

[Note: Dialogue in *italics* is in French with subtitles.]

**INT. CAFE DES FLORES - DAY.**

The Cafes des Flores, Paris, 1947: smoke-filled bohemian haunt of bums, singers, prostitutes -- and writers. Four writers sit at a table, deep in conversation.

JEAN-PAUL SARTRE (40), squat and ugly, wall-eyed behind giant specs, gesticulating wildly with his ever-present pipe.

SIMONE DE BEAUVOIR (38), imperious and elegant even in a tatty jumper, a turban on her head, smoking.

ALBERT CAMUS (35), Algerian, stylish trench-coat with collar up, Bogart-handsome, Gauloise permanently in mouth.

RAY WATTS (35), African-American, nerdish in suit and specs, serious, attentive, quietly in awe of his companions.

SARTRE

Who'd you rather sleep with -- a Communist or a capitalist?

CAMUS

*Not this again.*

SARTRE

*Ssh. Ray's not done it.*

(to Ray)

Come on -- who?

RAY

Okay... A Communist.

SARTRE

So you're happy to share her with everyone else?

DE BEAUVOIR

And Stalin gets to watch.

RAY

A capitalist then.

SARTRE

(to De Beauvoir)

*Ah, typical American.*

DE BEAUVOIR

She will squeeze every last drop

--

SARTRE

-- then kick you out on the street.

CAMUS  
*That doesn't sound so bad.*

The others laugh.

RAY  
 (to Camus)  
 What's your answer?

SARTRE  
 Camus would have them both --  
 (to De Beauvoir)  
 -- *but feel terrifically guilty*  
*after.*

RAY  
 Simone?

SARTRE  
 Oh, the Beaver would teach them  
 the error of their ways --

He pecks her on the cheek.

CAMUS  
 -- *then run off with their wives.*

De Beauvoir blows smoke in Camus's face in response.

RAY  
 So what's the right answer?

SARTRE  
 There is no right answer. Just  
 the choice you make.

RAY  
 But if they're both bad choices,  
 what do you do? Nothing?

SARTRE  
 Ah, but that's a choice too.

RAY  
 So you're doomed?

SARTRE  
 You're not doomed -- you're free.

RAY  
 But you have to make a choice.

SARTRE  
 That is the burden of freedom.

RAY  
 (to Sartre)  
 So come on then -- what choice  
 would you make?

CAMUS  
 (anticipating Sartre)  
 If only there was a third way...

SARTRE  
 (excitably)  
 If only there was a third way,  
yes.

RAY  
 What's the third way?

CAMUS  
 Up the arse.

Camus and Sartre laugh, but Ray does not understand.

RAY  
 Well, does it matter, one's  
 political persuasion, when it  
 comes to sex?

DE BEAUVOIR  
 You've not been in Paris very  
 long, have you?

More laughter. Ray looks at De Beauvoir, holds her gaze.

CAMUS  
 Another drink?

Sartre shakes his head and stands up, somewhat unsteadily.

SARTRE  
 My talk is tomorrow. The theatre  
 never sold out so quickly, they  
 said.

CAMUS  
 So?

SARTRE  
 So I should probably write it.

Sartre chuckles. Takes out a vial of pills, pops a couple in his mouth. Sees Ray watching and motions for him to take one.

RAY  
 What is it?

SARTRE  
 How you say? ...Rocket fuel.

Sartre mimes his head exploding. Amused, Ray pockets the pill.

**EXT. CAFE DES FLORES - MOMENTS LATER.**

Looking very refreshed, the four of them exit the cafe. It's bitterly cold, a dusting of snow on the ground.

Suddenly a gaggle of PAPARAZZI bears down upon them, cameras popping.

PAPARAZZI 1  
*Monsieur Sartre, is  
existentialism a threat to the  
Church?*

PAPARAZZI 2  
*Camus, does your work promote  
suicide amongst the youth?*

PAPARAZZI 3  
*Simone, will you and Sartre ever  
marry?*

Ray is taken aback. Sartre poses. Camus looks pissed off. De Beauvoir tries to disappear into the background.

Sartre deflects the attention of the paps to Ray.

SARTRE  
*Fellas, you're missing the real  
scoop.*

He puts his arm round Ray's shoulder.

SARTRE  
*You have here America's greatest  
new writer -- Mr Raymond Watts.  
Swapped racism for freedom in  
liberated Paris.*

The paps snap Ray. As they crowd around him, Sartre ducks away and sneaks off with Camus.

PAPARAZZI 1  
*Mr Watts, are you an  
existentialist too?*

Something about this question -- the pap's good English perhaps? -- catches Ray's attention. But before he has time to think, De Beauvoir grabs his arm and pulls him down the street. They start to run.

The paps pursue them, but it's icy and they slip and bump into each other -- camera equipment goes flying.

**EXT. PARIS ALLEY - MOMENTS LATER.**

Ray and De Beauvoir duck down an alley, keep running until they believe they are safe.

They stop, breathless and laughing. De Beauvoir leans against a wall. Ray looks at her... approaches...

...and they kiss passionately.

**INT. CAMUS'S APARTMENT BUILDING - LATER.**

Camus climbs the stairwell to his apartment. He gets halfway up and has to stop. He starts coughing -- a terrible rasping.

He pulls out a handkerchief and hacks into it. Once finished, he looks to see the handkerchief is spotted with blood.

**INT. CAMUS'S APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER.**

Camus enters his apartment to be greeted by the sound of BABIES CRYING. His reaction suggests he'd like to turn straight around and leave. But he heads into --

**DRAWING ROOM**

Where his wife FRANCINE (35) is bouncing one of their newborn twins CATHERINE on her knee while the other, JEAN, wails in his cot. Francine is sophisticated, smart -- but right now looks totally frazzled.

CAMUS

*They sound hungry.*

FRANCINE

*She's sucked me dry.*

CAMUS

*I'll warm a bottle.*

FRANCINE

*(angry)*

*The gas went off hours ago.*

Camus picks up Jean and paces around the room with him until he stops crying. He smiles at his helpless little son.

Camus glances around the room and sees a half empty bottle of red wine on the table.

CAMUS

*Have you been out today?*

FRANCINE

*(pointedly)*

*Unlike you, I can't seem to find the time.*

CAMUS  
*We hire the au pair then.*

FRANCINE  
*So I've failed as a mother?*

CAMUS  
*Stop being ridiculous.*

FRANCINE  
*It's an extravagance.*

CAMUS  
*I'll get an advance from  
 Gallimard.*

FRANCINE  
 (snaps)  
*An advance for what?*

Off Camus, wounded --

**EXT. PARIS STREET - LATER**

Ray and De Beauvoir stroll together as snow begins to fall.

RAY  
*I couldn't stop looking at you. I  
 was worried he'd notice.*

He glances at De Beauvoir but she doesn't immediately respond.

DE BEAUVOIR  
*It's not like that with Sartre  
 and I.*

RAY  
*What do you mean?*

DE BEAUVOIR  
*We don't believe in monogamy.*

RAY  
*But...?*

DE BEAUVOIR  
*But we are bound to each other.  
 He is my double -- and I his.*

RAY  
*What are you saying?*

DE BEAUVOIR  
*We made a pact, many years ago.  
 Complete honesty. In everything.*

Ray looks panicked.

RAY  
So he knows?

De Beauvoir goes to him, puts her hand in his.

DE BEAUVOIR  
You don't need to worry.

She kisses him. Just then --

FURTHER DOWN THE STREET

There's a sudden commotion. Ray and De Beauvoir look over to see a GANG OF MEN, some with rifles, dragging a scrawny young woman, ADELE (early 20s), from an apartment building.

One of these men, VINCENT (18) -- thin, kinetic, wild-eyed -- sets a chair down, pushes Adele onto it. As he does so, he glances over and sees De Beauvoir in her embrace with Ray.

DE BEAUVOIR  
(half to herself)  
*Vincent.*

Vincent gestures to one of his cohorts, who hands him an ELECTRIC RAZOR. He switches it on and begins to shave off Adele's long dark hair. A CROWD forms, some shouting encouragement to Vincent.

RAY  
What is this?

DE BEAUVOIR  
She was a collaborator.

RAY  
(disbelieving)  
Her?

DE BEAUVOIR  
"Collaborateur horizontale".

Vincent holds up the hair he has shaved off. Many in the crowd roar their approval. Adele sits impassive, almost defiant -- but terrified under the surface.

De Beauvoir heads over to Adele. The crowd parts to let her through. Vincent approaches her, brandishing the razor.

VINCENT  
*Simone -- you next?*

De Beauvoir pushes past him. She pulls a lipstick from her pocket, hands it to Adele.

Adele's hands shake. De Beauvoir takes the lipstick and slowly, deliberately, applies it to Adele's lips. Then she takes a compact mirror from her pocket, and goes to give it to Adele -- but Vincent angrily knocks it from her hand.

RAY  
Hey, watch it.

Vincent glowers at him.

VINCENT  
Fuck off, American.

Adele reaches down and picks up the mirror. It's cracked. She regards her fractured image -- shorn and sallow, starkly contrasting with the bright red lipstick. She smiles.

The crowd begins to dissipate, much to Vincent's annoyance. He tries to get them back on his side.

VINCENT  
*No to the amnesty. Death to  
collaborators. We are the party  
of the 75,000 dead.*

De Beauvoir takes Adele's hand and escorts her back to her building.

Off Ray, entranced by her --

**INT. HOTEL, CORRIDOR - LATER.**

Ray and De Beauvoir walk down the corridor of a decrepit old hotel, stop outside a door. De Beauvoir places her key in the lock. Ray puts his hand on hers.

RAY  
Why would you want to know about  
his affairs? Or him yours?

DE BEAUVOIR  
(half joking)  
Jealousy is bourgeois.

RAY  
Doesn't mean it's not real.

DE BEAUVOIR  
Sartre always says -- our love is  
essential, all others contingent.

RAY  
Contingent? Is that what I am?

DE BEAUVOIR  
It doesn't mean you're less  
important.

RAY  
What if I want to be more  
important?

A beat. De Beauvoir looks at Ray.



DE BEAUVOIR  
Paris can be intoxicating.

RAY  
Meaning?

DE BEAUVOIR  
We've know each other less than a month.

RAY  
So give me more time.

De Beauvoir kisses him. Then she opens her door and slips inside, leaving Ray in the corridor. Ray stands there for a moment, emotionally conflicted.

Then he turns and walks down the corridor to a door a few metres away. Takes out his own key, opens the door and steps into --

**INT. HOTEL, RAY AND EDIE'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS.**

Ray enters to find his (white) wife EDIE (35) lying in bed seemingly wearing every item of clothing she owns -- coat, hat, mittens. She's reading *The Family Reunion* by TS Eliot.

RAY  
How's Jen?

EDIE  
Still hot. Did you get aspirin?

Ray grimaces -- that's what he went out to do.

EDIE  
Great.

Annoyed, Edie goes back to her book. Ray takes off his coat and hangs it on the door.

EDIE  
The electrics went off even earlier today. No wonder she's sick.

RAY  
I saw Sartre. He wants me to write for the paper.

Ray wants her to be impressed, but Edie just continues to read her book.

RAY  
(frustrated)  
I know it doesn't mean much to you, but it's a big deal.

Edie slams her book down.

EDIE

Will it get us out of this shitty hotel? And don't patronise me.

RAY

If Sartre prints me, every other editor comes calling. You should see how he's treated here -- like Sinatra or something.

EDIE

If Sinatra looked like a toad.

From beyond, the sound of coughing. Ray goes into --

JENNIFER'S BEDROOM

No bigger than a closet. Ray and Edie's daughter, JENNIFER (11), lies on her bed looking feverish.

RAY

Hey kiddo.

JENNIFER

I was gonna puke. But I didn't.

Ray sits on her bed.

RAY

This is a helluva way to get out of starting school.

JENNIFER

Can I have a Pepsi?

RAY

I'm not sure they have Pepsi here.

Jen sighs and buries her face in her pillow.

JENNIFER

I want to go home.

RAY

Ssh. Just rest.

Ray gets up, shuts the door and heads back to Edie, who's now out of bed and splashing water on her face at the sink.

RAY

Come here, Sasquatch.

He grins, but Edie -- looking in the mirror above the sink -- does not find it funny.

EDIE

I look old and tired and ugly. Who's going to cast this?

She turns and spreads her arms wide, twirls. She looks sweetly comical in her bundle of clothes. Ray chuckles.

RAY

They'll be falling over themselves. You're a wonderful actress.

EDIE

Who's not been hired for five years.

RAY

You can't blame yourself for that.

Edie allows herself a smile.

EDIE

Getting in the way of my career, that was Hitler's greatest crime.

Ray kisses her. Then again, more hungrily. Pushes her onto the bed, starts working through the mountain of clothing.

RAY

How many goddamn layers you got on?

Edie giggles as he tickles her.