THE TWO EXECUTIONERS

Melodrama in One Act

by

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translated by

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adapted for radio by

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Desolo Luna Vox Theatrum

CHARACTERS:

Narrator

Two Executioners (unnamed, who do not talk)

The Mother, Francoise

The Two Sons, Benoit and Maurice

The Husband, Jean (who only cries, screams and groans thru gag)

(NARRATOR:)

In the middle of a very dark room,
two executioners,
I do not know their names,
sit silently and alone at
a table with three chairs.

Arrayed dimly behind the executioners at their table,
darkly looming up from the floor or
strung up hanging limply from huge hooks bolted into the wall,
are the appliances and instruments of torture.

Otherwise the room and its walls are bare.
There are no windows.

Opposite the side of the room with the implements of torture
is the single door, now closed, which opens onto the road.

The two executioners sit,
silently and still,
so that it seems that time has stopped,
until ...

(persistent knocking at the door begins and goes for a while)

Despite the insistent knocking at the door,
the executioners continue to sit still and silent,
as if they can't hear anything.

(knocking finally stops, then sound of door opening and creaking)

The door opens slowly,
not without creaking,
and a woman's head appears.

Slowly and silently she inspects the room.

Finally she decides to come in
and she walks up to the executioners.

She opens her mouth and
she begins to whine.
Her name is Francoise,
and all that she does is whine.

(FRANCOISE:)
Good morning, gentlemen ...
Excuse me ...
Am I disturbing you?

(NARRATOR:)
The two executioners remain silent and motionless,
as if it whatever she was up to
had nothing to do with them.

(FRANCOISE:)
If I'm disturbing you I'll go away ...

(NARRATOR:)
The silent stillness of the two executioners persists.

She stares at them fixedly,
trying to pluck up courage.

So that when she finally does speak,
the words come tumbling out.

(FRANCOIS:)
I came to see you because I
can't stand it any longer.
It's about my husband.

(even more pathetically)

The being in whom I place all my hopes,
the man to whom I gave the best years of my life,
and whom I loved as I would never have
thought I could love.

(then more softly, calmer)

Yes, yes, yes,
he is guilty.

(NARRATOR:)
Suddenly the executioners seem
to come alive and take an interest
in what the woman is saying.

One of them takes out a pencil and a notebook,
as though waiting for her to continue.

(FRANCOISE:)
Yes, he's guilty.
He lives at number eight rue du Travail,
and his name is Jean Lagune.

(NARRATOR:)
The executioner with the pencil and notebook
makes a note of it.

As soon as he has done so,
the two rise in unison and rush out of the door.

(sound of footsteps, door opening and closing,
of car doors, and of car starting up and driving away.)

Francois stands quietly alone in the room,
listening to the executioners drive away.
At which point she goes to the door and opens it.

(FRANCOISE:)
Come in, children, come in.

(NARRATOR:)

First to enter the room is Benoit ...

(BENOIT:)

There's not much light in here ...

(FRANCOISE:)

Yes, the room is very dark.
It frightens me,
but we must go in.
We've got to wait for Daddy.

(NARRATOR:)

Now Maurice steps into the doorway,
at which point all three fully enter the room,
making their way to the table and chairs.

(FRANCOISE:)

Sit down, children. Don't be afraid.

(sounds of them sitting)

(NARRATOR:)

As the three sit around the table,
Francois again takes up her whining ...

(FRANCOISE:)
What sad and dramatic events we are living through!
What sins we are guilty of,
that life should punish us so cruelly?

(BENOIT:)
Don't worry, Mother.
Don't cry.

(FRANCOISE:)
No, Benoit my son,
I'm not crying, I shan't cry,
I shall stand up to all the dangers that beset us.

How I love to see you always so solicitous
about everything that concerns me!

But just look at your brother Maurice ---
as unnatural as ever.

(NARRATOR:)
Maurice, with a melancholy air, looks deliberately
in the direction opposite his mother.

(FRANCOISE:)
Look at him; today, when more
than ever I need your support, he turns
against me and overwhelms me with scorn.

What harm have I ever done you, unworthy son?
Speak to me, say something.

(BENOIT:)
Don't take any notice of him, Mother,
he doesn't know anything about the gratitude
one owes to a mother.

(FRANCOISE:)
Can't you hear your brother Maurice?
Listen to him.
If anyone said such a thing to me I'd die of shame.
But *you* aren't ashamed.
Good God!
What a cross!

(BENOIT:)
Gently, Mother, don't let
him upset you.
He'll never agree with you.

(FRANCOISE:)
Yes, my son,
you don't realize.
When it isn't your father, it's Maurice:
nothing but suffering.

And when I've always been their slave.

Just look what a gay life so many women
of my age lead,
enjoying themselves night and day going
to dances, cafes, cinemas!
So many women!

You can't realize it properly you're still too young.

I could have done the same,
but I preferred to sacrifice myself for my husband
and for you, silently, humbly,
without expecting anything from my sacrifices,
and even knowing that one day the beings who
have been the dearest to me would say what
your brother says today ---
that I haven't done enough.

Can you see, my son,
how they reward my sacrifices?
You can see --- by always returning evil for good,
always.

(BENOIT:)
How good you are! How good you are!

(FRANCOISE:)
But what good does it do me to know that?
It comes to the same thing.
Everything comes to the same thing.

I don't feel like doing anything any more,
I don't care about anything, nothing is
important to me any more.

I just want to be good and always sacrifice
myself for you,
without expecting anything for my sacrifices,
and even knowing that one day the
beings who have been the dearest to me,
those who ought to be grateful for all my
concern for them,
deliberately ignore my sacrifices.

All my life I've been a martyr to you,
and I shall continue to be a martyr until
God chooses to recall me to him.

(BENOIT:)
Dearest Mother!

(FRANCOISE:)
Yes, my son, I live only for you.
How can I have any other interests?

Luxury, dresses, parties, the theatre ---
none of these count for me,
I have but one care: you.
What does the rest matter?

(BENOIT:)
Maurice, do you hear what Mother says?

(FRANCOISE:)
Let him be, my child.
Do you think I can hope that he will
be able to recognize my sacrifices?

No, I expect nothing from him.
I even know that he probably thinks that I
haven't done enough.

(BENOIT:)
You're a good-for-nothing, Maurice!

(FRANCOISE ... *excited*)
Don't make things worse for me, Benoit,
don't pick a quarrel with him.
I want us to live in peace, in harmony.
Whatever happens I don't want you brothers to quarrel.

(BENOIT:)

How good you are Mother! ...

... and good to him when he's so worthless.

If it weren't for the fact that you ask me to spare him,

I don't know what I'd do to him.

And you Maurice ...

You can say thank you to Mother

because you deserve a good thrashing.

(FRANCOISE:)

No, my child, no, don't hit him.

I don't want you to hit him even if he

does thoroughly deserve it.

I want peace and love to reign in our midst.

That's the only thing I ask of you Benoit.

(BENOIT:)

Don't worry, I'll do what you ask.

(FRANCOISE:)
Thank you, my son.
You are like balm for the injuries that life has
inflicted upon me.

You see, God in his infinite goodness has finally
granted me a son like you to bind up the
wounds my poor heart suffers,
the grief caused me, to my great distress,
by the beings I have struggled for the most:
my husband and Maurice.

(BENOIT: *angrily*)
From now on, no one shall make you suffer any more.

(FRANCOISE:)
Don't be angry, my son, don't be upset.
They've behaved badly, and they know it.

What we must do is forgive them,
and bear them no malice.

And anyway, even though your father
has sinned, sinned greatly even, you must
nonetheless respect him.

(BENOIT:)
Respect him: *him?*

(FRANCOISE:)
Yes, my son.
You must disregard all the sufferings he has caused.

It is I who should refuse him my forgiveness,
and you see, my son, I forgive him,
although he has made me suffer more than
I have suffered before, if that is possible,
I shall continue to wait for him with open arms
and I shall be able to forgive him his innumerable faults.

Ever since that day I was born,
life has taught me how to suffer.
But I carry this cross with dignity,
out of love for you.

(BENOIT:)
Mother, you're so good!

(FRANCOISE:)
I try, Benoit, to be good.

(BENOIT: *interrupting his mother with spontaneous affection)*
Mother, you are the best woman in the world.

(FRANCOISE:)
No, my son, I am not the best woman in the world.
I cannot aspire to such a claim,
I am too unworthy.

And then, I have probably committed some sins.
In spite of a great deal of good will;
but even so, what counts is that
I have committed some sins.

(BENOIT:)
No, Mother; never.

(FRANCOISE:)
Yes, my child, sometimes.
But I can say with joy that I
have always repented of them --- always.

(BENOIT:)
You are a saint.

(FRANCOISE:)
Hush!
What more beautiful dream could I have than saintliness!
I can't be a saint.
To be a saint one must be a very great person,
but I am worth nothing.
I shall try to be good ---
that is the limit of my pretensions.

(NARRATOR:)

(to accompanying sound effects)

Suddenly the street door opens
and the two executioners enter,
carrying Jean, Francoise's husband,
who has his feet and wrists tied together
and is hanging from a big stick,
rather after the fashion in which captured
lions or tigers are carried in Africa.

Jean is gagged;
as he is brought into the room he raises his head
and looks at his wife, Francoise, opening his
eyes widely and perhaps with some anger.

Francoise looks at her husband attentively, avidly even.
Maurice watches the procession go by with violent indignation.

The two executioners, without stopping, cross the room and
carry Jean from the street door into the section of the room
dedicated to torture.

There they drop him to the floor, untie him,
and then stand him to strip and gag him,
to lock his wrists and ankles into shackles
hanging from the wall.

As they do this, Maurice turns to his mother ...

(MAURICE: *very indignantly*)
What's going on?
What's the latest dirty trick?

(BENOIT:)
Maurice, don't talk to Mother like that.

(FRANCOISE:)
Let him be, my child,
let him insult me.

Let him reproach me.
Let him treat his mother like an enemy.
Let him be, my child, let him be,
God will punish this wicked action.

(MAURICE:)
Oh, that's *too* much.
Mother, it was you who denounced him.

(BENOIT: *ready to throw himself on his brother*)
I've already told you to speak civilly to Mother.
D'you understand?
Civilly!
D'you hear me?

(FRANCOISE:)
Gently, my son, gently,
let him be rude to me.

You know very well that he's only happy when
he's making me suffer;
give him that satisfaction.

That's my job ---
to sacrifice myself for him and for you;
to give you everything you want.

(BENOIT:)
I won't let him shout at you.

(FRANCOISE:)
Obey me, my son, obey me.

(BENOIT:)
I won't obey you.
You're too good and he takes advantage of it.

(FRANCOISE:)
My child, do you too want to make me suffer?

If he is unpleasant to me,
let him be unpleasant,
it was only to be expected,
but you, my son, you are different ---
at least that's what I've always thought.

Let him torture me if it does
his evil heart any good.

(BENOIT:)
No, never; not while I'm there, at any rate.

(NARRATOR:)
By this point the two executioners have
stripped Jean of his outer clothing, gagged him,
and shackled him face to the wall.

They have both taken out whips to stand
at each side of him
and now they begin to whip him.

(the sounds of whips can be heard, followed by cries muffled by the gag. As the sounds continue there is the sound of chairs scraping on the floor)

(NARRATOR:)
Francois and Maurice both rise from the table,
standing to watch the torture.

Francois watches avidly.
Her eyes are wide open.
There is a grimace (almost a smile?) on her face.
She looks hysterical.

(The sounds of the whip become louder for a long moment.
Jean continues groaning loudly.
At last the sounds of the whip and the cries cease.)

Finally the executioners end their torture.
Both then stand back,
passively studying their victim
who hangs limply, barely conscious,
from his shackles.

(MAURICE: *on the verge of tears)*
Mother!
It's your fault that they're whipping Daddy.
It was you who denounced him.

(BENOIT: *violently*)
Shut up!
Don't take any notice, Mother.

FRANCOISE:)

Let him be, let him be, Benoit.
Let him insult me.

I know very well that if you weren't there he would hit me.
But he's a coward and he's afraid of you,
that's the only thing that stops him,
because he is quite capable of lifting his hand
against his mother,
I can read it in his eyes.

He's always been trying to.

(there is a piercing moan from Jean followed by a long silence.)

(FRANCOISE:)

Come, let's take a closer look
at poor little Daddy!
Let's see him suffering, the poor man.
Because there's no doubt about it,
they must have hurt him a lot.

(NARRATOR:)

Francoise, alone, walks closer to her husband and grimaces.
Although he does not appear to be conscious,
she begins to speak to Jean.

(FRANCOISE:)
They must have hurt you a lot, Jean.
Poor Jean!
You must have suffered so much,
and they're going to make you suffer even more.
My poor Jean!

(Jean, though impeded by the gag, cries out in anger.)

Don't get into a state.
It'd be better to try to be patient.

You must realize that you are only
at the beginning of your sufferings.

You can't do anything at the moment,
you're tied up, and your back's covered with blood.

You can't do anything.
Just calm down!

And anyway, all this is going to do you a lot of good,
it'll teach you to have some will power ---
you never did have any.

(and now speaking as if she were in a church, but loudly)

It was I who denounced you, Jean.
It was I who said you were guilty.

(NARRATOR:)
As she speaks to him, Jean struggles back to consciousness.
Now Jean tries to speak, but as he is hindered by his gag,
he can only manage to make noises.

(sound of Jean's noises here)

But Francois ignores him and turns to her sons.

(FRANCOISE:)
The poor man is suffering a lot,
he hasn't any patience, he never did have any.

(here another sharp cry from Jean)

(MAURICE:)
Leave Daddy alone. Don't go on.
Can't you see you're tormenting him?

(FRANCOISE:)
It's he who's tormenting himself:
only he, and for no reason.

(NARRATOR:)
Now she turns back to her husband to point an accusing finger.

(FRANCOISE:)
I can see very well that it's you
who are tormenting yourself, Jean.

I can see very well that what I say irritates you.

(NARRATOR:)
Here Francois pauses to smile with great satisfaction.

(FRANCOISE:)
Who could pay more attention to your sufferings than I do?
I shall be at your side every time you suffer.
You're guilty,
and it's your duty to accept
your punishment with patience.

You even ought to thank the executioners for taking
so much trouble with you.
If you were a normal, humble, just man,
you'd thank the executioners,
but you've always been a rebel.

You needn't think you're at home now,
at home where you did everything you wanted to;
at the moment you're in the executioner's power.
Accept your punishment without rebelling.
It's your purification.

Repent your sins,
and promise that you won't fall back into error.

And don't torment yourself with the thought that I
am rejoicing to see you punished.

(loud groan from Jean)

(MAURICE:)
Can't you hear him groaning?
Can't you see you're making him suffer?
Leave him in peace!

(BENOIT:)
I've already told you not to talk to Mother like that.

(more groans from Jean)

(MAURICE: *on the verge of tears*)
Daddy! Daddy! *Daddy!!!*

(FRANCOISE:)
He's still groaning.
That's a sign that he's suffering from the wounds
caused by the whip and the shackles
fastening his hands and feet.

(NARRATOR:)
Francois returns to the table where
she opens its drawer and searches around
inside it.

Then she puts on the table a bottle of vinegar and a
salt cellar which she has found inside.

(FRANCOISE:)
These are just what I need.
I'll put vinegar and salt on his wounds
to disinfect them.

A bit of vinegar and salt on his wounds
will do wonders!
(then with hysterical enthusiasm)
A bit of salt and vinegar.
Only just a tiny bit on each wound,
that's all he needs.

(MAURICE:)
Don't do that.

(FRANCOISE:)
Is that the way you love your father?
You, his favorite son,
is that how you treat him?

You, you of all people, wicked son!
You who know very well that the executioners will
flog him until death results,
are you going to abandon him now and
not even let me bandage his wounds.

(NARRATOR:)
Francois now makes her way back towards Jean with
the vinegar and salt in her hand.

(MAURICE:)
Don't put salt on him!
If they're going to kill him anyway,
at least leave him in peace,
don't make the agony worse.

(FRANCOISE:)
You're very young, my son,
you don't know anything about life,
you haven't any experience.

What would have become of you without me?
Life has always been very easy for you.
You're used to your mother giving you
everything you want.

You must remember what I say.
I speak as a mother, and a mother lives only for her children.

Respect your mother, respect her,
if only for the white hairs which adorn her brow.
Think that your mother does everything for you out of affection.
When, my son, have you ever seen your mother
do anything for herself?

I have thought only of you.
First my children, and then my husband.
I don't count, not for anybody, and even less for myself.

That is why, my son,
now that I am going to take care of your father's wounds,
you mustn't stand in my way.

Others would kiss the ground I tread on.
I don't ask so much from you,
I merely hope that you may find it in you to
thank me for my efforts.

(NARRATOR:)
Francoise now turns back towards Jean with the salt and vinegar.

(FRANCOISE:)
I'll just put a little salt and vinegar on
poor little Daddy's wounds.

(NARRATOR:)
Maurice rushes forward to seize his Mother's arm
and brutally prevent her from moving any further.

(BENOIT:)
Don't hold Mother's arm!

(FRANCOISE:)
Let him hit me.
It's what he's always wanted.
Look at the marks of his fingers on my poor arm.
That's what he's always wanted to do --- hit me.

(BENOIT:)
How dare you hit Mother?

(NARRATOR:)
Benoit now rises and tries to hit his brother.
Francoise throws herself between her sons
to stop them fighting.

(FRANCOISE:)
No, my son, not in my presence.
The family is sacred.
I don't want my sons to fight.

(NARRATOR:)
Benoit controls himself with difficulty.

(FRANCOISE:)
He can flay me alive if he want to,
but *please,* my child, don't hit him in my presence.
He has hit me; but I forgive him.

(a loud cry from Jean)

He is suffering ---
they are making him suffer ...
He's suffering a great deal.
I must put some vinegar on him as quickly as possible.
At once.

(NARRATOR:)

Francois now begins applying the vinegar to her husbands wounds.

(to the sounds of Jean's muffled groans and screams)

(FRANCOISE:)

Just a little salt and vinegar will do
you a lot of good.

(long pause filled with Jean's sounds)

Don't move,
I haven't got much.

(another long pause filled with sounds of Jean's discomfort)

That's it, there, there.

(more groaning)

Now a bit of salt.

(angry cry from Jean)

(MAURICE: *shouting*)

Daddy! Daddy!

(at second Daddy Maurice begins weeping)

(FRANCOISE, *long pauses between lines as she speaks in gasps and Jean continues to groan*:)

That's it,
just a bit more,
there,
a tiny bit more,
don't move.
Don't move.
There.
Just a bit more.

(big groan from Jean)

That's it.
just a bit more;
there,
there it'll do you good.

(big cry from Jean)

Just to finish it up,
there.

(another cry from Jean)

That's all I've got.

(here there is a long silence,
a loud cry from Jean,
followed by another long silence)

Well now,
how are your sore places?
I'll touch them to see how they are.

(loud muffled scream from Jean)

(NARRATOR:)

Maurice step forward to see just what his mother is doing.

(MAURICE:)

What are you doing?

You're scratching his wounds!

(NARRATOR:)

Maurice drags his mother away from Jean

while Benoit throws himself on to his brother,

about to hit him.

(sounds of struggle)

Francois again positions her self between the two brothers,

separating them.

(FRANCOISE:)

No, my son, no, Benoit.

You're hurting *me*, not him!

No, don't hit your brother.

I don't want you to hit him.

(BENOIT, *slowly calming*:)

Well ...

I won't ...

I won't tolerate him ...

hurting you.

(FRANCOISE:)

Yes, let him hurt me.
Let him if he enjoys it.
That's what he wants.
Let him.

He wants me to cry when he hits me.
My son, that's how your brother's made.
What a martyr!
What a cross!

Why, Oh God, have I deserved to have a son who
doesn't love me and who is only waiting
for me to have a moment of weakness to beat
and torment me!

(BENOIT, *furious*:)

Maurice!

(FRANCOISE:)

Gently, my son, gently.

(then, dejected)

What a cross!

What a cross, O God!

Why do you punish me thus, Lord?

What have I done to provoke such a punishment?

Don't fight, my children, for the sake of your

poor mother who never ceases to suffer,

for the sake of her white hairs.

And you Benoit,

if Maurice won't take pity on my sufferings,

you at least must have pity on me and

not make me suffer.

Or can it be that you don't love me either?

(NARRATOR:)

Benoit struggles to say something but

finds himself to moved to speak.

And Francoise raises her hand forbidding him to speak.

(FRANCOISE:)

Yes, that's it!

You don't love me either!

(BENOIT, *on the verge of tears*:)
Yes Mother, I do --- / love you.

(FRANCOISE:)
Well then, why do you add extra thorns to
the crown of sorrows I bear?

(BENOIT:)
Mother!

(FRANCOISE:)
Don't you see my sorrow?
Don't you see the boundless sorrow of a mother?

(BENOIT, nearly crying:)
Yes.

(FRANCOISE:)
Thank you, my son,
you are the support of my old age.
You are the unique consolation that God has given
me in this live.

(NARRATOR:)
Suddenly, as if they have been magically returned to life,
the executioners again begin to whip Jean.

(and again the sounds of whips and of Jean's muffled sobs.)

The three witness, Francois, Benoit, and Maurice,
all stand and silently watch the torture continue.

(more whipping , sobbing, and groaning)

(FRANCOISE, *with long pauses and speaking in gasps*:)
They're beating him again ...
And they must be hurting him a lot ...
He's crying!
He's crying ...
He's groaning, isn't he?

(very long pause while torturing and groaning continues)

Yes, yes, he's groaning ...
he's groaning,
I can hear him perfectly ...

(more sounds of the whip and groans
then Jean gives out one loud but muffled piercing cry,
followed by the sounds of whipping but no more sounds from Jean)

(NARRATOR:)
Francoise notices that Jean has become silent,
despite the executioners continued whipping.

She carefully steps forward, avoiding the cracking, flying whips,
to look more closely at Jean.

(FRANCOISE:)
They've killed him!
They've killed him!

(the sounds of whipping stop)

(NARRATOR:)
Now all stand silently and still.
Maurice sits down and puts his head on the table.
He is crying, perhaps.
But silently.

The executioners now remove
the now limp and obviously dead Jean from his shackles.

They once again tie Jean, arms and legs, to the pole
which they had used to bring him in.
They stand and raise the pole bearing Jean to their shoulders.
Jean's head hangs down inertly.

(FRANCOISE:)
Let me see him.
Let me see him properly.

(NARRATOR:)
But the executioners pay no attention to Francoise.
They cross the room and go out into the street.
Closing the door behind them.

Slowly, uncertain, Francois and Benoit sit down
on either side of Maurice.
They look at him.
They all sit in silence.

Then Maurice finally breaks the silence.

(MAURICE:)
They killed Daddy because of you.

(FRANCOISE:)
How dare you say that to your mother?
To your mother who has always taken so much trouble with you.

(MAURICE, *interrupting her*:)
Don't give me all that stuff.
What I'm accusing you of is of denouncing Daddy.

(NARRATOR:)
Benoit is now too depressed to intervene.

(FRANCOISE:)

Yes, my son, as you wish.

If it gives you any pleasure I'll say it was my fault.

Is that what you want?

(MAURICE:)

Oh, stop harping on that.

(pause and long silence)

Why did you treat Daddy like that,

Daddy who never gave you anything to complain of?

(FRANCOISE:)

That's it.

That's what I've been waiting for,

all my life.

When your father compromised the future of

his children and his wife because of his ...

(MAURICE, *interrupting her*:)

What's all that stuff about compromising the future?

What's your latest invention?

(FRANCOISE:)

Ah, my son!

What misery!

What a cross!

(pause)

Of course he compromised his children's

future by his failings.

He knew very well that if he continued in his guilty ways

he would sooner or later finish up the way he has.

He know it only too well,

but he didn't change, he continued,

whatever happened, on his guilty way.

How many times did I tell him:

you're going to leave me a widow and your sons orphans.

But what did he do?

He ignored my advice and persisted in the error of his ways.

(MAURICE:)

You're the only one who says he was guilty.

(FRANCOISE:)
Ah yes, naturally, you're not content now with
having insulted me all night long,
but you're going to call me a liar as well
and swear that I make people purger themselves.

That's the way you treat a mother who,
ever since you were born,
has given you all her care and attention.

While your father was compromising your future
with his misbehavior, I was thinking of your
happiness and I had only one aim ---
to make you happy,
to give you all the happiness that I had never known.

Because of me,
the only thing that counts is that your brother and
you should be all right,
everything else was of no importance.

I'm a poor, ignorant, uneducated woman,
who wants nothing but the good of her children,
whatever the cost.

(BENOIT: *conciliatingly*)
Maurice, there isn't any point in make a fuss now;
Daddy's dead, we can't do anything about it now.

(FRANCOISE:)
Benoit's right

(long silence)

(MAURICE:)
We could have prevented Daddy's death.

(FRANCOISE:)
Now? Was it my fault? No!
He was the one who was guilty --- he, your father.
What could I do?
What could I do to stop him being like that?

He'd got stubborn.
I'm only a poor, ignorant, uneducated woman,
I've spent my whole life doing nothing but
worrying about other people, forgetting myself.

When have you seen me buy a pretty dress or go
to the cinema or to first nights, which I used to like so much?

No, I didn't do any of those things,
in spite of all the pleasure I'd have got out of them,
and that was only because I preferred to devote myself entirely to you.

I only ask one thing --- that you shouldn't be ungrateful,
and that you should be capable of appreciating the sacrifice of a mother
like the one you were lucky enough to have.

(BENOIT:)
Yes, Mother,
I appreciate all you've done for us.

(FRANCOISE:)
Yes, I know *you* do,
but your brother doesn't.
It doesn't seem anything to your brother,
it isn't enough for him.

How happy we could be if only we were all united,
if only we all agreed!

(BENOIT:)
Maurice, yes, we ought to understand one another
and all three live in peace.

Mother is very good,
I know she loves you very much and
that she'll give you everything you need.

Even if it's only out of selfishness,
come back to us.
We'll all three live happily and joyfully together
and love one another.

(MAURICE:)
But ...
... Daddy ...

(long silence)

(BENOIT:)
That's already past history.
Don't look backwards.
What matters is the future.
It would be too stupid to hang on to the past.

You'll have everything you want with mother.
Everything that's hers will be yours.
Isn't that so, Mother?

(FRANCOISE:)
Yes, my son,
everything that is mine will be his;
I forgive him.

(BENOIT:)
You see how good she is;
she even forgives you.

(FRANCOISE:)
Yes, I forgive you,
and I shall forget all your insults.

(BENOIT:)

She'll forget everything!

(gaily)

That's the important thing.

And so we'll all three live together without ill-feeling;

Mother, you, and me.

What could be more wonderful?

(MAURICE, *half convinced*:)

Yes, but ...

(BENOIT, *interrupting him*:)

No, you mustn't be vindictive.

Be like Mother.

She has reason to be angry with you,

but she's promised to forget everything.

We shall be happy if you'll be nice.

(NARRATOR:)

Maurice, full of emotion, lowers his head.

The three share a long silence until Benoit

reaches out and puts his arm round his brother.

(BENOIT:)

Kiss mother.

(long silence)

Kiss her and let bygones by bygones.

(NARRATOR:)

Maurice goes to his mother and kisses her.

(FRANCOISE:)

My son!

(BENOIT:)

Ask Mother to forgive you.

(MAURICE, *nearly crying*:)

Forgive me, Mother.

(NARRATOR:)

Maurice and Francoise embrace.

Benoit joins them and all three

stay enfolded in each others' arms.

(pause)

Finis.