there's nothing that can't be fixed. A change of repertoire, that's all.

PIAF: OK, so they play off the fucking beat, that's all they can do . . . it's like singing in a morgue –

PIERRE: I think you should –

PIAF: I'm going home. I must have been daft – why the fuck d'you put me up for it? I should have listened to Maurice, I should have done that film. We're going to be right down the sluice.

PIERRE: Not necessarily.

PIAF: Don't be so daft.

PIERRE: We've got signed contracts . . . coast to coast – and a return spot here.

PIAF: Bollocks.

PIERRE: We're contracted, Edith!

PIAF: When were you born, kid?

PIERRE: I'm telling you –

PIAF: No, no, no . . . listen . . . look . . . look, love, it's not worth – asspaper!



PIERRE: If the Yanks want to renege on their contractual obligations it's going to cost them money. They're legally contracted!

PIAF [*short laugh*]: You got a lot to learn. Look, Pierrot, what do you think the law is? What do you . . . who do you think it's for? People like us? People who make the laws do it for their own use. The contract that can't be split down the middle doesn't exist. They don't want us, we don't play. Believe me. Fact of life.

[*A knock.*]

I don't want to SEE anybody!

[*It is JOSEPHINE, shining, glamorous, and full of vitality.*]

PIERRE: It's Jo . . .

[*She waves to PIERRE, swoops on PIAF, embraces her, then inspects her.*]

JOSEPHINE: Fuck up, huh?

PIAF: Are you kidding?

JOSEPHINE: Sure, we have to go to work.

PIAF: I'm going home. [*To PIERRE*] Book the flights, love.

JOSEPHINE: Over my dead body. [*She jerks her head at PIERRE.*]

PIERRE: Piaf, I think you should listen. [*He goes.*]

JOSEPHINE: We'll talk about it.

PIAF [*drinking*]: I don't know what I'm supposed to be celebrating.

Long time since I got the bloody bird – shave under me armpits next time.

JOSEPHINE [*laughs*]: That's better!

PIAF: They don't know what I'm singing about half the time.

Anyway, who wants to see some little cunt looking like a war widow when they can have Doris Day.

JOSEPHINE: Stop putting yourself down.

PIAF: Perhaps I should sex it up a bit.

JOSEPHINE: Over my dead body.

PIAF: All right for you, Dusky, you don't have the same problems.

JOSEPHINE [*dry*]: You think so?

PIAF: Let's face it, I didn't start out with what you've got.

JOSEPHINE: Neither did I, kid. Come on . . . you don't have to fall for all that glamour stuff . . . you're the real thing!

PIAF: Oh, sod that . . . where's it got me?

JOSEPHINE: You're not out of a sixpack – mind your language.

PIAF: Sorry.

JOSEPHINE: And lay off that.

PIAF: Keeps me going.

JOSEPHINE: Not for long.

PIAF: Anyway, what's the point? One sentence. 'Get an earlier plane.'

JOSEPHINE: Honey, you have to get over it. You know you do.

PIAF: Yeah. [*But she turns her head away.*]

JOSEPHINE: Now don't start crying again. Tich – come on! You'll ruin your eyes for the late show.

PIAF: I'm not going out there again! I'm all on me own, you know.

JOSEPHINE: That's not true and you know it. [*She hands PIAF a handkerchief.*]

PIAF *snivels and sniffs, then blows her nose with a snort into the handkerchief and hands it back to JOSEPHINE.*

PIAF [*tragic*]: I wasn't always on me own.

JOSEPHINE [*apart, she knows what's coming*]: Oh shit. [*To PIAF, soothing*] I know, baby, I know.

PIAF: I ever tell you about my little girl?

JOSEPHINE: Sure. Lotsa times. Poor little Georgette.

PIAF [*firmly*]: Natalie.

JOSEPHINE: Didn't you tell me –

PIAF [*a quelling glance*]: Died in my arms. Didn't cry! – well, she was a real little lady, genuine *Marquis*, her father . . .

JOSEPHINE: No kidding. [*Accepts PIAF's fanciful mood.*]

PIAF: Over a year I nursed that kiddie . . . like a little angel, she was . . .

JOSEPHINE: Ah . . .

PIAF: . . . blue eyes . . . fair curly hair . . . like Shirley Temple only . . . you know – pretty. [*Sighs*] I was only a slip of a thing meself . . . barely out of convent.

JOSEPHINE: You're not kidding.

PIAF: Never left her side – well, except to go to the lav, of course.

JOSEPHINE: Sure, sure.

PIAF: I mean . . .

JOSEPHINE: Oh sure.

PIAF: Only just made it back when she snuffed it.  
 JOSEPHINE: My God . . .  
 PIAF: I mean . . . you'd never forgive yourself.  
 JOSEPHINE: Right. [*Lifts her glass.*] Here's to little Natalie!  
 PIAF: Who? [*Caught out, she breaks up.*  
*They laugh.*]  
 [*Growls*] Well, what did they expect? I know what they wanted – some crap with a feather up its ass. Like hell – I'm Piaf!  
 JOSEPHINE: That's better!  
 PIAF: When I go on to do a song, it's me that comes on. They get the lot.  
 JOSEPHINE: Sure.  
 PIAF: They see what they're getting – everything I got.  
 JOSEPHINE: Sure . . . but learn how to save it.  
 PIAF: Nah.  
 JOSEPHINE: Kid, you can't have an orgasm every single time you walk on stage.  
 PIAF: *I can.*  
 JOSEPHINE: No you can't. Nobody can. Nobody peaks all the time. Technique, baby! Trust it. Let it work for you. That way you don't exhaust yourself all the time. You're going to do great here – OK, some changes . . .  
 [*PIAF shakes her head.*]  
 . . . they want you! Highest paid woman singer in the world, that talks!  
 PIAF: Oh, fuck the money.  
 JOSEPHINE: Oh, sure we go out there because we want to be loved . . . like all those other myths from people who never gave one ounce of themselves . . . what do they know?  
 PIAF: They know when they want you. [*Slight pause*] Nah, it's not the money . . . they couldn't PRINT enough for the way we feel – I've seen you shaking away in the wings. Singing ditties? That's just the fucking tourist trade. No . . . when I'm out there – it's got to happen. Doesn't happen . . . terrible.  
 JOSEPHINE: I know what you mean.  
 PIAF: The trouble is, I'm off my own patch here . . . that's where it's going wrong.

JOSEPHINE: Good . . . you're beginning to work, that's my baby.  
 PIAF: OK . . . give it a whirl . . . just for you, Dusk.  
 [*They embrace to seal the deal.*]  
 JOSEPHINE: Listen, promise me something.  
 PIAF: For you, anything.  
 JOSEPHINE: I'm serious. This is a big country. Take care of yourself.  
 PIAF: OK.  
 JOSEPHINE: I mean it.  
 PIAF: Sure . . . Mom.  
 [*They laugh.*]  
 JOSEPHINE: We'll do the town . . . have a great time – hey, would you like to meet Harry Truman? He's about your size.  
 PIAF: So I noticed.  
 JOSEPHINE: Listen, he's a sharp fellow and tells a mean story, no flies . . .  
 PIAF: Sure . . . bring on the natives!

## SCENE II

*A bar. Two American SAILORS, in their cups, and a BARMAN. PIAF sitting between the SAILORS on a bar stool . . . she is wearing a cocktail hat and a short silver-fox jacket over her black dress.*

PIAF: Hi boys . . . what are you drinking?  
 FIRST SAILOR: Shorty! Where've you been all my life?  
 PIAF [*blenching good-naturedly at the whisky on his breath*]:  
 Make it doubles.  
 [*The BARMAN obliges.*]  
 FIRST SAILOR: Thanks, ma'am.  
 SECOND SAILOR [*a very loud whoop*]: Whoo-hoo!  
 FIRST SAILOR: So what's a fancy little lady like you doing in a joint like this?  
 PIAF: You'd be amazed.  
 SECOND SAILOR: Here's looking at you, kid.  
 PIAF [*to BARMAN*]: Got a room upstairs?

[*He nods, she throws a note on his tray.*]

So, how about it, boys?

SECOND SAILOR: Anything you say, little lady, anything you say.

FIRST SAILOR: Lead me, lady . . . lead me.

[*PIAF gets up . . . the FIRST SAILOR follows her. The SECOND SAILOR lags, rejected.*]

PIAF: What are you waiting for?

SECOND SAILOR: You mean, me too, ma'am?

PIAF: If I'm giving lessons I may as well take the whole class.

[*The BARMAN puts down his cloth and follows them off purposefully.*]

## SCENE III

PIAF's apartment in Paris. Partly furnished . . . there is a sofa, a small table, two usable chairs . . . and furniture unpacked.

MADELEINE enters stage left as PIAF enters stage right, a mink coat over her shoulder and carrying a bouquet of flowers. She is followed by LUCIEN, much younger than PIAF. He wears clothes au courant for the Fifties. His manner is wire tight.

MADELEINE: Piaf . . . you're back! We were coming to meet you!

PIAF: Caught an earlier plane.

[*She takes off her coat, drops it on the floor . . . MADELEINE picks it up.*]

Nice place. I like it.

MADELEINE: It was jolly difficult finding an apartment with seven bedrooms – you did say seven?

PIAF: Sure – Lucien here likes a change of view every night.

MADELEINE [*baffled*]: Oh I see.

PIAF: . . . Nah, it's for his group. There's seven of them, eight including me . . . I'm gonna put these boys on the map! Did you get that big fridge?

MADELEINE [*faintly*]: Will you *all* be dining at home?

PIAF: Nah, just for snacks . . . cheese, hamburgers, Seven-Up,

they're growing lads – oh and cornflakes . . . they're *very* into cornflakes. Go on, Lucien . . . read me the notices . . . ah, look at his dear little bum.

[*MADELEINE goes.*]

PIAF *sits, helping herself to a drink.*

LUCIEN *picks up the papers and reads.*]

LUCIEN: 'At first sight you wonder . . . this dumpy little woman with the big forehead . . .'

PIAF [*growsl*]: It's not that big . . .

LUCIEN: '. . . black dress, pale, agitated hands . . .'

PIAF: Christ . . .

LUCIEN: '. . . then she opens her mouth . . . sounds like you never heard . . . a cat mewing on the tiles . . . the ecstasy of morning . . . they are all here.'

PIAF: Do you wanna touch me up?

LUCIEN [*putting a hand inside her dress and reading a new notice*]: 'How is it possible to listen to one woman singing twenty songs in a foreign language, and find one's face wet with tears at the end? There is only one word for it – genius. And that genius is Piaf.'

PIAF [*growsl*]: That'll be Alain, bugger owes me money. Go on.

LUCIEN [*a new notice*]: 'The voice, rising like the slanting sun from the floating bric-à-brac of the Seine on a warm spring morning, fuses the backbone. She sings of love. She sings of sexual treachery . . . of unhappiness . . . of being made helpless by love. She sings of being alone, and of feeling bad . . . and we can't bear it for her.'

PIAF [*abruptly*]: Who wrote that? [*She jerks round, slopping her drink.*]

*He fumbles with the page.*]

Christ, can't you read now? [*Gets up and stumps off.*] Bloody kids . . . can't even get myself a decent man.

LUCIEN [*mutters*]: Piaf, you know how I feel about you.

PIAF: Yes, I'm your fucking meal-ticket. Well, where would you be without me . . . eh?

LUCIEN: Nowhere.

PIAF: Right . . . and don't you forget it.

LUCIEN: Piau, let's not get in a fight . . .

PIAF: Who said you could call me Piau? Who said you could call me Piau?

LUCIEN [*totally confused*]: What do you want me to call you?

PIAF: It's Madame to you, and don't you forget it.

LUCIEN: Even when we're fucking?

PIAF: Especially when we're fucking. Madeleine . . . Madeleine! Where is that middle-class bitch?

MADELEINE [*behind her, good-humouredly*]: Piau, I wish you wouldn't speak to me like that.

[LUCIEN *grimaces behind PIAF's back and makes his exit, taking the bags.*

PIAF *catches his exit.*]

PIAF [*calls after him*]: Hey, park the car! And don't forget to give the dog his enema! [*To MADELEINE*] What do you think of him?

MADELEINE: The young man?

PIAF: Yeah . . . Lucien . . . me new feller.

MADELEINE: He's very good-looking.

PIAF: You can say that again. We really get it on together. Cold little prick. I said –

MADELEINE: I heard you, Piau.

PIAF: Yeah, well, he'll do till I trade him up. Always set up your next trick before you shove in the icepick.

MADELEINE: Come and lie down.

PIAF: There was a guy on the plane I fancied but he was Australian – you gotta draw the line.

[*She allows MADELEINE to tuck her up on the sofa.*]

MADELEINE: You'd be much more comfortable in bed.

PIAF: Nah, can't sleep if I try – got any tablets?

[MADELEINE *already has the bottle in her hand. She tips out two tablets but PIAF reaches up, snatches the bottle and tips it into her mouth, taking a swig of whisky.*]

MADELEINE: Piau, that's too many!

[*Too late. She makes PIAF comfortable and walks off.*]

PIAF: Madeleine?

MADELEINE: Yes?

PIAF: I want full coverage for this opening . . . I'm gonna put these boys on the map.

MADELEINE: It's all taken care of. [*She makes to go.*]

PIAF: Rub the back of me neck for me.

MADELEINE: Do you want Gordon?

PIAF: I don't want to know how many times he's been raped this month . . . you do it.

[MADELEINE *returns and massages PIAF's shoulders. PIAF winces.*]

MADELEINE: Try to relax. [*She continues.*]

PIAF [*after a pause*]: I still miss him, you know.

MADELEINE: I beg your pardon?

PIAF [*angry*]: I said I still miss him . . . Marcel! [*She rises.*]

MADELEINE: I know, Piau . . . I know.

PIAF: Not that we'd have made it. He'd never have left his wife. He was lovely. Hate being on me own, without a feller. What do you do?

MADELEINE: Sorry?

PIAF: You're on your own, what do you do, d'you see yourself off?

MADELEINE: Do I have to answer that?

PIAF [*raps*]: Yes.

MADELEINE: Very well. I have a little dog.

[PIAF *laughs.*]

PIAF: St Bernard?

MADELEINE: Chihuahua.

PIAF: Serves me right, eh?

MADELEINE: Come and lie down.

PIAF: No, I asked for that. You got a right to your own life, love.

MADELEINE: Let me tuck you in.

PIAF: Sure. You got a lot to do.

[MADELEINE *tucks a rug over PIAF and goes.*]

PIAF: Madeleine!

MADELEINE [*reappears*]: What's the matter?

PIAF: I'm lonely!

[MADELEINE *crosses, sits with PIAF.*

PIAF *falls asleep.*

MADELEINE *rises carefully, but PIAF grabs her.*]

Caught you out . . . where you going?  
 MADELEINE: I *must* get some sleep.  
 PIAF: You must, what about me? Get somebody on the phone . . .  
 get Eddie.  
 MADELEINE: Piaf, it's five o'clock in the morning.  
 PIAF: So what? Get Jean-Claude.  
 MADELEINE: He's on tour.  
 PIAF: What about Guy . . . Eddie . . . get Lucille, I must have  
 somebody.  
 MADELEINE: I could try Hélène.  
 PIAF: That fat bitch. I know, get old Toine, she's good for a laugh  
 . . . my old mate from Belleville – get Toine.  
 MADELEINE: Before my time, I think.  
 PIAF: Well find her. Fucking friends, never here when you want  
 them . . . find old Toine . . .  
*[She is confused with drowsiness.*  
 MADELEINE *turns, as PIAF falls asleep again, to welcome*  
 TOINE, *who enters in coat and headscarf.*]  
 TOINE: Ede?  
 MADELEINE: Oh please don't wake her, she has such trouble  
 sleeping.  
 TOINE: Who, Ede? Sleeps like a horse.  
 MADELEINE [*low*]: Would you care to wait . . . I know she's dying  
 to see you.  
 TOINE: What for?  
 MADELEINE: After all the trouble we had finding you.  
 TOINE: You wouldn't have got me usually, but I'm on the early  
 shift. Then I had to wait for a train.  
 MADELEINE: I'll get you something.  
*[She goes.*  
 TOINE *crosses to PIAF, looks down at her before sitting.*]  
 TOINE: Christ, what's happened to you?  
*[She looks round at the apartment in aggressive awe, jumps*  
*slightly as MADELEINE returns with a tray. TOINE knocks*  
*back a glass of wine in one.]*  
 MADELEINE: Would you care for some coffee?  
 TOINE: No thanks, upsets me liver. Who are you, then?

MADELEINE: I'm Madame's secretary.  
 TOINE: Christ. Not the hostess?  
 MADELEINE: Ah, no – not the hostess.  
 TOINE: How many rooms she got here?  
 MADELEINE: This floor and the one above.  
 TOINE [*outraged*]: Two whole floors?  
*[MADELEINE refills her glass.]*  
 MADELEINE: You and . . . ah . . . Madame are old friends, I  
 believe?  
 TOINE: Yeah. We was on the road together. I'm a . . . performer.  
 MADELEINE: I see. What do you –  
 TOINE [*quickly*]: Well, I'm retired now.  
 MADELEINE: I see.  
 TOINE [*quickly*]: So you wouldn't have heard of me. [*Expands,*  
*undoes her coat*] So, you're the secretary?  
 MADELEINE: Ah, yes.  
 TOINE: Typing, that sort of thing?  
 MADELEINE: I look after Madame's affairs.  
 TOINE: Christ. [*She appraises MADELEINE.*] Been here long?  
 MADELEINE [*hesitates*]: No, not long.  
 TOINE: Hmm. Get on with her all right, do you?  
 MADELEINE [*fatal slight pause*]: Oh yes.  
 TOINE: Humph.  
*[PIAF stirs, coughs, sees TOINE.]*  
 PIAF: What the fuck are you doing here?  
 TOINE: She said you wanted to see me.  
 PIAF: Christ Almighty! [*Glaring up at MADELEINE*] I must have  
 some fucking privacy!  
*[Glares at them both, exits, coughing.]*  
 TOINE [*to herself, ironic*]: Thanks.  
 MADELEINE: Tch, I'm so sorry.  
 TOINE: Ah, don't worry about it, she can be *ever* so rude some-  
 times – look, are you gonna pay my fare?  
 MADELEINE: Of course. [*Exits for money.*]  
 PIAF [*enters*]: And where's the fucking gargle? Where's she gone?  
 And where the hell did you spring from?  
 TOINE: I got off early to see you.

PIAF: Well, you might as well sit down now you're here. [*Takes a drink, feels better.*] How's the kiddie?  
 TOINE: I got two more now.  
 PIAF: You got three kids . . . never . . . I don't believe it!  
 TOINE: You would if you 'ad 'em.  
 PIAF: What's your husband do now?  
 TOINE: Warehouseman. Sanitary supplies.  
 PIAF: All right for hygiene then?  
 [*Hiatus. They don't know what to say to each other.*]  
 TOINE: Course what he'd really like is a little place of his own.  
 There's a little bar down the road going cheap.  
 PIAF: Oh yeah? [*She can see it coming.*]  
 TOINE: Yeah . . . guy shot hisself. All it needs is a coat of paint.  
 PIAF: I'll come round and have a look.  
 TOINE: Would you? I been following you in the papers. I cut it out.  
 PIAF: You don't want to believe all that. It's not all fun and games.  
 TOINE: Go on, you must be rolling in it.  
 PIAF: D'you want to meet Errol Flynn?  
 TOINE: Get away!  
 PIAF: No, I mean it. He's taking me to the ballet – I'll introduce you.  
 TOINE: No! Really? I'll have to go home and change – get a babysitter . . .  
 PIAF: Oh, never mind all that. Come on, I'll drive you round there in me new Porsche.  
 TOINE: Yoohoo! Hang on. You can't drive.  
 PIAF: Who says I can't . . . haven't tried yet, have I? Here . . . [*To MADELEINE*] you gonna lend her that fur jacket I give you?  
 [*Calls, going off with TOINE*] Bring it!  
 [*MADELEINE stands, the money in her hand.*]

## SCENE IV

*A hospital waiting room, festive and expensive. A young man (JEAN) in a bright blue suit walks up and down impatiently. He carries a huge bunch of flowers, a bumper box of chocolates and an enormous pink teddy bear.*

*A NURSE enters . . . he approaches her urgently.*

JEAN: How is she, how is she?  
 NURSE [*arch*]: Patience, patience!  
 JEAN: When can I see her?  
 NURSE: It won't be long now. [*She goes.*  
*He walks up and down, smoking, agitated. He turns as PIAF enters, assisted by the NURSE. Her head is swathed in bandages and she has two sticks.*]  
 PIAF: Oh, look who's here . . . only the pisser who tried to finish me off . . .  
 JEAN: Darling!  
 PIAF [*swiping at him with stick*]: Get him out!  
 NURSE: Steady, Madame, steady . . .  
 PIAF: Fucking murderer!  
 JEAN: What do you mean! You're the one told me to step on it!  
 PIAF: Got it all worked out, have you? He thought he was going to cop the lot, the dibs –  
 JEAN: Are you joking, I was making more in hotel-management!  
 [*PIAF takes another swipe at him and they both howl with pain.*]  
 NURSE: Madame . . . Madame, please . . . !  
 JEAN: I got rights, you know, I am your husband!  
 PIAF: Don't you start! [*And she grapples with him, going for him with fists and feet.*]  
 NURSE [*trying to intervene*]: Madame – Monsieur!  
 PIAF: Piss off! [*to NURSE*]  
 JEAN: Stay out of this!  
 [*He starts to beat PIAF up. She makes a terrible noise and the NURSE runs for the DOCTOR. A melee.*]  
 DOCTOR: Madame, control yourself!  
 PIAF [*turning on him*]: Fucking do you, for a start!  
 DOCTOR: Ow! Out . . . out, the pair of you . . . what do you think this is, a giraffe-pit?  
 [*The NURSE and the DOCTOR attempt to remove JEAN and PIAF.*]  
 JEAN [*nursing his wounds*]: Aw!

PIAF: Get off, you fucking poxer – [*reels, in pain*] Christ, my head!  
 [*Instinctively, the DOCTOR and NURSE go to her assistance.*]  
 You'll have to give me something . . . [*collapsing on to her bum  
 on to the floor, legs splayed.*  
*They help her to a seat.*]

JEAN [*still in pain, but disregarded*]: Aw!

DOCTOR [*to PIAF*]: Sit down. [*But he sighs sentimentally over  
 PIAF's furious visage, and kisses his fingers to her.*] You may,  
 Madame, be a vicious and foul-mouthed slut . . . but I salute the  
 artistry – ow! [*as PIAF clouts him*]

PIAF [*to JEAN, who guffaws at the DOCTOR's discomfort*]: Out!

JEAN [*to DOCTOR*]: Salute who you fucking well like, mate . . .  
 I've just lost me bloody investment . . . aw . . . [*Groans as he  
 hobbles off.*]

DOCTOR: I think she's broken my finger.

PIAF: Up yours, are you gonna give me – oh . . . [*mollified as the  
 DOCTOR injects her*] . . . aw . . . ahhh . . .

DOCTOR: Feeling better?

[*He helps her to her feet . . . the lights begin to go as they  
 leave, the NURSE following with the sticks.*]

PIAF [*pauses.*]

PIAF: Hey, d'you hear the one about the man who won an elephant  
 in a drinking contest? He takes it home, ties it up outside his  
 house, next morning, bang-bang on the door – neighbour. 'Hey,  
 is that your elephant?' 'Yer.' 'Well it's just fucked my cat.'  
 'What, you mean like this?' [*PIAF mimes screwing, rocking her  
 hips.*] 'No, like this.' [*PIAF stamps one foot.*]

*She and the DOCTOR laugh heartily on the fade . . . not so the  
 NURSE who is shocked at this lèse majesté with the DOCTOR.*]

## SCENE V

*Rehearsal studio. A PIANIST strums.*

PIERRE and the MANAGER enter separately.

MANAGER: Good to see you.

PIERRE [*puts hat and briefcase on piano*]: Long time.

MANAGER: Sit down, take the weight off your feet. Any idea of  
 . . . only I said ten-thirty because naturally I didn't expect to see  
 you till about now.

PIERRE: She'll be along. Car's probably on its way. She was up  
 when I rang.

[*Slight pause*]

MANAGER: So, how's it going?

PIERRE: Very well, very well.

MANAGER: Plenty of money coming in?

PIERRE: Oh yes.

MANAGER: I should think you earn your screw, son. You've stayed  
 the distance – how d'you manage it?

PIERRE: We get along all right.

MANAGER: She does what she wants, you mean.

PIERRE: No, no . . . there's give and take.

MANAGER: Wouldn't do for me. There's only one thing to do with  
 a woman who makes trouble.

PIERRE: What? . . . make love to her, you mean?

MANAGER: No. Hit 'em in the face.

PIERRE: What?

MANAGER: They don't like that.

PIERRE: I see.

MANAGER: Couple of clips round the kisser, kid, you'd have no  
 trouble at all.

[*PIERRE gets up, moves away.*]

What about songs?

PIERRE: Couple of new ones. Really good.

MANAGER: Hmm. Now, about this latest idea . . .

PIERRE: Oh come on . . . you know how she is. It's worked before.  
 She is a professional – where the work's concerned she's the best  
 in the bloody world, now you know that. Where else could you  
 fill this bloody barn without back-up artists . . . she's always  
 been a good thing from that point of view.

MANAGER: I pay for it . . .

PIERRE: Sure, sure. We can come to an agreement. Look, if it keeps  
 her happy, that's all that matters.

MANAGER: Yeah, well, I was sorry to hear about the latest accident. Did she get my flowers?

PIERRE: Yes. Thanks.

MANAGER: You were lucky, that lad might have killed her. How's she looking, by the way . . . has she recovered?

PIERRE [*carefully*]: Oh yes. She's looking fine.

MANAGER: No scars?

PIERRE: No, no, she looks great. She's in love again . . .

MANAGER: Only I must have sophistication . . . my audiences demand it –

[PIAF enters at the rush, a bulging handbag under one arm. She wears an untidy, very dirty bandage around her head, from under which her hair pokes, greasy and ludicrous. She is slightly pot-bellied in a dirty pink jumper. The MANAGER blenches.]

PIAF: Hello, Henry, me old fruit . . . still the stiffest prick in Paris?

[The MANAGER is entirely unable to answer.]

How am I? Go on – say it . . . I look like an old ratbag! Never mind . . . wait till you see what I got for you! . . . where is he? . . . where's he gone? Angelo . . . Angelo! – oh, there you are. The audition's in here, love, not in the bloody lav. He's a bit nervous.

[ANGELO has entered. He is tall and handsome, despite the cowboy suit and boots.

PIAF throws herself down . . . leaving ANGELO stranded centrestage.]

How about that, then!

[The MANAGER, lost for words, turns his back for a moment.]

[To ANGELO]: Go on, love . . . go on.

ANGELO [*slight Italian accent*]: You want I should sing?

PIAF: Yeah.

ANGELO: Sing now . . .

PIAF: Well that is the general idea.

[ANGELO takes a creased brown paper bag from his pocket, removes a battered piece of sheet music, crosses, hands it to PIANIST, who looks at it with a sneer . . . turning it

over dismissively. He chews gum as ANGELO whispers instructions.]

PIERRE: When you're ready, kid.

[ANGELO takes centrestage. He takes a stance, Italian fashion . . . nods wildly at the PIANIST and launches into Deep in the heart of Texas, with an attempt at an American accent, and gestures. The PIANIST finishes, but ANGELO does a repeat phrase, so the PIANIST tries to pick it up, a fatal beat behind. ANGELO finishes, holding a 'yippee' stance. PIAF, grinning broadly, claps enthusiastically.]

PIAF: What did you think of that, Henry!

[A silence. The MANAGER, caught between shock and hilarity, can find no words. He bends his head, shakes it wisely . . . looks back and forth, avoiding her eye.]

Well?

MANAGER [*another pause*]: Pif . . . Pif – he's a nice-looking boy. Have him. You deserve a break – no, I really mean that.

PIAF: And?

MANAGER: Oh please . . . [And hilarity overcomes him . . . laughs, wiping his eyes.

PIAF turns to find PIERRE and the PIANIST doubled over with laughter.]

PIAF: Pierrot?

[But PIERRE bursts out laughing.]

What's the matter with you all . . . what's so fucking funny?

[Makes to attack PIANIST] I'll do you for a start . . .

[He ducks . . . PIERRE restrains her.]

PIERRE: Pif . . . you promised!

PIAF: All right! All right. But you're wrong . . . the lot of you.

PIERRE: He can't sing, love!

PIAF: What's that got to do with it?

MANAGER: Pif, we're not talking about his cock.

PIAF: Aren't you? Aren't you? Then you bloody well should be.

ANGELO: Darling . . . please . . .

PIAF: Shut up. Look at him, take a look! Six foot tall, good hairline, good nose . . . look at his thighs! OK, the suit's a joke, even I can see that. But put him in something decent . . . give him the right



material, the girls'll go mad. He's a fucking Eyetie, for God's sake! I know – ballads . . . he needs *ballads!* *O Sole Mio* . . . *O Sole Mio*, pet . . .

ANGELO: No, no . . .

PIAF: Come on, love . . . give 'em the old *bon giorno*.

ANGELO: Is not right . . . is too square.

PIAF: Nah, nah, come on, trust me . . . I know what I'm doing!

*[She begins to hum it.*

*He breaks into the song . . . and sings gloriously. When he reaches the high bit she cuts him off.]*

OK, OK – there, you see . . . see what I mean? When he forgets to perform, he's *lovely!* He's a winner! *[But there is no response.]* Oh, fucking men. *[No response]* All right, if it's down to me . . . I'll whack in thirty per cent. *[No response]* Fifty.

PIERRE: Piaf!

PIAF: Shut up . . . whose side are you on!

PIERRE: All right. OK.

*[He leaves, with the MANAGER.*

*Light change.*

PIAF *helps* ANGELO *into a new jacket, changes his tie.]*

PIAF: What's the matter?

ANGELO *[restless]*: I don't know.

PIAF: I do. You feel out of place.

ANGELO: I don't belong here.

PIAF: Nobody does, love.

ANGELO: What am I doing here . . . I'm a labourer!

PIAF: This is work, too, you know – we've worked hard, haven't we?

*[He shrugs, unconvinced.]*

I bet your stomach never felt like that on the building site, eh?

*[He grins briefly.*

*She pursues her advantage.]*

Look, all those bloody union meetings you go to . . . make a name, you can use it how you want . . . but you got to make a name first.

ANGELO: As a singer?

PIAF: Yeah, daft innit, but that's how it works.

*[He shakes his head.]*

And don't stand there feeling guilty because you're in the money . . . sort it out for yourself – anyway, wait till you've seen as many damp, shitty dressing rooms as I have, *and* all the rest.

ANGELO: I miss my mates.

PIAF: Me too . . . me too. Sometimes I nip out, do a bit of street singing . . . just to keep me hand in. I heard a woman say once: 'Hey, she sounds like Edith Piaf' and the other one said, 'Trying to.'

*[This makes him laugh.]*

ANGELO: I owe you everything.

PIAF: You're lovely.

P/A: Your call, please, Madame Piaf and Monsieur Angelo, your call, please. Thank you.

PIAF: Don't forget the plot on number three.

*[He nods.]*

Double intro . . . second pause . . . bam-bam . . . you come in.

ANGELO: Thanks.

PIAF: And remember not to waggle your head. Keep still. Make THEM come to you . . . make THEM talented. Let's have a look at you . . . no, over here.

*[He stands before her.*

*She grasps his thighs with fierce adoration.]*

Wah, they'll come in their knickers. But don't forget the men . . . they've got to like you, too . . . they've got to want to BE you. And listen. Stick to the gestures we worked out . . . don't drift into things of your own.

ANGELO: OK.

PIAF: Come off cleanly, big strides . . . but slower, like we rehearsed. Don't lift your chin up, it makes you look ugly. And don't hunch your shoulders – what are you looking like that for?

ANGELO: Nothing, nothing.

PIAF: What have I done now? I'm only trying to –

ANGELO: I know, I know. *[He turns away, clutching his stomach.]*

PIAF: I get it. I'm sorry, love. It's going to be all right . . . I promise. Listen, I'll be there. It's together from now on, you and

me. [*She dives into her bag.*] Here, I was going to give you this after. [*She dangles a bunch of keys.*]

ANGELO: What is it?

PIAF: What do you think . . . vrrmm . . . vrrmmm!

ANGELO [*smile of pure happiness*]: Edith! But you shouldn't!

PIAF: Just this once! [*Kisses him.*]

*They embrace.*]

P/A: Your call, Madame Piau . . . your call, Monsieur Angelo.

[*PIAF moves away, takes a long scarf from her bag.*]

ANGELO: Darling . . . what are you doing?

PIAF: Oh, just something for the rheumatism, love.

[*ANGELO goes.*]

PIAF *injects herself.*

PIAF *sings* Bravo pour le clown.]

## SCENE VI

*PIAF's apartment. At the end of the last scene there is a musical link, using the music of Misericorde, and introducing the powerful sound of a car being driven very fast. There is a crash . . . which reverberates in and out of the music, ending with the music of the phrase 'quand un homme vient vers moi' from La belle histoire d'amour.*

*In PIAF's apartment, PIERRE confers with a PHYSIOTHERAPIST.*

PIERRE [*writing a cheque for the fee*]: So, you'll be coming to do the treatments daily.

PHYSIO.: Yes, though I entirely agree with the hospital – it's madness for Madame to discharge herself.

PIERRE: I know. However, she insists.

PHYSIO.: There is still glass to be removed from her forehead – by the way, how did she come to lose the three ribs?

PIERRE: A previous car accident.

PHYSIO.: Obviously she should give up driving.

PIERRE: No, no, she doesn't drive. She tends to be driven by young men.

PHYSIO.: I see.

PIERRE: Look, we fully accept the risk, but we need to get Madame working again. When can she sing?

PHYSIO.: I don't think you understand! The mouth is badly torn – ripped! We can't start on that sort of scar-tissue for months – she mustn't even speak!

PIERRE: No, no, that's impossible, she has a big concert in six weeks.

PHYSIO.: I've obviously not made myself clear. This patient is lucky to be alive. Most women of her age would have been dead from shock on arrival. There's severe internal injury . . . laceration. She's probably only alive because she's a singer – we got very good response from the diaphragm. There'll be a lot of pain, for some time. Of course, she can be helped with that.

PIERRE: You mean, morphine?

PHYSIO.: Yes. [*He catches some anxiety in Pierre's voice.*] Why, has she been on –

PIERRE [*giving him the cheque*]: No, no, no – it's nothing. Just . . . there was a lot of pain *last time*, that's all.

[*PIERRE goes.*]

*The PHYSIOTHERAPIST prepares for the treatment.*

*PIAF enters, looking very much the worse for wear.*]

PHYSIO.: Good morning, Madame Piau.

PIAF [*evilly*]: Oh Christ, here it comes. [*A little, winning smile*] Are you going to give me a shot?

PHYSIO.: I'm sorry, Madame, you've already had the prescribed dose.

[*Her face becomes a vicious glare. But he will not budge. She slumps into the chair.*]

Try to relax. [*He begins to work on her face.*]

PIAF: Christ Almighty! Madeleine! [*She catches the PHYSIOTHERAPIST's eye.*] Oh. All right, get on with it.

[*He begins again.*]

Ow! Oh!

PHYSIO.: Madame, please. You say you want to sing in six weeks . . . it's impossible, but at least I'm trying.

[*PIAF submits, grasping the arms of her chair in agony.*]

MADELEINE enters, dressed for travelling, with her suitcase and a travelling bag and handbag. She stands.

PIAF ignores her.]

MADELEINE: Piaf . . .

[PIAF ignores her. MADELEINE puts out a hand.]

I've come to say goodbye.

PIAF: Piss off.

MADELEINE [low]: Please, Piaf . . .

PIAF [low mutter]: Fuck off . . . that's my answer to you, mate.

MADELEINE [upset]: Very well. [She takes a large envelope from her bag.] You've given me too much. I can't accept it.

[PIAF spits on the proffered envelope.

The PHYSIOTHERAPIST and MADELEINE exchange a small glance, then MADELEINE gently puts the envelope at PIAF's feet. She picks up her suitcase.]

Goodbye then.

[With a witchlike gesture PIAF wipes the envelope on her ass and throws it in MADELEINE's face.]

[quietly]: Goodbye then. I wish you the very best. I really mean that.

[There is no response.

She goes.]

PIAF: Go on . . . piss off after her.

PHYSIO.: I beg your pardon?

PIAF: You heard. Florence Nightingale! 'Ew, I'll never leave you, Piaf . . . I'll do anything!' Like fuck . . . they'll have your blood for breakfast. And sick it up all over your shoes – 'Yew don't appreciate me!' Who the fuck do they think YOU ARE?!

What goes on here, mate, is the rest of me. And it's not worth knowing, I can tell you. Come here, looking for glamour. They want glamour, they can pay to see me, at the Olympia . . . and I don't mean shoved-up tits, neither.

PHYSIO.: Could you put your head straight, please?

PIAF: Nah, they all want a slice, even the bloody managers. Will they take the rough with the smooth, will they hell! They want the bloody product, they want that all right, all wrapped up with a

feather in its ass, but songs – what do they know about songs! 'What rhymes with June, lads?' I said to him, 'No, I'm sorry . . . don't like it.' 'Oh, I thought you'd reckon it, Piaf . . . it's a love song.' Love!

Nah, pretty soon they're not going to want my stuff. My sort's dying out. Going extinct. What they want now is discs. Canned. In the can – well, real thing, dodgy, innit? I mean, you can count discs . . . stack 'em . . . put 'em in containers. They don't bloody answer back! [Again it seems as if she will settle, but no.] Love. I'll tell you about fucking love. [To the audience] Friend of mine . . . tart . . . dropping a kid. We get an old nurse to her in the end . . . dear little baby boy. And the old girl's washing her down with Dettol after. 'Hullo . . . where is it?' 'Where's what?' says me friend. 'You know, your bits and pieces,' says the old biddy ' . . . your Thingme!' 'Oh . . . that . . .' says me friend. 'Chewed off long ago.'

That's fucking love for you.

PHYSIO. [unmoved]: It's not uncommon, I'm afraid.

PIAF [sourly]: Oh well, you'd know, working in hospitals.

[Brightens] Hey, I bet you've seen a thing or two!

PHYSIO.: Could you keep your head still, please?

[JACKO, pageboy, enters with flowers.]

JACKO: Hi, Piaf!

PIAF [unable to see him as PHYSIOTHERAPIST tries to work on her face]: Don't think we've had the pleasure.

JACKO: You will, love, you will.

PIAF: Cheeky with it . . . how d'you like to be in pictures?

JACKO: Knock it off, I'm a singer. [She takes a look.]

PIAF: Are you now?

JACKO: Well, trying to be.

PIAF: Going to have to do more than try, love. [She gets up, gives him the once over.] Not bad . . . not bad at all. Just my size, in fact.

JACKO: That's what you think!

[PIAF's throaty laugh rings out.]

PIAF: What's your name?

JACKO: Jacko. [She kisses him.]

*Music.*

PIAF crosses to her dressing table. Applies make-up . . . pulls down her corset nervously.]

P/A: Your call, Madame Piaf. Madame Piaf, your call, please.

PIAF: Jacko!

[*He appears . . . wearing a Piaf blue suit . . . they embrace.*]

PIAF: What's it like out front?

JACKO: Electric.

PIAF: Buggers think I can't make it.

JACKO: Not a bit. They love you, same as ever.

PIAF: Well, I don't give them no shit – remember that, kid, give 'em the real thing. Mm, you're lovely – you can sing too!

JACKO: I don't know about that.

PIAF: Now don't piss on yourself . . . plenty do that for you – how do I look?

JACKO: Bloody good . . . will that stuff stay on?

P/A: Madame Piaf . . . your call, please . . . your call, Madame Piaf . . . thank you.

[PIAF panics.]

JACKO: OK, love, it's OK.

PIAF: You'll be there?

JACKO: Right where you can see me.

PIAF: Sure. [*Pulls herself together*] Go on. I just need a minute to . . . get it together.

[*He gives her a sharp look, but goes. PIAF injects herself. Big musical build . . . Hymne à l'amour.*]

P/A: Under the direction of Michel Desmoulins . . . with the Orchestre Bourre . . . we proudly present . . . Edith Piaf!!

[*music changes to her signature tune . . . La goulante du pauvre Jean.*]

PIAF moves to microphone. She acknowledges applause, laughing her throaty, inviting laugh. She announces the name of composer and lyricist . . . and then sings Hymne à l'amour.

At the end of the song PIAF accepts applause, bowing, and waving with a warm smile.

Sharp light change.

PIAF's manner changes in mid-smile. The radiant charm disappears and she looks up, her face murderous.]

PIAF: Kill the fucking lights! And where was the follow spot . . .

I'm not that small! Just do what you're fucking paid for. [*She turns to a young man (PUSHER) who has appeared at her side.*]

Have you got it?

[*He nods.*]

*She opens her hand . . . but he does likewise.*]

PIAF: Look, I haven't got any money on me, I'll see you tomorrow.

PUSHER: Sorry, Piaf, I daren't, you know that.

PIAF: But I can fix it tomorrow, no trouble.

PUSHER: Can't you get it from the box-office?

PIAF: No, he won't have it.

[*The PUSHER moves off.*]

[*PIAF becomes frantic.*]

Look, I must have a delivery.

PUSHER: I'll be round in the afternoon.

PIAF: No . . . no . . . [*She hangs on to him. He extricates himself sadly.*]

PUSHER: Piaf, you know better than that. We're in the same boat, remember. I'll see you tomorrow. [*He goes.*]

[*PIAF becomes agitated. She begins to shake.*]

PIAF: Oh God . . . oh God . . .

[*Her mania increases. She plucks at her clothes . . . scratches . . . shivers . . . heaves as if to be sick . . . whimpers. She crouches . . . howling . . . then goes into a violent fit.*]

An ATTENDANT enters. She fights him off savagely, screeching and terrified. He cuffs her and carries her off.]

## SCENE VII

A room at the Ritz. JACKO onstage. PIAF enters . . . in a new jacket . . . her hair combed.

PIAF: How do I rate?

JACKO: Fan-bloody-tastic!

PIAF: So you'd pay for an all-nighter?

JACKO: You can have one now if you like . . .

[*They embrace.*

PIERRE enters.]

PIERRE: I like it, keep it in.

[PIAF screams welcome, PIERRE picks her up, swings her round.]

Has she been a good girl?

PIAF: Cross me heart.

JACKO: A very good girl. Champagne?

PIERRE: What the hell are you doing in a hotel? I went to the apartment.

JACKO: Slight problem with the bills . . . no gas.

PIAF: And I wanted an omelette.

PIERRE: So you move into the Ritz?

PIAF: Only while we're broke!

[JACKO pours the drinks.]

OK, Pierrot! What have you come up with? I can't wait to get started.

PIERRE: Piaf . . . I have to know. Is it finished?

PIAF: Yes, love. It's finished. All I want now is the work. When do we start, boss?

PIERRE: Piaf, it's bound to take a little time. [*Slight pause*] I can't get any bookings. They don't want to know.

PIAF: I've told you, I'm off the shit.

PIERRE: We've tried everything. Nobody's playing.

[*Silence.*

PIAF mutters under her breath.

JACKO proffers the champagne.]

PIAF: No, love. OK, nobody's playing. Right. If that's the way they want it. If we have to prove it, we'll prove it. We'll do the provinces . . . fleapits, cinemas, holiday camps – feel like a tour. Lose the bottle, Jacko . . .

JACKO: Right, love.

PIAF: Give Michel a ring . . . Eddie . . . I'll need some songs – we'll start rehearsing tonight . . . OK, Pierrot?

PIERRE: I don't know. It may be difficult.

PIAF: Come on, I'll be a draw . . . they'll come to see if I can stay on me feet!

[*He doesn't respond.*]

We'll get all the publicity we want . . . the press are on my side. Come on, Pierrot . . . we've done it before, we can do it again!

PIERRE: One-night stands . . . fit-ups . . . travelling overnight . . . that was a long time ago. We're all older.

[*Silence*]

If we do it – IF we do it . . .

PIAF: Thanks, boss!

PIERRE: I said 'if' . . . I hold the purse. No running up debts, no freeloaders, no private shows, parties, subs, handouts . . . you've got to start holding on to something.

PIAF: I know, I know . . .

PIERRE: If you know so much, why don't you do something about it? It's just common sense, Edith!

[*A hush*]

PIAF: Sure. I know. I made a mess of it with the shit.

JACKO [*after a pause*]: You OK, love?

[*She nods . . . turns to PIERRE.*]

PIAF: Can't get me the bookings, eh? Been trying, have you, or is it second thoughts time?

PIERRE: What do you mean?

PIAF: Where were you when I was in the bloody bin?

PIERRE: Look, Piaf, I've explained to you –

PIAF: That's right . . . you had a lot on. What with your new apartment, your portfolio . . . not to mention all your new clients. I hear you're collecting glass now.

PIERRE: What's wrong with that?

PIAF [*to JACKO, jocular*]: Never asks us to his little dinner parties.

PIERRE: Only because I know you wouldn't come.

PIAF: Right. He can leave me out of it.

PIERRE: Look, I've never tried to –

PIAF: You never draw breath! Get it together, don't miss a trick, lunch with the accountant once a week. Fuck his own grandmother to get that fur-collared overcoat.

PIERRE: Piau, why pick on me? I'm just an ordinary guy –

PIAF: Oh sure. We know what you were. And we know what you want. You're doing well. Only don't bother waiting down the school gates for those two little girls of yours.

PIERRE: Why not?

PIAF [*vicious*]: Because you've made such fucking little ladies of them, they're ashamed of you already!

[*A silence*]

PIERRE [*at last*]: Who told you that?

JACKO: Leave it, love.

PIAF: All right. I'm sorry. What you don't understand is that we're not all into buying and selling.

PIERRE: Nothing wrong with honest trade. You sell your voice.

PIAF: That's a laugh.

PIERRE: Only because you fuck about. You've had the rate for the job, you just don't hang on to it!

PIAF: No, well, I'm rubbish, aren't I?

JACKO: Don't worry, love. You'll never be a lady.

PIAF: Too right. I've seen them, the ladies. Get the hots for a feller, they take it out on a day's *shopping*! Can't risk a bit of the other, might give the old man an excuse, wreck their investments – put theirselves to better use, there might not be so many wars, not that they'd be any fucking good at it. They think they can take it with 'em, like the man who goes to see his mate and a woman comes to the door and says, 'You can't see him, he's dead.' 'Dead? He can't be, he's got my big chisel!'

[*They laugh.*]

Nah, we'll go on as we are. Just get me the bookings.

PIERRE: Edith, I have to know. Is it over?

[*PIAF looks into his eyes candidly.*]

PIAF: Yes, love. It's finished.

[*PIERRE embraces her, kisses her on both cheeks and goes. She smiles up at JACKO, he goes. She pushes up her sleeve for a fix.*]

*Open stage. The MANAGER enters, crosses to microphone. Reprise of act one, scene one.*

MANAGER [*testing the microphone*]: One, two, three . . . [*He raises his head . . .*] Ladies and gentlemen, I give you . . . your own . . . Piau! [*He gestures, with a sharp glance off, and goes.*]

PIAF *appears. She sings the first few bars of La goulante du pauvre Jean. And breaks down.*

[*The MANAGER appears.*]

PIAF [*struggling*]: Get your fucking hands off me, I ain't done nothing nothing yet . . .

[*Light change.*]

MANAGER *enters again, as before.*

MANAGER: Ladies and gentlemen, I give you . . . your own . . . Piau!

[*Musical intro . . . Hamburg.*]

PIAF *appears, assisted on by JACKO. She pauses, but makes it to the microphone. Then stands, as if unaware of her surroundings. Misses opening.*

MANAGER and JACKO *run on to assist her off.*

PIAF [*mumbles, as they lead her away*]: What is it . . . where's the song?

[*Blackout.*]

[*The MANAGER appears, as before.*]

MANAGER: Ladies and gentlemen, I give you . . . your own . . . Piau!

[*JACKO has to assist her onstage. Frail and trembling, she seems lost onstage, and terrified by the lights. Eventually she approaches the microphone, only to collapse on the floor.*]

JACKO and the MANAGER *run on. JACKO kneels beside her, his face alarmed.*

PIAF [*looks up at him, returning to consciousness, murmurs*]: All right, love . . . all right . . . I'm still here.

PIAF

[JACKO carries her offstage.  
Blackout.]

SCENE IX

PIAF's room in a nursing home. PIAF sits in a wheelchair . . . JACKO,  
with flowers, at her side.

JACKO: How've you been?

PIAF: Not so grand.

JACKO: Did you get any sleep?

PIAF: I had to ask them for something.

JACKO: I'll have a word with them.

PIAF: I wish you would, I can't get any sense out of them. Any  
more news of your tour?

JACKO: Yeah, but nothing come of it.

PIAF: Oh?

JACKO: The terms weren't right.

PIAF: Whatcha mean, it's a number-one tour, you nuts or some-  
thing?

JACKO: I'm not going.

PIAF: You bloody are if I say so.

JACKO: I'm not leaving you in here.

PIAF: Oh . . . and who'll be the first to throw it in my face when the  
time comes? Don't be a fool, cockie, they won't ask you  
twice.

JACKO: I'm not leaving you!

PIAF: What's the matter, have they told you I'm going to die or  
something – well, have they?

JACKO: No, of course not.

PIAF: What did he say?

JACKO: That you need a rest.

PIAF [*mutters*]: I'm rigid with rest. Look, it's a number-one tour!  
D'you think that's nothing? I don't understand you, I really  
don't. I put a bloody lot of work into you!

JACKO: I am not leaving you in the lurch. When you're better we'll

ACT TWO

tour together, like we said. I'm not leaving you in the shit  
and you can yell as much as you like, I shan't change me  
mind.

PIAF [*pause*]: Oh. Well. Well, as far as that goes, it'll have to come  
out in the open.

JACKO: What do you mean?

PIAF: It's the elbow, old son. Haven't you seen it coming?

JACKO: I don't believe you.

PIAF: Hard luck on you then. Get the message . . . you've had a  
good run for it.

JACKO: There's somebody else, you mean?

PIAF: Yeah . . . yeah. Now listen, don't forget. You've got a lovely  
tone, but lift. And don't forget the diction, never mind the A and  
R wizards. My God, those eyes of yours, you'll knock 'em cold.  
Here . . . something for luck. [*Gives him her cross of St Theresa.*  
*He cries.*]

All right, love, all right. Come on, give us a kiss.

[*He kisses her . . . she embraces him for a moment then*  
*withdraws.*]

Go on, off you go, I need a kip.

JACKO: If ever you need anything –

[*But she waves him off.*]

NURSE [*enters, looks round for JACKO*]: Oh! That was a love you  
and leave you! Ohh, look at these! [*She buries her face in the*  
*roses.*] I'll put them in water for you.

[*She hums, arranging the flowers. PIAF watches her.*]

There! [*She turns.*] Oh, by the way, he's here again. [*She*  
*giggles.*]

PIAF: What?

NURSE: The foreign boy.

PIAF: What does he want?

NURSE: Honestly, I don't know. We've been trying to find out, but  
he's so shy. I think what he really wants is to see you!

PIAF: Are you kidding?

NURSE: I said I'd ask.

PIAF: Oh, tell him me fanny's dropped off and I'm having a  
transplant.

NURSE: I shan't say anything of the sort. He's very good-looking. You could thank him . . . he's called every day.

PIAF: Oh, all right, just for a minute. Only if he's good-looking, mind!

[The NURSE goes.]

[murmurs]: Frighten him for life. [She wheels the chair across . . . turns . . . aware of his presence, but without looking at him.]

Well, now you've seen me – what's the matter, died of shock? [She turns to look at him.]

They look at each other. A pause.]

[at last]: What's in it for you, kid?

THEO: I don't want anything.

PIAF: Come on!

THEO: We-ell –

PIAF: Aha!

THEO: Perhaps . . . to be near you.

PIAF: What for?

THEO: I don't know. [Slight pause] I like it. [Slight pause] It makes me happy.

[They look at each other. Then she gets a fit of coughing. At once he is at her side, attending to her.]

PIAF: Thanks kid. What's your name?

THEO: Theo. Theophanis Lambouskas.

PIAF [splutters, laughing]: That'll have to go for a start. Tell me about yourself, Theo.

THEO: I have seen all your concerts. Olympia . . . Lyons . . . Bordeaux.

PIAF: Oh, Bordeaux . . . not so hot.

THEO: I wanted to come in America but that was not possible . . . actually it was the money.

PIAF: I sang thirty songs in the Carnegie Hall. They applauded for twenty minutes. That's a long time. [She puts out a hand, touches his cheek.] You're a nice-looking boy, Theo. [She pats her hair, conscious of her appearance.]

THEO: You want I should do your hair?

[He takes out a comb and moves behind her, smoothing her hair with swift elegance.]

PIAF [in admiration]: Oh, you're a hairdresser. There's not a lot left, I'm afraid.

THEO [quiet and absorbed]: We shall do it nice.

[He bends over her, and they embrace.]

He helps her to her feet and she walks to the microphone and lifts her crippled hands, her eyes shining.]

PIAF: Ladies and gentlemen . . . ladies and gentlemen, I don't deserve such happiness. Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to present my husband . . . Theo Sarapo! [She calls off, throaty and commanding] Theo!

[PIAF and THEO sing, together . . . Chant d'amour. PIAF takes the end of the song alone.]

## SCENE X

PIAF's room in the South of France. THEO is tucking her into the wheelchair.

PIAF: Who was it?

THEO: A visitor, darling. The nurse will see to it.

PIAF: Did she say who it was?

THEO: An old friend, from Belleville . . . 'Toinette?

PIAF: Toine . . . old Toine? Never. Where is she, fetch her in . . . Toine?

THEO: I think the nurse has sent her away.

TOINE [enters]: Ede? [Bumping into THEO] Where are you?

PIAF: Over here.

TOINE: Is it you?

PIAF: Well who the fuck d'you think it is, I'm not dead yet. Christ, you've put on weight. Let's have a look at you. How d'you find me?

TOINE: I took a train.

PIAF: Here . . . Theo. [Takes his hand] Well, what do you think of him?

TOINE: He's a bit young.



PIAF [*throaty laugh*]: Never think she was an old Belleville street-walker, would you?

TOINE: Edith!

PIAF: Oh Christ, you never could take a joke, give her a drink – you still *drink*, don't you?

TOINE: Only wine.

[*He goes.*]

TOINE [*comes and sits by PIAF*]: How old is he?

PIAF: Oh, don't you worry, he's old enough.

TOINE: You don't *do* nothing do you?

PIAF: Nah. Still . . . never know. Anyway, thanks for coming . . . see your daft face, cheer anybody up. What your old man say?

TOINE: Never told him, you know what he's like. He still thinks you ought to have set us up.

PIAF: Oh, you know me, never could hang on to nothing. Still, we had some good times, eh? Remember running in and out of Coco Chanel's buying two of everything. Never did pay that bill.

TOINE [*gets out Gitanes*]: Mind if I smoke?

PIAF: It's bad for yuh – read it in the papers.

TOINE [*cheerful*]: Oh well, you can only die once. [*And could bite her tongue off.*]

PIAF [*sardonic*]: Trust you.

[*THEO returns with wine.*]

TOINE: Aren't you having none, Ede?

THEO: Edith's on a diet just now.

TOINE: Oh? Oh, I bought you some apples. [*She gets in a muddle with her bag, fag, wine and the bag of apples.*]

THEO [*bends over her.*]

PIAF: Hey you two, no getting off! [*She laughs her deep, inviting laugh.*] We could tell him a thing or two, eh, Toine? Her and me, we had our own band at one time. Mind you, she spent more time seeing fellers off out the back than we ever copped in fees.

TOINE: Edith! We had to eat.

[*Pause. TOINE looks for topics.*]

Hey, remember that time in Milan?

PIAF: You never came to Milan.

TOINE: Yes I did.

PIAF: No you didn't.

TOINE: I did!

PIAF: You never!

THEO: Darling . . .

PIAF [*lies back, eyes closed*]: It's all right, love . . . yeah, I remember. Go on . . . tell him, Toine.

TOINE: We brought these Chinese acrobats back to the hotel where we was staying.

PIAF: Go on . . .

TOINE: There was ever so many of 'em.

PIAF: Tell him about the goldfish.

TOINE: I was going to! Anyway, they had this ornamental pond – you know, in the foyer. We got them all paddling . . . catching the fish in their little shoes!

[*She starts to laugh, PIAF joins in.*]

We . . . we went in the kitchens, making breakfast . . . we 'ad 'em on toast! . . . d'you remember, Ede?

PIAF [*doubled up*]: Yeah!

TOINE: Little bit of garnish . . . anchovies . . .

PIAF: And noodles!

TOINE [*shrieking with laughter*]: Oh Christ, I forgot about the noodles – they went too far there.

[*They both laugh, and subside together, clasping hands.*]

Oh dear!

PIAF: Oh dear!

[*They wipe their eyes and subside.*]

TOINE: I forgot what we did after that. Oh yeah . . . I remember.

[*She smiles in fond remembrance.*] You tried to slash your wrists . . . Gawd, what a mess! I was so legless I nearly let her.

PIAF: Pity you didn't.

[*Slight pause*]

THEO [*murmurs*]: Darling . . . no.

PIAF: You're right. I wouldn't have met you.

TOINE [*fondly*]: We got thrown out.

PIAF: He's lovely. I don't deserve him. [*Her hands clench, picking at the rug which covers her knees.*] Go on, Toine, go on.

TOINE [*looks helplessly at THEO . . . she is stumped for a subject*]:

PIAF

Oh, I know. My little girl, Janine . . . the youngest . . . she's ever such a good dancer, Ede. We're paying for classes – I mean, I don't know if it'll come to anything. Be nice though.

[PIAF *seems to be drifting off.*]

THEO: You want to sleep now?

PIAF: No, no, go on . . . you go on . . . [To TOINE] . . . go on, Toine . . .

[TOINE *searches for something to talk about.*]

TOINE: Um . . . yeah . . . um . . . ah! Remember the Boche, Edith? During the war? One of them looked me up once . . . I couldn't believe it! He was ever so well off. [To THEO] They shoved us inside . . . I thought our number was up, I can tell you – well, Ede was passing messages to our chaps in the prison camps . . .

[PIAF's head is bent . . . she seems to have fallen asleep.]

. . . is she all right?

[THEO drops to his knees at PIAF's side.]

Edith?

[THEO puts his arms about PIAF. The music of Non, je ne regrette rien.]

*Lights begin to fade.*]

Ede?

[Lights to black.]

*Curtain call.*

PIAF sings Non, je ne regrette rien.]