

Orphée (1950)

Credits

<i>Screenplay</i>	Jean Cocteau
<i>Director</i>	Jean Cocteau
<i>Producer</i>	André Paulvé
<i>Music</i>	Georges Auric
<i>Director of Photography</i>	Nicolas Hayer
<i>Sets</i>	D'Eaubonne
<i>Costumes</i>	Escoffier
<i>Production Director</i>	Emile Darbon
<i>Cast:</i>	
<i>Orpheus</i>	Jean Marais
<i>Heurtebise</i>	François Peirer
<i>The Princess</i>	Maria Casarès
<i>Eurydice</i>	Marie Dea
<i>Cegestius</i>	Edouard Dermithe <i>and</i> Henri Crémieux Gréco Roger Blin Pierre Bertin Jacques Varennes

Small-town café. Seven o'clock in the evening.

A street-corner café, facing a small square. It is similar to the "Flore" in Paris. An awning with the words "Café des Poètes" covers the terrace. A guitarist strums. Inside, it is smoky. Casually dressed young couples sit with their arms around each other; others write and talk. The tables are very crowded. The customers drink little and have been there awhile.

Orpheus sits alone in the back of the room. He gets up, calls the waiter, and pays. As he leaves, he turns his head and looks with everyone else toward the terrace. Through the window they see a large, black Rolls Royce come to a halt. The chauffeur jumps out and opens the door. The Princess gets out.

PRINCESS (to the chauffeur): Heurtebise! Help Mr. Cegestius cross the square.

She helps a casually dressed young man get down from the car. He is obviously very drunk.

CEGESTIUS (shouting): I'm not drunk!

PRINCESS: Yes, you are. . .

The chauffeur props up the young man with his arm. The Princess goes ahead toward the café. They catch up with her as she greets the people on the terrace.

Inside the café, Orpheus walks to the door as the Princess enters. He stands back to let her pass, and looks at her. The young man, struggling to prove he can walk unaided, bumps into Orpheus, looks at him uncertainly, and mutters insults.

leave. Orpheus comes up to the table.

THE MAN: Come and sit down for a moment.

ORPHEUS (*sitting down*): As soon as I arrive there's an empty space. . . .

THE MAN (*smiling*): You've come to put your head into the lion's mouth. . . .

ORPHEUS: I wanted to see what it was like.

THE MAN (*drinking*): What would you like to drink?

ORPHEUS: Nothing, thank you. I've just had one. It was a bitter experience. It's very brave of you to speak to me.

THE MAN: Oh well . . . I'm no longer in the rat race. I stopped writing twenty years ago. I had nothing new to offer. People respect my silence.

ORPHEUS: They probably think I have nothing new to offer and that a poet shouldn't become too famous. . . .

THE MAN: They don't like you very much. . . .

ORPHEUS: What you mean is that they hate me.

The man looks around and watches the beautiful woman and the drunken young man as they leave the café and walk along the terrace. The guitar music has been replaced by jazz.

ORPHEUS (*turning back to the man*): Who is that young drunkard who was so pleasant to me and who does not seem to scorn luxury?

THE MAN: That's Jacques Cegestius. A poet. He's eighteen years old and everyone adores him. The Princess with him runs a magazine which has just published his first poems.

ORPHEUS: The Princess is most beautiful and most elegant. . . .

THE MAN: She is a stranger. She can't seem to do without our social

The terrace.

Orpheus walks along the terrace and leaves. He turns around and looks back with a surprised expression. In a corner of the terrace near the bushes is a disheveled middle-aged man sitting with three young men in sweaters, leather sandals, and untidy hair.

THE MAN (*waving and shouting*): Orpheus!

ONE OF THE YOUNG MEN: You're crazy. . . .

He stands up. The others follow suit. They pick up their glasses and



sphere. (*picks up a magazine*) Here's her magazine.

ORPHEUS (*opening it*): I see only blank pages.

THE MAN: It's called *Nudism*.

ORPHEUS: That's ridiculous.

THE MAN: It would be more ridiculous if those pages were covered with ridiculous texts. The excessive is never ridiculous. Orpheus . . . your most serious defect is knowing just how far one can go.

ORPHEUS: The public likes me.

THE MAN: Ah, but they're the only ones.

Another corner of the terrace. The Princess and Cegestius are standing next to the writers who have shunned Orpheus.

A WRITER: They're talking about us.

ANOTHER WRITER: Apparently things are changing and they're publishing texts now.

THE PRINCESS: I've got his here . . . keep them. In the state he's in, he leaves his poems lying around everywhere.

CEGESTIUS (*snatching the papers from the young writer*): Give me that! You bastard! I'm going to smash your face in — I'm going to smash your face in!

THE PRINCESS: Will you keep quiet! I can't bear a scandal!

CEGESTIUS: Of course!

The fighting spreads from table to table. The chauffeur enters the phone booth and dials a number.

HEURTEBISE: Police? Café des Poètes . . . there's a fight . . .

The terrace. Orpheus and the Man.



ORPHEUS (*bowing ironically*): Good-bye. Your café amuses me. You all think it's the center of the world.

THE MAN: It is. You know it's true and it upsets you.

ORPHEUS: Is my case hopeless, then?

THE MAN: No. If it were, you wouldn't arouse such hatred.

ORPHEUS: What should I do? Should I put up a fight?

THE MAN (*standing up*): Surprise us.

An expression of surprise suddenly appears on the man's face. Police

cars arrive; gendarmes get out and enter the café amid the confusion of the fight.

POLICE: Your papers . . . papers . . .

Orpheus and the Man are still seated at the table.

FIRST POLICEMAN: Your papers. (*Orpheus takes his wallet from his pocket. The policeman looks at it and lifts his head.*) Excuse me, sir, I didn't recognize you, yet my wife has photos of you all over the place.

ORPHEUS: This gentleman is with me.

FIRST POLICEMAN: Please accept my apologies . . . (*saluting*) . . . Sir!
He moves away.

THE MAN: You get along too well with the police.

ORPHEUS: Me?

THE MAN: I'd advise you to get out of here as quickly as possible. They'll hold you responsible for this business.

ORPHEUS: Well!

The police are questioning the woman, the chauffeur, and several boys and girls. They are gesturing angrily.

CEGESTIUS: Leave me alone! Leave me alone!

PRINCESS: You have no right to touch that young man!

SECOND POLICEMAN: He doesn't have his papers. (*to Cegestius*)
Follow us!

PRINCESS: I am responsible for him.

SECOND POLICEMAN: You can explain it all at the police station.

PRINCESS: This is inadmissible!

SECOND POLICEMAN: We are only carrying out our duty.

The young man struggles and shouts as they drag him away.

CEGESTIUS: Let me go, for Christ's sake, let me go!

They walk toward the square where the Rolls is parked.

CEGESTIUS (*shouting*): You rats! You swine! For Christ's sake, will you let me go! Let me go, will you!

They walk in confusion. Motorcycles can be heard in the distance.

A POLICEMAN: Oh, the pig! He bit me!

Cegestius escapes by ripping his sweater. Roar of the motorcycles. The policemen stop in their tracks, shouting.

POLICE: Watch out! Watch out!

Cegestius falls, flattened on the ground as though dropped from the sky. The two motorcycles roar away in a cloud of dust. The young man lies twisted in the dirt. The policemen look at the road and shout.

FIRST POLICEMAN: Did you get their numbers?

SECOND POLICEMAN: We couldn't see them.

FIRST POLICEMAN: Phone ahead along the road!

PRINCESS: Take him to my car, and see to all these wretched people. . . (*The young man is carried off.*) Heurtebise! Help them. . .

A group of people watch.

A YOUNG WRITER: To think that there's usually no one here!

Cegestius is hoisted into the car. The men and the chauffeur get out of the car.

PRINCESS (*turning*): Well, don't just stand there like a dummy!

Orpheus ventures forward with an inquiring expression, not certain if he is being addressed.

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PRINCESS: Yes, you! You! Make yourself useful *(turning toward Orpheus)* I need you as a witness. Get in! Quickly! *(getting into the car, shouting)* Come on! Come on! Hurry up!

Orpheus gets in after her. The door slams. The car moves off.

The car.

The people from the café stand outside the car. Inside is the body of the young man. There is blood at the corner of his mouth.



PRINCESS *(looking at Cegestius):* Give me your handkerchief.

Orpheus sits on the seat opposite her, looking at the evening landscape moving past the window. He hands her his handkerchief.

ORPHEUS: He looks badly wounded.

PRINCESS: Don't say such a pointless thing.

ORPHEUS: But we're going away from the hospital!

PRINCESS: You don't think I'm going to take this child to the hospital, do you. . .

The Princess wipes away the blood from Cegestius' face with the handkerchief. Orpheus lifts up Cegestius' eyelids.

PRINCESS' VOICE: Don't touch him!

ORPHEUS (*leaning back in amazement*): But . . . he's dead!

PRINCESS (*looking at Orpheus*): When will you learn to mind your own business? When will you learn not to meddle in other people's affairs?

She throws away her cigarette. The car brakes and stops at a level crossing.

ORPHEUS' VOICE: You asked me to get into your car. . .

PRINCESS' VOICE: Will you keep quiet. . .

Orpheus looks stunned. A train passes; the barrier is lifted. The car starts up again, accelerates, and crosses the tracks.

PRINCESS (*to the chauffeur*): Take the usual route. (*leaning toward the chauffeur*) The radio!

Heurtebise turns the radio knob. Sound of static, then a short-wave signal and Morse code.

THE RADIO: Silence moves faster when it's going backward. Three times. Silence moves faster when it's going backward. Three times. (*Morse code*)

The Princess listens carefully, leaning back against the cushions.

THE RADIO: Just one glass of water lights up the world . . . twice . . . Listen carefully. Just one glass of water lights up the world. Twice . . . Just one glass of water lights up the world. Twice . . . (*Morse code*)

ORPHEUS: Where are we going?

PRINCESS: Will you please keep quiet.

Roar of motorcycles. Their headlights approach the car, which has stopped. The Princess leans out a door.

PRINCESS (*shouting to passing motorcyclists*): Hello!

Orpheus watches the second motorcycle go by.

ORPHEUS: But they're the men who knocked the boy over.

PRINCESS: Don't be so stupid. And please don't ask me any more questions.

The car starts up again and drives away as the motorcycles cross in front of it on the road ahead.

The chalet. Night.

Two or three windows are lit up in the dark building. Sound of the motorcycles. The headlights of the car and the motorcycles move up the hill in a semicircle to the chalet. The motorcycles reach the chalet first. The riders get down and prop their machines against the wall. They go to the car. The chauffeur leaps out and opens the door. A train whistles.

PRINCESS (*to Orpheus*): Get down, and let my men see to him. (*She steps out between the motorcyclists*) Take the body out of the car and carry him upstairs.

Orpheus gets out and looks behind him. The motorcyclists take the young man out, carrying him with his head hanging down.

Inside the chalet. Rubble.

PRINCESS (*going up the stairs*): Are you sleepwalking?

ORPHEUS: It feels like it.

The group comes up to a landing. They turn to their right, go down a few steps, and through an open door.

PRINCESS: You're all taking such a long time. I don't like that. (to Orpheus) Wait for me here.

Room with mirror.

The room is a shambles, as though just burglarized. There is straw on the floor. Furniture consists of an old table and some chairs. The wallpaper is torn. To the left of the door is a huge mirror. The windows and shutters are closed. The two motorcyclists enter carrying the body. The Princess follows them.

PRINCESS: Put him down on the floor.

She turns around and leaves. Orpheus waits on the landing, trying to see what is going on in the room. The Princess passes him.

PRINCESS: Follow me.

He follows her through a door on the right of the landing and up four steps to another door. The Princess opens it. Orpheus stops at the foot of the stairs. The Princess stands by the open door.

PRINCESS (turning to Orpheus): You're really sleeping, aren't you...

ORPHEUS: Yes... yes... I'm sleeping... It's very strange.

Room with radio.

The room has a decadent elegance. It is furnished for a woman's comfort. Clothes and furs are hanging up or left lying around. Next to the shuttered window are a sofa, lamp, and radio. At the back of the room, left of the sofa, is a small door opening onto a brick corridor. In the opposite corner is a dressing table covered with bottles and brushes. Above the table is a three-sided mirror. The Princess switches on the lamp which throws a soft light into the room.

ORPHEUS: Please, Madam... will you explain...

PRINCESS: No, I won't. If you are sleeping and dreaming, accept your dreams. That's the role of the sleeper.

ORPHEUS: I have the right to ask for an explanation.

The Princess sits on the sofa and turns on the radio, which is playing a passage from Gluck's Orpheus (Eurydice's Complaint).

PRINCESS: You have every right, my dear Sir, and so do I. We are even.

She gets up and moves to her left.

ORPHEUS: Madam! Stop that music. In the room next door there is a dead man and the men that killed him. (He turns the radio knob and stands up.) Let me say again that I insist...

The Princess goes over to the dressing table and turns on the light over the mirror.

PRINCESS: And I insist that you leave that radio alone. Please sit down and keep quiet.

She sits down and arranges her hair. The mirror reflects the Princess and Orpheus standing by the radio.

THE RADIO (emitting the same short-wave signal and voice heard in the car): It would be better if mirrors reflected more. Once. I repeat. It would be better if mirrors reflected more. Once. It would be better if...

The mirror breaks, cracked along its entire length. The Princess leaps up while Orpheus stands next to the radio. Short-wave signal. The Princess walks abruptly to the radio and turns the knob. Music from Gluck's Orpheus

PRINCESS: You are insufferable. (She pushes Orpheus back onto the sofa.) Wait for me here in my room. My servants (Two Chinese servants in white jackets appear in the door of the brick corridor and bow.) will bring you champagne and cigarettes. Make yourself at home. (The servants bow and leave the room. The

Princess walks quickly behind Orpheus toward the door. She stops.) You mustn't try too hard to understand what's happening, my dear Sir. It's a very serious mistake.

Orpheus sits next to the radio, which is still playing.

ORPHEUS: But Madam, I'm expected at home.

PRINCESS (*opening the door*): Let your wife wait for you. She'll be that much happier when she sees you.

She leaves the room and closes the door behind her. The servants bring in a champagne bucket and cigarettes on a cart. Orpheus stands up, then slowly sits down again, while one of the servants uncorks the bottle of champagne.

The room with the mirror.

The two motorcyclists are standing on either side of the mirror. The body of the young man is lying on the floor. The Princess quickly enters the room, walks over to the body and looks at it.

PRINCESS: Is everything ready?

ONE OF THE MOTORCYCLISTS: Yes, Madam.

(The action in the following scene is depicted through reversed film.)

Cegestius is standing in front of the Princess and lets himself fall back. Her hands reach out but do not touch him. He rises up slowly and stands in front of the Princess.

PRINCESS (*interrogating him*): Cegestius, stand up. (*Cegestius rises, his eyes wide open.*) Hello.

CEGESTIUS (*as though he were sleepwalking*): Hello.

PRINCESS: Do you know who I am?

CEGESTIUS: Yes, I do.

PRINCESS: Tell me.

CEGESTIUS: My death.

PRINCESS: Good. From now on you are at my service.

CEGESTIUS: I am at your service.

PRINCESS: You will carry out my orders.

CEGESTIUS: I will carry out your orders.

PRINCESS: Excellent. Well then, let's go. (*She turns toward the motorcyclists.*) Hold onto my dress. Don't be afraid. Don't let go of me.

She moves back with the young man just behind her. She goes quickly toward the mirror and passes through it with Cegestius. The mirror ripples like water. Orpheus stands, holding his glass of champagne, at the threshold of the door . . . The glass falls to the ground and breaks. The two motorcyclists follow the Princess and disappear into the rippling mirror, which turns back into an ordinary mirror again. Orpheus throws himself at it and hits it. His head sways, his hands slip, he collapses at the foot of the mirror.

Orpheus' head is reflected in the mirror. He appears to be at the foot of the mirror, but he is lying at the edge of a pool of water. White sand dunes meet the horizon. Orpheus moves as though he were waking up. He hoists himself onto his elbow and looks around in amazement. He climbs up onto a mound of sand.

ORPHEUS (*calling out*): Hey there! Hey!

He goes down one slope, up another, and walks to a path between the bushes. The Rolls is waiting at the edge of the road. Orpheus runs down toward the car. The chauffeur is asleep. Orpheus shakes him.

ORPHEUS (*shouting*): Where are we? (*The chauffeur wakes up, rolls off the seat, and opens the door.*) I want to know where we are!

HEURTEBISE: I don't know, Sir. I was told to wait for you and to drive you back.

ORPHEUS. Where's the Princess? Where's the chalet?

HEURTEBISE: Would you care to get into the car, Sir?

Orpheus climbs in, without taking his eyes off Heurtebise. The chauffeur shuts the door and gets in. The car moves off.

Orpheus' living room. Day.

A comfortably furnished room with a small kitchen adjoining it. There are many books. The dining table is covered with magazines. At the back, on the left, a small door opens onto the garden. A ladder leads up through a trap door into Eurydice's and Orpheus' bedroom. Next to it is a sofa. Eurydice is sitting by the window, which looks onto the garden and the road. Aglaonice and the Chief of Police are beside her.

AGLAONICE (talking on telephone): Yes, she does . . . this woman lives at the Hotel des Thermes. Let me speak to the Manager.

She hands over the telephone to the Chief of Police.

The porter's office at the Hotel des Thermes.

PORTER (to the Manager): You're wanted on the phone, Sir.

Orpheus' living room.

CHIEF OF POLICE: This is the Chief of Police, here. I'm sorry to trouble you again. Have you made your inquiries? Hello, hello, hello . . . don't hang up.

The Hotel des Thermes.

THE MANAGER: I'm afraid I can only repeat what I said earlier. We have no woman here who fits your description and I haven't seen any Rolls Royce.

Orpheus' living room.

CHIEF OF POLICE: I'll come around to see you at two o'clock. Good-bye.

He hangs up. Eurydice is sitting. Aglaonice is standing.

CHIEF OF POLICE (walking up and down): It's incredible. Neither at the Fabius Hotel, nor at the Two Worlds Hotel!

EURYDICE: He'll never come back.



Aglaonice puts her hand on Eurydice's shoulder and shakes her gently.

AGLAONICE: Come now, keep calm. Men always come back, they're so absurd.

EURYDICE: But where is he? Where can he be?

AGLAONICE: There's no point in lying to you. He's with that woman.

EURYDICE (*standing up*): Oh no! No! I can't believe it. You, you, Sir, tell her it's not true! You know Orpheus. . .

CHIEF OF POLICE: Madam . . . Madam!

EURYDICE: Tell her it's not true! Tell her. . .

CHIEF OF POLICE: What can I say. You always seemed to be such a perfect couple. But men sometimes lose their heads. . .

EURYDICE (*turning her head to the wall*): My God! Oh my God!

CHIEF OF POLICE (*going over to Aglaonice*): What an unpleasant business.

AGLAONICE (*in a low voice*): Won't there be a scandal in the press?

CHIEF OF POLICE (*in a low voice*): No, no . . . I gave the strictest orders. In any case the reporters aren't aware of what's going on.

The bell rings. The Chief of Police starts.

AGLAONICE (*looking out of the window*): It's a reporter, my dear Sir.

EURYDICE (*leaning against the wall, crying*): Who is it?

She rushes to the door

The garden.

The reporter pushes open the gate and enters the garden. Eurydice is

standing in the doorway. The reporter stops in front of her.

REPORTER: Good-day, Madam. I'm from *The Sun*. Is your husband at home?

EURYDICE: My husband can't see anyone. He's asleep.

REPORTER (*insolently*): Asleep. . . ?

The Chief of Police comes up behind Eurydice.

EURYDICE: He worked all through the night.

CHIEF OF POLICE: I came to see him, but I didn't want to wake him.

REPORTER: Fine. Well, I'll be off. Can I give you a lift, Sir?

CHIEF OF POLICE: No thanks, I have my car with me.

EURYDICE: What is it you want to know?

REPORTER: I want to interview him about the young man's accident. As he's not in the hospital his friends are worried about him; they want to know where he is.

CHIEF OF POLICE: Everything's all right. I'll go down to the news office myself.

REPORTER: Good-bye, Madam.

He nods and leaves. Aglaonice is standing near the door. Eurydice and the Chief of Police go back into the room.

AGLAONICE: Well done!

EURYDICE: It's so awful. . .

CHIEF OF POLICE: Don't worry. I'll notify the paper.

Eurydice bursts into tears.

AGLAONICE (*comforting her*): Now, now . . . you must be brave.

Outside the house.

The reporter is snooping around the garden. Sound of a car approaching. The reporter slips away.

The Rolls Royce drives up and stops in front of the other side of the house. Orpheus gets out and talks to the chauffeur.

ORPHEUS: Follow me. Be as quiet as possible. I'll open the garage door.

Orpheus disappears through a small door into a stable, which has been converted into a garage. He opens the door. The Rolls drives slowly into the garage and stops next to Orpheus' small car. Orpheus shuts the door.

ORPHEUS: It's agreed then. *(He opens the door that leads into the garden.)* . . . My wife wouldn't understand what happened. . .

Orpheus walks toward the house. The reporter comes around the corner and stops him.

REPORTER: I'm from *The Sun*. So, you were asleep, were you?

ORPHEUS: What?

REPORTER: I'll let you sleep, Orpheus, I'll let you sleep. Sweet dreams!

ORPHEUS: Get the hell out of here!

REPORTER: My paper will appreciate your friendly attitude.

ORPHEUS: Good-bye. And get out.

REPORTER: You'll regret your rudeness.

ORPHEUS: I couldn't care less about the press.

REPORTER: That's new.

ORPHEUS: Yes, it is, isn't it?

He pushes his way past the reporter. Aglaonice, Eurydice, and the Chief of Police are standing by the window. Orpheus walks across the garden.

Inside the house.

AGLAONICE *(shouting)*: Eurydice! Eurydice! It's him!

Orpheus comes up the steps. Eurydice rushes to the door. They meet in the doorway. She clings to him, crying.

EURYDICE: Oh my darling . . . my darling . . . at last!

As Orpheus embraces her, he sees Aglaonice and the Chief of Police.

ORPHEUS: What are you doing here?

AGLAONICE: You're too kind! It's quite natural. Orpheus, when you abandon your wife for her to appeal for help to those who love her.

EURYDICE: I was sick with worry. I called Aglaonice.

ORPHEUS: And the Chief of Police?

CHIEF OF POLICE: I don't know if you realize just how serious the situation is.

ORPHEUS: I do know that I come home and find the police here with a woman whom I forbade to set foot in the house!

EURYDICE *(coming up behind Orpheus)*: Orpheus!

Aglaonice starts to leave, followed by the Chief of Police.

AGLAONICE *(turning)*: Your behavior is really the limit. You may regret it. *(She goes to the door and turns around again.)* Are you coming, Sir? I think your presence here is as undesirable as mine.

ORPHEUS: Go on, go on, don't let me keep you!

CHIEF OF POLICE *(taking his hat)*: I shall ask you to come to my office tomorrow. Good-bye, Madam.

They leave.

EURYDICE: Orpheus! Aglaonice is dangerous! Her women's league is

very powerful . . . you're mad!

Sound of a car driving off.

ORPHEUS: I may very well be going mad . . .

EURYDICE: Where have you been?

ORPHEUS (*exploding*): Oh no! No! (*He walks up and down the room shouting.*) No questions, please. No questions!

Eurydice is stunned. There are tears in her eyes.

EURYDICE: It's the first time you've ever stayed out all night, it's only natural that I should ask you. . .

ORPHEUS: Nothing! I want nothing asked of me!

He pours himself a drink and downs it. He pours another.

EURYDICE: Orpheus! Orpheus! You never drink. . .

ORPHEUS: Well I'm drinking now, do you mind?

EURYDICE: And I was waiting for you to come back, I was waiting so that I could tell you some really important news. . .

Eurydice takes the baby's bootee she is knitting and shows it to Orpheus . . . He rushes toward the ladder that leads to the bedroom. Eurydice drops her knitting. As Orpheus walks past the armchair, he steps on the bootee without even seeing it.

ORPHEUS: I don't want to hear any news! Least of all important news! The only news I ever hear is bad news!

Orpheus goes toward the ladder.

EURYDICE'S VOICE: Orpheus!

ORPHEUS: Enough! I want to sleep. Sleep, do you hear?

He goes through the trap door, which slams shut behind him.

Music. Outside the house.

Orpheus climbs out the bedroom attic window at the back of the house and goes down the ladder. Heurtebise watches him and walks around to the front of the house. Orpheus enters the garage. Heurtebise goes into the living room.





Inside the house. Music (Gluck's Orpheus).

EURYDICE: Who are you?

Heurtebise stops at some distance from Eurydice.

HEURTEBISE: I brought your husband home.

EURYDICE: Where was he?

HEURTEBISE: I'm the chauffeur of the lady who took him in her car yesterday.

EURYDICE: Did he spend the night with her?

HEURTEBISE: No, my employer was carrying a wounded man. Your husband was at the scene of the accident. He got into the car. But my employer doesn't like people meddling in her affairs.

EURYDICE: So?

HEURTEBISE: So she left us on the road. Her other car was waiting for her near the chalet where she lives. She drove off with the sick man.

EURYDICE: What about my husband?

HEURTEBISE: I couldn't get the engine started so I waited until daybreak. Your husband slept in the car. He was very worried about you. . .

EURYDICE (*from the kitchen*): I wish I could believe you.

HEURTEBISE: I might lie to you if I were a real chauffeur, but I'm not.

EURYDICE: What are you then?

HEURTEBISE: A poor student. I took the job as a chauffeur two weeks ago. My name is Heurtebise.



EURYDICE: You're making me feel a little better. My husband . . . do you know him?

HEURTEBISE: Who doesn't?

EURYDICE (*returning to the living room*): My husband adores me, but we've just had an argument. I hardly knew him . . . he was drinking. . .

HEURTEBISE: You've dropped your knitting.

He picks up the baby's bootee.

EURYDICE: Thank you. (*With one hand she takes the bootee; with the other she gently touches her stomach.*) I was about to give him the great news. He wasn't even listening to me. He didn't see or hear anything. He stepped on the bootee without even realizing it.

HEURTEBISE: He must be very tired. You don't sleep very well in a car.

EURYDICE: It could be that. He shouted that he wanted to sleep. (*She goes toward the kitchen.*) You must be exhausted. I'll make you some coffee. (*As she talks, she turns on the gas and pours some water into a saucepan.*) Where are you meeting your employer? . . . I mean, the lady . . . Do sit down.

HEURTEBISE (*sitting down at the table*): I have no orders. I'll wait for her in town.

EURYDICE (*in front of the stove*): You can wait here if you like. There's a small room above the garage. I must say it's not ideal, but you could put your car next to ours and wait. . .

HEURTEBISE: Admit it; you want me to stay here because I'm connected with what happened yesterday — which doesn't prevent you from being a very charming person.

EURYDICE (*walking around the table*): You're wrong. I'm a very simple woman. (*She takes a cup and the sugar out of the*

cupboard and puts them on the table.) You must understand that women with a background like mine have a lot to fear from certain people.

HEURTEBISE: Your husband isn't the sort to lose his head.

EURYDICE: He's very handsome and very famous. It's a miracle that he's faithful to me. (*The water boils over and puts out the flame. Eurydice lets out a cry and runs to the kitchen.*) Oh, the water! (*She takes a rag, kneels down, and wipes the floor.*) I am stupid. Please forgive me.

HEURTEBISE (*close-up*): Hey! The gas!

EURYDICE: What?

HEURTEBISE: It's still on, be careful. (*Eurydice hears the hissing of the gas. She gets up, turns it off, strikes a match, and lights it again. There is a popping noise.*) I can't stand the smell and for a good reason too. . .

EURYDICE: What reason?

HEURTEBISE: I committed suicide by gas. The smell has been following me ever since I died.

EURYDICE: Since you died?

HEURTEBISE: Well . . . I mean since I almost committed suicide.

EURYDICE: Ah, I see. You don't look like a ghost.

HEURTEBISE: I was in love with an awful-looking girl. Pity she didn't look like you. Your name is Eurydice, isn't it?

EURYDICE: Indeed. I'm afraid I've forgotten yours.

HEURTEBISE: Heurtebise, at your service.

Music from Gluck's Orpheus stops.

The garage.

Orpheus is inside the Rolls Royce, listening to the radio and taking notes on a pad. The car door is open.

THE RADIO: The bird sings with its fingers. Twice. The bird sings with its fingers. Twice. I repeat. The bird sings with its fingers...

Orpheus' and Eurydice's bedroom. Night. Music.

Moonlight shines through the window. Twin beds are reflected in the three-sided mirror. Eurydice is sleeping in the bed on the right; Orpheus on the left. The light changes. The Princess comes through the mirror and walks over to the beds. She stands and looks at the dreaming Orpheus.

AUTHOR'S VOICE: That first night, the Death of Orpheus came to his room to watch him sleep. *(The light surrounding the Princess touches Eurydice's bed.)* The next day...

End of music.

The garage. Sunlight and shadows.

Orpheus is sitting in the front seat with his papers in his hand. Eurydice is sitting in the back. Heurtebise is leaning on the open door of the car.

EURYDICE: You don't have to sit in a car to listen to the radio.

ORPHEUS: I can't get this station anywhere else.

EURYDICE: Well, if I want the pleasure of your company, I see I shall have to live in a car.

ORPHEUS: No one's forcing you!

He turns the radio knob. Sound of music.

EURYDICE: Listen, darling...

ORPHEUS (annoyed): Ssh! *(Short-wave signal. Orpheus listens; Eurydice looks at Heurtebise in despair. Heurtebise signals Eurydice to keep quiet.)* I've heard nothing but meaningless sentences, except for one yesterday, which was marvelous.

HEURTEBISE: Why don't you rest for a moment...

ORPHEUS: Thanks! And the sentences will start up again as soon as I turn my back!

EURYDICE: Orpheus, you can't spend the rest of your life in a talking car. It's irresponsible of you.

ORPHEUS (turning toward Eurydice): Irresponsible? My life was beginning to fester, to stink of success and death. Can't you see that the most insignificant of these sentences is more amazing than all of my poems? I would give my whole life's work for one



of these sentences. I'm in pursuit of the unknown.

EURYDICE: Orpheus, we can't bring up our child on these little sentences.

ORPHEUS: Just like a woman, Heurtebise. You discover the world and they talk to you about taxes and baby clothes.

HEURTEBISE: I admire Orpheus. As for myself, I could hear these little sentences a thousand times without paying the slightest attention to them.

ORPHEUS: Where could they be coming from, Heurtebise? No other station broadcasts them. I feel certain that they are addressed to me personally.

EURYDICE: Orpheus! This car is the only thing that matters to you. I could die and you wouldn't even notice.

ORPHEUS: We were dead without even noticing it.

HEURTEBISE: Beware of sirens.

ORPHEUS: It is I that charms them.

HEURTEBISE: Your voice is the best one. Be happy with your voice.

ORPHEUS (*leaning closer to the radio*): Ssh!

THE RADIO: I repeat. 2294 twice. 7777 twice. 3398 three times. I repeat. 2294 twice. 7777 twice. 3398 three times.

Short-wave signal. Orpheus takes notes.

EURYDICE: Well, that's most poetic, I must say!

ORPHEUS: Who are we to say what is poetic and what isn't? (*He sits up.*) Anyway, if you're not happy you can go. I just want to be left in peace, that's all.

HEURTEBISE: Come on, Eurydice.

ORPHEUS: Take her away, she's driving me crazy!

EURYDICE (*getting out of the car*): It's this car that's driving you crazy!

ORPHEUS (*angrily*): Oh!

Heurtebise helps Eurydice out of the car and takes her to the house.

ORPHEUS (*shouting*): Take her away, Heurtebise, or I'll do something I'll regret.

Orpheus' bedroom.

Heurtebise and Eurydice come through the trap door.

EURYDICE: Orpheus is behaving atrociously.

HEURTEBISE: No . . . he's a genius and all geniuses have their whims

EURYDICE: It's not the fact that he listens to the car that worries me . . . it's what he's really looking for. . .

HEURTEBISE: His attitude toward that woman won't change . . . he's interested only in the sentences.

EURYDICE: I know I'm being silly, but I'm very sensitive about these things. It's the first time that Orpheus has ever treated me like a dog.

HEURTEBISE: You mustn't exaggerate. It's just a little family row.

EURYDICE: It always starts with just a little family row.

HEURTEBISE: You must lie down and rest.

The phone rings.

EURYDICE: Would you answer it for me? (*She closes her eyes.*)

The living room.

Heurtebise answers the phone.

HEURTEBISE: Yes ... this is Orpheus' home. No. It isn't Orpheus.
Yes ... yes ... fine, Sir ... I'll give him the message.

Heurtebise disappears. The receiver replaces itself on the telephone.

In front of the garage.

Heurtebise reappears. Orpheus comes out of the garage and approaches him.

HEURTEBISE: The Chief of Police phoned. He's waiting for you in his office. Your wife is resting; she doesn't feel well.

ORPHEUS: Well, that's normal in her condition.

HEURTEBISE: Go and see her...

ORPHEUS: All right. Would you get the car out? You can drive me to the police station.

HEURTEBISE: Mine?

ORPHEUS: No, mine. No one must suspect that the other one is here.
The whole town would know.

Orpheus walks away. Heurtebise watches him and goes into the garage.

The garage.

The roar of motorcycles. Heurtebise rushes to the door and opens it. The motorcycles drive out at top speed.

The bedroom.

Eurydice is lying on her bed. Orpheus kisses her.

ORPHEUS: What's the matter? Don't you feel well?

EURYDICE: I feel fine.

ORPHEUS: Do you want me to get you a nurse?

EURYDICE: A nurse?

ORPHEUS: I can't leave you here alone.

EURYDICE (*smiling*): I won't be alone.

ORPHEUS: Don't be surprised at my bad mood. I've been resting on my laurels ... it's essential that I wake up.

EURYDICE: Come back quickly.

ORPHEUS: Do you forgive me? My nerves are bad.

He goes down through the trap door.

In front of the garage.

Heurtebise drives out Orpheus' car and parks it at the side of the road. He gets out to close the garage door. Orpheus walks through the garden toward the car. Just as he turns around to look for Heurtebise, the garage door slams. Orpheus leaps back.

HEURTEBISE: What's the matter? Did I startle you?

ORPHEUS: My nerves are really on edge. I don't think I could drive myself.

HEURTEBISE: Aren't you afraid that they'll recognize me if I take you?

ORPHEUS (*getting into the car*): You can drop me there and wait some distance from the area so you won't be recognized.

The car drives off.

A road.

The car drives up and stops at the foot of some steps leading to a row of houses and a gas lamp.

ORPHEUS (*getting out of the car*): I'll go to the police station and come back right away.

HEURTEBISE (*laughing*): One can never be certain of coming right back from the police station.

ORPHEUS: You're very encouraging!

He starts up the steps.

At the top of the stairs. Music.

Orpheus walks up to the middle of Bolivar Square. A little girl is jumping rope. Orpheus stops and looks toward the road, past the fort-like buildings surrounding the square. The Princess is walking along the road. She vanishes through a doorway. Orpheus rushes along the road after her. He comes out among the arcades of the Place des Vosges. There is no one there. As he comes out from under one of the arches, he sees the Princess walking through another arch further on. She looks at her watch and continues walking through the arches. He runs after her, but all the archways are empty. When he reaches the end of the arcade he turns the corner and finds himself in the covered market at Boulogne. Some hikers stop a truck that almost runs over Orpheus.

ORPHEUS (*to the hikers*): You haven't seen a dark-haired young woman go by, have you?

One of the hikers answers in Swedish. The truck drives off. As Orpheus looks around, the Princess appears. She walks through the empty stalls. Orpheus rushes after her. He bumps into a cyclist who is pushing his bicycle and carrying a ladder on his back.

THE CYCLIST: Well, Mr. Orpheus, having some trouble, are you?

Orpheus shoves past him and runs down to the end of the row of



stalls. A couple is leaning against a fence kissing.

ORPHEUS: Excuse me . . .

They are too deeply engrossed in each other to take any notice of him. He crosses the market place. A fat woman is piling up some crates.

ORPHEUS: You didn't see a young woman go by, did you?

THE FAT WOMAN: Well now, Mr. Orpheus, chasing girls are you?

ORPHEUS: A very slim, elegant young woman who was walking very quickly

THE FAT WOMAN: It was me.

She bursts out laughing. Orpheus continues on his way. He comes to the entrance gates of the market.

A YOUNG GIRL (*rushing up to him*): Mr. Orpheus, can I have your autograph please?

ORPHEUS: I have nothing to write with.

THE YOUNG GIRL: Monica! Give me your pen.

A crowd of young girls surrounds Orpheus and grabs at his clothes. He struggles. On the other side of the road the Princess gets into a car and starts the engine.

ORPHEUS: Let me go! Let me go!

THE GIRLS: Give us your autograph . . . Sign my exercise book . . . Sign my work card . . . Be a sport . . .

ORPHEUS (*shouting*): Let me go!

THE GIRLS: He's not so good-looking close-up . . . That's not him! . . . Yes it is, it is! . . . It's him! . . . It's him! . . . Sign! . . . Sign! . . .

The car drives off. Orpheus is struggling with the group of girls.

THE GIRLS: Sign! . . . Sign here! . . . Here!

Orpheus breaks away from the girls and rushes after the car.

ONE OF THE GIRLS (*shouting*): You fool!

ANOTHER YOUNG GIRL (*coming out of the café opposite waving a newspaper*): Here! Here . . . come quickly! He's in trouble! Read this.

The girls bury their heads in the paper.

In the police station.

The Chief of Police is holding a newspaper. He puts it down. Sitting in front of his desk are the middle-aged man from the Café des Poètes, the reporter, two writers, Aglaonice, and one of her young women.

CHIEF OF POLICE: A most unfortunate article . . . (*uproar*) You must all speak in turn, otherwise we'll never get anything settled. You were saying, my dear Sir, that this sentence is a poem. That's your affair. I am completely open-minded about it. You may speak.

THE MAN: Orpheus sent me these texts yesterday morning. I found them quite amazing. I showed them to some friends . . .

FIRST WRITER: And I noticed that one of the texts, which was rather astonishing I must admit, reminded me of something.

CHIEF OF POLICE (*looking at his papers*): It was, if I'm not mistaken, the text: "The bird sings with its fingers." I quote this without committing myself.

FIRST WRITER: The boy was a bit drunk the day of the accident.

CHIEF OF POLICE: You are referring to the victim, aren't you?

FIRST WRITER: Yes, Jacques Cegestius. He was supposed to give us a poem. I picked up the papers from the floor of the Café des Poètes the day of the fight. He wrote the sentence that you're looking at.

THE MAN: Orpheus didn't know Cegestius. He was sitting at my table. He saw him for the first time. The young man disappeared under tragic circumstances. And his sentence comes back to us through Orpheus, who was in the car and who maintains that he doesn't know what happened to Cegestius.

CHIEF OF POLICE (*to Aglaonice*): Madam, you run a woman's club, "The Bacchantes," don't you? I believe you can drink there till the early hours of the morning.

AGLAONICE: Yes, Sir, that's right, we serve champagne.

CHIEF OF POLICE: What do you have to say?

AGLAONICE: Orpheus married one of my waitresses. We were very fond of her. When she's upset she turns to us. She admitted that she was very unhappy.

CHIEF OF POLICE: Ladies and gentlemen, I don't for a moment doubt your good faith, nor your desire to come to the aid of justice. But there really isn't enough evidence to accuse one of our national heroes, Orpheus! Don't forget that at this moment the municipal brass band is named after him!

FIRST WRITER (*standing up*): We don't give a damn about national heroes, we will dispense our own justice.

He goes toward the door. The Chief of Police walks around the desk and follows him.

CHIEF OF POLICE: I've asked Orpheus to come and see me. He'll be here any minute now. I'm sure he'll have an explanation. . .

THE MAN: If the law refuses to intervene we will intervene ourselves. (*He nods his head.*) Sir!

He leaves, followed by the writers and Aglaonice.

CHIEF OF POLICE (*running after them*): Gentlemen! Gentlemen! Ladies!

The door slams shut.

The steps leading to Bolivar Square.

Orpheus goes to the car. Heurtebise is reading a newspaper. Orpheus gets into the car. Heurtebise gives him the paper.

HEURTEBISE: Have you read the article?

ORPHEUS: No, and I'm not going to.

He throws the newspaper away.

HEURTEBISE: You are quite right, it's disgraceful.

ORPHEUS (*while Heurtebise starts the engine*): Don't mention it to my wife, whatever you do.

HEURTEBISE: Did you meet a lot of people?

ORPHEUS: No, in fact the streets seemed to be particularly empty. I met some girls who wanted my autograph. And you?

HEURTEBISE: No one. Oh yes! My employer. She drove past in a little convertible. She slowed down, asked me if the Rolls was at your house, and told me to wait for her there.

ORPHEUS: You should have run after her and told her to stop!

HEURTEBISE: It is not the role of a chauffeur to give orders. Instead, the role of a chauffeur consists of accepting them.

ORPHEUS: Did she give you any?

HEURTEBISE: No, she told me to wait until I saw her at your house. What did the Chief of Police have to say to you?

ORPHEUS: I didn't go to the police station.

The car drives away.

Orpheus' bedroom. Night

The Death of Orpheus stands at the foot of the bed, with eyes painted on her eyelids.

THE AUTHOR'S VOICE: And every night, the Death of Orpheus returned to the room.

Orpheus' living room.

HEURTEBISE: No, Eurydice, no. . .

EURYDICE: I'm going, Heurtebise. I'm going to see Aglaonice. I must. She alone can advise me.

HEURTEBISE: Orpheus would hate you to do that.

EURYDICE: Orpheus couldn't care less about anything that isn't connected with that woman's car.

HEURTEBISE: And even if I agreed to drive you into town, Orpheus is in the garage; he'd see us leave.

EURYDICE: I'll go by bicycle. I'm used to it.

HEURTEBISE: That's ridiculous in your condition.

EURYDICE'S VOICE: I'm going!

HEURTEBISE: Eurydice! I know I have no right to forbid you . . . but if I implored you?

EURYDICE (*walking toward the door*): I'd go anyway. You won't stop me. It's driving me crazy.

She leaves.

HEURTEBISE (*in the doorway*): Aglaonice won't tell you anything, and you'll be exhausted. . .

He goes back inside. Motorcycles roar in the distance. Heurtebise goes to the window and looks outside with horror. The riderless motorcycles break to a halt with screeching tires in front of Orpheus' house. They disappear.

Garage.

Orpheus sits in the car, leaning close to the radio. Short-wave signal.

Orpheus' bedroom.

Heurtebise comes through the trap door carrying Eurydice's body

and puts her down on the bed. The light changes. The Princess comes through the mirror, pushing the two sides like a door. The glow around her lights up the room.

PRINCESS: Come on, come on, Cegestius. You must get used to following me.

Cegestius comes through the mirror, holding a metal suitcase.

PRINCESS: Will you please close the doors.

CEGESTIUS: Which doors?

PRINCESS: The mirror. You never understand what you're told.

Cegestius closes the two sides of the mirror.

Cegestius and the Princess walk over to the bed where Heurtebise is standing guard.

PRINCESS: Hello!

HEURTEBISE: Hello.

PRINCESS: Is everything all right?

HEURTEBISE: Just about.

PRINCESS: What do you mean by that?

HEURTEBISE: Nothing, Madam.

PRINCESS: Good. I have a strong distaste for rebels.

HEURTEBISE: Yes, Madam.

PRINCESS: Well now, Cegestius. What are you making such a face for? Did you expect me to work with a shroud and scythe? My dear boy, if I appeared to the living as they imagine me to be, they would recognize me and it wouldn't make our task any easier. (*Cegestius walks over to the table.*) Heurtebise will help you. You'll never manage alone. I see I'll have to draw the curtains myself, since neither of you has thought of doing so.

(*She closes the curtains.*) Take everything off the table except the transmitter. (*darkness*) Cegestius, send out the messages. Come on, come on, get with it. You're obviously unaccustomed to not drinking. We've got no time to waste. (*The Princess projects light.*)

Cegestius stands in front of the table, turning the transmitter knobs. The Princess comes over.

CEGESTIUS (*Voice of the Radio*): The black crepe of little widows is a real sunshine meal. Twice. The black crepe of little widows is a real sunshine meal. Twice. I repeat. The black crepe of little widows. . .

PRINCESS (*ironically, walking toward Cegestius*): You really do find the most delightful sentences! Where are my gloves?

HEURTEBISE: They're not in the bag.

The sentences continue, followed by numbers: "5-5-7-2-3-7-3-5-5-7-12. I repeat . . ." etc., and the sound of Morse code.

PRINCESS (*to Cegestius*): Did you forget them? That would really be the limit!

CEGESTIUS: I'm sorry, Madam. I hope that you will forgive me.

PRINCESS: I knew it. Give me yours. (*Cegestius hands her his rubber gloves.*) Quick . . . quick . . . to your places. You know I insist on total discipline as though we were on board ship.

She walks around the bed as she puts on the gloves. Eurydice is lying there, motionless, lit up by the glow of the transmitter.

HEURTEBISE: What are your orders?

PRINCESS (*taking off her gloves*): I beg your pardon?

HEURTEBISE: I want to know if you have any orders.

PRINCESS: When I carry out orders I have been given I expect others

to carry out mine.

HEURTEBISE: That's why I'm asking you if you were given any orders.

PRINCESS: How dare you!

HEURTEBISE: If you had specific orders your killers would have completed the job.

PRINCESS: Would you happen to be in love with that silly girl?

HEURTEBISE: And if I were?

PRINCESS: You are not free to love, neither in this world nor in the other.

HEURTEBISE: Nor are you.

PRINCESS (*coming up angrily to Heurtebise*): What?

HEURTEBISE: There can be no exception to the rules.

PRINCESS: I command you to be quiet!

HEURTEBISE: You're in love with Orpheus and you don't know what to do about it.

PRINCESS: Shut up!

Her dress turns white

HEURTEBISE (*making an angry gesture*): I. . .

He disappears

The Princess walks up to Cegestius, who is standing next to the table. Her dress turns black again.

PRINCESS: Send out the messages! Send out the messages! Just say anything.

CEGESTIUS (*turning round*): Madam . . . will I be able to disappear and reappear like Heurtebise?

PRINCESS: You are too clumsy! The messages!

CEGESTIUS (*Voice of the Radio*): Jupiter gives wisdom to those whom he wishes to lose. I repeat. Jupiter. . .

The garage.

Orpheus' face is near the radio; his hand on the knob.

THE RADIO: Jupiter gives wisdom to those whom he wishes to lose. Three times. Jupiter gives wisdom to those whom he wishes to lose. Listen carefully. (*Morse code. The sentences continue during the following conversation.*) The night sky is a hedgerow in May. . .

Heurtebise is standing by the door of the car.

HEURTEBISE: Orpheus! Orpheus!

ORPHEUS: Won't I ever be left in peace!

Orpheus turns toward Heurtebise, who is still standing by the car door.

HEURTEBISE: Your wife is in great danger. Follow me.

RADIO: The night sky is a hedgerow in May. I repeat. The night sky. . .

ORPHEUS (*grabbing his papers and taking notes*): Be quiet!

HEURTEBISE: I'm telling you that your wife is in great danger.

ORPHEUS: You're preventing me from listening. . .

HEURTEBISE: Do you hear me?

ORPHEUS: Wait till I've written this down.

He writes "hedgerow in May."

HEURTEBISE (*shouting*): Your wife is dying!

ORPHEUS: You just don't know her. She's play-acting to make me come home.

Heurtebise leaves.

Orpheus' bedroom.

The Princess is standing at the head of Eurydice's bed. She is removing a metal band from Eurydice's neck.

(The action in the following scene is depicted through reversed film.)

PRINCESS: Stand up.

Eurydice gets off the bed and stands in front of the Princess.

PRINCESS: You know who I am, don't you?

EURYDICE (*speaking in a strange, distant voice*): Yes.

PRINCESS: Tell me.

The trap door opens. Heurtebise pushes it back and stands on the steps of the ladder.

EURYDICE'S VOICE: My death.

PRINCESS' VOICE: From now on you belong to the other world.

EURYDICE: From now on I belong to the other world.

PRINCESS: You will obey my commands.

EURYDICE: I will obey.

PRINCESS: That's fine. (*to Heurtebise*) Ah, there you are! Orpheus must have refused to follow you.

HEURTEBISE: I'll talk about that . . . elsewhere.

PRINCESS: And I'll talk too. I have quite a lot to say.

She walks past the motionless Eurydice, toward Cegestus. She takes off her gloves and throws them on Orpheus' bed. She reaches

Cegestius as he fastens the suitcase.

PRINCESS: Don't forget my equipment, will you! (*Cegestius reopens the suitcase.*) Good. (*She turns toward Heurtebise.*) I suppose, Heurtebise, that you wish to remain on earth. You look just like a gravedigger standing in that trap door. You're quite ridiculous.

HEURTEBISE: I'm not the only one.

PRINCESS: I shan't forget your insults. Cegestius!

Cegestius walks around the bed and is astonished to see two Eurydices: one on the bed, one walking toward the Princess.

PRINCESS: Will you ever learn not to look back. Some people have been turned into pillars of salt playing that game.

She breaks the mirror with her fist. It shatters. Her dress turns white. The group goes through the broken mirror, which becomes solid again.

Heurtebise goes up to the mirror, which reflects his image. He turns around. The mirror shows him walking toward Eurydice, who is stretched out on the bed. He puts his hand on her forehead.

Orpheus comes out of the garage and closes the door behind him almost regretfully.

HEURTEBISE (*from the window*): Orpheus! I warned you. You're too late . . .

ORPHEUS: Too late?

HEURTEBISE: Come up.

ORPHEUS: What are you doing in my room?

HEURTEBISE: Come in . . . through the window, which is so useful when you want to get out.

Orpheus climbs up the ladder. He goes into the room through the window and closes it behind him.

ORPHEUS: I asked you what you were doing in my room.

HEURTEBISE: Your wife . . .

ORPHEUS: What about my wife?

HEURTEBISE: Your wife is dead.

ORPHEUS: You're joking.

HEURTEBISE: It would be a very strange joke. You wouldn't listen to me.

ORPHEUS (*shouting*): Eurydice! Eurydice!

HEURTEBISE: Listen . . . listen to me, Orpheus.

Orpheus throws himself onto his knees in front of the bed.

ORPHEUS: Eurydice!

HEURTEBISE: It's too late to pity her.

ORPHEUS (*turning around toward Heurtebise with an anguished expression*): But how? How? Why?

HEURTEBISE: She fell down, but I think there's more to it than that . . .

ORPHEUS: What? What? (*He turns back to Eurydice.*) Eurydice! Eurydice! It's not possible! Look at me! Speak to me!

HEURTEBISE: There's still a way to redeem your folly.

ORPHEUS (*turning his head from side to side on the bed*): I'm still dreaming! It's the same nightmare! I know I'll wake up! Wake me up!

HEURTEBISE (*taking him by the shoulders*): Listen . . . listen to me . . . Will you listen to me? . . . Orpheus!

ORPHEUS (*raising his head*): It's hopeless.

HEURTEBISE: You've got one chance.

ORPHEUS (*bitterly*): What's that?

HEURTEBISE (*pulling him up onto his feet*): Orpheus! (*shaking him*)
Orpheus! You have met Death.

ORPHEUS: I talked about it. I dreamed about it. I sang about it. I thought I knew it, but I didn't.

HEURTEBISE: You do . . . you know it personally.

ORPHEUS: Personally?

HEURTEBISE: You've been to her home.

ORPHEUS: To her home?

HEURTEBISE: In her very room . . .

ORPHEUS (*shouting*): The Princess! (*Heurtebise nods.*) My God!
(*He tears himself away from Heurtebise and rushes over to the mirror.*) The mirror . . .

HEURTEBISE (*coming up to Orpheus*): I will tell you the greatest secret . . . Mirrors are the doors through which Death comes and goes. Besides, look at yourself in the mirror throughout your life and you will see Death at work like bees in a glass hive.

Orpheus touches the mirror and turns toward Heurtebise.

ORPHEUS: How do you know all these amazing things?

HEURTEBISE: Don't be naive. One doesn't work for my employer without finding out certain . . . amazing things.

ORPHEUS: Heurtebise! There's nothing we can do!

HEURTEBISE: We can join her.

ORPHEUS: But no man can . . . unless he kills himself.

HEURTEBISE: A poet is more than a man.

ORPHEUS: But my wife is there . . . dead . . . on her deathbed!

Orpheus turns around and runs to the head of the bed.

HEURTEBISE: That's only one of her forms, just as the Princess is a form of death. All that is false. Your wife is living in another world and I'm inviting you to follow me there.

ORPHEUS: I'll follow her all the way to Hades.

HEURTEBISE: We're not asking that much of you.

ORPHEUS: Heurtebise, I want to join Eurydice.

HEURTEBISE: You don't have to beg me. I'm offering it to you.
(*putting his hands on Orpheus' shoulders*) Orpheus, look me in the eyes. Is it Eurydice you want to join, or Death?

ORPHEUS: But . . .

HEURTEBISE: I am asking you a very precise question; is it Eurydice you want to see, or Death?

ORPHEUS (*looking away*): Both of them . . .

HEURTEBISE: . . . and if you could, you'd cheat on one with the other . . .

ORPHEUS (*rushing toward the mirror*): Let's hurry.

HEURTEBISE: I congratulate myself on no longer being alive.

The Princess' gloves are on Orpheus' bed.

HEURTEBISE (*removing the gloves*): Someone left their gloves behind.

ORPHEUS: Gloves?

HEURTEBISE: Put them on . . . come on, come on . . . Put them on.

He throws the gloves at Orpheus. Orpheus catches them, hesitates



for a moment, and puts them on.

(The action in the following scene is shown through reversed film.)

HEURTEBISE (standing by the mirror): With those gloves you'll go through the mirror as though it were water!

ORPHEUS. Prove it to me.

HEURTEBISE: Try it. I'll come with you. Look at the time.

The clock shows just a second before six o'clock. Orpheus prepares to go through the mirror. His hands are at his side.

HEURTEBISE: Your hands first! *(Orpheus walks forward, his gloved hands extended toward the mirror. His hands touch the*



reflected hands in the mirror.) Are you afraid?

ORPHEUS: No, but this mirror is just a mirror, and I see an unhappy man in it.

HEURTEBISE: It's not a question of understanding; it's a question of believing.

Orpheus walks through the mirror with his hands in front of him. The mirror shows the beginning of the Zone. Then the mirror reflects the room once more.

The garden gate.

The postman rings the bell at the garden gate. He rings again, looks around, and slips a letter through the slit in the mailbox. The letter slides through.

The Zone. Music.

A road surrounded by demolished buildings. Heurtebise is engulfed by a strong, silent wind.

ORPHEUS (following Heurtebise): Where are we?

HEURTEBISE (walking stiffly): Life takes a long time to die. This is the Zone. It consists of the memories of men and the ruins of their habits.

ORPHEUS: And do all the mirrors in the world lead to the Zone?

HEURTEBISE: I suppose so, but I don't want to put on airs. I really don't know much more than you.

Orpheus stops and looks around. Heurtebise walks on. However, it appears that the Zone is moving rather than Heurtebise.

HEURTEBISE (turning around toward Orpheus without stopping): Come on . . . come on.

ORPHEUS (catching up with him): I can hardly keep up with you. You look as though you're not moving.

HEURTEBISE: That's another story.

A glassmaker crosses the road behind Orpheus.

THE GLASSMAKER: Glass! New glass!

ORPHEUS: Who are all these people wandering around? Are they alive?

HEURTEBISE: They think they are. There is nothing as stubborn as professional enthusiasm.

ORPHEUS: Are we going far?

HEURTEBISE: Those words don't mean anything here.

ORPHEUS: There's no wind. Why do you look as though you're walking against the wind?

HEURTEBISE: Why? . . . always why! Don't ask me any more questions, just walk! Do I have to take you by the hand?

Heurtebise takes Orpheus by the hand and drags him along. They cross a large open space and go down some steps.



The chalet.

Room with the mirror. Night.

Three judges sit at the table. The Court Clerk is at the end of the table. Cegestius stands in front of the table, dressed as he was in the Café des Poètes. One of the motorcyclists guards the door leading into the corridor. The shutters are closed. The room is harshly lit. There are several documents on the table.

FIRST JUDGE: Were you ordered to send out messages?

CEGESTIUS: Yes.

FIRST JUDGE: Were you ordered to send out specific messages? Did you submit the texts beforehand? Answer carefully.

CEGESTIUS: No, I invented the sentences and numbers. I even transmitted sentences that I had written previously.

SECOND JUDGE: Did you notice anything particular about Heurtebise's attitude?

CEGESTIUS: No. I admired him for being able to disappear and reappear at will. I wanted to do that, but the Princess said I'd never be able to; I was too clumsy.

FIRST JUDGE: All right . . . all right.

He whispers something to the second judge.

SECOND JUDGE: Take this young man away and bring in the next person.

The first motorcyclist comes up to Cegestius, puts his hand on his shoulder, and leads him away. They go off toward the stairs. The Princess appears in the door opposite, followed by the second motorcyclist. She walks toward the table. The motorcyclist closes the door and takes his companion's place. The Princess stops in front of the table.

PRINCESS: May I sit down?

FIRST JUDGE: You may.

PRINCESS (*sitting down*): May I smoke?

FIRST JUDGE: If you wish.

The Princess takes out a cigarette and lights it. She puts her cigarette case and lighter down on the table.

FIRST JUDGE'S VOICE: You are accused of having taken away a woman without authority, of having devoted yourself to certain activities, of having shown initiative when you had only received orders . . .

SECOND JUDGE: Or at least permission . . .

FIRST JUDGE: . . . to take a young man into your service. What do you have to say?

PRINCESS: Nothing. It was the result of a chain of circumstances.

SECOND JUDGE: It is not a matter of circumstances, it is a matter of orders. Did you receive orders?

PRINCESS: The other world is ruled by laws that are different from ours. I may have gone beyond the limits of my work without realizing it.

The judges confer in whispers.

FIRST JUDGE: Before continuing our inquiries, we shall await the appearance of another defendant and a witness.

SECOND MOTORCYCLIST: They're coming.

He touches the mirror. Orpheus jumps through it into the room, followed by Heurtebise. Orpheus starts back.

HEURTEBISE: We are just like rats . . .

PRINCESS: Hello! Do not be mistaken, my dear Sir, these are my judges. Just keep calm.

Orpheus looks at the Princess and goes up to the table. Heurtebise

stands at his side.

FIRST JUDGE: Come closer.

Heurtebise moves closer.

PRINCESS: Well, Heurtebise! *(She puffs her cigarette and exhales.)*
Now's the time to say what you have to.

HEURTEBISE: I have nothing to say.

SECOND JUDGE *(looking at his papers)*: You are accused of having taken part in an intrigue in which this woman, without any superior order whatsoever, involved herself. Do you have a valid excuse?

HEURTEBISE: I was her assistant. I followed her.

FIRST JUDGE: You did, however, stay behind in the other world and were involved in human affairs, which you have no right to do.

The Princess stares at Heurtebise.

HEURTEBISE: Perhaps . . .

FIRST JUDGE: There is no "perhaps" here.

SECOND JUDGE: Please answer.

Orpheus moves back, and looks at the Princess.

HEURTEBISE: I didn't think I was disobeying . . .

FIRST JUDGE: Come closer.

Orpheus continues to look at the Princess.

FIRST JUDGE: You . . . you! . . .

ORPHEUS: Me?

FIRST JUDGE: Yes, you. Your name?

ORPHEUS: Orpheus.

FIRST JUDGE: Profession?

ORPHEUS: Poet.

The Court Clerk stops writing and looks up.

CLERK: His file says "writer."

ORPHEUS: It's almost the same thing.

SECOND JUDGE: There is no "almost" here. What do you mean by "poet"?

ORPHEUS: One who writes without being a writer.

The judges confer in low voices.

FIRST JUDGE *(facing the Princess)*: Do you recognize this man?

PRINCESS: Yes.

FIRST JUDGE: Do you admit to having taken away his wife?

PRINCESS: Yes.

FIRST JUDGE: . . . So that you could get rid of her and try to have this man all to yourself?

ORPHEUS: Gentlemen!

CLERK: Silence!

PRINCESS *(to Orpheus)*: Please be quiet, Sir. Just keep calm.

FIRST JUDGE: Do you love this man?

The Princess doesn't answer. She exhales. Orpheus starts.

FIRST JUDGE: Do you love this man?

PRINCESS: Yes.

FIRST JUDGE: Is it true that you went to his room and watched him sleep?

Silence.

PRINCESS: . . . Yes.

The motorcyclist pushes him along. Heurtbise follows them. The first judge stops him.

FIRST JUDGE: Not you. You must stay.

The Princess, Orpheus, and the second motorcyclist go through the door. The first motorcyclist comes in and guards the door. Eurydice enters, as though sleepwalking. She stops in the doorway.

FIRST JUDGE: Come . . . come closer.

Eurydice approaches him and stops where the Princess had been standing.

FIRST JUDGE: Do you recognize this man?

EURYDICE (*turning her head toward Heurtbise*): Yes . . . that's Heurtbise.

FIRST JUDGE: Did he try to talk to you during your husband's absence? Did he say anything dubious?

EURYDICE (*opening her eyes wide*): Dubious? . . . Of course not . . . that's Heurtbise.

The judges confer.

FIRST JUDGE: Heurtbise, do you love this woman?

Silence. Eurydice stares at Heurtbise.

FIRST JUDGE: I repeat, Heurtbise, do you love this woman?

HEURTBISE: Yes.

FIRST JUDGE: That is all we wish to know. Sign.

He gives Heurtbise a paper. Heurtbise signs.

The chalet. The room with the radio.

Orpheus and the Princess are in each other's arms in front of the sofa.

Orpheus is stunned.

SECOND JUDGE: Sign this please.

He leans over toward the Court Clerk, who hands him a document. The judge puts it on the table in front of the Princess. She stands up and walks over to Orpheus.

PRINCESS (*to Orpheus*): Do you have a pen? (*Silence. She laughs.*) I forgot that you weren't a writer.

She is given a pen. She signs the paper.

FIRST JUDGE (*rising*): Take these two people to the other room.

The motorcyclist leads the Princess away. Orpheus remains stunned.

near the radio. They separate. They look into each other's eyes and talk in a low voice. Music.

ORPHEUS (*thrilled*): And you said yes . . .

PRINCESS: One can't lie here.

ORPHEUS: My darling . . .

PRINCESS: I loved you long before we first met.

ORPHEUS: I must have seemed so stupid . . .

PRINCESS: What is there to say? I have no right to be in love . . . yet I'm in love.

She kisses him. They separate. The Princess falls back onto the sofa. Orpheus gets down on his knees.

ORPHEUS: But you are all-powerful.

PRINCESS: You may think so. But here, there are countless faces of death, both young people and old, who receive orders . . .

ORPHEUS: And if you were to disobey? They can't kill you . . . It is you who kills . . .

PRINCESS: What they can do is far worse.

ORPHEUS: Where do these orders come from?

PRINCESS: They are transmitted by so many messengers that it's like the tom-tom of your African tribes, the echo of your mountains, the wind in the leaves of your forests.

ORPHEUS: I will find the one that gives these orders.

PRINCESS: My poor darling . . . he is nowhere. Some believe that his thoughts are with us, some that we are his thoughts. Others believe that he sleeps and that we are a dream, a bad dream.

ORPHEUS: I'll take you away from here. We are free.

PRINCESS: Free?

She laughs strangely and leans back against the cushions

ORPHEUS (*moving down next to her*): I don't want to leave you.

PRINCESS: I must leave you, but I swear I'll find a way for us to be reunited.

ORPHEUS: Say "forever."

PRINCESS: Forever.

ORPHEUS: Swear to it.

PRINCESS: I swear.

ORPHEUS: But now . . . now?

PRINCESS (*sitting up*): Now? Their police are here.

ORPHEUS: If by some miracle . . .

PRINCESS: Miracles only happen in your world . . .

ORPHEUS: All worlds are moved by love.

PRINCESS: No one is moved in our world. Things proceed from tribunal to tribunal.

The music stops. Sound of the door opening. They separate and look around. One of the motorcyclists is standing in the doorway.

SECOND MOTORCYCLIST: Come with me.

The Princess and Orpheus stand up.

PRINCESS: Go . . . I love you; don't be afraid.

ORPHEUS: I don't want to lose you.

PRINCESS: If you resist, you'll lose us both.

SECOND MOTORCYCLIST: Follow me.

They walk toward the door and leave the room. The motorcyclist follows.

The Tribunal.

Heurtebise and Cegestius are sitting next to each other against the wall, facing the door. They stand up.

FIRST JUDGE (*rising*): After due consideration, we have reached the following verdict: The court of inquiry has decided to grant provisional freedom to the Death of Orpheus and her assistants. (*Cegestius, Heurtebise, the Princess, and Orpheus stand silently.*) Orpheus is free, on condition that he never reveals what he has seen. Eurydice is free to live in the other world, on condition that Orpheus never looks at her again. Just one look at her and he will lose her forever.

ORPHEUS: But . . .

COURT CLERK: Silence!

Eurydice is brought in by the first motorcyclist.

FIRST JUDGE: Here is your wife.

Orpheus turns his head but is stopped by a shout from Heurtebise.

HEURTEBISE: Be careful! (*Orpheus hides his face with his hand.*) Don't look at her . . .

The judge gathers up his papers. He leans toward Orpheus.

FIRST JUDGE: Not a very good beginning!

HEURTEBISE (*leaning forward on the table toward the Judge*): May I be allowed to accompany Orpheus to his home? I'm afraid that the condition you have imposed will be difficult for him to observe without assistance from one of us.

The judges stand up.

FIRST JUDGE: You may accompany the husband . . . and wife. (*Bowing ironically to Heurtebise.*) With our kind permission, of course.

HEURTEBISE (*walking up to Orpheus*): Do you have the gloves?

ORPHEUS: No. Ah, yes! In my pocket.

HEURTEBISE: Put them on. Close your eyes. I'll guide you. It will be easier this way at first.

ORPHEUS: But her . . . May I look at her?

HEURTEBISE (*in a low voice*): On no account whatsoever. Don't turn around. Don't open your eyes on any account. Come.

He takes Orpheus' hand and leads him away.

HEURTEBISE (*to Eurydice*): Hold him by the shoulders, it's safer. Come.

Eurydice, moving like a sleepwalker, comes up behind Orpheus and puts her hands on his shoulders. Orpheus does not move. Heurtebise walks around in front of him. He takes hold of Orpheus' and pulls him along. Eurydice follows. The Princess stands to the right of the empty table where the judges were sitting, with her hand on Cegestius' shoulder. Cegestius looks at her and then stares at the mirror.

CEGESTIUS: Where are the judges? (*vague gesture from the Princess*) The bastards!

PRINCESS: Cegestius . . . if we were in our old world, I'd say to you "let's have a drink."

Orpheus' garden. The mailbox.

The letter slides through the slit and falls into the box behind the glass pane. The postman rings the bell, looks toward the house, and leaves.

The living room.

The clock chimes six o'clock. Orpheus comes down the ladder from the bedroom followed by Eurydice and Heurtebise.

ORPHEUS: What! Six o'clock? We went through the mirror at six o'clock.

HEURTEBISE: You promised you wouldn't talk about such matters.

EURYDICE (*herself again; looking toward the window*): There's a letter.

ORPHEUS: I'll go.

HEURTEBISE: Shout from the garden "I'm ready to come in" and Eurydice will hide.

ORPHEUS (*tightlipped*): How convenient!

EURYDICE: What a nightmare!

The garden. The door and the mailbox.

Orpheus takes the envelope from the box, opens it, and reads the letter.

The living room.

Eurydice walks over to the mirror on the wall above the sofa and looks at herself. Heurtebise is behind her.

HEURTEBISE: Watch out!

EURYDICE: Why shouldn't I look at myself?

HEURTEBISE: If Orpheus comes in, he might see you in the mirror.

EURYDICE: Thank goodness you came with us!

She moves away from the mirror.

HEURTEBISE: Eurydice, do you forgive me for what I said at the Tribunal?

EURYDICE: What was it you said?

ORPHEUS' VOICE (*from the garden*): Heurtebise!
Silence.

HEURTEBISE: Nothing, I'm sorry. (*He walks over to the door.*)
When Orpheus comes in, hide behind the table.

The garden door.

Heurtebise goes down the steps. Orpheus is standing below.

ORPHEUS (*showing him the letter*): An anonymous letter! Written backward.

Orpheus comes up the steps.

HEURTEBISE (*turning and shouting*): Watch out Eurydice, watch out! He's coming in!

The living room.

Orpheus quickly enters with the letter in his hand. He walks over to the table and then toward the mirror.

HEURTEBISE (*rushing forward*): Be careful Orpheus! Eurydice, are you under the table?

EURYDICE'S VOICE: Yes.

Heurtebise goes to the table. Orpheus passes behind it and stands in front of the mirror. Eurydice lifts up the carpet in front of her and raises her head.

EURYDICE: Where is he?

ORPHEUS: Where are you?



HEURTEBISE: She's there . . . there, behind the table.

ORPHEUS: Ah! Everything's all right then.

He holds the letter up to the mirror. The reflection shows: "You are a thief and a murderer. Be prepared to meet your death."

HEURTEBISE: Beware of mirrors.

Both Orpheus and Heurtebise are reflected in the mirror.

ORPHEUS: You don't have to remind me.

HEURTEBISE: I was talking of your wife's reflection.

EURYDICE'S VOICE: Heurtebise has forbidden me to look at myself in the mirror.

As she speaks, Orpheus puts his finger to his lips and shows Heurtebise the letter. Heurtebise takes the letter, crumples it, and puts it in his pocket.

HEURTEBISE (*speaking in a low voice*): You must get rid of this letter, you fool.

Eurydice is crouching under the table, half hidden by the carpet. Orpheus and Heurtebise are standing behind the table.

EURYDICE: May I come out?

ORPHEUS and HEURTEBISE: No!

HEURTEBISE: Just a minute . . . (*to Orpheus*) Turn around . . . (*to Eurydice*) You may come out now.

Eurydice stands up.

ORPHEUS (*with his back turned to her*): This ridiculous situation demands the utmost care and attention. It will cause us a great deal of strain.

EURYDICE: It'll become a habit . . .

ORPHEUS: A strange habit, I must say!

EURYDICE: It's better than being blind or crippled . . .

ORPHEUS: In any case . . . we have no choice.

EURYDICE (*to Heurtebise*): It even has its advantages. Orpheus won't see me growing old and wrinkled.

ORPHEUS: Marvelous! You're really looking on the bright side of things.

HEURTEBISE: I don't see what else your wife could do.

ORPHEUS (*starting to turn around*): What else!

HEURTEBISE (*shouting*): Watch out!

Eurydice dives to the floor. Orpheus turns away with an obstinate and angry expression.

HEURTEBISE: You're living dangerously, my dear man.

ORPHEUS: I don't intend to go on living with my face glued to the wall, let me tell you.

EURYDICE: I'll get you a drink. Close your eyes. Heurtebise will help you sit down while I open the refrigerator.

She goes toward the kitchen. Heurtebise walks around the table and takes Orpheus by the hand. He sits him down, with his back to Eurydice.

ORPHEUS: I'll tell you what else my wife could do! She could try to understand exactly how difficult this is for me.

HEURTEBISE: Orpheus! And what about her? Don't you think she's suffering too?

ORPHEUS: You are quite wrong, my dear man. Women adore complications.

Orpheus is seated; Heurtebise stands by his side. Eurydice emerges from the kitchen, carrying a tray loaded with glasses, a bottle and ice.

EURYDICE (*as she walks*): Close your eyes.

ORPHEUS: Shall I tie a handkerchief around my head?

EURYDICE (*behind him*): No Orpheus, you'd only cheat. It's better to get into the habit from the beginning.

Orpheus closes his eyes and taps his fingers lightly on Heurtebise's arm as though to say "incredible." Eurydice walks by him and puts down the tray.

EURYDICE: It's not easy, I must admit, but I'm sure we'll manage.

ORPHEUS: Bring up a chair and come and sit down. I'll turn my back.

He turns around and picks up a magazine from the table, opening it to an article entitled "The House of the Poet." It features two large photographs of Orpheus and Eurydice. Orpheus quickly closes the magazine, lifts his head and cries out.

ORPHEUS: Oh!

HEURTEBISE: Your wife's photo isn't your wife.

Orpheus puts his head in his hands. Eurydice sits down behind him.

EURYDICE: I'm exhausted . . .

ORPHEUS: We must make certain decisions right now, and it's up to me to make them. We can't spend the rest of our lives playing hide and seek.

EURYDICE: Do you want me to go and live somewhere else?

ORPHEUS: Why must you always exaggerate?

HEURTEBISE: Come now, Orpheus.

ORPHEUS: Well we can't possibly sleep in the same room. I shall sleep here, on the sofa.

EURYDICE: Now you're the one who's seeing the worst side of things.

ORPHEUS (*moving toward her*): Will you let me speak!

HEURTEBISE: Be careful!

He takes hold of Orpheus' head and turns him around.

ORPHEUS: It's her fault. She'd make a dead man turn around.

EURYDICE: I should have remained dead.

ORPHEUS: Be quiet! My nerves are in a dreadful state. I'm capable of doing just about anything!

HEURTEBISE: Orpheus, you've made your wife cry!

ORPHEUS: Since my presence is so disturbing, I'll leave!

He gets up and walks toward the ladder.

HEURTEBISE: Orpheus! Orpheus! Where are you going?

Orpheus climbs up the ladder and opens the trap door.

ORPHEUS: To my room.

He disappears. The trap door closes behind him. Eurydice collapses onto the table, burying her head in her arms.

HEURTEBISE: Relax . . .

He puts his hand on her arm.

Music: Gluck.

EURYDICE (raising her head): He hates me.

HEURTEBISE: If he hated you, he wouldn't have brought you back from death. He'll be held up as a wonderful example . . .

EURYDICE: He didn't do it for me . . .

HEURTEBISE: Eurydice!

EURYDICE: You know it, Heurtebise. You know where he's gone. To her car.

Night. The bedroom.

Eurydice, wearing a nightdress, opens the trap door and goes down the ladder. Orpheus is in a deep sleep on the sofa. Next to him, the lamp is still switched on.

Music

THE AUTHOR'S VOICE: Eurydice felt she had lost Orpheus. She could not bear this situation. She wanted to free him, and there was only one way.

Eurydice goes up to the sofa. She leans over Orpheus. She puts out her hand, but does not dare touch him. Finally she shakes him gently.

EURYDICE (in a low voice): Orpheus! Orpheus!

Orpheus turns over toward the wall. Eurydice shakes him a little harder.

EURYDICE: Orpheus!

ORPHEUS (talking in his sleep): Do you love that man? I want to know if you love that man . . .

EURYDICE (shaking him): Orpheus . . .

ORPHEUS: What is it? Is it you?

He opens his eyes and turns around. At that moment the lights go out. The room is in total darkness.

EURYDICE: It's me, Eurydice . . . I know you often fall asleep with the light on, but as this power failure has lasted for at least an hour, I thought I'd take the opportunity to come down and get a book.

ORPHEUS: A book? To read in the dark?

EURYDICE: Well . . . that is to say . . .

The electricity returns. Eurydice is still leaning over the bed, Orpheus is facing the wall.

ORPHEUS: Oh! Just think how dangerous it is to be so careless. Go back up and close the trap door. You gave me a terrible scare.

EURYDICE: Do you forgive me?

ORPHEUS: Yes, of course I do. Now go upstairs and go back to sleep.

Eurydice climbs up to the bedroom.

THE AUTHOR'S VOICE: A brief power failure prevented her from achieving her aim. She had to go on living. The next day . . .

The garage. Day.

Orpheus is in the car listening to a message on the radio. Heurtebise enters and walks over to the car.

ORPHEUS: Do you understand these signals?

HEURTEBISE (*listening*): Those are quotations from the Stock Market.

ORPHEUS (*changing stations; sound of Morse code*): And this?

HEURTEBISE: Be careful, your wife is coming.

ORPHEUS: Again!

HEURTEBISE: Don't push her too far.

EURYDICE (*behind the door*): May I come in?

HEURTEBISE (*to Orpheus*): Close your eyes a minute. (*shouting*) Yes, come in!

Eurydice enters and walks over to the car.

HEURTEBISE: Your husband is listening to the Stock Market report. Get in the back of the car.

Heurtebise opens the back door. Eurydice gets in. Sound of the radio. Heurtebise gets in next to Eurydice. She is sitting directly behind Orpheus.

EURYDICE: Am I disturbing you?

ORPHEUS: I came here to get out of your way in the house.

EURYDICE: That sound is frightening.

She moves closer to Orpheus until her cheek touches his.

HEURTEBISE: Don't do anything careless, will you?

EURYDICE: Careless? Orpheus can't see me, yet I can touch his cheek. Isn't that marvelous?

Orpheus is fiddling with the radio knob. Suddenly it speaks.

THE RADIO: . . . are twenty-two. Three times. Two and two are twenty-two. Three times . . .

Orpheus looks up. His eyes fall on the rear-view mirror. He sees Eurydice. She vanishes.

HEURTEBISE (*shouting*): The mirror!

ORPHEUS (*shouting*): Eurydice!

Orpheus and Heurtebise get out of the car. Sound of drums.

HEURTEBISE: It was fatal.

ORPHEUS: It had to be! It had to be, Heurtebise! I was sick to death of compromises and settlements. One cannot compromise, Heurtebise. One must live fully, one must go to the end of things!

Sound of drums and chanting "Cegestius! Cegestius!" Orpheus rushes to the door.

HEURTEBISE (*trying to restrain him*): Orpheus! Orpheus!

The garden.

Orpheus runs out into the garden. Sound of people banging and knocking on the garden gate. Stones fall around Orpheus. The windows shatter.

ORPHEUS (*shouting at Heurtebise*): Stones! Stones! They can build

my statue with them.

HEURTEBISE (*rushing to the garden gate*): Don't stay out there!

The stones are still falling all around them. Orpheus flattens himself against the wall next to Heurtebise.

ORPHEUS: Here they are! I was expecting them, the bastards! The letter, Heurtebise! The anonymous letter!

The road.

Shouts of "Cegestius! Cegestius! Cegestius!" A crowd of young people are shouting and throwing stones.

The garden.

HEURTEBISE: I'll go and talk to them.

ORPHEUS: What does marble think when it is being sculpted into a masterpiece? It thinks, "They're ruining me! They're destroying me! They're insulting me!" I'm ruined! Life is sculpting me, Heurtebise, allow it to complete its task.

Heurtebise runs toward the garage.

The garage.

Heurtebise takes a revolver out of the car and loads it.

The garden.

Heurtebise gives Orpheus the gun.

ORPHEUS: The cowards!

HEURTEBISE: Threaten them with the gun. It's your home!

The road.



The Bacchantes arrive in a large car. They incite the crowd by shouting: "The wall! Climb over the wall!"

The garden gate.

The young people climb over the wall and open the gate. The first person in the group comes forward. The drums become silent. Orpheus faces them with the gun in his hand.

FIRST WRITER: Give me that revolver. I order you to give me that revolver.

ORPHEUS: And I order you to leave the premises. I forbid you to enter my home.

FIRST WRITER: I shall do as I please.

ORPHEUS: Do you want to kill me?

FIRST WRITER: We want to know the whereabouts of Jacques Cegestius. Is he in your house?

ORPHEUS: One step and I'll shoot . . . I'll shoot . . .

A Chinese man grabs Orpheus' arm and twists it. The gun goes off and falls to the ground. A young man picks it up. Orpheus breaks away and punches him on the chin. He staggers. The gun goes off again. Orpheus clutches his stomach and collapses. The young people flee. The drums start up again.

The road.

Whistles. Drums. Shouts. The sound of motors. Shouts of "The police! The police! Get out of here!" The Bacchantes' car.

AGLAONICE (standing): Get going! Get going! Hurry!

People climb up onto the cars. They drive off. A police wagon stops in front of the gate. Roar of the motorcycles.

The garden.

The motorcyclists drive through the gate and wheel around. The police run in after them.

The road.

The police push the struggling young people into the wagon.

The garden.

The first motorcyclist and Heurtebise drag Orpheus' body into the garage. The second motorcyclist stays at the gate, sending off the police with a machine gun.

THE POLICE: Get away from that gate!

SECOND MOTORCYCLIST: We're taking care of a wounded man. Just keep calm and we won't harm you.

The road.

The police struggle with the crowd of young people, hitting them with clubs. Sound of a car engine. The garden gate opens and Heurtebise backs the Rolls onto the road at top speed, turns it around, and drives away. The two motorcyclists roar off behind him. The police run out onto the road and shoot at them. The sound of whistles, drums, and motors continues.

Viaduct on a deserted road.

The Rolls comes to a halt halfway across the viaduct. The motorcycles are on each side of the car. One of the motorcyclists comes up to Heurtebise.

FIRST MOTORCYCLIST: Hello. Everything all right?

HEURTEBISE: Everything's all right.

Heurtebise turns around. Orpheus' eyes are blank, his head is thrown back in a position confirming death.

The car drives off.

The chalet.

Night. Sound of drums. Orpheus climbs up the stairs like a sleepwalker. Heurtebise is behind Orpheus and pushes him with his hands on his shoulders. Their feet disappear down the steps that lead

to the room with the mirror.

The Zone.

The ruins of the steps. Sound of drums.

The Princess and Cegestus are waiting, standing exactly as they had been at the close of the Tribunal. The Princess is dressed in black, her hair is loose. The drums die down.

PRINCESS: Cegestus . . .

CEGESTIUS: Madam?

PRINCESS: For once, I almost have the feeling of time. It must be terrible for men to have to wait . . .

CEGESTIUS: I don't remember.

PRINCESS: Are you bored?

CEGESTIUS: What's that?

Silence.

PRINCESS: Nothing. I was talking to myself.

The Zone. Arcades. The drums start up again.

Orpheus and Heurtebise walk flattened against the wall. They drag themselves along the wall by their hands, giving the impression they are crawling along the ground, flat on their stomachs. They pass an old woman who is huddled in a niche in the wall.

THE AUTHOR'S VOICE: It is not the same journey as before. Heurtebise is taking Orpheus to a forbidden place. He no longer walks upright and still. Orpheus and his guide drag themselves along, at times swept along on a strange wind, at times struggling against it.

Orpheus and Heurtebise slide down a steep slope. They seem to be

flying along. Orpheus falls down at the bottom of the wall and drags himself away. Heurtebise follows him.

The drums stop. Music. The ruined steps. The Princess and Cegestus appear.

CEGESTIUS: They're coming . . .

The Princess rushes away to the right, leaving Cegestus standing behind her. The Princess and Orpheus come together at the arcades in the wall.

Music. Close-up of their faces touching. They murmur.

PRINCESS: Orpheus!

ORPHEUS: I found the way to join you.

PRINCESS: I cried out silently till you came.

ORPHEUS: I heard you . . . I waited . . .

PRINCESS: I didn't want you to stay in the world of men . . .

ORPHEUS: Where can we hide?

PRINCESS: We don't have to hide any more. We shall be free.

ORPHEUS: Forever . . .

PRINCESS: Forever. Hold me tight Orpheus. Hold me tight . . .

ORPHEUS: You are burning me like ice.

PRINCESS: I can still feel your human warmth; it's good.

ORPHEUS: I love you.

PRINCESS: I love you. Will you obey me?

ORPHEUS: I will obey you.

PRINCESS: Whatever I may ask?

ORPHEUS: Whatever you may ask.

PRINCESS: Even if I condemn you, if I torture you?

ORPHEUS: I belong to you and I'll never leave you.

PRINCESS: Never.

She moves away from Orpheus and turns to Heurtebise.

PRINCESS: Heurtebise, you know what I expect of you, don't you?

HEURTEBISE: But . . . Madam . . .

PRINCESS: It's our last chance. And we don't have a moment to lose.

HEURTEBISE: Think again . . .

PRINCESS: One mustn't think, Heurtebise!

HEURTEBISE: There is no crime as serious as this, in any world.

PRINCESS: Are you a coward?

AUTHOR'S VOICE: The Death of the Poet must sacrifice herself to make him immortal.

PRINCESS (*turning back to Orpheus*): Orpheus, I must ask you once and for all not to attempt to understand what I'm about to do. Indeed it would be very difficult to understand even in our world.

HEURTEBISE (*pushing Orpheus against the wall*): Stay there.

He positions him like a prisoner about to be shot.

PRINCESS: Quick . . . quick (*calling*) Cegestius! To work!

Heurtebise comes up behind Orpheus, puts one hand over his eyes, the other over his mouth. Cegestius runs up and holds Orpheus' legs against the wall. Together, they prevent him from moving. Orpheus tries to struggle.

PRINCESS (*shouting*): Orpheus, don't move! Keep still! You promised.



Orpheus gives in. The Princess walks up to the group and stands next to them against the wall.

PRINCESS: Work! Work! I'm helping you! I'm working with you. Don't give up. Count, calculate, make a supreme effort, as I'm doing. Come on, get him through the wall. You must! Without will power we are nothing. Come on . . . come on . . . come on! . . .

HEURTEBISE (*in a distant voice*): I can't . . .

PRINCESS: You must, Heurtebise, you must!

She stamps her foot.

HEURTEBISE: I can't . . .

He lets go of Orpheus' eyes and mouth. Orpheus' head falls back, as though he were asleep.

PRINCESS: You're not trying hard enough! Don't talk any more! Concentrate! Detach yourselves! Run! Run! Fly! Overcome all obstacles!

Orpheus stands as though asleep, with his head thrown back on Heurtebise's shoulder. Cegestius is huddled motionless against Orpheus' legs. The Princess comes up to them.

PRINCESS: You're getting near! You're almost there! I can see it!

HEURTEBISE (*in a distant voice*): I'm there . . .

PRINCESS: One last effort, Heurtebise. Go on! Go on! Are you there? Answer me. Are you there?

The Princess' face appears against the wall next to Orpheus'.

PRINCESS: Are you there?

HEURTEBISE (*in a distant voice*): Yes, I'm there.

PRINCESS: Well then, let's go! We must go back in time. What has happened must be wiped out.

(The action in the following scene is depicted through reversed film.)

It gets dark. Orpheus walks backward. Heurtebise holds him by the hand. They pass the glassmaker. Suddenly Heurtebise puts his hand to his forehead and stops. Orpheus stops too.

The Zone. The Princess, Heurtebise, Orpheus, Cegestius.

HEURTEBISE (*in a distant voice*): I'm so tired.

PRINCESS: I don't care. Work! Work! I command you.

(The action is again depicted through reversed film.)

Heurtebise and Orpheus disappear along the road amongst the ruins

The room in the chalet.

They come through the mirror into the room.

The Zone.

PRINCESS: Where are you?

HEURTEBISE: In the room . . .

PRINCESS: The gloves, quick, the gloves.

Orpheus' bedroom.

The clock chimes six o'clock. Orpheus takes off the gloves and throws them to Heurtebise, who puts them in his pocket. Orpheus leaves; Heurtebise remains.

EURYDICE'S VOICE: Were you watching me sleep?

ORPHEUS' VOICE: Yes, my darling.

Eurydice and Orpheus are in each other's arms. Orpheus is kneeling beside the bed.

EURYDICE: I had the most terrible nightmare . . .

ORPHEUS: Do you feel ill?

EURYDICE: No, I just have a slight headache.

ORPHEUS (*kissing her*): I'll make you well.

As they talk, Heurtebise stands in the middle of the room.

EURYDICE'S VOICE: Were you working?

ORPHEUS' VOICE: Yes, I was working.

EURYDICE'S VOICE: You work too hard; you should rest.

ORPHEUS' VOICE: My books won't write themselves, you know.

EURYDICE'S VOICE: Your books do write themselves.

ORPHEUS: I help them. How's my son?

EURYDICE: Orpheus, it may be a girl.

ORPHEUS: It's a boy.

EURYDICE: He's kicking me. He punches me, too.

ORPHEUS: He will be as unbearable as his father.

EURYDICE: You, unbearable?

They kiss, laughing.

ORPHEUS: Many people find me unbearable.

EURYDICE: You shouldn't complain, you are adored!

ORPHEUS: And hated.

Heurtebise looks at them for a moment, then vanishes near the mirror.

EURYDICE: That's just a form of love.

ORPHEUS: The only love that matters is ours . . .

The Zone.

Cegestius stands up as though he had just awakened. Orpheus has disappeared. Heurtebise puts his hands to his head.

PRINCESS: It's done?

HEURTEBISE: It's done

Cegestius looks to his left. The two motorcyclists come forward through the rubble.

CEGESTIUS: Madam! Madam! Your assistants! Are they going to arrest you?

PRINCESS: Yes, Cegestius.

CEGESTIUS: Run!

PRINCESS (*very wearily*): Where to?

CEGESTIUS: Madam, when one is arrested here, what happens?

HEURTEBISE: It's not funny, I can assure you.

CEGESTIUS: It's not funny anywhere.

HEURTEBISE: Least of all here.

PRINCESS (*turning as she walks away*): Heurtebise!

HEURTEBISE (*coming to her side*): Madam?

PRINCESS: Thank you.

HEURTEBISE: It was nothing. We had to return them to their muddy waters.

The gloved hands of the motorcyclists come down on their shoulders.

PRINCESS: Farewell, Cegestius . . .

Drums are heard over the music. The group sets off. Cegestius, looking distressed, takes a step forward and watches them leave.

The Princess and Heurtebise, flanked by the motorcyclists, walk away into the distance. Their shadows move across the background.

As they disappear, the words "THE END" appear.

There are no symbols or messages in this film. Such works are unfashionable in the bad sense of the word. It is a realistic film, which expresses cinematically that which is truer than truth itself — a superior realism, the truth that Goethe opposes to reality, the truth that is the great conquest of the poets of our era.

ORPHEUS

In the film, Orpheus is not a great priest. He is a famous poet whose celebrity annoys what has come to be known as the avant-garde. In the film, the avant-garde play the role of the Bacchantes in the fable. Here, the Bacchantes are the members of a women's club where Eurydice worked as a waitress before marrying Orpheus. Orpheus forbids Eurydice to associate with them. She disobeys him, because Aglaonice, Queen of the Bacchantes, still has a great influence over her. Orpheus incorporates several themes: The theme summed-up in Mallarmé's lines: "And so it was that eternity finally changed him in himself."

The poet must die several times in order to be reborn.

Twenty years ago I developed this theme in *The Blood of a Poet*. But there I played it with one finger; in *Orpheus* I have orchestrated it.

The theme of inspiration: one should say expiration rather than inspiration. That which we call inspiration comes from within us, from the darkness of our own night, not from outside, from a different so-called divine night. Everything starts to go wrong when Orpheus ignores his own messages and agrees to accept messages coming from outside. Orpheus is tricked by the messages that come from Cegestius, not from the beyond. They are inspired by the B.B.C. broadcasts of the occupation.

Some of the sentences are real: for example, "The bird sings with its fingers" comes from a letter that Apollinaire wrote me.

Note that talking cars belong to modern mythology, a mythology of which we are unaware because we are actually living it.

The cars and modern clothes are there by poetic license, as a means of bringing an old myth closer to today's spectators.

The comic scene of the return home is an illustration of what men say when they love another woman: "I can't bear to look at my wife," or, "I can't stand the sight of her."

In the final scene the Princess, Heurtebise, and Cegestius set to work on Orpheus and put him to sleep, in the same way that the Neophytes of Tibet are put to sleep to enable them to travel through time. This can be interpreted as death inflicted on someone already dead, thereby giving him life again.

CEGESTIUS

Cegestius is sixteen years old. The avant-garde is infatuated with him for no apparent reason, as is often the case. He is an excessive drinker, and his insolence and bravado are pleasing. But as soon as he reaches the Zone, he becomes himself again: a shy, young boy, somewhat naive but very noble.

HEURTEBISE

Heurtebise is by no means an angel, as he is in the play, and as he is often made out to be. He is a young man in the service of one of the infinite satellites of death. He is only just recently dead. He tries several times to warn the others (theme of free will). For example, he tries to warn Orpheus of the harmful nature of the radio messages and to warn Eurydice of the coming accident on the road.

But the fate he tries to thwart by an act of free will is a fate created by the Princess. This is why the court of inquiry does not hold it against him.

Lies are no longer legal tender at the Tribunal, which is held at the Princess' chalet. The Princess and Heurtebise have to confess to the faintest shadow of emotion and admit that the human world to which they once belonged still has a hold over them.

The sentence, "We had to return them to their muddy waters," does not mean to their earthly love but, quite simply, "back to the world."

THE TRIBUNAL

The Tribunal is a Court of the Underworld and the judges play the role of examining magistrates at a trial — and much more than that!

EURYDICE

Eurydice is a very straightforward woman, a housewife who cannot be touched by anything that does not concern her home. She is quite impervious to mystery.

She endures all the hazards of the legend with total purity and one objective in mind, her love for her husband. This love alone wins her case and convinces the Princess to undertake the strange act in which the theme of immortality is expressed.

The poet's death is canceled in order to make him immortal.

Short scene in front of the mirror.

HEURTEBISE: Do you forgive me for what I said at the Tribunal?

EURYDICE: What was it you said? . . .

HEURTEBISE: Nothing, I'm sorry . . .

This scene proves that even Heurtebise is not fully aware of the extent of Eurydice's pureness.

THE PRINCESS

The Princess does not symbolize death because this film has no symbols. She no more stands for death than an air hostess represents an angel. She is the Death of Orpheus, just as she decides to be the Death of Cegestius and of Eurydice. We each possess our own death, who watches over us from the day we are born.

In a way, she plays the role of a guardian whose job is to watch over someone and who saves him at the price of their own destruction.

What kind of condemnation does she inflict upon herself? I don't know. It brings to mind the enigmas that puzzle etymologists:

the enigmas of the ant hill and the bee-hive. Her prerogatives are very limited. She does not know what she is exposing herself to. The Princess' and Orpheus' love for each other illustrates the deep attraction that poets feel for all that exists beyond the world they inhabit. It also represents their determination to overcome the infirmity that cuts us off from a host of instincts. We are haunted by these instincts, yet we are unable to define or enact them.

While they are waiting in the Zone, the Princess asks Cegestius, "Are you bored?" and Cegestius replies, "What's that?" The Princess' reponse, "Nothing, I was talking to myself," is an admission that questioning Cegestius is a pretext for questioning herself and her memories.

THE ZONE

The Zone has nothing to do with any dogma whatsoever. It is the fringe of life itself, a no-man's land between life and death. There, one is neither completely dead nor completely alive. The glassmaker who walks past Heurtebise and Orpheus is a dead young man who insists on selling his wares in a place where windows no longer have any meaning.

Orpheus asks Heurtebise; "Who are all these people wandering around? Are they alive?" Heurtebise replies, "They think they are; there is nothing so stubborn as professional enthusiasm."

THE MIRRORS

I almost forgot the theme of the mirrors. They show us growing older and bring us closer to death.

I have presented the outlines of the film, in which all the themes are intertwined, from the Orphean myth, itself, to more contemporary ones.

The film does not pretend, however, to be more than a paraphrase of an ancient Greek legend, which is quite natural since time is a purely human notion and, in fact, does not exist at all.

Jean Cocteau



THREE SCREENPLAYS

L'Eternel Retour

Orphée

La Belle et la Bête

Translated from the French by Carol Martin-Sperry

Grossman Publishers New York 1972

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CONTENTS

L'Eternel Retour 1

Orphée 101

La Belle et la Bête 193

PN
1977
A1
C6
1972

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