

THE RULING PASSION

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Power consists in deciding which stories shall be told.
Carolyn Heilbrun

All these powers of religion, which should never have been left lying loose, well, the press picked them up. And now the press is the first estate.

Senator Eugene McCarthy

I have Johnsonized the land.

James Boswell

CAST OF CHARACTERS

PRIMARY PLAYERS:

David Hume Nicknames: le bon David, St. David, the Great Infidel, The Defender of the Faith

A great fat healthy stupid looking man. Tends to stare blindly at people. Speaks with a thick Scottish brogue. Not particularly graceful at maneuvering his great bulk.

Loves the human race, and above all else desires literary fame.

Samuel Johnson Nicknames: The Bear. The Sage. The Colossus of Literature. The Caliban of Literature. Ursa Major. The Great Moralist. Also known as Dictionary Johnson

A large, somewhat unkempt creature, with no great love for clean linen. Displays all the symptoms of a fairly serious obsessive compulsive disorder: voluntary facial tics, tongue clicking, movement of the head, obsessive need to always enter the room with his right foot, counts his steps from room to room, repetitively mutters little words under his breath in any new and therefore anxiety provoking situation.

In any and every company, talks for triumph: he must win every conversational encounter. A believer in the past. Progress is, to Johnson, just another word for decay.

James Boswell Nickname: Bozzy. Also known as the tit bird riding on the eagles back

A star fucker. A great lover of whores, he contracts gonorrhea 19 different times and eventually dies of it. For a short time, a drama critic. A clothes horse. By his middle years, alcoholic. Unhealthy interest in executions. Obsessed with death, and writing every day in his journal.

SUPPORTING PLAYERS:

Adam Smith	The eccentric economist, an absentminded professor type, soft spoken and odd
David Garrick	The actor
Margaret Boswell	Boswell's long suffering wife; she also suffers from tuberculosis
Madame Boufflers	The most magnificently intelligent and charming and beautiful of all the magnificent salon world in France.
Lydia	An English gentlewoman, with no family or resources

Additionally, there are many “one time” characters.

SETTING

A huge 18th century drawing room, with ceilings that extend as high as the height of the theatre--the scale of the room is enormous, mythic. There are impossibly tall windows, with gossamer sheer curtains. The walls are paneled, with simple, elegant woodwork, and paintings are hung high, in the space right below the ceiling. The walls are painted, tinted the palest rose.

It is sunset through the windows. Sunset by Tiepelo. A constant merging flowing stream of colored light.

Whatever is necessary to place the many locations of the play will come in and go out as needed, suggested with a minimum of scenic display, furniture, and props. Only one exception:

There should be as much paper on the stage as possible at all times-- letters, journals, pamphlets, books.

TIME

The 18th Century

Johnsonians, Boswellians, and Humeans are here gently reminded that *The Ruling Passion* is a work of fiction.

The historical inaccuracies herein are, hopefully, violations of the facts but not of the spirit of those depicted. In a wide ranging research I have discovered how fluid the myths of these three men are. Many of the stories I've used I have found corroborated in several sources, some I have found are often contradicted, and some occur only in works of marginal credibility.

Many historical persons depicted in *The Ruling Passion* are combined and rolled into each other. This puts the occasional famous word or sentiment into the wrong mouth of secondary characters, and means that characters will say things they never said in life. This should not be surprising. And it is a necessary economy--not of production capabilities so much as the audience's attention.

Events are also manipulated, floated a little earlier or later if it serves the stream of meaning for the audience. Occasionally, there is a rather shocking alteration in historical fact. Again, I plead purpose and intention.

There is some Boswellian instinct in all of us. And some justice in Boswellizing Boswell.

PROLOGUE

GRAVEDIGGER 1

(Two gravediggers dig Hume's grave, which is obscured from view by a row of other headstones. Boswell is hiding from the gravediggers.)

'Twas an atheist.

GRAVEDIGGER 2

A deist.

GRAVEDIGGER 1

Atheist.

GRAVEDIGGER 2

A deist. The mon went to Kirk ever' Sunday.

GRAVEDIGGER 1

The deil himself could go to Kirk, it would'na make him a Christian.

GRAVEDIGGER 2

I did'na say he was a Christian, I said he was--

GRAVEDIGGER 1

He was an atheist.

GRAVEDIGGER 2

An atheist would'na go to Kirk, man.

GRAVEDIGGER 1

So he went to Kirk. He's still dead.

GRAVEDIGGER 2

Aye. 'Tis a sad fact. Going to Kirk ever' Sunday does'na keep a man from being dead.

(Boswell comes over to the grave.)

Hallo there--

BOSWELL

I've just--come to inspect the grave.

GRAVEDIGGER 1

A grave inspector, are ye?

BOSWELL

No--

GRAVEDIGGER 1

Member of the family are ye?

BOSWELL

No--

GRAVEDIGGER 2

I know you! You're that mon that's always sniffing 'round the fatal tree at the Grassmarket hangings, the fancy lawyer who never misses a chance to see 'em swing.

BOSWELL

And what of it? Half of Edinburgh watches the hangings, that's what they are for!

GRAVEDIGGER 2

True enough, sir, but your devotion to them is legendary--first one there and last 'ta leave.

BOSWELL

I like a good view, same as the next man.

GRAVEDIGGER 2

True again, sir. But tis also true that many of those dancing in the clouds are your clients. Is it true ye lost Reid the sheep thief to the gallows on purpose, just 'ta see him swing and sway?

BOSWELL

How dare you--I defended Reid as though it was my own life at stake--I challenge you to a duel--pick your weapon and your time and place, sir--

GRAVEDIGGER 1

You're a fine fancy lawyer, challenging a gravedigger to a duel.

GRAVEDIGGER 2

(Grabs Boswell, then pushes him away fanning his nose.)

He's foul--must a' poured an entire distillery down his gullet.

GRAVEDIGGER 1

Well off with ye, ye ghoul. We've wark to do.

BOSWELL

Let me--let me look--

GRAVEDIGGER 1

A shilling.

BOSWELL

A shilling--

GRAVEDIGGER 1

Aye, a shilling is the going rate.

GRAVEDIGGER 2

For a shilling we'll lift you out again.

BOSWELL

But I only want to look--

GRAVEDIGGER 1

Give us the shilling, Sir. We know your kind.

(Boswell hands him a coin, stands at the open grave, then
climbs down into it.)

And you'll be wanting this--

(Hands him his threadbare, soiled coat. Boswell looks at it
dubiously.)

Don't mind the holes, Sir. It will still give you protection, so you won't get
your fine coat dirty lying in the earth.

GRAVEDIGGER 2

(They stare down at him.)

The upper classes seem madder and madder of late.

GRAVEDIGGER 1

'Tis on account of their idleness. You'd never see a laboren' man pay a shilling
to climb early into a grave. 'Tis called the melancholy.

GRAVEDIGGER 2

Melancholy?

GRAVEDIGGER 1

Melancholy for them, madness for us.
(Another gravedigger comes by.)

GRAVEDIGGER 3

I see ye've made short wark of the atheist's gave, Johnny.

GRAVEDIGGER 2

Deist.

GRAVEDIGGER 1

I told you, Johnny man--atheist.

GRAVEDIGGER 2

Deist!

GRAVEDIGGER 3

Ach, no matter.
(He looks down into the grave.)
Christ, another one. You--out of there--

BOSWELL

But I paid my shilling--

GRAVEDIGGER 3

A shilling?
(The other gravediggers look guilty.)
Well, my lord, you've got a bargain. Now out with you.
(He reaches in, and pulls Boswell out.)
And how did you enjoy your stay?

BOSWELL

(Boswell is shaken and pale.)
Cold. So cold.

GRAVEDIGGER 3

Aye, sir, that is what they all say.

BOSWELL

The grave is cold, and empty, and alone--

(Boswell grabs Gravedigger 3 by his jacket collar.)

Tell me--how am I to bear it! How--

GRAVEDIGGER 3

Don't ask us, sir, that is what religion is for--

BOSWELL

But what if religion is a dream! What if there is nothing beyond the grave but nothingness!

GRAVEDIGGER 2

Then sir, we will have wasted all our Sundays sitting on hard pews in drafty kirks listening too a lot of nonsense.

BOSWELL

We are all born black with sin, we are born a filthy lump of hell! We are born a corrupt thing!

GRAVEDIGGER 3

(Gravedigger 2 helps Gravedigger 3 detach himself from Boswell.)

Well, I'm sure it's nothing personal, sir--

GRAVEDIGGER 2

On your way now--

(Pointing him away from the grave and giving him a shove.)

GRAVEDIGGER 3

(They watch him go.)

Next time he comes around, charge him a pound.

(He inspects the grave.)

We've instructions to make it half again deeper.

GRAVEDIGGER 1

'Tis deep enough, Thomas--

GRAVEDIGGER 3

There's talk of riots, and speechifyen', and desecration of the body.

GRAVEDIGGER 1

Because he was an atheist?

GRAVEDIGGER 3

Aye.

GRAVEDIGGER 2

But he was'na an atheist, he was a--

GRAVEDIGGER 3

Hoots, man--deist, atheist, the grave's got to be twice as deep and we're the ones that must dig it.

(They all three climb down into the grave, out of view.)

GRAVEDIGGER 1

(From in the grave.)

Know how I knows this Mr. Hume was a atheist?

GRAVEDIGGER 2

Deist.

GRAVEDIGGER 1

I saw a entertainment about him. A burlesque, thirty years ago, oh, it was a good 'un, with Satan and all kind of fire and brimstone and it was about this David Hume, and it was called The Philosopher's Opera—

(Lights down on the cemetery.)

* PHILOSOPHERS OPERA

THE DEVIL

(Lights up on a tiny stage area, complete with footlights and flashy paper scenery. The Devil enters, steaming in hell.)

Long have I been notoriously weak in Scotland because of the dominance of the church. But rumors reach me, of a Philosopher known as Mr. Hume-ongus, who is a Deist, and therefore, may be on my side. And so, I arrive--

(In a puff of smoke)

In the city famous for its fragrance.

(As he walks down a tiny stage city street, chamber pots are emptied from every window)

Ah, yes, the famous flowers of Edinburgh. Blooming around me like spring. Heartened by their eternal scent, I go to meet Mr. Humongus.

(In walks Mr. Humongus, an impossibly huge man in a spotted yellow and black coat, who is a caricature of Hume. The audience boos and hisses at his entrance.)

We see Boswell sitting in the audience, laughing and clapping, and writing on a pad of paper.)

I have read your Treatise on Human Nature, your essay on Suicide, your essay on Miracles, and found each one a clever, thinly disguised attack on the authority of God and church. I like them.

MR. HUMONGUS

Sir, you have excellent taste.

THE DEVIL

(Aside to Audience)

But what if it is all a sham? His works are difficult to read--what if I have misunderstood them? I confess I have some suspicion that he is a shrewd fellow, endeavoring to convert men to Christianity, by writing indecipherable nonsense against it. Let's test him.

(The crowd indicates its approval of the test.)

Daughter!

(The Devil's Daughter appears. She is seductively attired. The crowd indicates its approval of her and her attire.)

DEVIL'S DAUGHTER

Yes, father.

THE DEVIL

Once again, I will require your help in testing a man's faith.

DEVIL'S DAUGHTER

Oh, what fun! There's nothing I like better than proving a man's soul is no match for a woman's body.

(The Devil's daughter gives the come-hither to Mr. Humongus.)
Oh, Mr. Humongus.

MR. HUMONGUS

Hoots, man, now here's a comely Lassie to come upon.

(Mr. Humongus has simulated sex with the Devil's Daughter, with much encouragement from the audience.)

DEVIL'S DAUGHTER

Yes! Yes! Give yourself over to passion!

THE DEVIL

What short work you have made of his beliefs, dear daughter.

MR. HUMONGUS

Not at all, sir. Since it is my maxim that reason is the slave of passion, I have violated none of my beliefs.

THE DEVIL

He has tricked us! Unhand her, you ruffian!

(Pulling them apart. To his daughter.)

Dress yourself.

(To the Audience.)

It is a clever kind of faith that outwits the Devil. I must silence his pen. But how? Some men I seduce with gold, or women, or cards--what will keep this philosopher from writing?

THE DEVIL'S DAUGHTER

Father! I have an idea!

(Goes to her father, and whispers in his ear. He vigorously nods his approval.)

THE DEVIL

Excellent!

THE DEVIL'S DAUGHTER

(She goes back to Mr. Humongus, and singing off key, she pulls food out of her costume. Mr. Humongus eats it compulsively, insanely, rapturously.)

Sell your soul for mutton, Mr. Hume
 Sweets and puddings spell eternal doom
 You have dared put faith in passions sway
 So you'll eat and eat and eat till Judgment Day.

(Wild applause from other audience members and Boswell. But his companion, Adam Smith, does not clap.)

FIRST MAN AT THEATRE

Let him burn in hell!

SECOND MAN AT THEATRE

Damn him and his heresy!

SMITH

This is an outrage! These entertainments are slanderous and vile! I do hope David isn't too aggravated.

BOSWELL

Why would he be? The philosophical jibes hit directly on the mark.

SMITH

Directly on the mark--have you not read Hume's work, or are ye too thick to understand it?

BOSWELL

I am almost halfway through his Treatise.

SMITH

Half way?

BOSWELL

Whenever my valet reads it to me, I fall asleep.

SMITH

I hope you won't embarrass yourself by talking nonsense about his work in your review.

BOSWELL

Oh, I pretty much leave the philosophy alone, and concentrate on the production.

(Reading from what he has written)

“The scenery was adequate for burlesque, as was the acting, with the exception of Madge Stone, who, as the Devil’s Daughter, quite stole the show.”

SMITH

Stole the show? I thought her quite mediocre.

BOSWELL

Well really, Mr. Smith, I should know. I am the reviewer, not you. “Her well turned ankles are put to good effect, as is her sweet and enchanting voice. The Edinburgh theatre will be revived by her debut.”

(Writing in)

Make that, illustrious debut.

SMITH

What a scoundrel you’ve become! Have you forgotten everything you learned in my moral philosophy course?

BOSWELL

What’s the harm, Mr. Smith? She’s tone deaf and can barely remember her lines. She’ll be wildly grateful to me for an entire season at least.

SMITH

Well I thought the proceedings very unfair to Mr. Hume and you should say so. After the way you have nagged and nagged me to introduce you to the man, I would think you--

FIRST MAN AT THEATRE

(Man sitting next to Smith.)

Are you some friend of Hume’s?

SMITH

Yes.

THIRD MAN AT THEATRE

(Calling to a companion)

McDonald—look, over here—a friend of the Infidel!

SMITH

But more importantly, I am a friend of reason, and that is sufficient.

SECOND MAN AT THEATRE

Sufficient to get your head bashed in.

SMITH

If you are secure in your faith what harm can he do?

THIRD MAN AT THEATRE

Hume must be stopped from spreading his poison.

SMITH

As much as I would like to continue this stimulating philosophical dialogue, I--

(Two more men join the other three.)

Ah. Reinforcement. Boswell, may I ask you to accompany me and my head outside? I am depressingly outnumbered.

BOSWELL

I would, but I must stop at the green room to meet Madge Stone first.

(Boswell heads for the green room. The men close in on Smith.)

SMITH

Oh, Jamie. Your baser instincts will be your salvation yet.

FIRST MAN AT THEATRE

Stand up and fight, friend of the Infidel!

SMITH

Gentlemen, consider your target. I am a mere nobody--a simple economics professor--whereas Mr. James Boswell, whom you are letting escape, is a famous theatre critic who has just confessed to me that he will not write a word against Hume in his review.

(Boswell hears this and moves faster. The men hesitate, then come closer.)

A review that hundreds will read.

(They pause again, can't decide which man to attack.)

So give me a good thrashing, and let Mr. Boswell slip through your fingers. It is Mr. Hume who will benefit, in the end.

(The thugs go for Boswell.)

FIRST MAN AT THEATRE

After the theatre critic!

SECOND MAN AT THE THEATRE

Don't let him get away!

(Giving Smith a chance to get away.

Lights fade.)

* BOSWELL JOURNAL

ROBERT THE VALET

(Lights up on Robert, knocking on the door to Boswell's chambers, carrying a bottle of Kennedy's Lisbon Diet Drink.)

Sir? Sir?

(He enters. Lights up on Boswell in his robe, writing in his journal.)

BOSWELL

She looked so sweet and innocent, who--

ROBERT THE VALET

Here is another bottle of Kennedy's Lisbon Diet Drink, sir.

BOSWELL

Put it there, thank you, Robert.

(Robert exits. Boswell drinks from the bottle, continues writing.)

She looked so sweet and innocent--who would have imagined she was so debauched! I have drunk two pints of Kennedy's Lisbon Diet Drink but they have had no effect on the disease. Every joint is screaming in pain, my discharge is a putrid river, and on my palms--

(He holds them up, and displays them to himself.)

It is the venereal rash!

(He writes.)

It is the venereal rash. This is the thanks I get for writing that glowing review of her. I should have wondered how she got the part in that burlesque in the first place. Have written David Hume, apologizing for my review, and asking when I can meet him. I determined to be more careful in future, and, if the fury should seize me, find a safe, genteel girl.

(Lights down. Lights up. Writing.)

Today I picked up a red-haired hussy and wallowed in the very stink of vice. My loins were on fire, and I was forced to enjoy her twice.

(Lights down. Lights up. Writing, and drinking from a bottle of Kennedy's Lisbon Diet Drink.)

Have been in bed these 3 weeks. This time the fevers are not as severe, and I have hopes of full recovery soon.

(Calling)

Robert! Robert!

(Holding up an empty bottle.)

Another—

(But Robert has anticipated his needs, and enters swiftly with another bottle.)

ROBERT

Bottle, sir.

(Lights down.)

* GOOD SAMARITAN

HUME

(It is a dark and misty night in Edinburgh. Hume walks along the walkway behind the castle, with his lantern, which is sputtering, about to go out. He misses his footing, and tumbles into the boggy ground, losing his lantern. Silence for a beat.)

I'm stuck. I'm stuck! Help. HELP. Will someone help me. Hello! Hello!
WILL SOMEBODY HELP ME?

GOOD SAMARITAN

(A woman, carrying large parcels, comes walking down the path, carrying her lantern.)

Who's that?

HUME

Hello--over here--

GOOD SAMARITAN

Hello--

HUME

Here, I'm here--

GOOD SAMARITAN

Hello.

(Her lantern light finds him.)

Are ye hurt?

HUME

No, madam, but I am stuck.

GOOD SAMARITAN

Stuck, are ye?

(She holds the lantern close to his face. She gasps.)

Lord above, protect me from heathens below. It's the Great Infidel!

HUME

Help me, please, I--

GOOD SAMARITAN

You're Hume the Atheist! The man Reverend Boston has called upon all Christians to shun!

HUME

Deist. I am a Deist.

GOOD SAMARITAN

All the same.

HUME

No, good woman, it is not, an atheist does not believe in any god. A Deist does not believe in your God, but....

GOOD SAMARITAN

Like I said, Mr. Hume. All the same.

HUME

NO IT IS NOT THE SAME!!!

GOOD SAMARITAN

All righty, then.

(She sits down on her parcels on the walkway.)

I'm in no hurry, and tis plain you're not going anywhaur. Tell me. In whatten God do you believe?

HUME

In God the watchmaker.

GOOD SAMARITAN

Go on.

HUME

Deists believe that God has not botched the job creating the universe, and does not need to intervene to set things straight. He is the great Watchmaker. He has created the world, given it laws to run by, and withdrawn from the daily affairs of it. He is supreme, and distant.

GOOD SAMARITAN

If he is so far away he canna help us when we have need, whatten good is he?

HUME

He is God.

GOOD SAMARITAN

But we need his help, here and now, to guide us--

HUME

Decency, generosity, honesty, and uprightness are all a man needs to guide him through life.

GOOD SAMARITAN

I've heard men refer to this watchmaker god.

HUME

Ah, good, than you understand--

GOOD SAMARITAN

The only watchmaker I know tis old Peterson, with the shop in the shade of Tower bridge. He charges dear, has a kind word for naebody, breaks more watches than he repairs, and is gone half blind from peer'en at the wee watch workings. God a watchmaker--I do hope not, sir.

(She hoists herself up, shoulders her load, and starts away.)

HUME

Wait, wait, does not Christian charity bid us help our enemies.

GOOD SAMARITAN

I'll dae naething for ye if ye dinna say the Lord's prayer, but leave ye where I fand ye.

HUME

(At the speed of light)

Our father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, they will be done, in earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil for thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory forever.

GOOD SAMARITAN

I think ye missed a ward or two.

HUME

Good woman, please, I am sinking--

GOOD SAMARITAN

Beneath the weight of your infidelity--

HUME

As a Christian women, I beg you--

GOOD SAMARITAN

Take my hand, then. One.

(She rocks him a bit.)

Two.

(She rocks him a bit.)

Three--

(A giant heave and grunt. She pulls hard and Hume comes sprawling out of the bog. They both lie on the boardwalk, panting.)

Tis a bit of advice I'm giving you now, Mr. Deist Hume. The people say you hae a great love of mutton.

HUME

Madam, please, I--

GOOD SAMARITAN

Well, this is whatten comes of your pagan ways.

HUME

God did not push me into the bog and mire!

GOOD SAMARITAN

Maybe, maybe not, who can say. But if ye loved God more and mutton less, ye'd be home by now.

(BLACKOUT)

* BOSWELL DRESSES/MEETS HUME

BOSWELL

(Lights up on Boswell, in bed, writing in his journal.)

Louisa was a great disappointment. She swore she had known no man but her late husband, and myself, and I prepared for a winter's safe copulation.

Instead—

(He takes a swig of Kennedy's Lisbon Diet Drink.)

I have used the time in bed to finish reading David Hume's History of Great Britain. It is much easier to read than his philosophical works. Have written him seven times, in the hopes of meeting him, but so far have received no--

(Robert comes in with a letter. Boswell opens it.)

At last. AT LAST!!!!

(He tears off his robe, and runs around in his underclothes.)

Robert--Robert--where are my white silk breeches?

ROBERT THE VALET

(Comes on carrying them.)

Here there are sir.

BOSWELL

(Boswell puts on his breeches.)

I think the red coat with gold lace.

(Robert goes to get it.)

No, the rose colored one with gold buttons. No, the blue coat and vest, with white lace.

(Robert holds them all in ready.)

I really don't know which to chose! It is not my fault, Robert. I have a passionate addiction to fine clothes. Dress affects my feelings as irresistibly as music.

ROBERT THE VALET

Well, sir, let me know when you settle on the tune.

BOSWELL

The--the--the--blue.

(Robert helps him dress.)

I am anxious to look my best. I shall be meeting David Hume today.

ROBERT THE VALET

Congratulations. I shall alert the papers.

BOSWELL

He is the greatest man in English letters. It is a great occasion to be meeting him.

(Lights up on Hume in his study. Boswell enters.)

It is a great occasion to be meeting you, Mr. Hume. I have read all your work, and believe you to be the greatest man in English letters.

HUME

Nonsense, my History is popular with the reading public, but--

BOSWELL

I heard you received an advance of a thousand pounds for the next volume.

HUME

My History has done well, it's true, but my Treatise and essays are all but ignored.

BOSWELL

Not your Essay on Miracles, sir.

HUME

Aye, I'm still shunned in certain circles over that.

BOSWELL

You must admit your purpose was to turn the church on its ear.

HUME

Mr. Boswell, my purpose was to show men how to think.

BOSWELL

But the church requires a belief in miracles--they are the very foundation of faith!

HUME

That the church has based its viability on acts which are violations of the very laws of nature can hardly be my fault.

BOSWELL

Your kind of thinking shakes the church's hold on the faithful, and the faithful's hold on their faith.

HUME

As it should.

BOSWELL

But I am fond of my belief.

HUME

You are a Calvinist, are you not?

BOSWELL

I was raised in that faith, but it did not comfort me. I crave the consolation of religion, but at closer glance they all fall short. I have tried Methodism, Deism, latitudinarianism, vegetarianism, and the Quakers. None of them was a solace. I have just converted to Roman Catholicism.

I wish I could be as constant in my faith as you are in your lack of one.

HUME

Are you not happy as a papist?

BOSWELL

I thought their elaborate rituals and ceremonies would help, but they are of no use to me. Whenever I hold my faith in my hand, where I can examine it--

HUME

It is important to remember that a man has two hands. Passion, and reason. And the faith he settles on must fit in both.

(Boswell takes out a small pad of paper and writes.)

BOSWELL

Passion and reason. And the faith he settles on must fit both.

HUME

Must fit in both. Although either meaning could be appropriate, I believe.

BOSWELL

I keep a very detailed journal.

HUME

Yes, it is an excellent practice for a young writer such as yourself.

BOSWELL

I find the taking of notes to be quite calming--this way I do not fret that the best parts of conversation are lost.

HUME

Do you not, however, find all this note taking to be an impediment to lively conversation?

BOSWELL

Lively conversation is worthless if it can't be preserved.

HUME

Mr. Boswell, you have got it backwards. Life is not meant to serve the writing, but the other way around.

BOSWELL

Oh no, it is essential to my well being to transcribe a maximum amount of experience into text. I have brought my journal. I wonder would you indulge me by reading it, and giving me your opinion.

HUME

It would be my pleasure.

(He takes the offered journal, and reads. Boswell is thrilled to the sound of every word.)

My affairs are conducted with the greatest regularity. At eight in the morning Molly lights the fire. I lie some time in bed indulging in indolence, which is most pleasing. I then slip on my clothes loosely, easily, and quickly, and come into my dining-room. I pull my bell. The maid lays a milk white napkin upon the table and sets the things for breakfast. I then take some light amusing book and read for an hour or more, gently pleasing both my palate and my mental taste. Breakfast over, I feel myself gay and lively. I go to the window, and am entertained with the people passing by.

(Hume puts the journal down.)

It's like peering at you through a flea glass, looking for every little convulsive leap. Anyone reading this will go palsied from the strain of holding still long enough for something to happen.

(Boswell is crestfallen.)

But it is very well writ--

BOSWELL

No, no, I see I will have to change my style--

HUME

Not but a little. You have a natural talent.

BOSWELL

But how can I tell the good parts from the bad?

HUME

We will go through your journal together and mark the best passages. That way you will have a better idea of what is worthy of pen and ink.

(They bend over the journal together. Lights fade.)

* TOAST THE DICTIONARY

BENJAMIN

(London. Lights up on David Garrick's apartments, where a small celebration is in progress. Samuel Johnson and several of his amanuenses are in attendance, as is Charles Jenkins, a bookseller.

Benjamin, the servant opens the door, and leads William Hogarth into the room.)

Good evening, Mr. Hogarth.

HOGARTH

Good evening, Benjamin.

(Johnson is standing in the corner looking out the window, shaking his head and rolling himself against the wall in a strange and disturbing manner. Benjamin takes Hogarth's coat and gloves. Hogarth watches Johnson carefully.)

GARRICK

There you are, Hogarth. Benjamin, did you check Mr. Hogarth's sleeves?

(To Jenkins.)

The last time he came to supper he had pigment, red pigment on his sleeve, it got all over my wife's favorite tablecloth.

HOGARTH

It was not the last time, it was years ago, and if you insist on telling that story over and over next time I come to dinner I shall come naked.

GARRICK

That will make an even better story.

HOGARTH

That it will, certainly a better story than the plays you put on. What you are doing to Shakespeare at Drury Lane ought to be outlawed. Your King Lear with a happy ending put me right to sleep.

GARRICK

Oh, really? Well, sir, your paintings--

JENKINS

Gentlemen, gentlemen.

(Indicating Johnson with a jerk of his head.)

Let us not give your guest the wrong impression.

HOGARTH

Yes, I wanted to ask you about him. Marvelous huge head he's got on him. Resembles some sort of animal. Like to paint him some day. Frankly, Garrick, I didn't think you were the type.

GARRICK

What type?

HOGARTH

Why, to take in an imbecile relative. At least, I assume he's a relative. If not, then your charity truly does you credit.

JENKINS

You also assume he's an imbecile.

HOGARTH

I can see that for myself.

GARRICK

(Calling to him.)

Sir?

JOHNSON

(Starting out of his behavior)

Yes?

GARRICK

May I have the honor of introducing you to Mr. Hogarth? Samuel Johnson, my friend William Hogarth.

(They sit down to supper.)

HOGARTH

But surely you're not the Samuel Johnson who has just completed the dictionary of the English language?

JOHNSON

I am.

HOGARTH

How extraordinary.

JOHNSON

It is not extraordinary, sir, it was hard work.

HOGARTH

Yes, yes, I imagine such a large project would be.

JOHNSON

To begin with, I started with the Bible. I underlined each word as it appeared the first time. I then gave this list to an amanuensis, who copied out the words, in alphabetical order. I then wrote the definition of each word. With some words, sir, I wrote more than a dozen definitions. I then went to other books, and found these words used in sentences and underlined those, choosing sometimes three different examples of the word from three different sources. I only used books which were Christian in their viewpoint, and rejected those with any revolutionary sentiments. I then gave these underlinings to the amanuenses, who copied them out. I have followed this procedure with several hundred books, finding words as yet unlisted, underlining them, defining them, and finding examples of their use. I employed six amanuenses, ten hours a day, six days a week for ten years to copy out what I selected, and since I had no patron for the project, had to write essays to provide their salary.

HOGARTH

You had no patron?

JOHNSON

Many promised their support, but none delivered it.

HOGARTH

But that is an outrage.

JOHNSON

The Dictionary could not wait. I did my duty, as I saw fit.

GARRICK

Dr. Johnson believes it his patriotic duty to freeze the English language before it is too late.

JOHNSON

It is a national tragedy that the populace insists on speaking English their own way! Everyday in the streets and the taverns I am pained to hear their assaults upon it. I have accepted that it will continue to degrade, as the lower classes and immigrants inject their poisonous slang, but I hope that my Dictionary will at least slow the inevitable tide before it erodes away all that we have come to revere and love in our mother tongue.

GARRICK

Hear, hear, it is a remarkable achievement! Benjamin!

(Benjamin enters, with glasses poured for the guests, passes them around.)

Now that you have finished your Herculean task, Dr. Johnson, I will send you free tickets to the theatre and will expect to see you there again.

JOHNSON

I have told you, Garrick, I will not go to Drury Lane again. Your actors mumble the Shakespeare, the new plays you present appear to have been written by lunatics, and the silk stockings and white bobbies of your actresses excite my genitals.

HOGARTH

But that is the reason most of London goes to Drury Lane.

JOHNSON

Sir, you have made my point.

GARRICK

(Holding his glass high.)

To the Dictionary!

ALL ASSEMBLED

TO THE DICTIONARY!

(Blackout.)

* BURLESQUE OF THE DICTIONARY

MR. COLEMAN

(Edinburgh. Lights up on a burlesque stage. A man wearing brown, and a tattered wig, a caricature of Johnson, comes down to the footlights.)

I come to you with a proposal for a Glossary or Vocabulary of the Vulgar Tongue, intended as a supplement to a certain larger Dictionary. And while some will complain that I have increased their labors by explaining what is easy, enjoyable, and bawdy by what is difficult, boring, and refined--be not afraid! Instead, be grateful for such pointless scholastic effort spent to such trivial effect.

(Coleman's helper reads from a list of words, Coleman recites the definitions.

The audience responds approvingly.)

HELPER

Higgledy-piggledy

COLEMAN

Conglomeration and confusion

HELPER

Rigmarole

COLEMAN

Discourse, incoherent and rapsodical

HELPER

Tit for Tat

COLEMAN

Adequate retaliation

HELPER

Shilly Shally

COLEMAN

Hesitation and irresolution

HELPER

Fee! Fa! Fo! Fum!

COLEMAN

Gigantic intonations

HELPER

Ding dong

COLEMAN

Tintinnabulary chimes, used metaphorically to signify dispatch and vehemence.

HELPER

Hodge-podge

COLEMAN

A culinary mixture of heterogeneous ingredients; applied metaphorically to all discordant combinations.

HELPER

Scottish.

(The crowd grows quiet.)

COLEMAN

The barbaric language spoken by Scots.

(The crowd starts to hiss.)

HELPER

Scotland.

COLEMAN

The place where nothing of value grows, but oats, and where nothing lives but sheep and the people who speak the barbarous tongue.

(More hisses and boos, and foot stamping)

HELPER

Scotsmen.

COLEMAN

The people who eat the oats that are in Scotland grown, speak the hideous language that only a savage can know, and who do call their boggy, swampy land a home!

(The crowd boos and hisses and stomps wildly.)

CROWD

Down with the dictionary!

Burn every copy!

Royalist pig!

Down with Dr. Johnson! Down with Dr. Johnson!

(Coleman joins in)

CROWD AND COLEMAN

Down with Dr. Johnson! Down with Dr. Johnson!

(Hume, Boswell and Smith make their way from the theatre to a Tavern. Smith is carrying Johnson's dictionary, which he flings down on the table.)

SMITH

Imagine! Johnson has had the effrontery to write a piece of Tory propaganda disguised as a dictionary!

BOSWELL

The man is entitled to his political beliefs—

SMITH

But he is so busy defining words to support his own opinions and prejudices that he forgets to include their real meaning!

HUME

I cannot see that there is any good in trying to freeze the English Tongue. Surely it is a fluid substance like a river, that flows through its people. Surely it must grow and change and reflect the hearts of the men who speak it--not adhere to rules born out of the disappointment and poverty of a single man.

SMITH

(Looking through the dictionary.)

Look what he's done to the word excise!

(Reading)

A hateful tax levied upon commodities, and determined not by the common judges of property, but wretches hired by those to whom excise is paid.

So now, all who do not know how to think will hate the excise tax. Why—because it is bad? No, sir. Because Johnson's father had trouble paying his!

HUME

Aye, it is an outrage, but it pales beside his definition of oats.

BOSWELL

What definition?

HUME

Oats: A grain, which in England is generally given to horses, but in Scotland supports the people.

BOSWELL

But what is so wrong with that? It is true.

SMITH

Jamie! 'Tis is a most outrageous slur.

HUME

If it were a novel, or an essay, no one would complain, Jamie, but this is the great dictionary of the English language! Surely he does not confuse himself so roundly with an entire people that he expects them all to speak and think as he does?

BOSWELL

I still say it is a remarkable achievement. Dr. Johnson must be a remarkable man.

SMITH

He is a hack, Jamie, a man who writes solely for money.

BOSWELL

But he is the greatest writer in the English language, after Mr. Hume, of course, and he only writes for money because he is poor--

SMITH

Yes, a poor man who is a royalist. He supports the power of the ruling classes and the subordination of the lower ones. Can you not see the contradiction in that?

BOSWELL

Even if you disagree with his ideas, his phrasing is without equal--he can present thoughts and opinions more clearly and with more color than any writer save Voltaire--he can argue either side of any argument with equal eloquence and knowledge, he--

HUME

Jamie, Jamie, all this is very true. He has the ability to speak of things which are of no account to him better than most men can speak about the things they hold most dear. But there is a difference between excellence in style and excellence in ideas, and just as a woman's beauty does not necessarily reflect the condition of her soul, so a well made phrase does not necessarily make a well made world.

BOSWELL

When I go to London, next month, I intend to make Dr. Johnson's acquaintance.

HUME

Do you?

BOSWELL

Oh, yes. I have a list of great men I wish to meet, and he is at the very top.

HUME

Well then. If it he is at the very top—but remember that Dr. Johnson, like all men of bigotry and antiquated notions, is ruled by the things he hates.

BOSWELL

And what does he hate?

HUME

Other than myself and my work?
 (Pause. With a smile.)
 Anyone who comes from Scotland.
 (Lights fade.)

* ALICE GIBBS

ALICE

(It is night in London, a misty, foggy night. The street lamps cast ghostly shadows. Boswell lunges drunkenly down a narrow street, pawing a young and pretty prostitute.)

Where are we going sir?

BOSWELL

To a place where a man may lie--alone, and yet in company.

ALICE

That could be a bed of straw in a rank tavern--or a feather bed in a fine palace.

BOSWELL

What a clever girl you are! It is indeed a rank tavern to some and to others, a fine palace.

ALICE

Well, either way, I am content.

BOSWELL

Are you! Ah, my ripe and luscious Alice--
 (He kisses her voluptuously.)

You suit me a thousand times better than the sad, scrawny girls of Edinburgh. You are a whore worthy of Boswell--if Boswell must have a whore.

ALICE

And must he, sir?

BOSWELL

He must! HE MUST INDEED!

ALICE

But are you worthy of me, sir?

BOSWELL

I? I am James Boswell, Scottish lord, poet, lawyer and theatre critic. I count among my friends many famous men—I intend to meet the great Samuel Johnson soon--and have in my pocket letters of introduction to many more!

(He takes one out and shows it to her.)

ALICE

(Reading, with some difficulty)

My dear Sheridan. This letter will in-in--

BOSWELL

Introduce--

ALICE

--introduce James Boswell. He is a young man of much learning and wit, and I trust he will find your door open to him.

(She hands the letter back.)

BOSWELL

A whore who reads! Every minute London suits me more and more.

ALICE

My mother says, we may be headed for the poorhouse, but we'll be able to read the street signs on the way there.

BOSWELL

So then, do you find me acceptable?

ALICE

Sir, I have read your fine recommendation.

(She lies down on the ground and opens her legs to him.)

You will find my door open to you.

(She giggles. Then she sees that they are at the entrance to a graveyard. She gets up.)

Sir?

(She steps away from him, confused.)

We are at the Tybourn Graveyard.

BOSWELL

Where some men go to lie in hell, and some men go to lie in heaven. Come--

(He grabs her, she doesn't want to.)

ALICE

Oh, sir, if word got out I laid with a man in a bone yard--

BOSWELL

Your reputation is safe with me.

(He gives her a shilling.)

ALICE

But isn't it frightening--

BOSWELL

At first. Terrible frightening, at first. But then--it is not.

(He gives her another shilling. Then another. She nods her head.

He pulls her into the graveyard. Lights fade.)

* BOUFFLERS LETTER TO HUME

LYDIA

(Paris. Lights up on Madame Boufflers' apartments. Boufflers is dressing to go out.)

But Madame--you told me you weren't going out, you said--

BOUFFLERS

Lydia, I go out every night.

LYDIA

But you promised me.

BOUFFLERS

I promised, Lydia, because I wanted to want to stay. But it turned out that no matter how much I wanted to want to stay--I did not. So, I have no choice. I must go.

(She shrugs and slips on her rose colored satin dress.)

Don't sulk, Lydia. You have the best of me, yes?

(Lydia does not respond.)

Say yes, Lydia, or you will have none of me at all.

LYDIA

Yes.

BOUFFLERS

(She hands a red leather bound book to Lydia.)

You will finish reading Monsieur Hume's Treatise on Human Nature, tonight when I return.

LYDIA

(Lydia does not take the book.)

I shall be asleep by then, Madame.

BOUFFLERS

Of course you won't. You will wait up for me, as you always do.

(She kisses the book.)

And when we finish reading the Treatise—we will start it over again!

LYDIA

You are wrong to worship Hume. In England in polite company he is hardly mentioned at all. Dr. Samuel Johnson is the greatest English mind.

BOUFFLERS

Dr. Johnson? Pfft. He is a popular writer, and like all popular writers, he does not translate. Hume is a man of ideas—his work will always translate.

LYDIA

Perhaps his ideas translate, Madame, but they are still of no regard in England.

BOUFFLERS

Poor Monsieur Hume! It is a great injustice that he must suffer the snubs of English fools, while all of France reveres him.

(An idea strikes her.)

But of course! He must come here! We shall write to him immediately!

(She takes Lydia to her writing desk, and sits her down.)

Dear Monsieur Hume.

(Lydia does not write. Firmly.)

Dear Monsieur Hume.

(Lydia writes. Madame dictates.)

The admiration which your sublime work has awakened in me has caused me to write to you to express those sentiments with which I am so deeply penetrated.

LYDIA

Are you sure you wish to use the word penetrated, Madam? In English, it also means-

BOUFFLERS

I am aware, Lydia, of what it also means.

(Back to dictation.)

Monsieur, it is known that the English do not appreciate you. But here in France, all the best minds are your admirers. Diderot is mad for you! Voltaire proclaims you the greatest philosopher in the world. Even Rousseau sings your praises.

You must come to France. I would deem it a great honor to be your hostess. My Palace is large, my Salon is agreeable, and the greatest minds in France will be at your disposal.

Sign it as usual--

LYDIA

(With attitude.)

Marie-Charlotte-Hippolyte de Campet de Saujeon, Comtesse de Boufflers
Rouverel

You're in love with him.

BOUFFLERS

(Throws back her pretty head and laughs.)
What nonsense, Lydia! I have not even met him!

LYDIA

I could put in mistakes--clever mistakes, which would make you appear stupid to Mr. Hume, and--

BOUFFLERS

And then, Lydia, my poppet? When I read the letter, and found these mistakes?

(Pause)

When Monsieur Hume comes, you will go to stay in my estates in the South.

LYDIA

But you promised you would never send me away--

BOUFFLERS

It's true, I did promise.

(Lydia hangs her head. Boufflers touches her cheek.)

LYDIA

When Hume comes--what about the Prince--won't he mind?

BOUFFLERS

My darling Lydia--the Prince will mind no more than he minds you. In fact, he will be pleased that there is someone newer to the chains, and therefore more eager to please me. Less apt to rattle them and disturb his day.

(The two women stare at each other.)

LYDIA

(Sweeps past her dramatically.)

Excuse me, Madam, I shall pack and be gone from here before nightfall.

BOUFFLERS

You will pack, as you have a dozen times before, you will pack, and you will cry, and you will talk about going back to England, but you will not go. I own you now, Lydia. It is too late for you. As long as I let you, you will stay.

(Lydia turns to face Boufflers. Lydia exits. Boufflers faces out.)

Postscript.

When I read your work, I am transformed. In truth, I believe I have before my eyes the work of some celestial being, free from human passions. Such is my dream, Monsieur Hume--and it is why I read philosophy so desperately. To find the key to set me from my own passions, free.

(She folds the letter and places it in a blue envelope. Lights down on Boufflers.)

* BOSWELL MEETS JOHNSON

JENKINS

(London. Lights up on Jenkins' book shop. Boswell enters.)

Sir, I told you, there is no assurance that he will come here today.

BOSWELL

I am not leaving. I have been everywhere else in London where it is rumored he goes, and I am always missing him either by arriving straight away after he is gone, or leaving the minute before he appears. So I am resolved to stay in one place. Which is here.

JENKINS

Sir, 'tis not that I find your company odious, but you have already graced my shop with your presence for three days running, and--

(He looks out, through the door of his shop.)

Mr. Boswell, prepare to meet the Bear.

(Jenkins opens the door in a sweeping gesture, as Johnson enters his book shop.)

BEHOLD. IT COMES! Hail the Great Caliban of Literature. Dr. Johnson, may I introduce James Boswell, a young man who comes to us from--

BOSWELL

(Desperate aside.)

Please don't tell him where I come from--

JENKINS

From Scotland.

BOSWELL

Dr. Johnson, I do indeed come from Scotland, but I cannot help it.

JOHNSON

That, sir, I find is what a very great many of your countrymen cannot help.

(Boswell is stunned. Johnson turns away from him, to talk to Jenkins.)

Well then, Jenkins, have you made up your mind up to come with me to dine at the Duke of York's, or will you insist on squandering the evening with your ridiculous Scientific Association tonight?

JENKINS

Since when is it a waste to spend the evening with men of learning?

JOHNSON

It is always a waste, and even a rube from the country knows it. Boswell, I put it to you. If on the same day you were asked to dine with the first duke in England, or with the first man in Britain for genius, which would you chose?

BOSWELL

The duke.

JOHNSON

You see?

JENKINS

I contend there is no question at all. Dine with the genius! Most dukes are fools.

JOHNSON

Perhaps, but it is still a mistake not to dine with them. Even a great genius will have a higher opinion of you because you have dined with royalty.

JENKINS

If you were not the son of a poor man, no one would allow you to say such royalist cant.

JOHNSON

Nonsense.

BOSWELL

I agree with you, Dr. Johnson. Without rigid class distinction, there would be no difference between myself and my valet. And consequently, I would be without a servant, and he would be without a job.

JOHNSON

Your argument is frivolous, but I find I like you, Mr. Boswell. Though you hail from a benighted backwater, your accent is quite good, with hardly any of the stink of the lowlands in it.

BOSWELL

You are most kind to say so. I have ambitions to be a writer, like yourself.

JOHNSON

You are right to come to London--there is much for a young gentleman to learn here. Of course, it will sour whatever comfort you may have taken in what passes for conversation in Edinburgh--

BOSWELL

Oh, no, we have David Hume, who--

JOHNSON

David Hume?

BOSWELL

Yes do you know him?

JOHNSON

Know him? Of course not. He is an infidel, and beneath my contempt.

BOSWELL

Oh, no, sir, he is a decent man, who genuinely wants to discover the truth--

JOHNSON

Infidels are motivated by nothing but vanity, which blinds their eyes to truth. And you, in turn, are blinded by his fame.

BOSWELL

But David Hume lives a pure and virtuous life. I sometimes suspect that for all his pagan talk, he is secretly a Christian on the inside.

JOHNSON

On the inside? Sir, internal goodness is worthless to any civilized society. A savage, living in the woods by himself, may have happiness by it. But our happiness in society depends on external merit, and external signs of it. Internal goodness will not serve you so much as outward piety, or a fine set of clothing, or money will. Sir, you may make the experiment. Go to the street and give one man a lecture on morality and another a shilling, and see who will respect you most.

Internal goodness--you cannot trust it. You cannot see it. You cannot spend it to put clothes upon your back or food in the mouths of your children. It is a worthless thing, and if that is all the claim David Hume has to your respect and affection, than you have placed it, sir, in a very hollow place.

(Lights down on Jenkins' book shop.)

* ORANGE CAKE CAVE

ANN HUME

(Hume is in his cave, a small, enchanting spot. It is filled with the sound of the wind in the leaves of trees, the birds roosting and singing, the stream that gurgles just below. It is twilight, and the dappled light plays in through the leaves. It will be the place

where

Hume imagines himself at peace in the final hours before death.

He

is feeding the wee birds a white cake.

His mother enters, carrying a lantern. She sees what he is up to.)
Davie? Davie? You're not feeding the birds my good orange cake!

HUME

I couldn't finish it.

ANN HUME

Couldn't finish it! 'Tis not like ye.

HUME

No, tis not.

ANN HUME

(She sits.)

Do you have to go? Maybe, if you just left Edinburgh—perhaps the university at Aberdeen would--

HUME

No one will hire me. I am branded an infidel and will be blackballed here no matter where I go.

ANN HUME

But you know nothing at all about this Madame Blueflowers –what kind of a woman writes such a letter to a man, a man she doesn't even know—going on and on about your philosophy, page after page of shameless flattery, well, is that the sort of thing a lady would do?

HUME

Is reading other people's mail the sort of thing a lady would do?

ANN HUME

You left it on your desk, Davie, there's not a mother in the world who could of helped reading it, with her son about to go so far away.

(She struggles not to cry. A flock of birds goes by.)

Your wee birdies will miss you.

HUME

Mother--

ANN HUME

And you'll miss your wee cave--oh, it's such a snug place, with the water close by. Your brother always said he thought it was heaven.

HUME

That was because I would never let him come in here. Heaven is always a place with a door that is not open to everyone. That is why I am resolved never to give in to temptation, and believe in it.

ANN HUME

Oh, if only you hadn't written that essay on Miracles! Maybe, if you'd promise you'd never write anything like that again, you wouldn't have to go. Maybe, if-

HUME

Don't ask me to say things you know it will upset you to hear.

ANN HUME

(Fiercely)

Why do you have to do it? Why!

HUME

It is what I believe.

ANN HUME

No, why do you have to write it down, and publish it? Isn't believing it enough?

HUME

Men have a passion to make other men believe as they do.

ANN HUME

That is precisely the thing you despise about the church!

HUME

The point is, I am right, they are wrong.

ANN HUME

The point is, they have the power and you have none. Be reasonable, Davie. Do not bring down that power on your head!

HUME

Listen to you! You want me to be reasonable, but reason is the slave of our passions--it is how we feel about a thing that makes us want to be reasonable about it.

ANN HUME

Do not talk philosophy at your mother, David Hume. It is always a sign you are trying not to talk about something else!

HUME

Mother I--all I am saying is, we don't need the church to tell us what is good and what is bad.

ANN HUME

Then who will tell us?

HUME

Our hearts will tell us. Our hearts, which are more real than any fear of hell or hope of heaven.

ANN HUME

I should hate to trust my fate to the heart of a highwayman on the road.

HUME

I'm not saying there should be no laws. I'm saying--when we go to the theatre, Mother. When we sit in the theatre, do you not notice that everyone laughs and cries at the same moment? As if there were an agreement of feeling. Of sentiment. We laugh and we cry, as one body, as one heart. And that heart knows what is good and what is bad. That is the only law we need, the law of sympathy.

(He holds a handful of cake up for the birds. There is a flutter of wings around him.)

There is no place for me here, Mother. I have to go.

ANN HUME

Do you—do you know when you might be coming back?

(Shakes his head.)

Well then.

(She sighs)

I will come here and think of you, Davie. And feed your wee birds.

HUME

(As he feeds the birds.)

They do love your cake, mother.

ANN HUME

They should. I went all the way to Southgate for those oranges.

HUME

You always used to tell us that heaven had the scent of a thousand oranges, remember?

ANN HUME

There's only three in that cake, Davie, and I was lucky to get those.

HUME.

(He holds the remains of the cake to his face, and inhales deeply.)

Only three? Then three oranges will have to do.

(The birds swirl about his head. Lights fade.)

* FACE OFF

HUME

(Edinburgh. Lights up on Hume. Peggy, his housekeeper, is packing for him.)

I am grateful to be going. I do not believe there is one Englishman in fifty, who, if he heard I had broke my neck tonight, would not be rejoiced with it. Some hate me because I am not a Tory, some because I am not a Whig, some because I am not a Christian, and all because I am a Scotsman.

BOSWELL

(Boswell comes from behind a dressing screen, trying on a flamboyant red waistcoat. He regards himself, as he moves to the center of the stage.)

Do you really mean to part with this? It is a splendid fabric.

HUME

I have not worn it since I was your age, nor am I likely to fit into it again.

JOHNSON

(The scene shifts to Johnson, working in his chambers. He regards Boswell's fancy waistcoat.)

So. I see you are wearing his cast off clothing, as well as his cast off ideas.

BOSWELL

(Rushing to Johnson.)

Sir, it is a beautiful fabric--

JOHNSON

Look closer, sir! You will see it riddled with holes from the meals of moths! You will find it mildewed and rotten, the first time you subject it to hard wear! Hume's ideas are nothing but vanity!

(He rubs the fabric between his fingers in disgust.)

HUME

Nothing but vanity? Jamie, it is a tired old attack on me. It is nothing new.

(To Peggy)

Over there Peggy, yes I will need my broadcloth shirts.

BOSWELL

(Boswell runs back to Hume.)

But Dr. Johnson says there is no other way for your attacks on organized religion to be received.

HUME

Ah, you are quoting Dr. Johnson now, are you?

(To Peggy, as she holds up a yellow coat with black spots, like the one Mr. Humeongus wore.)

No, Peggy, don't pack that one. I know it's your favorite—but I can't bear to wear it anymore.

(Back to Boswell)

I am a man who seeks to free mankind from the harmful prejudices of an outdated and unnecessary set of laws and practices.

BOSWELL

But surely, religious doctrine has been handed down by divine revelation, and must have some merit--

HUME

Merit? Is there merit in the doctrine of original sin--that babies are born already black with it?

BOSWELL

You cannot be sure we are not, Mr. Hume--

HUME

Man is born pure. I am sure of it.

(Peggy scowls at him and shakes her head.)

Peggy I am sure of it. Peggy, I will not have you sulking over the doctrine of original sin when there is packing to do.

(Peggy glowers at Hume and gets back to work. To Boswell)

We are born innocent and while we are capable of both good and evil, our nature will provide all the goodness necessary to a virtuous and noble life.

JOHNSON

Man's chief merit consists in resisting the impulses of his nature. It is nonsense to believe otherwise.

HUME

Detachment from the passions is impossible--and to try to do so a great mistake. Get rid of all the passions we harbor about virtue, or the revulsion we have for vice, render each man reasonable about good and evil--and that will be the end of morality. Once a man ceases to be passionate about being good, he will have nothing but selfish impulses to guide his actions.

JOHNSON

Being a man of virtue is hard work.

HUME

Virtue is natural.

JOHNSON

Hume and other infidels destroy our principles and put nothing firm in their place.

HUME

(Peggy is loading him up with linen.)

It requires a great goodness of disposition to withstand the baleful effects of Christianity.

(He goes to put it in a trunk.)

BOSWELL

(To Johnson)

Oh if you could just meet Mr. Hume, he is the best of men, kind and generous, he does have a strange habit of staring at one, but after all you also have your strange...your strange...your...

JOHNSON

(A strange smile on his face, daring Boswell to mention his disorder.)

My--what, Bozzy?

BOSWELL

(Turns immediately to Hume.)

I'm sure once you meet Dr. Johnson, the two of you would--

HUME

I will meet Dr. Johnson in hell, if there is one, not before.

BOSWELL

No, you must come to London, I will bring the two greatest men of English letters together at last!

JOHNSON

You speak of me and the infidel in the same breath!

HUME

I expected better from you, Jamie.

JOHNSON

I would not suffer my soul to remain in the same room with the man, let alone entertain the notion of conversation!

(He begins to walk off.)

BOSWELL

But--but it would be a legendary meeting--a meeting that history deserves--I could publish it in a pamphlet--The Great Infidel meets the Great Bear--

(Sees that Johnson is gone, runs to Hume.)

Mr. Hume--please reconsider--

HUME

(Angry for the first time.)

You have no right to badger me on this! You knew how I felt about Dr. Johnson! You knew how he attacks and reviles me--and still you went straight to his bosom the instant you arrived in London!

BOSWELL

Mr. Hume, I never meant to--

HUME

I leave for France today, Jamie. Since you are so fond of Dr. Johnson, go back to London--and get your fill of him.

(He is packed and dressed for France and begins to walk off.)

BOSWELL

Mr. Hume--I'm sorry, I--Mr. Hume--

(But he is gone. Lights down.)

* THE BALL

CELESTE WALPOLE

(Paris. Lights up on the apartments of Celeste and Horace Walpole. Celeste and Horace are sitting at their dressing tables, while their servants powder and help them dress for the ball.

Her maid gives Celeste a large silver entry-hall tray. Celeste looks through their calling cards.)

Not a single one.

HORACE WALPOLE

How very extraordinary. We, who have introductions to everyone who is anyone--

CELESTE WALPOLE

--have invitations from no one.

HORACE

Meanwhile David Hume is met everywhere he goes with a sickening burst of applause.

(Lights up on the masked ball, where Hume is met with a burst of applause.)

CELESTE WALPOLE

All my new Paris fashions, just sitting. Tonight at least we will be masked, no one will know we have no invitation to this Madame Blueflower's ball.

HORACE WALPOLE

Imagine, sneaking into a ball given in honor of--

(He shakes his head.)

--a SCOTSman.

(He goes behind his dressing screen to change.)

1st MASKED WOMAN AT BALL

(Scene shifts to the ball.)

And how are you finding Paris, Monsieur Hume?

HUME

(Kissing her hand.)

I eat nothing but ambrosia, drink nothing but nectar, breathe nothing but incense, and tread on nothing but flowers.

1st MASKED WOMAN AT BALL

All France adores you.

(She dances away.)

HORACE WALPOLE

(From behind his screen, to Celeste, who goes behind hers.)

It is hard to imagine, Celeste. The French prefer Monsieur Hume--a Scotsman whose sole claim in recognition lies in philosophy--over me--the celebrated son of a celebrated prime minister.

2nd MASKED WOMAN

(A second Masked Woman dances past Hume.)

The clarity and beauty of your ideas in the Treatise on Human Nature are overwhelming!

HORACE WALPOLE

(He comes from behind his screen, dressed in his costume--an éclair.)

Celeste! Aren't you ready yet?

3rd MASKED WOMAN

(A third Masked Woman dances past Hume.)

Monsieur Hume! Nothing that I have ever read has held my attention so thoroughly, and I have never had so high an opinion of myself as when I was reading you.

YEW TREE

(A man dressed as a Yew Tree comes up to Hume.)

So, you are the exceedingly famous Monsieur Hume all the ladies whisper about.

HUME

I am the exceedingly dazed Hume, sir, as the ladies do more than whisper, they talk my own philosophy to me day and night.

YEW TREE

And you suffer miserably.

HUME

I am convinced that even Louis the Fourteenth has never, in any three weeks of his life, suffered so much flattery.

YEW TREE

(Laughs delightedly)

I am positive you are correct. So. You will come to visit us next Saturday? My eldest son is your great admirer.

HUME

I would be honored. If you will tell me where to--

YEW TREE

My coach will pick you up at noon.

(The Yew Tree goes off. A fourth masked lady, wearing a gorgeous rose colored satin gown, takes his arm.)

FOURTH MASKED WOMAN
(BOUFFLERS)

You are a complete success.

HUME

Excuse me?

FOURTH MASKED WOMAN

You have just been invited to Versailles!

HUME

When?

FOURTH MASKED WOMAN

Just now!

HUME

By the Yew Tree?

FOURTH MASKED WOMAN

The King!

HUME

The Yew Tree was the--

(He turns to look--there are four Yew Trees.)

But which one? There are four--no--a dozen of them!

FOURTH MASKED WOMAN

He imagines it provides a additional element of disguise.

HUME

In Scotland, a dozen Yew trees provides a hedge.

FOURTH MASKED WOMAN

And this way, no man may say for sure he saw the King dallying with his wife.

(They pass a man relieving himself on the back leg of one of the
Yew Trees, to his companions' delight.)

Or claim he urinated on the royal limb.

(Pause)

Sir, do you Scottish not know it is proper to offer a lady your arm, and request the favor of a dance?

HUME

Madam, nothing would give me more pleasure, but I am waiting for our hostess to make her appearance.

FOURTH MASKED WOMAN

Ah, yes, Madam Boufflers. They say she has been in a fit over her quarantine. Imagine. The measles!

HUME

Yes, it is unfortunate.

FOURTH MASKED WOMAN

Yes, here she has schemed and schemed to bring you to France, and then she must hide in her palace, while the reports stream in daily, of the conquests you make in the salon of every woman who has the wit to display you!

HUME

I cannot bear to hear you speak of her with such spleen, Madam. Though I have not yet met her, I owe her my very life.

FOURTH MASKED WOMAN

Your very life! Surely you exaggerate.

HUME

No. In England the easiest route to fame was to publish an attack on me. I lived without the respect you would afford the lowest cur. I was lost, Madam, with no hope of ever living in the clear world of thought and conversation. And then suddenly I find myself in France, where I am reunited with both my writings and the human race once again.

FOURTH MASKED WOMAN

(The Walpoles, Horace in his eclair costume, Celeste decked out as a three masted ship, dance by, glaring at Hume.)

Oh! Who is that odious couple?

HUME

Horace Walpole and his wife. Son of the prime minister.

FOURTH MASKED WOMAN

They had no invitation. But I let them in anyway.

(She waves at them. Hume realizes she is Boufflers. He stares at her, openmouthed.)

You stare, Monsieur Hume.

HUME

I am bound to stare, Madame Boufflers, when someone has played a trick on me. I am only a writer. You cannot expect my conversation to be adequate to such needs.

BOUFFLERS

Ah, you hide behind your pen.

HUME

As you hide behind your mask.

BOUFFLERS

But to different ends, I trust. And while we are on the subject of masks--where is the mask and costume I sent you?

HUME

It did not...suit me.

BOUFFLERS

I am much put out with you. I sacrificed my favorite seamstress for a week to make it. Have you nothing more to say to me on the subject of your costume than it did not suit you?

HUME

In point of fact, Madam, it did not suit me.

BOUFFLERS

Nonsense. You picked it yourself, you sat for three fittings--

HUME

Three weeks ago.

BOUFFLERS

I see. Is your taste so fickle that it becomes inconstant in three weeks? I should not like to think that my tastes ran so wildly.

HUME

Madame, please spare me further ridicule. Three weeks of French pastry--

(He indicates an expanding girth.)

and fourteen course banquets--

(And bigger.)

--which end with endless desserts.

(And bigger still.)

BOUFFLERS

(Laughing)

I will speak of it no further.

(A wigged and elaborately dressed man servant comes up to her, whispers in her ear. She nods.)

My duties require my presence elsewhere. Enjoy the party, Monsieur Hume. It is after all, in your honor. Perhaps, later, you may ask me for a dance. And perhaps, later, I will favor you with one.

(With a swirl of satin, she is gone.)

DIDEROT

(Hume stands, dumbfounded. A man, disguised as a pastry, is at his side.)

Monsieur Hume?

HUME

Yes?

DIDEROT

It is a great honor to meet you.

HUME

Then take your mask off.

DIDEROT

It is a masked ball, Monsieur.

HUME

I have not the temperament or the conversation to continually evade the traps that are being set for me! For all I know, you are the Prince Conti--or a rival of my

hostess seeking to trap me in some unintended slur--or perhaps the King in another costume or--I cannot bear speaking to people I cannot see!

DIDEROT

(As Hume raises his hand to remove his mask, he restrains his hand.)

Sir, to remove my mask in this assembly is to endanger my life.

HUME

Sir, your amorous activities are of no consequence to me. If your ridiculous disguise is necessary to allow you a rendezvous while avoiding the sword of a jealous husband, then--

DIDEROT

My disguise is necessary whenever I leave my apartments, sir. Although I do not often go abroad disguised as a piece of pastry, my appearance as such is necessary here for only one thing--to meet you.

(He extends his hand.)

I am Denis Diderot.

HUME

(Taking his hand, shaking it enthusiastically.)

Sir, I am sorry--

DIDEROT

So am I. I had hoped to meet you as an éclair--but thanks to a mistake at my costumers, who rented it to an overbearing Englishman at the last moment, I am nothing but a common crust.

HUME

I am honored, sir, to meet you regardless of your culinary form.

DIDEROT

Oui, it is already known in Paris that you have not yet met a pastry you have not liked. Monsieur, I have read all your work and I welcome you to France. It is most appropriate that you should come at such a time. We have completed the first volume. I should like you to have the first of the run.

(From inside his costume, he hands Hume a large book.)

HUME

The Encyclopedia--I have heard the rumors--

DIDEROT

Now, the knowledge of man will belong to all men. The Encyclopedia will become the new Bible for the new age, and make it possible for the masses to replace faith with reason, and improve their lives. Unlike your Dr. Johnson's huge dictionary, which seeks to freeze society as it is, and inhibit change, the Encyclopedia will make progress and change inevitable. This, of course, threatens governments and religions everywhere. I am always in danger now.

(The Walpoles dance by. Diderot sees the eclair costume.)

Ah, my eclair. Will you excuse me? It is a point of honor--I am a Frenchman, after all.

(Diderot grabs Walpole, and starts ripping the eclair off him.

The crowd of people dancing envelopes Hume, cutting off his view of the tussle. He is trapped in the whirl. Then, he is spit into the middle of the crowd--and there is Madam Boufflers. She removes her mask, and extends her hand. Hume takes her in his arms.

Hume and Boufflers dance. In the crowd we lose sight of them.)

* LOOSELY

BOUFFLERS

(Hume and Boufflers dance into a bedroom.)

You hold me quite loosely sir.

HUME

I hold you as a gentleman would, Madame.

BOUFFLERS

Which is loosely.

HUME

I can hold you tighter.

BOUFFLERS

You can, but you do not. You hold me--as a philosopher, I believe. How does the passage from your Treatise go. "There is a looseness that prevents the possible from shrinking tightly around the actual." Have I quoted you accurately?

HUME

You have. Just because an existing atom can unite with two hydrogen atoms to form a molecule of water doesn't mean that it must, that it is doing so right now. Everything possible is not actual. If it were--then everything that could happen would happen. The result would be chaos.

BOUFFLERS

Chaos?

HUME

Chaos. Or worse.

BOUFFLERS

Is passion so terrible, Monsieur Hume?

HUME

You yourself know it to be. In your letters to me, you begged help in finding release from it!

BOUFFLERS

I was very unhappy then. But now that I have met you--

HUME

Nothing has changed, Madam, that should make you less afraid of it. I have always tried to escape its grip.

BOUFFLERS

But at what cost?

HUME

The cost is mine to pay. I have seen how passion for God, or love, for money, for power, I have seen how it enslaves a man--how it enslaves whole nations. It can be terrible.

BOUFFLERS

But it can--be other things as well. The hydrogen atoms may unite and make something wondrous.

HUME

That is true. But once they unite, that is their one chance, they are henceforth bonded there, and the possible shrinks around the actual--

(He pulls her tight to him.)

--until there is no more room for the other possibilities. The possible becomes real. And all the other might have beens fall away.

(They kiss. He breaks away from the embrace.)

You are married--

BOUFFLERS

I have thought of nothing but you from the first moment I read your work! I wrote you, I begged you, I schemed to bring you to Paris! Now that you are here I am your devoted servant, I worship at your feet--what greater proof of my passion--intellectual, emotional, and now physical--can you need--

HUME

--and what of Prince Conti--you are his official...his official...

BOUFFLERS

You are making me angry! You have no right to talk to me of the Prince! You, who are so busy protecting the possible, hiding from the actual. Put your arms around me, Monsieur, and make one atom unite with the other, and then we will see if it is chaos.

HUME

Or worse.

BOUFFLERS

Give up your grip on the way you have chosen to slip out of passion, on the way you have chosen to live outside of life. And hold me, very, very tightly.

(He puts his arms around her tightly. They embrace passionately.)

Lights fade.)

* JOHNSON AND BOSWELL JOURNAL AND ORANGES

JOHNSON

(Lights up on Johnson's attic chambers. There is a deep layer of

paper from Johnson's various projects, strewn all over the floor. Boswell is recording their conversation with pencil and paper. I hope he stays in France, and I have done everything in my power to insure it. He is, and always has been, an enemy of everything I hold dear.

(Johnson takes out an orange and begins peeling and eating it, then scraping the peel with a small pocket knife.)

They will not notice his lack of scruples in France. They do not care that he opposes the very principles which have been thought necessary to human happiness.

BOSWELL

He is a seeker of truth, like yourself.

JOHNSON

Truth! The truth of what? Of his enormous vanity?

BOSWELL

Even though you disagree with his beliefs, it seems unChristian of you to be so cruel.

JOHNSON

If he is the great man he thinks himself, all my essays and pamphlets cannot hurt him; it is like throwing peas against a rock.

BOSWELL

But why attack his heart?

JOHNSON

Why, Sir, because his head has corrupted it. Or perhaps it is his heart that has perverted his head. I know not indeed whether he has first been a blockhead and that has made him a rogue, or first been a rogue and that has made him a blockhead.

BOSWELL

(Writing)

Oh, that's good, Dr. Johnson, that is--

JOHNSON

(Johnson grabs the pad of paper out of Boswell's hands.)

No more, Bozzy, no more! It makes a man nervous to have you always scribbling away. I have been so put to the question by you this evening that I am panting for breath. Why, one was: Pray, sir, can you tell me why an apple is round and a pear is pointed? Would not such talk make a man hang himself?

(He rips up Boswell's pad.)

BOSWELL

But my journal--

JOHNSON

I keep a journal as well, but I do not make such a spectacle of it.

BOSWELL

You so rarely mention it sir, that I sometimes wonder at its existence. I should like to see it.

JOHNSON

A gentleman's journal is for his own eyes alone.

BOSWELL

I should still like to see it--

JOHNSON

Sir, the man who would let you see his private papers deserves to be hanged. And do not think you will find your way to them upon my death--they will be nothing but ashes by the time my body is cold. And you must make similar arrangements.

BOSWELL

But my journals are all I have to guarantee that after I die I will not vanish into nothingness.

JOHNSON

Guarantee? Of what, sir? They are nothing but words. They have no power in the afterlife.

(Johnson opens a drawer, and deposits the orange peels inside it.)

BOSWELL

Oh sir, I see where you keep all the orange peels you are always scraping--

(Boswell starts to reach his hand into the drawer, Johnson slams the drawer shut, catching Boswell's fingers.)

JOHNSON

They are as precious to me as my journals, sir. Do not think to disturb them. I have a great love for them.

BOSWELL

But pray, sir what do you do with them? You scrape them, it seems very neatly, and then put them in the drawer--

JOHNSON

To let them dry, Sir.

BOSWELL

And when they are dry, what next?

JOHNSON

Nay, sir, you shall know their fate no further.
(Johnson lets Boswell's hand go.)

BOSWELL

Then the world must be left in the dark.

(He writes as he speaks:)

It must be said he scraped them, and put them in a drawer to dry, but what he did with them next, he could not be prevailed upon to tell.

JOHNSON

Nay, sir, you should say it more emphatically--he could not be prevailed upon, even by his dearest friend, to tell.

(Lights down on them.)

* LYDIA AND HUME

LYDIA

(Night. Hume, holding a candle and wearing bedclothes, stumbles through the halls of Bouffler's palace, clutching his stomach. He walks with difficulty.)

Lydia, dressed simply, also holding a candle, comes up behind him.)

Mr. Hume?

HUME

Lydia. The kitchen--where is the kitchen--

LYDIA

You have just passed it. Here--

(She turns him around.)

HUME

What are you doing up at this hour, Lydia--

LYDIA

I walk, sometimes, at night, when I cannot sleep.

HUME

(They enter the kitchen.)

I knew there had to be a kitchen somewhere. My grandmother had a soft stomach, and she always mixed a remedy of milk and oats.

(He looks for the ingredients for his remedy.)

Did you also have trouble adjusting to the French diet?

LYDIA

No. Not at first. Lately I have no interest in food at all.

HUME

Then you are lucky. My stomach pains me so, I am frightened every time I walk into a dining room.

LYDIA

Frightened of food, but not of death.

HUME

What?

LYDIA

It is well known, Mr. Hume, that you are not afraid of death.

HUME

What I am, is not afraid of hell. Or hopeful of heaven.

LYDIA

But hell is better than nothing, isn't it? For those who cannot hope for heaven? At least, it is something.

HUME

There is no point at all in believing in hell without hoping for heaven.

LYDIA

But some of us may not.

HUME

Lydia, I cannot imagine a single black mark against you. Surely, if there is a heaven, you will have no problem attaining it.

LYDIA

It is not what I have done, but what I might do.

HUME

What could you possibly do that would--

LYDIA

(Lydia takes a vial from around her neck.)

I purchased this from an apothecary some time ago. He said that death would be quick, and painless. I carry it with me always now, and when Madam is especially cruel, I touch it. It makes me believe that I have some small power. To end the pain.

HUME

Lydia, even as a comfort, it is not a healthy act to imagine oneself a murderer.

LYDIA

(Laughing)

A murderer! Of course not.

(Pause)

HUME

No, no, this is nonsense Lydia, you must not even think of it--

LYDIA

I must not think of it? You may write an entire essay on Suicide, but I may not even think on it?

HUME

I know you are not happy here--

LYDIA

Happy! I had forgotten the sound of the word.

HUME

Is it money--I will pay for your passage back to England--I--

LYDIA

Back to England. Back to what, sir? My father sold his small property and lost his fortune to gin. My mother and I were left on the street. While she lived I managed to care for her, but when she died, I could see no other possibilities than--well, you are aware of what a woman with no relatives or fortune will become. I let my mother be buried in a pauper's grave, a muddy hole, and I spent all the money she had saved for her casket to buy myself two silk dresses and passage to France. Here I presented myself as a widowed gentlewoman, looking to be a companion to French ladies who desired instruction in English. Fate delivered me into the hands of Madame Boufflers.

For a time, it seemed a miracle. For the first time in my life--some kindness. Some softness. It is strange, but when once you have had the taste of these things from another human being it does not ease the desire you have for them. It only makes you want them more.

HUME

Lydia--please tell me what I can do to help you--

LYDIA

You can tell me--in your essay, you say that suicide is an act without guilt or shame. That there is no sin in it.

HUME

That essay was nothing more than a philosophical exercise, it--

LYDIA

An exercise? Then you do believe suicide a sin?

HUME

If I say no, I do not believe it is a sin, then--

LYDIA

If you say no, you will help me.

HUME

(He touches her cheek. Softly.)

No.

LYDIA

No, you will not help me, or no, you--

HUME

I believe as I have written. But I was a young man then, I did not know--

LYDIA

All you need to know is that it is a comfort.

HUME

I can still help you--

LYDIA

A small kindness. A small comfort.

(She touches his cheek.)

A small softness.

HUME

Please, Lydia. Give me the vial.

LYDIA

You have no right to ask for it.

HUME

But--

LYDIA

I will only buy another. You see, sir, it is only fair. You have your remedy, for the pain. And I have mine.

(Lydia leaves him alone. Lights fade.)

* LIFE OF A LEAF

JOHNSON

(Johnson, in his chambers, conducting an experiment drying leaves while his amanuensis work around him. One of his amanuensis opens a door, and a breeze blows through the room, disturbing the mounds of paper that litter the floor.)

Shut the door! You are a hard man on my experiments, sir!

(The amanuensis shuts the door.)

Yes. Now hand me the scale, would you--yes, put it there. Now, keep still while I finish this last calibration.

(Johnson places an infinitesimal speck of sand on the scale to balance the dried remains of a leaf.)

The life of a leaf. I have measured it exactly, to the limits my poor equipment will provide. This is the difference in weight of a leaf just picked from a tree, and after it is dried to dust. This is the weight of its life.

(He blows it into the air.)

BLACKOUT

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

* DR. HUNTER

DR POULANC

(Paris. Lights up on Hume, being visited by four doctors in turn.)

Dr. Poulanc listens to Hume's stomach while striking it with a strange instrument.)

Monsieur Hume, you are suffering from a hemorrhage in the colon. I shall let a little blood, recommend a walk every evening after dinner, and a glass of wine before retiring. I think you should be back on your feet in no time.

(Poulanc exits.)

DR. PRINGLE

(Dr. Pringle inspects Hume's stool.)

Monsieur Hume, you are suffering from a stricture in the bowel. I shall let a little blood, recommend a ride every afternoon before dinner, and request that you drink no wine at all. You will be your old self in no time.

(Pringle exits.)

DR. GUSTHARD

(Dr. Gusthard makes Hume breathe into a strange contraption attached to a bladder. He then squeezes Hume's breath out of the bladder, through a bizarre series of dials and gauges.)

Monsieur Hume, your case is the commonest of all cases we find in the indolent upper classes. Biliousness! I shall let a little blood, and recommend you drink a glass of wine three times a day. You will up and about in no time.

(Gusthard goes off.)

DR. JOHN HUNTER

(Dr. Hunter swiftly pokes and feels Hume's abdomen.)

Mr. Hume. You are dying of a tumor on the liver.

HUME

Then it is not biliousness?

DR. JOHN HUNTER

Biliousness? Good heavens, no.

HUME

How strange it is to have a thing that wishes you ill growing inside you.

DR. JOHN HUNTER

Not really. It happens all the time.

HUME

But how odd it is to feel it, to know it is there, but to have no way to engage it in conversation.

DR. JOHN HUNTER

It is a cancerous growth, Mr. Hume. It cannot speak. It is less like a single man than like a mob of them--it is wild and kills without thought. There is no aspect of it that can respond to reason.

HUME

Proof, once again, of what a poor force reason is. How long, Doctor?

DR. JOHN HUNTER

As long as 6 months, as short as 3.

HUME

3 months. It will be enough.

DR. JOHN HUNTER

The body will shut down of its own accord--like a shop keeper turning off the lamps and cutting the wicks. The cold will start here--

(He touches Hume's feet)

--in your feet and legs, and grow towards the chest. When it reaches your heart, you will die. I do not imagine there will be much pain in it. The tumor is small now, but it will spread rapidly--here, you can feel it yourself.

(He takes Hume's hand, shows him the tumor.)

HUME

Yes.

DR. JOHN HUNTER

It is about the size of an orange now.

HUME

An orange? You know doctor, my mother used to say that heaven smelled like a thousand oranges. Doctor, do you believe in it? In heaven?

DR. JOHN HUNTER

I find that heaven is a great comfort to my patients.

HUME

And to you?

DR. JOHN HUNTER

Of course. What would a doctor do without it?

HUME

It must be of comfort to you, to know that your patients pass from your hands to some safer place.

DR. JOHN HUNTER

You misunderstand. I have no such knowledge. But often, in hopeless cases such as yours, I have nothing in my bag that will help. And heaven is the only remedy I can find.

HUME

And have you found it with each patient, Doctor?

DR. JOHN HUNTER

You are a well known Deist, Mr. Hume.

HUME

Aye.

DR. JOHN HUNTER

When the doctor's bag is empty, even a deist may find heaven a helpful remedy.

HUME

I am asking more of your own thoughts on the matter, sir.

DR. JOHN HUNTER

I have seen a good many men die, Mr. Hume. There comes a moment when no man may say what he will wish for. As a doctor, I would guess I will spend my last moments wishing for a fuller bag. As a philosopher--you will no doubt find yourself reaching inside whatever passes for a philosopher's bag of remedies. And wishing that your hand and heart comes up full.

(Lights down on them.)

RABBITS

MARY TOFTS

(London. Lights up on Garrick, Jenkins and Johnson standing in a dark, smoky, room, filled with a crowd of men and a few women. They are clustered in a circle, around something that is not visible to the audience.

(Mary screams from inside the circle of spectators.)

They're coming! They're coming! I CAN FEEL THEM COMING!

MALE SPECTATOR #1

Look!

FEMALE SPECTATOR #1

Oh Good Lord Above!

(She screams and faints.)

FEMALE SPECTATOR #2

Oh--Don't look!

MALE SPECTATOR #2

Look! I see the head--

MARY TOFTS

(Screaming)

Lord help me with this birth! Lord help me!

THE SHOWMAN

Stand back, stand back, give her some air--

MARY TOFTS

I can't stand it. I can't! Oh Lord please help me, help me!
(Mary Tofts screams, the crowd goes wild.)

FEMALE SPECTATOR #2

There's so much blood--

MALE SPECTATOR #3

Out of my way, let me see--

MALE SPECTATOR #2

Stop pushing.

THE SHOWMAN

Silence! Silence! Let the brave woman have a moment's peace in her torment!
(The crowd quiets down a bit.)

MARY TOFTS

No, no, no, no, I'm afraid, I'm afraid, I can't endure this--

THE SHOWMAN

Mary, Mary, you can endure it, God would not have given you this cross to bear if He did not believe you had the strength to carry it. SILENCE!! I SAID SILENCE!

(The crowd is deathly quiet. Mary goes into intense labor, screams, the crowd crowds closer, and then:)

The FIRST!! Bright of eye and healthy!

(He holds a newborn baby rabbit up into the air. The crowd erupts in sighs and screams and gasps of disbelief.)

The SECOND!

(He holds a second baby rabbit above the heads of the crowd.)

Look at its unique markings!

JOHNSON

Well, Garrick? Do you retain your skepticism, or do you believe?

GARRICK

I believe that every good showman deserves my admiration.

JOHNSON

You have the proof of your eyes, sir.

THE SHOWMAN

The THIRD!

(A third baby rabbit is held high.)

Ladies and gentlemen, marvel at its furry excellence!

GARRICK

Sir, I have the proof of nothing but an entertaining spectacle.

JOHNSON

Then you, sir, are nothing but a fool. For as we may plainly see--

BOSWELL

(Boswell runs into the room, upset and frantic.)

Dr. Johnson--Dr. Johnson--

JOHNSON

Here sir!

BOSWELL

(He pushes his way through the crowd to get to Johnson.)

Montgomery. I saw Montgomery, just now on the street!

THE SHOWMAN

(Holding up another rabbit.)

Four!

(He drops it. The women squeal, etc.)

Don't step on it--look out--

GARRICK

Who is this Montgomery, Jamie--

BOSWELL

Poor, dead Montgomery, that was hanged last month--

THE SHOWMAN

Five!

(Holds up another rabbit.)

BOSWELL

He walked right past me--

JOHNSON

You must not surrender to these mad thoughts, sir, but fight them, fight them--

THE SHOWMAN

Six!

(Another rabbit.)

BOSWELL

I know he is dead, and I know it is mad but I still see him!

(He clings to Johnson desperately.)

Help me! Help me! The black dog has me in his teeth and he will not let me go!

I no longer know the difference between thought and deed and dream.

THE SHOWMAN

Seven!

BOSWELL

I wake often in the morning in filth and squalor, in the arms of unknown whores and no memory of how it was I came to pass there. My wife cries out to me for comfort in her illness and I can barely be bothered to turn my head and say her name. Help me. Help me.

MARY TOFTS

The last one's coming--it's coming--

THE SHOWMAN

Here, brave girl--hold on, hold on--

(Mary screams, and delivers the last rabbit.)

The eighth and final!

(Mary faints.)

FEMALE SPECTATOR #2

She's fainted!

THE SHOWMAN

Poor Mary, now you can rest.

JOHNSON

How can I help you—I, who have never been, for a single day, not afraid of death.

(He gently removes Boswell's hands from his coat.)

Jamie. I cannot give you what each man must supply for himself.

BOSWELL

But my faith is not strong enough--

JOHNSON

All men wrap their souls in whatever shreds of comfort they possess, even if, in the end, it does not avail them much.

BOSWELL

What? You mean that faith will not protect us?

JOHNSON

Numberless men who had no doubts in God and his glory have died in fear and agony. Who am I to say my faith is stronger than theirs? I have no reason to believe it so.

BOSWELL

But you can't mean it! You can't! What is the point of faith if it cannot protect us from fear. What good is it!

JOHNSON

What good sir! What good!

BOSWELL

You have described a cloth made of holes--a worthless piece of fabric--

JOHNSON

You know nothing of it, sir! How could you--a lord born rich, who has never known a day of true hunger and want, how could you know! A poor man knows! He knows the cold, and he knows the good of even the most threadbare blanket, he clutches your cast off cloth full of holes to his breast and he thanks God for granting him the smallest moment of comfort from it.

(He marches out.)

GARRICK

Come along, Jamie.

(Garrick drags him by the arms.)

BOSWELL

Yes, we must find Montgomery! He has found the way to escape death, and if we talk to him we will discover it--

GARRICK

He has not escaped anything, he lies buried in the ground till judgment day.

BOSWELL

But if a woman can give birth to rabbits, why can't a man return from the dead?

GARRICK

A woman can't give birth to rabbits, Jamie.

BOSWELL

But we have just seen it with our own eyes--

GARRICK

We have seen nothing but a show, Jamie.

JENKINS

An overpriced show--

GARRICK

I give it three months to run, tops.

JENKINS

Three months? After Johnson writes about it, it will run for a year.

(They drag Boswell off. Lights fade.)

* THE APARTMENT

BOUFFLERS

(Lights up on an apartment Boufflers has built for Hume. It is the room that Hume, in his last moments of life, will believe himself to be in, and so it is a small version of the set itself, with long windows, and walls a pale shade of rose.)

She leads Hume in, he is wearing a blindfold.)

As soon as you see my surprise, you will stop all this talk about going.

HUME

Madam—

BOUFFLERS

No, no—not another word. Not until you have seen it.

(She removes the blindfold.)

Look! It is a complete and self contained apartment, here within the Palace. Now you will live by me, but without the inconvenience of my official responsibilities. We shall dwell together and yet separately, so as to have all the joy of proximity without subjecting ourselves to rumor and innuendo.

HUME

I long to return to Edinburgh, to my friends and family--

BOUFFLERS

It is the perfect place for you to work. It even contains a library, stocked with the best of my own books.

HUME

Please, do not misunderstand my going.

BOUFFLERS

You can send for your own servants from Scotland, or--

HUME

Madame--

BOUFFLERS

Do not keep saying you are going! You cannot go! You cannot!

(Quietly.)

Your coming here has only disgusted me with the bulk of the people I have to live with! I am surrounded by the dull, the stupid, and the mindlessly cruel. How can you abandon me to them—how--

HUME

Common sense has always required that I should keep at a distance from all attachments that can imply passion.

BOUFFLERS

No. No, you will not quote your philosophy at me and get off so easily. Look around you—look at the home I have built for you—for us—for our happiness—

HUME

Surely it would be the height of folly to lay myself at the mercy of a woman who is not only married but who is intimately linked with--

BOUFFLERS

The Prince—you bring up the Prince—I build you a Palace inside a Palace and you bring up the Prince!

HUME

Come with me.

BOUFFLERS

What?

HUME

To Scotland.

BOUFFLERS

Monsieur, you amaze me. Are you not the same man who was so miserable in Scotland that he was cut off from all human life? Can it be you have forgotten the attacks on you--

HUME

From the English, Madame, and the clergy, but I have friends, in Edinburgh--

BOUFFLERS

A woman is nothing, less than nothing in Scotland.

HUME

I must go home. I must have my world around me now--

BOUFFLERS

(Arms extended, indicating the apartment.)

But this is our world!

HUME

It is a cage! I have seen what happens to those you keep.

(He is breathing heavily, as if in pain.)

I must go, Madam. I cannot, will not, shall not be your slave.

BOUFFLERS

(She slaps him, and turns away from him.)

What a fool I have been to think you would free my soul from this hunger. That if I had you, with me, the passion that enslaves me would at last let me go free.

(She turns back to him, and sees that he is doubled over in pain, clutching his stomach.)

What is it--

HUME

It is--it is--

BOUFFLERS

I'll get my doctor--

HUME

No, no--there is no point. I have seen all the doctors. This is how it starts. It is how my mother died.

(Hume slumps onto the floor. Boufflers drops to the floor with him, her rose colored dress billowing around them in waves. She holds him in her arms.)

BOUFFLERS

No, no--you are mistaken--it is the food, you have eaten nothing but pastry since you arrived--

HUME

I have been aware of the signs for some months now, Madame. There is no hope. At last, it is here.

BOUFFLERS

No, no, this is not right--it is not fair--

HUME

(Another wave of pain. She takes his face in her hands and covers it with kisses.)

If I should say I was cold--then you would bring me a blanket to cover me. But if I should say I was frightened--that the thought of the black nothingness filled me with despair--what blanket would shield me from that fear?

BOUFFLERS

What has this to do with saying that you love me--

HUME

That is what love is.

BOUFFLERS

Not to me.

HUME

Aye, I know. Not to you. But if I say I love you--if I ask you to cover me, with this blanket, and you do, and I am warm, as warm as I have ever prayed to be, and if then, you take it away--

BOUFFLERS

I have these fears too--

HUME

I know, I know, I never blamed you for them, I see how they show you no mercy, how they drive you hard and fast--

BOUFFLERS

Yes--

HUME

They forced you to use up poor Lydia--

BOUFFLERS

(Covering her ears with her hands.)

Do not say it, do not--

HUME

The fears create in you this cruelty--

BOUFFLERS

Passion.

HUME

But you will not let me shield you from these fears.

BOUFFLERS

I do not wish to be hidden from the fear, I want to be free of it! Free of the whip of the passion.

HUME

Impossible.

BOUFFLERS

No, I will be free of it, I will.

HUME

It is too late for us, Madame. We are who we are.

BOUFFLERS

Then this blanket you talk about is worthless. It changes nothing.

HUME

It changes everything that can be changed.

BOUFFLERS

You promised me more--

HUME

I never--

BOUFFLERS

Your writings promised--

HUME

And your promises, Madame? You begged me to give in to the grip of passion, but now all you want--

BOUFFLERS

What I want is one thing only

(She whispers)

Stay! Please stay!

HUME

To stay with you now is to lie down, shivering, forever, in the cold.

BOUFFLERS

Then why have you stayed here, shivering, all these months. Go. GO. Why do you stay here--to torment me?

HUME

Because--you could.

BOUFFLERS

Could what?

HUME

Make a blanket, and cover me with it.

BOUFFLERS

Fool. Stupid, stupid fool. You think I can, but I won't. You think that a woman could save a man from every fear inside him but chooses not to? Why would she deny him salvation? Why would she do such a dreadful thing? For the same reason she wears pink to a ball instead of blue?

You hide behind your idea that a woman “can”, and so you do not ever know what is real in her. That would bind you to her.

(She gets up, off the floor, wiping the tears from her face.)

Do you like the apartment?

HUME

Yes.

BOUFFLERS

Yes. In our minds, where all things are possible at the cost of anything actual, we can be happy here. It is a perfect place for us. Come here, in your thoughts, whenever you think of me.

(Boufflers leaves him alone. Lights fade on Hume.)

* ORANGES LITTLE GIRL

LITTLE GIRL

(Johnson stands on a London street corner, desperate and shaking, unable to cross where the cobble stones have been cracked. A little girl, a street urchin, passes by.)

What’s the matter sir, are you lost?

JOHNSON

(He gasps and barely manages to speak.)

I--I--cannot cross.

LITTLE GIRL

Why not? Are you blind--take my hand--

JOHNSON

No, no, the cracks.

LITTLE GIRL

Oh, yes sir, the big lorries come this way from the mines, it pulverizes the stones something terrible.

JOHNSON

I may not step on them. But the way behind is as bad as the way ahead.

(He struggles for breath.)

I must pass. Give me your hand, then--

(She does.)

Now. You will be my guide. I will step where you step. When we get to the other side, there will be a penny for you.

LITTLE GIRL

A whole penny?

JOHNSON

Hurry, let us go.

(She leads him across the street, he steps in her footsteps carefully. They arrive on the other side, and Johnson slumps exhausted, on the ground.)

Thank you, child.

LITTLE GIRL

My penny?

JOHNSON

Yes, yes, here it is.

(He hands it to her. She goes to put it in her bundle, and an orange falls out. In a desperate whisper.)

Give it to me--

(He reaches for it desperately, but it rolls onto the cracked street.)

LITTLE GIRL

(Dashes after it.)

No sir, it was dear, I am taking it home to my mother who's got the consumption.

JOHNSON

I need--I need--

(He pulls out a shiny coin.)

LITTLE GIRL

So much? But--

JOHNSON

(A wail.)

Now! I beg you.

(She hesitates only a moment. Then she grabs the coin as he grabs the orange. She runs away. He rips into the fruit with his hands, and inhales deeply.)

Lights fade on him.)

* GONORRHEA

DR. CHEYNE

(Lights up on Boswell in bed, sick with the clap again. Dr. Cheyne attends him.)

Mr. Boswell, Mr. Boswell. What ever shall I do with you? I believe a man must make it a practice--if he has no armor, he may not fight!

BOSWELL

But I often have no warning of the impulse--

DR. CHEYNE

Then carry a supply! It will do a man no good to endanger himself unnecessarily.

BOSWELL

Whores are the only company I have had of late. None of my friends in London can stand my melancholy, and back here in Edinburgh, no one will speak of anything except the impending death of David Hume.

DR. CHEYNE

Yes. I heard you asked him three times if he feared death and hoped for heaven, and three times he refused you, growing more gay and triumphant with each denial.

BOSWELL

What?

DR. CHEYNE

Why, it's all right here----

(He pulls a pamphlet out of his doctor's bag.)

...asked him three times...here it is--then a large shadow filled the room, and the Great Infidel gasped, and tried with all his strength to speak, but his throat was held shut by invisible hands, still he made signals that he wished to repent his infidelity, and he pulled his lifelong friend close and whispered in his ear, renouncing his heresy, confessing his fear, and begging God's forgiveness for a life spent spreading heresy and lies.

BOSWELL

Then it's true!--he has repented at last--but this is marvelous! Why has no one told me this before!

DR. CHEYNE

Why should anyone tell you. You were the one he confessed to.

BOSWELL

Me?

DR. CHEYNE

Yes.

(Reading from the pamphlet)

James Boswell, theatre critic, poet and lawyer, received Hume's confession and blessed him.

BOSWELL

(Confused.)

But--but--it is not so--

DR. CHEYNE

But were you not there?

BOSWELL

No, I have not seen the man in two years--

DR. CHEYNE

Curious.

(Reads)

It is titled, James Boswell, Esquire, in a version that contradicts the stories spread by the vain, treacherous Adam Smith, relates this true tale of David Hume's final illness.

BOSWELL

But I wasn't there!

DR. CHEYNE

You're sure?

BOSWELL

YES!!

DR. CHEYNE

A shame. It was a good story. Such a satisfying end.

(He drapes a sheet across the lower half of Boswell's body. He inspects Boswell's member--which we cannot see. He clucks his tongue disapprovingly.)

Did you operate on this sore yourself?

BOSWELL

Who has written this--

(Inspects the pamphlet.)

DR. CHEYNE

Next time, Mr. Boswell, you might wish to leave it to a specialist.

BOSWELL

Anonymous. Well I will go to the publisher and demand he tell me--

DR. CHEYNE

(Pushing him back down in bed.)

You are far too sick to go anyplace.

BOSWELL

It is an outrage. What if I want to write my own account of Mr. Hume's death--

DR. CHEYNE

Come come, Mr. Boswell. You well know that this counterfeit pamphlet can only increase interest in such a work, as the reading public adores a scandal more than the truth! If I didn't know better I would think you had engineered this deception yourself.

(He takes out a large syringe.)

Now then, Mr. Boswell, I must warn you that this will hurt.

BOSWELL

Hurt? But aren't you going to let a little blood and recommend Kennedy's Lisbon Diet Drink, as usual?

DR. CHEYNE

Oh no, Mr. Boswell your present encounter with Senior Gonorrhoea is much too advanced for that! Luckily for you a new procedure exists which will undoubtedly cure you. I will inject into the urethra a safe if painful irrigant--dilute solution of vitriol, mercury salts, and a mixture of lead salts.

BOSWELL

Painful, you say?

DR. CHEYNE

It will--burn a bit, I believe. Well, not a bit. It will burn tremendously.

BOSWELL

(Flailing wildly.)

No, no, I won't let you--

DR. CHEYNE

You must make water, Mr. Boswell--and as long as the infection has swollen the urethra shut you cannot. So you must bear it, or die. Which is it to be, Mr. Boswell?

(Boswell nods his head. Dr. Cheyne starts the procedure.

Boswell screams in agony. Lights down.)

* LITTLE DAVIE CAVE

LITTLE DAVIE

(The cave. Lights up on Hume, propped up on pillows and blankets, and little Davie, feeding the birds. The birds sing, the leaves blow, the light plays a brilliant Tiepelo sunset.)

Uncle David? How long will it be before I am not afraid, in the night, like you?

HUME

Not long now.

LITTLE DAVIE

Because I long for it. Papa says I am too old to come into their bed now, so I lie under the covers and sing until dawn, but--

HUME

It happens, like this. One night, you wake up, and you realize it has been weeks since you saw a demon in the corner or under the bed, or heard a goblin chasing you up the stairs. And you are sad.

LITTLE DAVIE

Oh, no, I would be happy.

HUME

You think so now, but when it happens, you are not. Because now you are alone. And the world is empty now.

LITTLE DAVIE

How can it be empty, Uncle, when it has Mamma and Papa, and you and--

HUME

It is a world that is empty, inside you. And for all their trouble, demons and goblins and gods fill it up quite nicely.

LITTLE DAVIE

No, Uncle, not nicely, not at all.

HUME

A little bit of faith turns out to be the largest substance in the world. Of course, a man who has no faith at all is in possession of an even bigger substance.

LITTLE DAVIE

How can anything be bigger than the biggest substance in the world?

HUME

I don't know, Davie. Perhaps because it changes the very size of the world.

LITTLE DAVIE

All the same, I cannot wait for that night.

HUME

Aye, I thought so too.

(The sunset begins to fade. More and more birds return to the cave for the night.)

But now I think that if one man can stand, unafraid, at the door to death, which is the door through which all the church's power flows, then others will perhaps find the strength to free themselves from the grip of the old superstitions, and seat the power in their own hearts. Where it resides, where it belongs.

LITTLE DAVIE

Papa says you belong here. Why don't you stay here, Uncle David?

HUME

This is your cave now.

LITTLE DAVIE

But I would lend it to you. I think right over...there--

(He points.)

--would be an excellent place to die.

HUME

No, I must die in my own bed, in my own house.

LITTLE DAVIE

Then I will go home with you--

HUME

No--

LITTLE DAVIE

You said you were lonely now that the demons and goblins are gone, I don't want you to be lonely.

HUME

You're a good boy, David Hume.

(He squeezes Little Davie's hand.)

LITTLE DAVIE

Aye, that I am.

(He throws a great handful of crumbs into the air for the birds to eat. The birds flock around them. Lights fade.)

* HANGING

MAN IN CROWD

(Edinburgh. The shadow of the gallows. Boswell, looking quite ill, is watching intently, swallowing, breathing heavily.)

Make him dance!

MAN IN CROWD 2

Make him kick the clouds!

SMITH

Boswell! BOSWELL!

(Boswell doesn't respond to Smith calling his name.)

Boswell--they said you were back from London!

(A man is hanged. The crowd cheers.)

BOSWELL

I hatched a plan. I hatched a plan but every one said it wouldn't work.

SMITH

What plan?

BOSWELL

To save poor MacPhearson.

SMITH

Ah, yes, the sheep thief.

BOSWELL

I defended him as best I could, but they convicted him anyway, so I conspired to snatch the body after it was let down from the tree, and spirit it away and revive it but nobody would help me and now it's too late and--there he is--there he is--MacPhearson--MacPhearson--

(He rushes up to the gallows, only the base of it is visible.)

MacPhearson--I'm sorry--I'm sorry--I'm--

(MacPhearson is hanged. The crowd cheers. Boswell stares at him, stricken.)

MacPhearson. Oh, look at his face. What terrible thought was he thinking?

SMITH

Jamie, come away from here.

BOSWELL

What terrible, terrible thoughts.

SMITH

Jamie--

BOSWELL

No, I must know. I must know what they are thinking. Look at them, lined up and waiting--there, that one--eating a sweet orange with the noose around his neck, as if he does not leave behind a wife and five children--

(Yelling up at him.)

Sir! I beg you! Tell me your thoughts at this moment! Tell me your thoughts on death!

SMITH

Boswell--

(Smith tries to drag him away.)

It isn't seemly, Jamie. The man is preparing to die. Let him alone.

BOSWELL

Alone? A man about to die does not ever want to be alone, Mr. Smith.

(Another man is about to be hanged.)

I find most men are grateful for the chance to have me record their last words.

(A thud, as the trap drops, a cheer from the crowd, Boswell licks his lips in intense concentration.)

SMITH

You look very pale, Jamie.

BOSWELL

I am much disturbed by thoughts of death these days, sir.

SMITH

Ah, yes, David Hume's illness has cast a shadow upon us all. He asked about you, just the other day, and--

BOSWELL

I did not write that pamphlet—

SMITH

Good lord, of course you didn't, Jamie. It was not at all your writing style. So, when can I tell Davie to expect your visit?

BOSWELL

Visit? Well—I—I—you see, I--

SMITH

He knows you are Johnson's man now, Jamie. It makes no difference to him. He wants to see you before he dies.

BOSWELL

I am of Dr. Johnson's opinion that those who write against religion ought not to be treated with gentleness.

SMITH

Jamie! You can't mean it—David Hume has always been your friend!

BOSWELL

Dr. Johnson says that any man who seeks to diminish our access to the unseen world has--

SMITH

Dr. Johnson, Dr. Johnson. I suppose we will now have to endure you endlessly quoting Dr. Johnson?

BOSWELL

Yes, as a matter of fact. I have undertaken to write a biography of Dr. Johnson. I hope to make a great success with it.

SMITH

(As coldy as possible)

I wish you much luck with your endeavor.

(He turns to go, then turns back, and points at him angrily.)

You are so blinded by the great doctor's fame that you don't even see that David Hume is the man you should be writing about, not Johnson.

BOSWELL

What?

SMITH

But you were never a student who looked below the surface of life! Why should it surprise me, that when you have the chance, you choose the polish and not the silver beneath.

BOSWELL

Wait—wait—Mr. Smith—do you think—do you think Mr. Hume would consent to it? To a biography of my making?

SMITH

Well, I—I don't—Jamie, that is not the point—I only meant, Jamie, that Hume is the greater man, and that—

BOSWELL

And of course, with his imminent death to insure a good subscription from the reading public—

SMITH

Jamie, Jaime. You never change.

BOSWELL

I would like to see Mr. Hume again. He always treated me with the greatest kindness.

SMITH

It will make him happy to hear it. I'll tell him to expect you soon.

(A great cry and hue goes up as another man is hanged. Smith looks up at the gallows.)

Cameron, the poacher?

BOSWELL

No, that's Ferguson. Three counts of forgery. Five counts of fraud.

SMITH

Yes, that's right. You were his lawyer too, I believe. Tell me, do you keep a count of the men you lose to the gallows?

BOSWELL

Yes. I keep a detailed account of each hanging. I record as much of their final moments as I can--the man's bearing and his last words. I have it all written down. In my journal.

(Ferguson is hanged. The crowd cheers.)

Ferguson! Forgive me!

(The crowd surges forward. Boswell is carried with them.)

Lights fade.)

* LAST INTERVIEW

BOSWELL

(Boswell goes to Hume's front door. He knocks, Peggy Irvine answers.)

Good morning, Peggy, is--

PEGGY IRVINE

Well well well, Mr. Boswell, imagine you showing your face here after all. Wipe your feet. He'll be glad to see you regardless. 'Tis his nature.

(Boswell enters, and finds Hume lying half sitting up in bed, revising his manuscripts while his nephew, Davie, plays on the bed.)

HUME

Jamie—Jamie--sit down, sit down. Adam said you might be coming to see me.

BOSWELL

I had not expected to find you so cheerful.

HUME

Yes, yes, I am dying as fast as my enemies could wish, and as easily as my friends could desire.

BOSWELL

Mr. Hume, I did not write that pamphlet--

HUME

Jamie, Jamie, there is no need to explain--

BOSWELL

No sir, it was a scandal, and I am much put out about it. But all the same, it made me think about how much better I could have written it if you had confessed to me! And then, I thought, why stop with just a pamphlet! It is a topic of great interest to me. As you know, I have long been unbalanced on account of the fear of death.

HUME

Dear Jamie, if you have a clear faith it will not desert you--

BOSWELL

But where is the proof that it will be enough?

HUME

All living things dread dying, you cannot expect belief to completely wash away all our natural fears.

BOSWELL

So you are afraid?

HUME

I am content that my portion of fear is not any greater than my ability to face it.

BOSWELL

(To Davie)

You are my witness--say it again--you are afraid of death--

HUME

I did not say I was afraid, I said that my fear was matched by my equanimity.

BOSWELL

There, you said your fear--

LITTLE DAVIE HUME

But it is matched, sir, he said his fear--

BOSWELL

But that does not erase it, it does not wash it away--

LITTLE DAVIE HUME

No, it does not wash the fear away sir, but holds it close. Close where it cannot jump out and scare you in the middle of the night.

HUME

My brother's first born. The future Lord of Ninewells. He's a fine laddie. My brother lends him to me, now and then.

BOSWELL

Do you miss having your own, sir?

HUME

A philosopher has his work, he counts on it to carry his name for him.

BOSWELL

Yes. Your writings are a firm foundation for your name. And for the picture of David Hume, the man—as you well know, I keep a journal. And in that journal I have recorded every conversation we have ever had. It is my intention, using my journal, and whatever private papers you can provide me with, to write a new kind of biography--a life in scenes, as though it were a kind of drama.

HUME

And you think such a biography would be successful?

BOSWELL

It is sure to sell. Your infidelity is bound to attract a large portion of the reading public--

HUME

My infidelity--but that is just one aspect of who I am--

BOSWELL

--especially ending, as it does, with your confession of fear and faith. THE LIFE OF DAVID HUME, a life in scenes by James Boswell. Now, if you will give me your journals--

HUME

My confession of fear and faith?

BOSWELL

Have you not just admitted to fear of death?

HUME

Jamie, I am not a stone who feels no sadness at the end of life. But fear--

BOSWELL

You said your fear was equal to your equanimity, I have it right here--
(He shows him in his notes.)

HUME

By which I meant that it was held in balance, that it did not surface above the general level of my thoughts and that my fear--

BOSWELL

Your fear--

HUME

--and that while my fear is, rationally apparent to me, I look at approaching death with little apprehension and no dread.

BOSWELL

And you will not change your mind?

HUME

To increase subscriptions to your book, Jamie?

(Throws back his head and laughs)

Though it is the best reason I have ever been given to change my stance, no, I am afraid I shall not.

(Pause)

I do not fear hell, or hope for heaven.

BOSWELL

(Puts his pad of paper and pencil away, stands.)

There is still time for you to change your mind. May I visit you again, tomorrow or the day after, when you are closer to your--I mean when you are closer to--

(Hume, amused, waits for him to say it.)

HUME

To what, Jamie?

BOSWELL

Closer to your—

HUME

(Boswell cannot say it.)

--death?

BOSWELL

Yes.

HUME

(Throws back his head, laughing.)

Of course, Jamie. You are always welcome here.

(Boswell leaves. To his nephew.)

Now then, little Davie. You may begin.

LITTLE DAVIE HUME

(Kneeling by Hume's bed, he clasps his hands together, and prays.)

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures. He leadeth me beside still waters. He restoreth my soul.

HUME

(Tussling the boy's hair.)

Ah, that's a lovely, lovely, lovely dream. Go on.

(Lights up on Johnson. He prays, at the same time as Little Davie.)

LITTLE DAVIE HUME/JOHNSON

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death

(Lights fade on the Hume's deathbed.)

I will fear no evil, for thou art with me
Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.

JOHNSON

Take a letter.

(Johnson turns to his amanuensis.)

Dear Boswell,

What can be the reason that I hear nothing from you? You have no business worrying me so. I know you are angry that I cannot abide your constant questions about death--but I am no longer strong enough in my own heart to withstand your doubts and fears.

(He holds out his hand for the letter, and indicates for the servant to leave him. He finishes writing the letter himself.)

Oh, my friend. Let us be kind to each other. Do not omit giving me the comfort of knowing that even after all my losses I have yet a friend left. I have no true friend now living but you and Mr. Hector, that was the friend of my youth. Do not neglect to write me!

(He signs the letter, and gives it to his servant. He then goes to the drawer where he put the orange peels, and takes out a handful. He falls to his knees on the floor and begins counting the orange peels. He has strung the peels of each orange together, so that each little clump of peels is complete.)

One. Two. Three. Four. Five.

(Lights down on him.)

* ANNIE CUNNINGHAME

BOSWELL

(Lights up on Boswell, writing in his Journal.)

I am in the grips of an unholy melancholy. Dr. Johnson, who believes religion the only way to calm a man's fear of dying, has refused to indulge my black moods any longer, but expects me to fight them on my own. David Hume, who preaches that man does not need the solace of religion to face death, also offers me no comfort. But of the two, Mr. Hume is less afraid—and this on the very threshold of death. David Hume's views have unhinged me. What if religion is not the way to fight the fear of death? He is so calm, so peaceful in the face of it. I cannot help

but think that he is lying. When I will visit him again—I will force him to tell me the truth.

(Annie Cunninghame knocks on his door.)

ANNIE CUNNINGHAME

Uncle? May I come in?

BOSWELL

Of course, of course, Annie. I was just writing in my journal.

(He cannot stop looking at her. She is completely unaware.)

ANNIE CUNNINGHAME

Aunt Margaret says supper is soon.

BOSWELL

Good. Good. I'll be in.

(She leaves. He begins writing in his journal frantically.)

To add to my torment, Annie Cunninghame, my wife's poor orphaned niece, has been under our roof for several weeks, to help with the new baby. She is sweet, and young and fresh, and not yet fifteen.

ANNIE CUNNINGHAME

(Scene shifts to Annie and Margaret Boswell in the dining room.

Margaret is holding the new baby.)

He said he was just writing in his journal, ma'am.

MARGARET BOSWELL

His journal. I hate it.

BOSWELL

Every time I see her, the blood races through my veins in a brutal fever.

MARGARET BOSWELL

(They sit down at the table.)

And to think, when we were first courting, I thought it the most romantic thing in the world.

BOSWELL

To be near her, and not touch her, is almost more than I can bear.

MARGARET BOSWELL

When he read his journal to me, I was part of his life. Now I know better. His journal IS his life. Where is the man. Jamie!

(She starts to cough.)

Jamie your dinner is getting cold! JAMIE!!

(She coughs violently. Her handkerchief is soaked with blood. She gets up from the table and goes into the bedroom.)

BOSWELL

Coming Margaret! I'm coming.

Supper. A waste of time. A waste of time. A hour wasted at table, when I could write the entire dinner conversation down, in a few minutes, and be done with it. "Pass the bread. Pass the salt. How are you feeling today?" And all the while my loins are aflame and the words I long to write are "I had my way with Annie Cunninghame today".

(He drinks.)

All right then. I will. I will write them.

(He writes them in his journal.)

I had my way with Annie Cunninghame today.

(He looks at his journal, strangely. Puts his pen down, slowly.)

ANNIE CUNNINGHAME

(Coming to his room)

Aunt Margaret isn't well. We are to dine without her.

BOSWELL

(Boswell nods at her, and rises from his desk.)

Then, one night, we dined alone, without my wife.

ANNIE CUNNINGHAME

What?

BOSWELL

I sat across the table from her.

(He sits down at the table.)

She was so ripe and juicy and sweet.

ANNIE CUNNINGHAME

Sir, why do you speak so strangely--as if you were reading from a novel?

BOSWELL

I told her, it was a game.

ANNIE CUNNINGHAME

A game?

BOSWELL

I told her, it was a game, where we would speak as if we were in a novel.

ANNIE CUNNINGHAME

I passed him the mutton and potatoes.

BOSWELL

She said. I told her she was a good girl.

ANNIE CUNNINGHAME

Thank you sir, I said.

BOSWELL

I put my hand under the tablecloth, and touched her thigh.

(He does.)

Her beauty and innocence inflamed my member.

ANNIE CUNNINGHAME

Sir?

BOSWELL

She said.

ANNIE CUNNINGHAME

But--

BOSWELL

I took her hand in mine and placed it--

ANNIE CUNNINGHAME

What are you doing, sir--

(She tries to get her hand away from him, he holds it under the table, on his member.)

Sir!

BOSWELL

She allowed me luscious liberties with kindly frankness.

ANNIE CUNNINGHAME

Stop it, stop it--

BOSWELL

Her tender young flesh beckoned to my member and accepted me without hesitation.

(He throws her on the floor, and is on top of her.)

ANNIE CUNNINGHAME

You said it was a game, you said it was a game--

BOSWELL

I could not help but be lost in her sweetness, and though I had only meant to taste her lusciousness--

ANNIE CUNNINGHAME

Please stop, I beg you, stop--

BOSWELL

She begged me to stay in her embrace, and give her the full measure of my manhood--

(She screams as he thrusts into her.)

Which I did. And I was so overwhelmed in my eagerness that I--

MARGARET BOSWELL

(Faint with her illness, she enters the room in response to Annie's cries.)

What--what do you do, sir--

(She lunges to pull him off her.)

You wretch! You monster! Beast! To debase my niece while I lie sick in the next room! Get out of my sight! Out!

(She puts her arm around the weeping Annie, and leads her out of

the room.)

BOSWELL

(He stands up, bottle in hand, and staggers back to his desk.)

I drank rather too much after, and swore to my wife I would never serve her so in her own home again. My valuable spouse forgave me, with much crying and remonstrations. The next day, I lay down naked in bed for a while and enjoyed my dear wife excellently. I then rose and wrote letters and had some good soup and for several hours, the black fog lifted from my mind.

But by nightfall I am lost again.

(Lights fade on him.)

* DREAM HUME

DREAM HUME

(Night. Boswell and Margaret in bed. Boswell is tossing and turning in fitful sleep. Next to the bed the lamp casts flickering shadows.

A ghostly figure appears in the room. Boswell wakes, terrified.)

Jamie? Jamie it's me--

(It is Boswell's dream of Hume, holding a diary. He sits on the edge of the bed.)

I've come to give you something.

BOSWELL

What is it--

DREAM HUME

The thing you have been wanting from me all along.

BOSWELL

The secret that frees you from the fear of death!

DREAM HUME

I have no secret to free me of the fear of it. But I will show you something almost as valuable. My secret diary.

BOSWELL

Why--

DREAM HUME

Because you were right about me all along. All that Deism was a sham.

BOSWELL

I knew it! I knew it! I knew you were too good a man to be an infidel.

DREAM HUME

I have always been a Christian through and through. Look, Jamie--in it are all my secret devotions, my doubts and hopes and fears.

BOSWELL

Then you are afraid of death!

DREAM HUME

Terrified!

BOSWELL

But why then, do you persist in lying about it?

DREAM HUME

It is my passion for literary fame that makes me attack the true church and pretend I feel no fear.

BOSWELL

But surely, that is a great sin that you will be punished for in the afterlife!

DREAM HUME

God has always known that I was only pretending. And since I was so pious in my heart, I was sure God would not find much fault with me. Here--let me read you a passage I think you'll find especially devout.

(He opens his mouth, but instead of words, he sings wordless music.)

BOSWELL

Yes--yes--the answers--all the answers--I see now where you get your courage in the face of death--and it is so beautiful too--wait--wait--let me get pen and

paper--I've got to write it down--

DREAM HUME

Don't worry, its all here in my diary, you can read it whenever you like.
 (He starts singing the odd sounds again, holding out the diary
 and backing away from Boswell, who clambers out of bed
 and follows Hume, arms outstretched.)

MARGARET BOSWELL

(Margaret awakens to the sight of her husband stumbling out of bed.)
 The night deliriums again. Jamie. Jamie! You'll wake the babies. JAMIE!

BOSWELL

(Boswell grabs the diary from the Dream Hume, and turns to
 Margaret.)
 Margaret! David Hume is here!

MARGARET BOSWELL

Oh, Jamie--

BOSWELL

And look--look what he gave me--

MARGARET BOSWELL

All right, all right let me see--
 (She holds the diary close to the lamp.)
 It's your journal.
 (The Dream Hume is gone.)

BOSWELL

No, no, it's David Hume's secret diary--he gave it to me--look--

MARGARET BOSWELL

All the looking won't change it. 'Twas a dream.
 (She coughs violently, her handkerchief is covered with blood.)

BOSWELL

No, it was more than a dream, I know it is--

MARGARET BOSWELL

(Softly)

Jamie? Jamie? It's come back again.

(Margaret holds out the blood stained handkerchief, for him to see.

He doesn't turn to look at her.)

BOSWELL

All the answers--he gave me his secret diary with all the answers--

(She begins to cry.)

And his devotions--they were so beautiful, why didn't I write them down, why didn't I write them down. I can hear them in my mind--but the words--

MARGARET BOSWELL

I'm dying, Jamie--look at me--look at me!

BOSWELL

I can't get the words to come into my ears--

(He starts striking his head with his hands.)

I'll force them into my ears--I'll make them--

MARGARET BOSWELL

(Crying)

LOOK AT ME LOOK AT ME LOOK--

BOSWELL

(As if she isn't there at all)

Some strong drink--that will clear my head--

(He lunges for a bottle, drinks it down.

The sound of a quill scratching on paper. It is joined by the sound of many quills. Then the sound of a flock of birds, roosting in the trees, and then flying away.

Lights up on the death bed. Hume lies in his bed, very near death, and the sound of the single quill reveals itself as his quill, as he scratches away on a letter. He is sunken in the bedclothes so that he looks quite wasted away.

Adam Smith sits near the bed.)

HUME

My dearest Madam,

This will be the last letter that comes from my hand. The last words I write will be these, to you.

(The sound of the flock of birds taking wing again.)

MARGARET BOSWELL

(Margaret crawls out of bed, weeping, unsteady.)

I can stand no more, Jamie. No. No more.

(She pulls a suitcase out of a closet.)

BOSWELL

Shh, Margaret, I am listening to the music in my head.

(She begins packing.)

HUME

You saved me from a total indifference towards everything in human life. I had become shut off from all feeling, and that state is worse than even the most unfortunate passion.

(Hume's hand fails, he is too weak to continue, the quill falls over. Smith plucks the quill from his hand.)

SMITH

There, there, Davie, you must rest--

HUME

No, I must finish this letter--

(Smith steadies his hand while he writes.)

I hope that you are freed of the passions that haunted you. I am forever sorry that we--that you--I salute you, with great affection and regard, for the last time.

(The letter falls to the floor. It blows, like a leaf, across the stage, and arrives at Bouffler's feet.)

Madame, I bid you, adieu.

(Boufflers reads it rapidly, rips it up violently, then falls to the floor weeping, and starts putting the pieces together. Lights fade on her.)

I'm back in my wee cave again, Adam.

SMITH

The fever--he's burning up poor man--Peggy--PEGGY!!

HUME

My wee cave, ooh, it's so snug, the water close by't.

(The sound of a stream, and of the birds and wind in the leaves increases.)

SMITH

(Peggy runs in.)

Peggy. He's burning up.

(They bathe Hume's face with wet cloths.)

BOSWELL

(He notices that Margaret is packing.)

Margaret, what are you doing?

MARGARET BOSWELL

(Margaret is packing desperately, almost too weak to stand.)

I can endure it no longer. I am going and I am taking the children to my mothers.

BOSWELL

But why?

MARGARET BOSWELL

I am too ill to care for them, and you--you--you cannot be trusted. All of us could lie here burning up with fever or thirst and if a pretty whore caught your eye on the way the pharmacist's it could be days before you'd remember us and return!

HUME

(Raving in his delirium.)

At sunset, Adam, the leaves and the water and the wee birds coming home to their beds for the night. The shadows and the colors--and everything so right. And the thought of a God--of a God who makes that color and that color and that color bothering to make a single law that is preached in Kirk--God would have to be a madman to do that, Adam. And God is not a madman.

(He grows excited, even more delirious.)

He made that color and that color and that color--

SMITH

(He feels Hume's brow.)

Davie--my poor Davie--

HUME

But that shade of rose--the color of her dress--God did not make that color, Adam. But I know who did. Do you want to know? Do you? Do you? DO YOU? A Parisian dressmaker. Yes! A Parisian dressmaker made a color we had never seen before, a color that previously existed only in dreams. A shade of heaven.

BOSWELL

Stay, Margaret. Please. It will be different now—I will be different, now.

MARGARET

Yes, of course, the way you always are--

BOSWELL

Everything will be different now that Hume has come to me and confessed!

MARGARET BOSWELL

(Wary)

Jamie--you know that was just a dream--

SMITH

Davie, can you hear me--Davie--

MARGARET BOSWELL

(She takes his hand, strokes his brow.)

Jamie. Listen. It was dream. And that means there is no secret diary.

BOSWELL

(He picks up the lamp from beside the bed, carries it over to the hearth, removes the glass, and lights it.)

There is, Margaret. Whether he wrote it on paper, or only in his head. I am sure of it. His peacefulness in the face of death is a charade--nothing more. He has fooled the world, but he will not fool me any longer.

(Boswell has taken one of his journal books, and with a knife begins cutting out pages, and feeding them to the fire.)

MARGARET BOSWELL

Jamie--what are you doing---that's not his secret diary, it's your journal--

BOSWELL

I know that, Margaret.

SMITH

The fever must break, it must.

MARGARET BOSWELL

(She starts pulling them out of the fire.)

But you are inconsolable if a single page is lost--if the children smudge a single line--

BOSWELL

Let them burn.

(She backs away. He adds more pages to the fire.)

HUME

Adam, could you put another blanket on me? I'm sudden cold.

SMITH

At last. Ah, Davie, you're going to bide with us a while longer yet.

(Adam and Peggy unfurl a blanket in the air to cover him, and the sound is transformed into the cave bird sounds.)

HUME

So cold. It's good to be cold, to feel like other people.

MARGARET BOSWELL

It's nothing but the delirium, tomorrow morning you'll wake up and find your journal burnt and--

(She rakes through the fire. She pulls out a piece and starts to read it.)

David Hume, who has been tortured on the metaphysical rack as much as any man--

HUME

Remember the cold when we were boys, Adam? You'd beg your mother for a blanket--

SMITH

Seven or eight blankets--

HUME

But even seven or eight blankets are no match for the Scottish cold.
(They cover him with another blanket.)

MARGARET BOSWELL

(Another page.)

I am much hearty with David Hume, and think him the finest of men. He is--

(Another page)

Spent the day with David Hume, talking about--they are all about David Hume.

BOSWELL

Dr. Johnson was right about him all along.

MARGARET BOSWELL

But you are burning every page of your journal where you have written of him--

BOSWELL

As he well deserves. His life was a sham. His views are worthless. He never knew the way to escape the fear of death.

MARGARET BOSWELL

But this is not his secret diary, Jamie--it is your journal. Jamie--please--

BOSWELL

He has caused me years of doubt and fear. Wasted years. Wasted! I must erase him from the history of my mind, my history, I must erase him. I do not wish to leave any record of the Great Infidel. In my private papers or for public view.

I will write the life of Dr. Johnson, instead.

JOHNSON

(Lights up on Johnson. There are a dozen boxes empty and large piles of orange peels all over the floor. The candles are now guttering in their holders, and it is dawn through the dirty windows. He kneels on the floor.)

One thousand. Yes. The smell of one thousand oranges.
(He inhales.)

HUME

These blankets are so thin. They're no good at all. I can't feel my feet. Mother, another blanket for your Davie, your Davie that lies so cold.

SMITH

Peggy! More blankets--Peggy!
(Peggy races in with more blankets. She unfurls them over him, and the sound transforms into the fluttering of birds.)

JOHNSON

(Johnson gathers as many of the orange peels as he can under him, and crushes them in great armfuls to his face.)
Please, dear Lord. Send me to heaven. Please send me to heaven, I've worked so hard, I've worked so hard and deserve to go. Don't cast me down below. I've worked so hard. And deserve to go.

HUME

(The room is filled with the light of a Tiepelo sunrise.)
One more, one more--Mother, can't you hear me calling--I'm in my wee cave--I need a blanket--
(Peggy and Smith unfurl blankets in the air and cover him, the sound of the cave birds grows louder.)
So cold--so cold--more blankets--more--
(The shudder of the sounds of birds, and water, and the gorgeous light has grown. The shadows of trees blowing in the breeze play across the room.)

LITTLE DAVIE

(Little Davie kneels next to the bed.)
The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures.

HUME

Ah, it's such a lovely dream. I wish it were mine.

LITTLE DAVIE

He leadeth me beside still waters. He restoreth my soul.

HUME

(And then a blue light envelopes the room.)

There you are. There you are.

(Madam Boufflers appears, wearing a magnificent blue cloak.)

LITTLE DAVIE

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil,
for thou art with me. Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.

HUME

Yes. Yes. I knew you would come--

(Boufflers takes off her cloak in a great, flowing gesture, and lays it
over Hume--its underside is revealed as a blanket of blue flowers.)

And you have brought me a blanket. The blanket I was searching for in the wide,
wide world.

(The room is now the apartment in the Temple and the cave, both
at the same time. Dawn light starts to burn through every window.

Adam and Peggy stand silently.

Margaret, carrying her bags, walks past Boswell and out the door.
Boswell places the final page into the fire.

Final spot on Johnson, and his oranges.

It is full dawn.

The light leaves everything but Hume and Boufflers.

She sits on the edge of his bed. The blue light builds. She unlaces
her bodice, and a bird flies out.

BLACKOUT.)

END OF PLAY