

CHARACTERS

ANDRÉ

ANNE

LAURA

PIERRE

MAN

WOMAN

SIDE #1

THE FATHER

One

André's apartment.

START →

ANNE. So? What happened?

ANDRÉ. Nothing.

ANNE. Dad.

ANDRÉ. What?

ANNE. Tell me.

ANDRÉ. I just did. Nothing happened.

ANNE. Nothing happened?

ANDRÉ. Nothing at all. Just you bursting in on me as if something had happened, something... But nothing happened. Nothing at all.

ANNE. Nothing happened?

ANDRÉ. Nothing.

ANNE. She just called me.

ANDRÉ. So? What does that prove?

ANNE. She left in tears.

ANDRÉ. Who?

ANNE. You can't go on behaving like this.

ANDRÉ. It's my apartment, isn't it? I mean, this is incredible. I've no idea who she is, this woman. I never asked her for anything.

ANNE. She's there to help you.

ANDRÉ. To help me do what? I don't need her. I don't need anyone.

ANNE. She told me you'd called her a little bitch. And all kinds of other things.

ANDRÉ. Me?

ANNE. Yes.

ANDRÉ. Could be. I don't remember.

ANNE. She was in tears.

ANDRÉ. What, just because I called her...

ANNE. No. Because you... Apparently you...

ANDRÉ. Me?

ANNE. Yes. With a curtain rod.

ANDRÉ. With a curtain rod... What is this nonsense?

ANNE. That's what she told me. She told me you threatened her. Physically.

ANDRÉ. This woman is raving mad, Anne. With a curtain rod... Can you see me doing that? I mean... Obviously she has no idea what she's talking about. Physically? With a... No, best if she does leave, believe me. She's raving mad. Best if she does leave. Believe me. Especially as...

ANNE. As what?

ANDRÉ. Mm? Listen... If you must know, I suspect she was...

ANNE. She was?

ANDRÉ. She was...

ANNE. She was what?

ANDRÉ. (*Whispering.*) I didn't want to tell you, but I suspect she was...

ANNE. (*Impatiently.*) She was what, Dad?

ANDRÉ. She was stealing from me.

ANNE. Isabelle? Of course not. What are you talking about?

ANDRÉ. I'm telling you. She stole my watch.

ANNE. Your watch?

ANDRÉ. Yes.

ANNE. Isn't it more likely you just lost it?

ANDRÉ. No, no, no. I already had my suspicions. So I set a trap for her. I left my watch somewhere, out in the open, to see if she'd take it.

ANNE. Where? Where did you leave it?

ANDRÉ. Mm? Somewhere. Can't remember. All I know is it's now nowhere to be found. Nowhere to be found. I can't find it, there's your proof. That girl stole it from me. I know it. So yes, maybe I called her a... Like you say. It's possible. Maybe I got a bit annoyed. All right. If you like. But, really, Anne, a curtain rod, come on... raving mad, I'm telling you.

Anne sits down. She looks winded.

What's the matter?

ANNE. I don't know what to do.

ANDRÉ. About what?

ANNE. We have to talk, Dad.

ANDRÉ. That's what we're doing, isn't it?

ANNE. I mean, seriously.

Pause.

This is the third one you've...

ANDRÉ. I said, I don't need her! I don't need her or anyone else! I can manage very well on my own!

ANNE. She wasn't easy to find, you know. It's not that easy. I thought she was really good. A lot of good qualities. She... And now she doesn't want to work here anymore.

ANDRÉ. You're not listening to what I'm telling you. That girl stole my watch! My watch, Anne! I've had that watch for years. For ever! It's of sentimental value. It's... I'm not going to live with a thief.

ANNE. (*Exhaustedly.*) Have you looked in the kitchen cupboard?

ANDRÉ. What?

ANNE. In the kitchen cupboard. Behind the microwave. Where you hide your valuables.

Pause.

ANDRÉ. (*Horrified.*) How do you know?

ANNE. What?

ANDRÉ. How do you know?

ANNE. I just know, that's all. Have you looked there for your watch? ← END

ANNE. You needn't sound so surprised.

ANDRÉ. No, it's just that... Since your... What was his name?

ANNE. Antoine.

ANDRÉ. That's right. You have to admit, since Antoine, there hasn't been a lot of... What's he do, anyway?

ANNE. He lives in London. I'm going to go and live there.

ANDRÉ. What, you? In London? You're not going to do that, are you, Anne? I mean, wake up... It never stops raining in London!

Pause.

Do I know him?

ANNE. Yes. You've met him.

ANDRÉ. Are you sure?

ANNE. Yes, Dad. Lots of times.

ANDRÉ. Oh?

Pause. He's trying to remember.

So, if I understand correctly, you're leaving me. Is that it? You're abandoning me...

ANNE. Dad...

ANDRÉ. What's going to become of me?

Pause.

Why can't he come and live in Paris?

ANNE. He works over there.

ANDRÉ. What about your job?

ANNE. I can work from home. I don't need to be in Paris.

ANDRÉ. I see.

ANNE. You know, it's important to me. Otherwise, I wouldn't be going... I really love him.

Pause. He says nothing.

I'll come back and see you often. On weekends. But I can't leave you here all on your own. It's not possible. That's why. If you refuse to have a helper, I'm going to have to...

ANDRÉ. To what?

SIDE #2

Pause.

To what?

ANNE. You have to understand, Dad.

ANDRÉ. You're going to have to what?

She lowers her eyes. Pause.

Anne. You're going to have to what?

Pause. Blackout.

Two

Same room. André is alone.

ANDRÉ. I've got to find that lawyer's number. And call him. Yes. I haven't lived all these years to be treated like a... Like this. No. I've got to phone... Yes. A lawyer. My own daughter... My own daughter...

A man suddenly appears.

MAN. Everything all right?

ANDRÉ. Sorry?

MAN. Everything all right?

ANDRÉ. What are you doing?

MAN. Sorry?

ANDRÉ. What are you doing here? What are you doing in my apartment?

MAN. André, it's me... Pierre.

ANDRÉ. What?

MAN. Don't you recognise me? It's me, Pierre...

ANDRÉ. Who? What are you doing here?

MAN. I live here.

ANDRÉ. You?

MAN. Yes.

← START

ANDRÉ. You live here?

MAN. Yes.

ANDRÉ. You live in my apartment? That's the best yet. What is this nonsense?

MAN. I'm going to phone Anne.

He moves towards the telephone.

Your daughter...

ANDRÉ. Thank you, yes, I do know who Anne is! Do you know her?

Brief pause.

You a friend of hers?

No answer.

I'm speaking to you. Do you know Anne?

MAN. I'm her husband.

ANDRÉ. *(Caught off-guard.)* You are?

MAN. Yes.

ANDRÉ. Her husband? But...for how long?

MAN. Coming up on ten years.

He dials a number.

ANDRÉ. *(Trying to conceal his dismay.)* Ah, yes. Of course. Yes, yes. Obviously. Ten years, already? Time passes so fast... I thought... Didn't you, aren't you separated?

MAN. Who? Anne and me?

ANDRÉ. Yes. You aren't?

MAN. No.

ANDRÉ. Are you sure? I mean, I mean... Are you sure?

MAN. Yes, André.

ANDRÉ. But this thing about England? Wasn't she supposed to be going to London to...wasn't she?

MAN. *(On the phone.)* Hello, darling. Yes, it's me. Tell me. Will you be done soon? No, no problem. It's just your father isn't feeling very well. I think he'd like to see you. Yes. All right. Fine, we'll wait for you. See you. Yes. Don't be too long. No, no. Lots of love.

He hangs up.

She'll be here soon. She's just out shopping. She's coming right back.

ANDRÉ. She told me she was going to go and live in London. She told me the other day.

MAN. In London?

ANDRÉ. Yes.

MAN. What was she going to do in London?

ANDRÉ. She's met an Englishman.

MAN. Anne?

ANDRÉ. Yes.

MAN. I don't think so, André.

ANDRÉ. Yes, she has. She told me the other day, I'm not an idiot. She told me she was moving. To go and live with him. I even remember telling her it was a stupid idea, because it never stops raining in London. Don't you know about this?

MAN. No.

ANDRÉ. Oops.

MAN. What?

ANDRÉ. Have I put my foot in it?

Brief pause.

(To himself.) I've put my foot in it.

MAN. No, no, don't worry. She hasn't mentioned it to me, but I'm sure she was intending to soon.

ANDRÉ. You didn't know anything about the Englishman?

MAN. *(Amused.)* No.

ANDRÉ. Oops-a-daisy...

Pause. He puts a hand on the man's shoulder.

Never mind. Chin up. Anyway, they all end up leaving sooner or later. I speak from experience.

Brief pause.

MAN. You want something to drink while we're waiting for her? Glass of water? Fruit juice?

END

ANDRÉ. No, but I mean... What was I going to say? Oh, yes, that's it, it's come back to me.

MAN. What?

ANDRÉ. It's because of that girl...

MAN. What girl?

ANDRÉ. You know, that nurse...

MAN. Laura?

ANDRÉ. I've forgotten her name. That girl your wife insists on handing me over to. A nurse. You know about this? As if I wasn't able to manage on my own... She told me I needed the help of this... When I can manage perfectly well on my own. Even if she had to go abroad. I don't understand why she persists in... Look at me. No, take a good look at me...

He's trying to remember the name.

MAN. Pierre.

ANDRÉ. That's right, Pierre. Take a good look at me. I can still manage on my own. Don't you think? I'm not completely... Mm? You agree? I'm not...

He hunches over like an old man.

Am I? You agree? Look, I still have the use of my arms, see?

He illustrates this capability.

And my legs. And my hands. In fact, it all works wonderfully. You agree? Of course you agree. But her? I don't know where this obsession comes from. This stupid obsession, it's ridiculous. Ridiculous. In truth, she's never known how to evaluate a situation. Never. That's the problem. She's always been that way. Ever since she was little. Thing is, she's not very bright. Not very... You agree? Not very intelligent. She gets that from her mother.

MAN. I think she tries to do the best she can for you, André.

ANDRÉ. The best she can, the best she can... I never asked her for anything. She's cooking up something against me, I don't know what it is. But she's cooking something up. She's cooking something up, that I do know. I suspect she wants to put me in a home for... Yes, she does. For...

He pulls a face representing an old man.

I've seen the signs. That's what she has at the back of her mind. She almost came out with it the other day. But let me make something absolutely clear: I'm not leaving my apartment! I'm not leaving it!

MAN. This isn't your apartment, André.

ANDRÉ. Sorry?

MAN. If you remember, you moved here, I mean you moved to our place while you were waiting for...

ANDRÉ. What?

MAN. Yes. While you were waiting for a new helper to be found... Because you had a fight with the last one... With Isabelle.

ANDRÉ. Did I?

MAN. Yes. Don't you remember? That's why you're staying in our place. While you wait.

Pause. André looks slightly lost.

ANDRÉ. So, Antoine...

MAN. Pierre.

ANDRÉ. Yes. So you're telling me, I'm in your place?

MAN. Yes.

André laughs and rolls his eyes.

ANDRÉ. Now I've heard everything.

*The door opens. A woman enters, carrying a shopping bag. ← STAFF
It's not Anne.*

WOMAN. There, I was as quick as I could be. Everything all right? What's happening?

MAN. Nothing much. Your father seemed a bit confused. I think he wanted to... Didn't you? Wanted to see you.

WOMAN. Something wrong? Are you all right, Dad?

He doesn't recognise her.

Dad?

ANDRÉ. I...

WOMAN. Yes?

ANDRÉ. What is this nonsense?

Side #3

WOMAN. What are you talking about?

ANDRÉ. Where's Anne?

WOMAN. Sorry?

ANDRÉ. Anne. Where is she?

WOMAN. I'm here, Dad, I'm here.

She realises he doesn't recognise her. She looks anxiously at the man.

I went to do some shopping. And now I'm back. I'm here, everything's all right.

ANDRÉ. I...I see... But... What did you buy?

WOMAN. A chicken. Sound good? Are you hungry?

ANDRÉ. Why not?

He seems lost. And gloomy.

MAN. Look, let me have it. I'll go and fix everything.

WOMAN. Thanks.

He takes the bag and steps out into the kitchen. Pause.

Pierre called me. He said you weren't feeling very well?

ANDRÉ. I feel fine. Except... There's something that doesn't make sense... About all this, I mean.

WOMAN. What?

ANDRÉ. It's difficult to explain. It's difficult. You wouldn't understand.

WOMAN. Try me.

ANDRÉ. No!

Pause.

WOMAN. You look worried.

ANDRÉ. Me?

WOMAN. Yes. You look worried. Is everything all right?

ANDRÉ. Everything's fine. It's just...

WOMAN. Just what?

ANDRÉ. (*Annoyed.*) I was just standing there. Standing quietly in the living room looking for a telephone number, and suddenly your husband arrived and...

WOMAN. Who?

ANDRÉ. Your husband.

WOMAN. What husband?

ANDRÉ. Mm? Well, yours, my dear. Not mine.

WOMAN. Antoine?

ANDRÉ. Your husband.

WOMAN. Dad, I'm not married.

ANDRÉ. Sorry?

WOMAN. I got divorced more than five years ago. Have you forgotten?

ANDRÉ. What? Well, then, who's he?

WOMAN. Who?

ANDRÉ. Are you doing this on purpose? I'm talking about...him. Who just left with the chicken.

WOMAN. The chicken? What are you talking about, Dad?

ANDRÉ. Right here, just a minute ago. Did you not hand over a chicken to someone?

Clearly, she doesn't know what he's talking about.

The chicken! A minute ago, you were holding a chicken, were you not? A chicken. A CHICKEN!

WOMAN. What chicken? What are you talking about, Dad?

ANDRÉ. I'm worried about you, Anne.

WOMAN. Me?

ANDRÉ. Yes, believe me, I'm worried about you. Don't you remember? She doesn't remember. Are you having memory lapses or what? You'd better go and see someone, my dear. I'm talking about something that happened not two minutes ago. I could have timed it.

He checks his watch is still on his wrist. He's relieved.

Not two minutes ago. Yes. I could have timed it. About a chicken for dinner. Which you'd bought.

He approaches the kitchen.

WOMAN. I think you're mistaken, Dad. There's no one in the kitchen.

ANDRÉ. Well, that's very peculiar! He was there two minutes ago.

← END

and she still used to call me "little Daddy," "little Daddy." That's what she used to call me. Nice, isn't it, "little Daddy"?

Pause. Pierre starts slowly moving towards André.

PIERRE. Can I ask you a question?

ANDRÉ. Yes.

Pierre gets closer to him. There's something threatening about his approach.

PIERRE. But I want an honest answer. Nothing fancy... Can you do that for me?

ANDRÉ. *(Caught off-guard.)* Yes.

PIERRE. Well, then...

Brief pause.

How much longer do you intend to hang around getting on everybody's tits?

Pause. Blackout.

Side #4

Six

Anne and André. Earlier in the day.

START → ANNE. I need to talk to you, Dad.

ANDRÉ. Good start.

ANNE. Why do you say that?

ANDRÉ. My dear, when someone says "I need to talk to you," it means they've got something disagreeable to say. Don't you think?

ANNE. No. Not necessarily.

Brief pause.

ANDRÉ. So? What was it you wanted to say?

ANNE. *(Calculating that this might not be a good time.)* Never mind. Nothing.

Pause.

I've spoken to Pierre.

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ANDRÉ. Pierre?

ANNE. Pierre, Dad. I've spoken to him.

ANDRÉ. Your husband?

ANNE. Dad... Pierre isn't my husband. I'm divorced.

ANDRÉ. Make up your mind.

ANNE. I divorced Antoine five years ago. I now live with Pierre. He's the man I'm living with.

ANDRÉ. I don't care for him, that fellow. He's unsympathetic.

Brief pause.

Don't you think? I don't care for him.

ANNE. He's not a fellow, Dad. He's the man I love.

Pause.

Anyway, I've spoken to him and... You remember at first, when you came to our place, it was... I mean, it was a temporary solution. You remember? It was... a stopgap. Because you had that fight with Isabelle. But... How can I put this? I'm wondering if it wouldn't be better to... You're comfortable in your room, aren't you?

Brief pause.

You're comfortable in that room at the back?

ANDRÉ. Yes.

ANNE. Yes, you seem to be comfortable there. That's what I thought. And I was wondering if it wouldn't be more reassuring... Nicer for you if we came to a joint decision that you should move in here. I mean, for good. With us. Provided we get someone to help us.

Brief pause.

That way, we could see each other every day. It'd be easier. What do you think?

Pause.

I've spoken to Pierre about it. He agrees.

ANDRÉ. But... I thought... I thought you were going to go and live in London.

ANNE. No, Dad. Why do you keep talking about London? I'm staying in Paris.

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ANDRÉ. I don't understand any of this nonsense. You keep changing your mind. How do you expect people to keep up?

ANNE. But there was never any question of going to London, Dad.

ANDRÉ. Yes, there was. You told me.

ANNE. I didn't...

ANDRÉ. I'm sorry, Anne. You told me the other day. Have you forgotten?

Pause.

You've forgotten. Listen, Anne, I have a feeling you sometimes suffer from memory loss. You do, I'm telling you. It's worrying me. Haven't you noticed?

ANNE. In any event, I'm not going to London.

ANDRÉ. Well that's good. It never stops raining in London.

ANNE. I'm staying here. So's Pierre.

ANDRÉ. What about me?

ANNE. You too, Dad. You're staying here.

ANDRÉ. What about your sister? Where's she?

ANNE. Dad...

ANDRÉ. What?

Brief pause.

If you knew how much I missed her...

Pause. Blackout.

Seven

A little later in the evening. Anne and Pierre are at the table. André is standing in the doorway to the kitchen.

Anne and Pierre haven't noticed him.

PIERRE. He's ill, Anne. He's ill.

Anne and Pierre simultaneously realise that André is in the room. Anne starts. Feeling of awkwardness.

ANNE. Dad. What are you doing, standing there? Come and sit down. Come on.

He doesn't respond.

Dad...

Pause.

Come on, Dad.

Pause.

Come and sit down.

Pause. Blackout.

Eight

Lights up almost immediately. Anne, Pierre, and André. A few minutes earlier in the evening. They're eating.

PIERRE. So it went well?

ANNE. Yes. It went very well. Don't you agree, Dad?

ANDRÉ. What?

ANNE. It went well, your meeting with Laura...

ANDRÉ. Yes.

ANNE. You made her laugh a lot.

END →

ANDRÉ. Eight o'clock in the evening?

ANNE. Yes, Dad.

ANDRÉ. But I thought it was morning. I've only just got up. Look, I'm still in my pyjamas.

ANNE. No, it's evening, and I've cooked you a chicken. Come on, let's eat. Come on, Little Daddy, Little Daddy,

He seems very lost. Pause. Blackout.

SIDE #5
Twelve

The room, a little later. André is already in bed. Pierre and Anne. A repeat.

START → ANNE. Any left?

PIERRE. Yes. Want a glass?

ANNE. Please.

He gets up and pours one for her.

He was so strange this evening.

PIERRE. You know what I think.

ANNE. It's worrying me.

PIERRE. Shall we change the subject?

ANNE. Yes. Sorry.

Long pause. Sense of strain.

It's good, this wine.

PIERRE. Yes.

Pause. They smile at each other. Silence.

ANNE. I've been thinking about what you said before. About... When you said we should put him in a nursing home.

PIERRE. Oh?

ANNE. Yes. And I was thinking maybe you were right. Maybe you were right, after all.

PIERRE. I think I was.

ANNE. It hurt me so much to see him like that this evening.

PIERRE. Yes.

ANNE. I had the feeling he was frightened of you.

PIERRE. I know.

ANNE. I'm frightened of you too.

Pause. Oddly, he smiles.

PIERRE. Don't be ridiculous. Stop being frightened. Believe me, this is the right decision. Afterwards, we'll be able to lighten up a little. Go away somewhere. Wouldn't you like to go away?

ANNE. Where?

PIERRE. I don't know. A long way away. Just the two of us. Live a bit...

Brief pause.

Listen to me, you have no reason to feel guilty. It doesn't make any sense.

ANNE. Sense? What does make any sense?

PIERRE. Being happy. Being together. Being alive. *end*

She kisses him. Blackout.

Thirteen

The following morning. By now, the apartment is practically empty. André is alone. Suddenly, Anne appears.

ANNE. Up already?

ANDRÉ. I didn't sleep.

ANNE. Last night?

ANDRÉ. No. Not a wink.

ANNE. Why? Aren't you feeling well?

ANDRÉ. Have you seen?