

I want to lose her, and find her again. I want to hate her, and rock her gently afterward, like a little child. I want to struggle, to suffer, to accept . . . I want to live

M. Henri [*annoyed*]. Of course you'll live. . . .

Orpheus. With the mistakes, the failures, the despair, the fresh starts . . . the shame.

M. Henri [*looks at him, scornful and tender, murmurs*]. Poor boy. . . . [*He goes to him, and says in a different voice.*] Good-by. The moment has come. She's out there, on the platform, standing on the same spot where you saw her yesterday for the first time—waiting for you, eternally. Do you remember the condition?

Orpheus [*already looking at the door*]. Yes.

M. Henri. Say it out loud. If you forget, I can do nothing more for you.

Orpheus. I mustn't look at her.

M. Henri. It won't be easy.

Orpheus. If I look at her just once before the dawn, I lose her again forever.

M. Henri [*stops, smiling*]. You don't ask me why or how any more?

Orpheus [*still looking at the door*]. No.

M. Henri [*still smiling*]. Fine. Good-by. You can start again from the beginning. Don't try and thank me. I'll see you later.

*He goes out. ORPHEUS stands for a moment without moving, then goes to the door and opens it on the deserted platform. First he says nothing, then in a low voice, he asks without looking.*

Orpheus. Are you there?

Eurydice. Yes, my darling. What a long time you've been.

Orpheus. I've been allowed to come back and fetch you. . . . Only I mustn't look at you before the morning.

Eurydice [*appearing*]. Yes, I know. They told me.

Orpheus [*taking her hand and pulling her along without looking at her; they cross the stage in silence until they reach a bench*]. Come. We can wait for morning here. When the waiters arrive for the first train, at dawn, we shall be free. We'll ask them for some nice hot coffee and something to eat. You'll be alive. You haven't been too cold?

Eurydice. Yes. That's the worst part. The terrible cold. But I've been forbidden to talk about anything. I can only tell you what happened up to the moment when the driver smiled into his little mirror and the gasoline truck fell on us like a mad beast. [*Pause. She adds in a little voice.*] After that I can't tell you anything.

Orpheus. Are you comfortable?

Eurydice. Oh yes—here against you.

Orpheus. Put my coat around your shoulders.

*Puts his coat round her; pause; they are happy.*

Eurydice. Remember the waiter from the *Comédie Française*?

Orpheus. We'll see him again tomorrow.

Eurydice. And the beautiful silent cashier? Maybe we'll know what she thought of us at last? It's so convenient to be alive again. . . . As if we'd just met for the first time. [*She asks him as she did that first time.*] Are you good, or wicked? What's your name?

Orpheus [*entering into the game and smiling*]. It's Orpheus. What's yours?

Eurydice. Eurydice. . . . [*Then gently she adds.*] Only this time we've been warned. [*She hangs her head, then says after a tiny pause.*] Please forgive me. You must have been so afraid. . . .

Orpheus. Yes. When I saw you downstairs, lying in the van, it all stopped. I wasn't afraid any more.

Eurydice. Did they put me in a van?

Orpheus. A police van. They laid you out on a bench at the back, with a policeman sitting beside you, like a little thief who had been arrested.

Eurydice. Was I ugly?

Orpheus. There was a little blood on your temple. That's all. You seemed to be asleep.

Eurydice. Asleep? If you knew how I was running. I was running as fast as I could go, like a mad thing. [*She stops; there is a tiny pause; she asks.*] You must have suffered horribly?

Orpheus. Yes.

Eurydice. Please forgive me.

Orpheus [*in a low voice*]. There's no need.

Eurydice [*after another pause*]. If they brought me back to the hotel it must have been because I was still

holding my letter. I had written to you in the bus before we started. Did they give it to you?

*Orpheus.* No. They must have kept it at the police station.

*Eurydice.* Ah! [*She asks, worried suddenly.*] Do you think they'll read it?

*Orpheus.* They may.

*Eurydice.* D'you think we could stop them reading it? Couldn't we do something straightaway? Send someone there, telephone them, tell them they have no right?

*Orpheus.* It's too late.

*Eurydice.* But I wrote that letter to you! What I said was only for you. How could anyone else possibly read it? How could anyone else say those words? A fat man, with a dirty mind, perhaps, an ugly, self-satisfied, fat old man? He'll laugh, he'll surely laugh when he reads my agony. Oh, stop him, stop him, please—please stop him reading it! It makes me feel as if I were naked in front of a stranger.

*Orpheus.* They may not even have opened the envelope.

*Eurydice.* I hadn't time to close it! I was just going to when the truck crashed into us. Probably that's why the driver looked at me in the glass. I put my tongue out, it made him smile, and I smiled too.

*Orpheus.* You smiled. You could still smile?

*Eurydice.* Of course not. I couldn't smile. You don't understand! I had just written you this letter where I told you I loved you, that I was suffering, but I had to go away. . . . I put out my tongue to lick the envelope, he made a crack as all those boys do, and everyone smiled. [*She stops, discouraged.*] Ah, It's not the same when you describe it. It's difficult. You see, it's too difficult.

*Orpheus* [*in a low voice*]. What were you doing in the bus for Toulon?

*Eurydice.* I was running away.

*Orpheus.* You had the letter from Dulac?

*Eurydice.* Yes, that's why.

*Orpheus.* Why didn't you show me the letter when I came back?

*Eurydice.* I couldn't.

*Orpheus.* What did he say in the letter?

*Eurydice.* To meet him on the eight-twelve train, or else he'd come and fetch me.

*Orpheus.* Is that why you ran away?

*Eurydice.* Yes. I didn't want you to see him

*Orpheus.* You didn't think he might come and I'd see him just the same?

*Eurydice.* Yes, but I was a coward. I didn't want to be there.

*Orpheus.* You've been his mistress?

*Eurydice* [*crying out*]. No! Is that what he told you? I knew he would, and you'd believe him! He's been chasing me for a long time, he hates me. I knew he'd tell you about me. I was afraid.

*Orpheus.* Why didn't you tell me yesterday, when I asked you to tell me everything? Why didn't you tell me you'd been his mistress?

*Eurydice.* I wasn't.

*Orpheus.* Eurydice, now it would be better to tell me everything. No matter what happens, we are two poor wounded beings sitting on this bench, two poor souls talking without daring to look at each other—

*Eurydice.* What must I say to make you believe me?

*Orpheus.* I don't know. That's what's so terrible. . . . I don't know how I'm ever going to believe you. . . . [*Pause; he asks, gently, humbly.*] Eurydice, so I won't have to worry afterward, when you tell me the simplest things—tell me the truth now, even if it is terrible. Even if it will hurt me horribly. It can't hurt any more than the air I haven't been able to breathe since I've known you lied to me. . . . If it's too difficult to say, don't answer me, but please don't lie. Did that man tell the truth?

*Eurydice* [*after an imperceptible pause*]. No. He was lying.

*Orpheus.* You've never belonged to him?

*Eurydice.* Never.

*There is a pause.*

*Orpheus* [*in a low voice, staring straight in front of him*]. If you're telling me the truth, it should be easy to see. Your eyes are as clear as a pool of water. If you're lying, or if you aren't sure of yourself, a dark green circle forms and shrinks around the pupil. . . . \*  
eye  
color

*Eurydice.* The dawn will soon be here, my darling, and

you can look at me. . . . [*Gently.*] Don't talk any more. Don't think. Let your hand wander over me. Let it be happy all alone. Everything will become so simple if you just let your hand love me alone. Without saying anything more.

*Orpheus.* D'you think that's what they call happiness?

*Eurydice.* Yes. Your hand is happy at this moment. It doesn't ask anything more of me than to be there, obedient and warm beneath it. Don't ask anything more of me, either. We love each other, we are young; we're going to live. Agree to be happy, please. . . .

*Orpheus* [*rising*]. I can't.

*Eurydice.* If you love me. . . .

*Orpheus.* I can't.

*Eurydice.* Be quiet, then, at least.

*Orpheus.* I can't do that either! All the words haven't yet been said. And we must say them all, one after the other. We must go now to the very end, word by word. And there are plenty of them!

*Eurydice.* My darling, be quiet, I beg you!

*Orpheus.* Can't you hear? A swarm of them has been around us ever since yesterday. Dulac's words, my words, your words, all the words that brought us here. And the words of all the people who looked at us as if we were two animals being led along. The ones that haven't been spoken yet, but which are there, attracted by the aroma of the rest; the most conventional, the most vulgar, the ones we hate the most. We're going to say them; we're surely going to say them. They must always be said.

*Eurydice* [*rises, crying out*]. My darling!

*Orpheus.* Ah, no! I want no more words—enough! We've choked ourselves with words since yesterday. Now <sup>the look</sup> ~~st-~~ I've got to look at you.

*Eurydice* [*throwing herself against him, holding him close to her with her arms round his waist*]. Wait, wait, please wait. What we must do is get through the night. It will soon be morning. Wait. Everything will be simple again. They'll bring us coffee, rolls and butter. . . .

*Orpheus.* I can't wait till morning. It's too long to wait until we're old. . . .

*Eurydice* [*still holding him, her head pressed to his back, imploringly*]. Oh, please, please, don't look at me, my darling, don't look at me just yet. . . . Maybe I'm

not the person you wanted me to be. The one you invented in the happiness of the very first day. . . . But you can feel me, can't you, here against you? I'm here, I'm warm, I'm sweet, and I love you. I'll give you all the happiness that is in me. But don't ask more of me than I can give. . . . Don't look at me. Let me live. . . . I so much want to live. . . .

*Orpheus.* Live! Live! Like your mother and her lover, perhaps, with baby talk, smiles, and indulgences, and then a good meal, a little love-making, and everything's all right. Ah, no! I love you too much to live! [*He has turned round and looked at her. They are standing face to face, separated by an appalling silence; suddenly he asks, in a low voice.*] Did he hold you to him, that horrible man? Did he touch you with those hands all covered with rings?

*Eurydice.* Yes.

*Orpheus.* How long have you been his mistress?

*Eurydice* [*replying to him now with the same eagerness to lacerate herself*]. For a year.

*Orpheus.* Is it true you were with him two days ago?

*Eurydice.* Yes, the night before I met you; he called for me after the performance. He made a scene. He made a scene every time.

*Orpheus.* What scene?

*The little MANAGER appears, in agony, awkward, clumsy. He raises his little hat before speaking.*

*Manager.* He threatened to send me away, monsieur. I'm his company manager, and each time he threatened to dismiss me.

*Dulac* [*entering, and exploding when he sees the MANAGER*]. He's a fool! He loses everything! I won't keep such an idiot in my company.

*Manager.* Oh, Monsieur Dulac, I have to look after all the trunks, all the scenery, and I'm alone. I'll never manage! I'll never manage!

*Dulac.* He's a half-wit, I tell you. He's a half-wit!

*Eurydice.* It's your fault—you're always shouting at him. I'm sure if you talked to him gently, he'd understand. Listen, Louis darling. . . .

*Manager.* I'm listening, Eurydice. . . .

*Eurydice.* Listen, darling Louis, it's really very simple. You get to the station where we have to change. You get out of the train very quickly. You run to the baggage car. You count the trunks to make sure they haven't forgotten one. . . .

*Manager.* Yes, but the others put their suitcases down beside me and tell me to look after them and go away. And the platform is full of people hurrying along. . . .

*Eurydice.* You mustn't let them go away! You must run after them!

*Manager.* I can't watch the trunks if I'm running after them! I'll never be able to manage, I tell you, I'll never be able to manage. I'd much better go away. . . .

*Dulac [roaring].* He's a fool! A fool, I tell you! This time it's settled. He leaves at Châtellerault!

*Eurydice.* Don't shout at him all the time. If you do, how can you expect him to understand?

*Dulac.* He'll never understand. I tell you he's an incompetent. He leaves the company at Châtellerault, and that's my final word!

*Manager.* Monsieur Dulac, if you fire me, I don't know what I shall do. I promise you I'll be very careful, Monsieur Dulac!

*Dulac.* You're fired! You're fired, I tell you!

*Eurydice.* I'll help you! I promise I'll manage so that he doesn't lose anything. . . .

*Dulac.* I know what your promises are worth! No, no, he's quite useless. Sacked, fired! Get out! [*And he pushes the little MANAGER out into the darkness.*]

*Eurydice [she fastens on to him, imploringly].* I promise you he'll be careful. Dulac, I promise. . . .

*Dulac [looking at her].* Oh, you're always promising, but you don't always keep your word.

*Eurydice [in a lower voice].* Yes.

*Dulac [going to her, softly].* If I keep him just once more, you'll be good to me?

*Eurydice [hanging her head].* Yes.

*DULAC embraces her roughly.*

*Dulac.* Admit that that time you came with me because you wanted to, you little liar.

*Eurydice [pulling herself away from him].* Because I wanted to? I spat every time you kissed me.

*Dulac [calmly].* Yes, my dove.

*Eurydice.* As soon as you left me, I ran away. I undressed completely. I washed all over—changed my clothes. You never knew that, did you? [*DULAC laughs.*] Oh, I know you, my darling—you can laugh, but it's out of the wrong side of your face.

*Dulac.* You aren't going to tell me you believed in that scene for a whole year?

*Eurydice.* Don't pretend to be so damn clever!

*Dulac.* Don't pretend to be stupid, Eurydice. You aren't stupid at all. Did you, yourself, believe in that scene for a whole year?

*Eurydice.* What!

*Dulac.* It had become a mere formality, that threat. I made it so that you could save your dirty pride, and pretend you had a reason which forced you to follow me without admitting you enjoyed it.

*Eurydice.* You mean, it wasn't true, you wouldn't really have fired him?

*Dulac.* Of course not. [*And he laughs again, as he disappears into the shadows.*]

*Eurydice.* That's what happened every time. Forgive me, my darling. Orpheus!

*Orpheus [who has recoiled, in a low voice].* I shall always see you with that man's hands on you. I shall always see you as he described you in that room.

*Eurydice [humbly].* Yes, my darling.

*Orpheus.* He wasn't even jealous when he came to fetch you. He even knew you were a coward. That if he came to fetch you, you wouldn't stay with me. Because you are a coward, aren't you? He knows you better than I do.

*Eurydice.* Yes, my darling.

*Orpheus.* Explain, can't you? Why don't you try and explain?

*Eurydice.* How can I explain? Do you want me to lie to you? I am untidy, I am a coward. Ah, it's too difficult.

*There is a pause. ORPHEUS raises his head. He looks at EURYDICE who is standing humbly before him.*

*Orpheus.* If you loved me, why were you going away?

*Eurydice.* I thought I'd never be able to make you understand.

*Mother [exclaiming suddenly].* What I don't under-