

THE SLOVENE NATIONAL THEATRE NOVA GORICA
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MRS. BOVARY

by

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A satirical melodrama based on the novel by Gustave Flaubert

Characters:

The Judge

Emma

Charles

The Vicar

The Professor

Emma Rouault's Father

The Viscount

An Unknown Gentleman

The Apothecary

Leon

The Parish Priest

Rodolphe

Speaker at a country gathering

Hippolite

Janitor at the cathedral

Dr. Canivet

THE INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS

EMMA *(to the audience)*

Let's go back to the beginning.

Life. Life is a dictionary filled with scattered, unsorted words that we try to

understand and put together into some kind of an intelligible entity. Then we go on and try to live. These words.

The world.

The world is a library. Every person is a library. The title of every book is the name of a person. A book written by an invisible Author.

Consequently I am not a living person. I am a fictitious character, a ghost, someone you can take seriously though it is not necessary to do so. My fictitious interior contains all the suppressed weaknesses as well as all the unsung cruelties. One could also say: all the worst. This extreme gives me my bulk, weight and my height. What I represent and what I say does not count. Just like a village buffoon: the important thing is that someone may not remember what I am and whether I said anything at all.

I resemble a fly: my existence and my buzzing always remind someone of something. Moreover, I have the elegance of a cockroach – what I resemble is small, black, surrounded by darkness and when light pierces it, the cockroach flees back into darkness in panic.

I cannot rightly say »I am« because I don't know who I am. When one has been the target of interpretations and definitions for over a hundred years, one really finds it hard to say who one is. I do know that I am not prone to declarations of love. I do worse things. I am a guide over mountains of love and my path leads to the plains of hatred. I need to be treated with utmost cruelty. You can insult me, hurt me, maim me, but you cannot kill me. I am immortal. I, Emma. I, Emma. I, Emma. Emma... Bovary. One more time. From the beginning.

THE VERDICT

THE JUDGE *(to the audience)*

So what is the title of the novel? *Mrs. Bovary*. The title in itself means nothing. There is also a subtitle: *Provincial morals*. The subtitle doesn't mean much either, but it does give us an inkling. These are scenes from everyday life. The novel

begins with Charles Bovary, the husband, and it ends with him as well. However, the most important portrait illuminates all the other scenes: the portrait of Mrs. Bovary.

Now I am narrating.

Charles Bovary entered the gymnasium. As a child he showed what a husband he was going to make. He was unusually obtuse and timid, so shy that when the teacher asked him about his name his first answer was *Charbovary*. He was so obtuse that he worked but showed no progress. He was never either the first nor the last in class. He was the image, perhaps not of a bad student but at least of a funny one. After graduation he went to Rouen to study medicine. He lived in a small attic room on the fourth floor overlooking the Seine. His mother leased this room from a dyer she knew. Charles frequented local inns, played truant, and his only hobby was playing dominoes. So he studied medicine and in due time he obtained the title of a physician though not of a medical doctor. So this is the portrait of Mr. Bovary.

He wanted to get married. His mother found a wife for him, the widow of a seizer from Dieppe. She was honest and ugly, aged forty-five, and her annual income amounted to 1,200 pounds. One day the notary entrusted with her funds fled to America, leaving the unfortunate woman so stricken that she died of it.

Mr. Bovary, recently widowed, considered remarrying. He did not need to think far. He immediately considered Miss Emma Rouault, a tenant's daughter from a neighbouring village, brought up in a nunnery in Rouen. So the good doctor went to see her father. Since the doctor demanded no dowry the affair was quickly settled. Mr. Bovary, on his knees before his wife, was the happiest and most gullible of all the husbands in the world. His only desire was to fulfil his wife's wishes. And here, the role of Mr. Bovary blended into the background. It was the beginning of Mrs. Bovary's story.

Did Mrs. Bovary love her husband? Did she at least try to get to love him? No, as it is plain to see in the opening scene of their marriage. New vistas opened up in her life. The Marquis d'Dandervilliers, owner of the Vaubyessart castle, organized a ball, inviting the Bovaries as well. There she met Duke de Laverdière, once a favourite of the royal court. She waltzed with a viscount which brought her unusual

excitement. At that moment, her new life began. Her husband and everything around her became unbearable to her. One day, as she rummaged in her wardrobe, she pricked her finger on a wire; it was a wire hidden in her wedding bouquet.

In order to chase away her constant feeling of boredom, Mr. Bovary abandoned his patients and moved to Yonville. That was where the first downfall occurred. The first male Mrs. Bovary met at Yonville and started to flirt with was not the town notary but his probationer, Mr. Leon Dupuis, an unversed youth and law student who was getting ready to move to the capital. Any husband except Mr. Bovary would resent the man's frequent visits. But Mr. Bovary was so naïve that he believed in his wife's virtue. Leon, lacking experience, was likely disposed. So, Leon then left for Paris and missed his opportunity. But there was ample opportunity for Mrs. Bovary.

Let me continue my narration.

Near Yonville there lived Rodolphe Boulanger, a gentleman. He was 34 and of a very choleric disposition. He was highly appreciated by easy women. During that time he had a mistress, an actress who was beginning to put on flesh. Rodolphe noticed the young and charming Mrs. Bovary and decided to take her on as his new mistress. It was not a difficult task, three opportunities sufficed, namely: first, his visit to a gathering of farmers; second, his visit with the Bovaries; and third, a horseback outing with Mrs. Bovary suggested by her husband who thought that such outings were beneficial to his wife's health. On that occasion, namely the horseback outing, a fall occurred as soon as they entered the forest. Not a fall from the horse, of course. Romantic encounters ensued at Rodolphe's castle and often simply in the good doctor's garden. The two lovers reached extreme sensual bliss! In her madness, Mrs. Bovary asked that Rodolphe kidnap her. Rodolphe did not dare tell her the truth; instead, he wrote her a letter, trying to explain to her in every possible way that the kidnapping was unfeasible. Upon receiving the letter, Mrs. Bovary felt as if she was struck by lightning. She had a nervous breakdown, followed by typhoid fever. The fever killed her love but the patient lived.

After the fall with Rodolphe, Mrs. Bovary had a fleeting attack of religious zeal. Yet she soon succumbed again. Her husband was of the opinion that theatre might have a beneficial effect upon her health, so he took her to an opera performance

in Rouen. In the box facing theirs, there was Leon Dupuis, the probationer with the city notary who had gone to study law in Paris and had just returned, an accomplished and experienced man. He visited Mrs. Bovary and suggested a rendezvous. Mrs. Bovary agreed and the following day they met in the cathedral. Upon leaving the cathedral, Leon suggested they hire a carriage. At first she resisted but Leon explained to her it was the Parisian way, so there was no reason why they shouldn't do it in Rouen. The fall occurred inside the carriage! Romantic encounters with Leon ensued just as those with Rodolphe before him, first at the doctor's house, then in a hotel room in Rouen. In the end, the liaison started to tire her – and horror ensued.

Mrs. Bovary was squandering money to humour her vanity and buy gifts for Rodolphe and Leon. She lived a sumptuous life. In order to pay her debts she signed bills. Her husband authorized her to run the family finances. But the worst thing was that she did business with a usurer who made her sign many bills, and when she couldn't make payments in time he transferred them to his partner. Shortly afterwards, sealed envelopes started arriving; protests, verdicts, seizure ensued, and finally the property was to be sold. Mr. Bovary had no idea! His distressed wife started begging people for money but nobody would lend her any. Leon had none, and when Mrs. Bovary asked him to steal some he fled in panic. Mrs. Bovary, utterly disgraced, turned to Rodolphe, but in vain, for Rodolphe didn't have 3,000 francs. She saw a single way – spurned by base instincts – of making her husband forgive her. No, not an explanation, for he was generous enough to forgive her, yet Mrs. Bovary was not willing to accept such humiliation. She decided to poison herself. She actually did poison herself. Emma Bovary, the woman who neglected her child, the child who needed her; the woman who despised her loving husband; adulteress, destroyer of her family... She took poison. Loathsome, bad and contemptible, a woman of insatiable desires, a monstrous creature of perverted imagination! Can such a person be forgiven or shown mercy? Can such a person be – what? Loved? Emma Bovary, the name that is an insult to the female kind.

Many sad scenes followed. The husband, sitting by his dead wife's body. He asked for her wedding dress to bury her in. Her remains were to be put into three coffins made from oak, mahogany and lead respectively.

Then one day Mr. Bovary opened a drawer in his desk and in it he found

Rodolphe's photo and Rodolphe's and Leon's letters. One might think it would quench his love. No, nothing like that. It grew, its flame in him was rekindled, even though she'd had other men beside him. He loved her though she was dead, living off his memories, neglecting his patients and his family, squandering the last of his fortune until one day he was found dead in his garden. In his hand there was a tuft of black hair.

So this is it. I've told you the whole story, not omitting any part of it.

THE CATECHISM

THE VICAR

How do you know your misery?

EMMA

I know my misery from God's laws.

THE VICAR

What do God's laws teach us?

EMMA

In Matthew 22, Christ teaches us: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind. It is the first and most important commandment. The second one is similar: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the laws and the prophets.

THE VICAR

Does that mean that God created man evil and depraved?

EMMA

No, God created man good and in his own image, truly just and saintly, so that he would be able to know God his Creator, love Him with all his heart and live with Him in eternal bliss, to praise and glorify him.

THE VICAR

Why is then man so depraved?

EMMA

Man's disobedient forefathers Adam and Eve were chased from Eden, poisoning our character because we were all conceived and born in sin.

THE VICAR

Does our depravity therefore make us unfit to do good and prone to evil?

EMMA

Yes, unless we are renewed in the Holy Spirit.

THE VICAR

What do you see as *Divine Providence*?

EMMA

It is the omnipotent and omnipresent God's power that enables Him to rule over the earth and the sky and the whole universe by his own hand so that leaves and grass, rain and draught, fertility and barrenness, food and drink, health and sickness, riches and poverty come to us by His fatherly hand and not by accident.

THE VICAR

Why do you deem yourself a Christian?

EMMA

By my faith I am a follower of Christ, anointed by Him, recognizing His name, living myself unto Him as a live victim, in this life fighting against sin and Satan of my own free will in order to sit by His side till all eternity to rule over the universe.

THE VICAR

Excellent. You have learned well.

JESUS

EMMA *(to the audience)*

Jesus was my first man. I understood him as a woman understands a man, powerful yet tender, cruel yet compassionate.

Jesus has no other body but mine;
He has no arms and no legs except mine.
Through my eyes he sees.
With my hands he touches the world.
With my legs he walks.
My arms, my legs, my eyes are His body.
Jesus has no other body.

I was in a nunnery and Jesus was my man.

An old spinster, descendant of an old noble family who did our laundry, loaned us novels that we read in secret. They were brimming over with love, lovers, mistresses, haunted ladies swooning in secluded pavilions, with stagecoach drivers killed at all the stations, with horses driven to exhaustion, with dark forests, romantic jumbles, with oaths, crying, tears and kisses, with boats in the moonlight, with nightingales in the shrubbery, with gentlemen brave as lions and meek as lambs, endlessly virtuous, well-clad and weeping their hearts out. That is when I came to love the sea because of its gales and tufts of greenery growing amidst the ruins. I dreamed about old wardrobes, watchtowers and minstrels.

I returned home from the nunnery, gloomy and pale. I delighted in giving myself up to melancholy. I dreamed about old wardrobes, watchtowers and music resounding in the old castle where I imagined myself living as the lady of the manor, propped on a stone plate, looking into the distance, awaiting the arrival of a white-plumed prince on his black horse.

CHARLES

THE PROFESSOR

Come on, please take this ridiculous hat off your head.

(Charles meekly takes off his ridiculous hat.)

THE PROFESSOR

Percussion.

CHARLES

Percussion. A method for diagnosing lung diseases called PERCUSSION. It means knocking on the thorax and the upper abdomen in order to determine subcutaneous structures. It is used in lung examinations. With the middle finger we tap the middle finger of the other hand. We press the tissue with the middle finger, also called the pleximeter finger. Percussion can be direct or indirect, depending on the number of fingers used in percussion. With healthy patients we hear three kinds of percussion sounds: a clear and sonorous sound means that the thorax is healthy and the pulmonary alveoli vibrate; the sound is clear, loud and deep. We get a shallow sound with the percussion of organs that do not contain air, e.g. the liver, the heart, muscles. A timpano percussion sound is of a specific quality produced by pressing organs or cavities containing air, e.g. the intestines and the stomach. As it resembles the sound produced by a drum or by timpani it is called a timpani percussion sound.

THE PROFESSOR

Effundatur sanguis. What do we do?

CHARLES

We bleed the patient in order to restore his blood. During a long-term therapy we prescribe a mustard plaster to stimulate blood circulation. We mix mustard seeds with hot water and make a thick mixture. We spread it on a towel and wrap it in a thick cotton cloth. We cover the patient's skin with it and leave it on until the skin becomes red and warm. Then we remove the plaster.

THE PROFESSOR

You have learned well, colleague Bovary. I congratulate you. You are now a physician.

(He covers his head with a tall hat and shakes Bovary's hand.)

LOVE

EMMA *(to the audience)*

Charles was my second man.

EMMA ROUAULT'S FATHER

Emma! Emma! Send for a doctor!

(Charles arrives with a tall hat on his head, wearing a long coat and high riding boots. He's holding a horsewhip. Emma approaches him. Charles takes off his coat, takes the tall hat from his head and gives everything, including the horsewhip, to Emma. She deposits the clothes at the other end of the stage.)

EMMA

Father broke his leg returning from a neighbour's house after Twelfth Day Celebration.

(Emma takes him to her father who is prostrate on the ground. Charles kneels down and starts examining his leg.)

CHARLES

A nice fracture, very ordinary.

EMMA ROUAULT'S FATHER

Why do you have no beard?

CHARLES

Does it matter?

EMMA ROUAULT'S FATHER

You are too young to be a doctor. I don't trust young beardless doctors.

CHARLES

All right, I'll be off then.

EMMA

Oh no, please. Don't take offense. He drank a lot of fruit brandy to alleviate the pain.

(Emma gives Charles a long, beseeching look. Charles looks into her eyes as well. He stands there transfixed.)

CHARLES

All right then, if you say so.

(With an energetic thrust Charles straightens the bone in the leg of Emma's father which makes the old man cry out. Charles then turns to Emma and starts staring

at her again.)

CHARLES

Bring me three small boards and some linen so that I can make a bandage for his leg.

(Emma leaves right away and returns with the boards and a piece of linen. Charles tears the cloth in two and bandages Mr. Rouault's leg.)

It will take a month for the bone to heal. I will check on him occasionally to see how he's doing.

EMMA

When will you be coming?

CHARLES

Three days from now.

(Charles keeps staring at Emma.)

Tomorrow.

(Emma leaves and immediately returns, carrying Charles' clothes. Charles puts them on and starts looking round as if he was looking for something.)

EMMA

Are you looking for something?

CHARLES

My horsewhip.

(He walks to the other end of the stage with Emma on his heels, then he bows

down to pick up his horsewhip that is lying on the ground. At the same moment Emma bends and the two collide. Perplexed, Charles draws himself up. Emma picks up the horsewhip from the floor and gives it to Charles. Charles takes the horsewhip, hits his boots with it once and turns to leave.)

EMMA

So long.

(Charles turns around and bows to her.)

CHARLES

See you soon. *(He departs.)*

EMMA

He is strong but gentle, cruel but compassionate.

A PROPOSAL OF MARRIAGE

(There is mooing heard all around, along with cackling, barking, neighing and grunting. After a while there is silence. Only the crackling of fire is heard and the buzzing of flies.)

EMMA ROUAULT'S FATHER

Emma, there is something I must ask you. Mr. Bovary is waiting outside, asking me for your hand in marriage. I find him a little obtuse; he is not exactly the son-in-law of my dreams. But he is well-mannered, I hear, frugal and well qualified; he has healed my broken leg as it befits. I don't think he will demand a rich dowry. In any case, I have to sell those 20 acres of land to pay the dowry and still have enough left so that I can repay my debts to the builder and the harness maker. Perhaps I could even have the press repaired. So if you are willing...

EMMA

I am! I said yes!

(Charles arrives, dressed as before. Emma first looks at Charles then she speaks to the audience, overcome with emotion yet disheartened.)

EMMA

Oh, I thought it was a man who can ride a horse, fence, break glasses, crack a whip, recite poetry, swim the waters of life, and that now life will begin and happiness will come...

(Emma goes to Charles. He embraces her.)

EMMA

... in stagecoaches, hidden behind blue silk curtains we shall ride slowly along mountain roads, listening to the coachman's song echoing from the mountains while a goat herd clatters by and waterfalls rumble. And when the sun goes down we shall smell citrons on the beach. In the evening, standing alone on the terrace of our villa, we shall hold hands and watch the stars. *(To the audience.)* Then, in the garden of our first home, under a full moon, I passionately recited Lamartine.

*My heart longs for the shores of the southern sea
Where warm waves whisper to the aloes,
At the foot of the Etna where fertile cinders lie,
The plain is like a flowering garden in May
When immortality still blossoms in our hearts;
When each throb of the heart
Is a cry for happiness hidden who knows where.*

And Charles said...

CHARLES

*What is shown
I've always known:
As the clock strikes one,
to bed I'm gone;*

*As the clock strikes two,
the owl goes boohoo;
As the clock strikes three,
the pig grunts its plea;
As the clock strikes four,
the cock sings some more;
As the clock strikes five,
I get up, come alive;
As the clock strikes six,
I go feed the pigs;
As the clock strikes seven,
I eat till I'm laden;
As the clock strikes eight,
I sing to my mate;
As the clock strikes nine,
I drink some wine;
As the clock strikes ten,
I'm back in my den;
As the clock strikes eleven,
I think: Almost even;
As the clock strikes twelve,
I say: End of the poem!*

EMMA

What is this, Charles?

CHARLES

Oh, it is nothing, just some poetry. It's a poem from my youth that I learned when I was little.

EMMA *(to the audience)*

And this is how our new life began.

A NEW LIFE

(Charles sits down at the table. Emma serves him dinner. Charles eats.)

CHARLES

It looks like rain tomorrow. Thank God it didn't rain today. I'd get wet through and through. And it wasn't a bad day at that. Three bleedings; two tooth extractions; a pleurisy, a mild one at that.

You can send out the bills tomorrow. I earned some 150 francs today.

(There is a pause. Silence. Emma gets up and walks away.)

It looks like snow tomorrow. Thank God it didn't snow today. I'd get well and cold. And it wasn't a bad day at that. A catarrh... plus a stomach flush... one natural death... an old man... one leeching for heart palpitations. You can send out the bills tomorrow. I earned some 155 francs today. Oh, its past ten already. Emma? Emma, where are you?

(Emma approaches.)

How beautiful you are! You know you are very beautiful. I always like to watch you. You are so beautiful. Someone called me by mistake today, it was about a cow. They said Emily wasn't feeling well. Can you imagine that? Emily being a cow. And they thought any doctor is also a veterinary doctor. I bled her, just in case. I hope it was of some use.

(A pause. Silence.)

Emma, do you remember the Marquis d'Andervilliers? The man I once treated for a mouth infection.

EMMA

No, I don't.

CHARLES

You know, it was a hot day and the marquis had an abscess in his mouth: I pricked it with a lancet and the puss leaked out.

EMMA

No, I don't remember.

CHARLES

He was asking you about cherry grafts. Well, this marquis sent us an invitation to a masked ball.

EMMA

Pardon?

CHARLES

To a masked ball. In two weeks, at the Vaubyessard castle.

EMMA

Oh, Charles!

CHARLES

Oh, it's past ten already. *(He stretches and gives a yawn.)*

THE DANCE AT THE VAUBYESSARD CASTLE

(Emma, dressed in a ball gown, is holding a mask; she enters a big hall filled with thousands of mirrors. There is a festive lighting. Music is heard.)

EMMA

The sweet smell of flowers. The smell of smoked meat. The smell of truffles. Candelabra. Silver bells. Crystal dishes. A faint dew. Pale sunrays. Bunches of flowers. Napkins. Mitres. Red lobster claws. Bulky fruit. Quail. Jean-Antoine d'Andervilliers d'Yberbonville. Jean-Antoine-Henry-Guy d'Andervilliers de la Vaubyessard. Duke de Laverdière. Count d'Artois. Marquis de Conflans. Pierre de Coigny. Olivier de Lauzun. Champagne. Pomegranates. Pineapples. Painted folding fans. Gloves. Lace trimmings. Diamond pins. Bracelets. Cherries. Forget-me-nots. Jasmine. Cornflowers. Oh, I need air, air... I need air...

(A stagehand enters the stage and breaks one of the mirrors. From behind the mirror three gentlemen appear: Charles, the Viscount and an unknown man. They are all wearing masks. The Viscount approaches Emma, gives a bow and asks her for the next dance.)

EMMA

But I cannot do the waltz.

THE VISCOUNT

Don't worry, I will guide you.

(They start dancing. Charles is standing in the background; he seems to converse with the unknown man, looking perplexed. The unknown man stops chatting with Charles; he approaches the dancing couple and takes over Emma.)

EMMA

Oh, it's like being in Paris. Oh, Notre Dame de Nazareth, Saint-Denis, Rue Blondel, Sainte-Foy, Saint Apolline, Rue Réaumur, Rue d'Aboukir, Rue du Caire, d'Alexandrie, Rue des Innocents, le Singe de Julie, Passage Lemoine, Juju, Double Jeu, Mariely, La grande Murraille, Passage du Ponceau, Lili la Tigresse, Rue de Palestro, Caisse d'Epargne, Passage de la Trinité... Paris, where gentlemen tread the glistening parquet floors of mirrored halls to join pale

duchesses in golden velvet, oh, the poor angelic ladies, their smiles masking secrets and anxiety. That is where people get up at four p.m., put on English lace, late at night they dine in restaurants filled with writers and actresses who are living a life on heights, between heaven and earth, in the lofty sphere where tempests rage.

(Emma is dancing; her image is reflected in a thousand mirrors. The music drowns her screams. Gradually everything disappears, first the mirrors then the dancer and finally the music. Emma remains standing centre stage.)

EMMA *(to the audience)*

That is when I began to feel that my life, my true life was lived by someone else far removed from me. And I, innocent as I was, was condemned to prison, sitting behind bars of steel boredom.

When we returned home, Charles complained about the food that was being served in the castle and about his shoes that pinched him. My God! And I was slowly drowning in sorrow; at times I was feeling sick. Day after day I was sitting by the window, watching the wide road where the wind kept stirring up long clouds of dust. Dogs were howling and the church bell was ringing. The barber was sitting in front of his shop, counting crows. Oh God, why did I ever get married? I wanted a man who would know the secrets and mysteries of life! Charles whittled the corks of empty bottles after dinner, licked his teeth after meals; he gulped his soup with every spoonful. Meanwhile, I was desperately watching the desert of my life, cursing God's unjustness, leaning my head against the wall and crying, envying those outside their exciting life, masked nights and daring parties. I was waning away and my heart was pounding. Charles kept making me valerian tea and running camphor baths for me. In the end, having decided I had a nervous disorder, he decreed I was to change my everyday environment. We moved from a virtual village to a virtual town.

THE PROVINCE

(Charles and Emma are wearing travelling costumes and two bulky suitcases. The apothecary. Leon is huddled in a corner.

THE APOTHECARY

All big rivers and all great men come from the province. No matter what is said about us by big city dwellers, let me tell you: the province is a treasure-house of humanity. Welcome to Yonville!

Years ago I was in Paris with a group of weird young men and we lived in an unusual world. We hovered between insanity and suicide; some killed themselves, others died in their beds, one of us strangled himself with his tie, many died of debauchery just to escape boredom. That is why I moved to the province. As the saying goes: Better to be a big fish in a small pond than a small fish in a big pond.

CHARLES

I see, I see... Of course, by all means...

THE APOTHECARY

The province must never be looked down upon. Big city dwellers believe the province to be small, limited, boring, studied... It is not so. We too have questions and problems... I dare say true existentialism is found here. There is nothing artificial. True blood, real bones and meat!

CHARLES

Yes, whatever.

THE APOTHECARY

Here, you'll have it good, believe me. Our roads are fit for the use of vehicles. Payment is good, for our farmers are not doing badly. As for health, we have the usual ailments such as enteritis, pneumonia and gall disorders, an occasional fever during harvest time but few severe illnesses, nothing but lymphatic gland infections, undoubtedly due to bad hygiene. The climate is mild. In winter it never gets colder than 40 degrees and in summer not hotter than 70 or 80 degrees, I noticed. The Argueil forest protects us from northern winds, and the Saint-Jean hill

from winds from the west; and the heat that on account of the vapours from the river and numerous cattle grazing, cattle that exhale a lot of ammonia, that is nitrogen, hydrogen and oxygen instead of just nitrogen and hydrogen, thus sucking humus from soft soil, combining the various vapours into a single wisp, as it were, linking with electricity in the air, when there is any; well, if the heat should last too long it would be prone to bear sickly seeds, just like in the tropics; the heat, I tell you, diminishes right where it comes from, or better, where it would come from, namely from the south, with the south-western winds crossing the Seine and cooling down so that they come to us as cold as those in the Russian steppes. Come, I'll show you my laboratory.

(Charles and the Apothecary leave.)

LEON

Madam, I see you are tired.

EMMA

Pleasingly tired. I like to move. We have moved here from Tostes.

LEON

From Tostes? It's the first time I hear of it.

EMMA

Me, too.

LEON

Leon.

EMMA

Emma.

(There's a pause; they look into each other's eyes. Emma speaks to the audience.)

I watched the sad eyes of this young man, burning with a fire that no amount of tears could put out. He told me he loved music, German music, you said and...

LEON

And I said that art is more useful than industrial production; what is beautiful is better than what is good, why else were the first people, the first rulers not manufacturers or merchants! They were artists, poets; they built useless things like pyramids and cathedrals. First they wrote a poem and then they spun cloth for clothes. That is what I said.

EMMA

How beautiful. During the day, you said, you climb a hill, holding a book in your hand, to watch the sun go down. And in the evening you sit by the fire, holding a book, while window-panes rattle in the wind and a lamp flickers: Just like me.

LEON

I live here, far from the crowds, with no other pleasures.

EMMA

Just like me.

LEON

Oh, if I could love...

EMMA

If I were loved...

LEON

I'd be happy...

EMMA

Happy nights, sweet hours. There are people who actually live like that!

LEON

Why not me?

EMMA

Why not me?

LEON

Oh God, I wish for no other pleasures; my heart is filled with deep sounds and the sweetest heavenly melodies; a female finger could bring out a poem and shivers that would melt into – a kiss, a look – and what? Shall I never live to experience any of it?

EMMA

My heart is bigger than my head. Oh, how I would love! Come, come, you mysterious souls, sisters to my own soul; I shall kiss your footprints; walk over me and I shall kiss your feet and cry.

LEON

We said all that.

EMMA

We did. Without words. It all happened so quickly and so unexpectedly... (*Disappointedly.*) And it disappeared just as quickly. I was carrying the baby of a man I was increasingly alienated from.

LEON

And I went to Paris to study. Oh, Emma... Emma... Emma... *(He walks off the stage.)*

THE BIRTH

CHARLES

Oh, Emma! Emma! My love! I am so happy! And you are so beautiful! A mother. And I, a father! *(He embraces her.)*

EMMA

Charles was truly happy. It is said that in order to be happy three basic things are needed: being stupid, selfish and healthy. And I – I was simply perplexed. Inquisitive. I wanted to know what it is like being a mother. From a local shopkeeper I wanted to buy a crib designed like a little boat with pink silk curtains and lacy caps for the baby... But Charles said it was too expensive. I was in a bad mood. All I could think of was that I wanted a son, a son who would become a man. His name would be Georges. And Georges would be free to follow his passions, his desires; perhaps he would go abroad, out into the wide world. I wanted a son. I wanted Georges.

(Darkness; a scream; a child crying.)

CHARLES

A daughter! Emma, we have a daughter!

THE CONFESSION

(Emma is kneeling by the mesh of the confessional. Bournisien the parish priest is on the other side of the mesh.)

THE PARISH PRIEST

Oh, it is you, Mrs. Bovary. I didn't recognize you before.

EMMA

Father, I am suffering. I have sinful thoughts.

THE PARISH PRIEST

We all do.

EMMA

I am nervous... I can't eat... I cry for days on end and...

THE PARISH PRIEST

You are just like old Guerin's daughter. She was always so terribly sad. When she stood on her doorstep it made you think there was a shroud hanging over the door. Her sickness, they said, was some sort of a hazy brain. Nobody was able to help her. When it got really bad she ran to the river bank all alone, and fishermen often found her lying on her stomach, wetting the sandbank with her tears. It all stopped after she got married.

EMMA

I only got sick after I got married.

THE PARISH PRIEST

What does your husband say?

EMMA

Oh, what is he supposed to say? Sometimes I wish he would simply beat me.

THE PARISH PRIEST

Why is that?

EMMA

It would make it easier for me to hate him.

THE PARISH PRIEST

Oh, Mrs. Bovary, it must be the sudden spring heat. It sometimes weakens, shrivels a person. It cannot be helped, we are born to suffer, as St. Paul said. What does Mr. Bovary say?

EMMA

I told you...

THE PARISH PRIEST

He is a doctor. He could prescribe a tonic for you.

EMMA

No tonic of this world can help me. I'd like to know...

THE PARISH PRIEST

He is probably too busy, too. The two of us are the busiest men in our parish. It is just that he heals bodies while I heal human souls.

EMMA

Yes, you alleviate all pain.

THE PARISH PRIEST

Oh, do not say that, Mrs. Bovary. It was only yesterday that I was called to some village to heal a bloated cow. They thought it was a curse. Imagine that! Sometimes I feel that peasants are to be pitied.

EMMA

Oh, not only them.

THE PARISH PRIEST

Of course. Workers in the city, for example.

EMMA

I was talking about myself.

THE PARISH PRIEST

I knew some destitute mothers and wives among them, real saints they were, and they didn't even have bread.

EMMA

Or those who have bread, Father, but they have no...

THE PARISH PRIEST

Firewood to make a fire in winter?

EMMA

Oh, that is no matter!

THE PARISH PRIEST

What do you mean? That is no matter? I believe that a man who is warm and well fed...

EMMA

My God! My God!

THE PARISH PRIEST

What is it? Are you not well? It must be a stomach disorder. Go home, Mrs. Bovary, and have a cup of tea to freshen yourself. Or a glass of cold water with sugar.

EMMA

Why?

THE PARISH PRIEST

I thought you had a dizzy spell. What else did you want to ask me?

EMMA

It was nothing, nothing.

THE PARISH PRIEST

Well then, go with God and give my regards to your husband. Everything will be all right.

RODOLPHE

(Turning his back to the public, the speaker at a country gathering is standing on some sort of a pedestal, talking calmly yet resolutely, at times overcome by emotional ardour...)

SPEAKER AT A COUNTRY GATHERING

Gentlemen, I sincerely welcome you at this country gathering that is being

organized at Yonville for this solemn occasion. Before addressing the purpose of the meeting allow me to remind you of the merits of the managing body, the government and the monarch, gentlemen, of our ruler, the beloved king who, in his care, neglects no sphere of our general and individual welfare, using his wise hand to control the rudder of our state in constantly turbulent waters of the stormy sea, capable of securing respect in peace and war, in trade, commerce, science, farming and the fine arts.

(The speaker's voice dies down, but he is still standing on the pedestal, swinging his arm now and again. Now we hear his voice coming from afar. Emma and Rodolphe arrive. Rodolphe's garb reminds us of Charles, he is wearing a coat, high boots, a tall hat and holding a horsewhip.)

EMMA

Rodolphe is the third man in my life.

(Rodolphe smiles and embraces Emma.)

He once visited my husband with his servant who felt pins and needles all over his body. We bled him.

RODOLPHE

Upon seeing her I immediately thought: The doctor's wife is quite lovely. Nice teeth, black eyes, lovely feet, carrying herself like a true Parisian woman.

EMMA

As for Charles, for Charles you said...

RODOLPHE

He looks stupid. She must be tired of him. His nails are dirty and he has a three-days-old beard. While he is ministering to his patients his wife stays home, mending socks. And she's feeling bored. She'd like to live in the city, dancing the polka every night. The poor woman. She hankers for love like a carp on a kitchen

table hankers for water.

EMMA

Oh, you guessed it right, all of it!

(Charles arrives.)

RODOLPHE

How do you do, doctor.

CHARLES *(oozing excessive politeness)*

Oh, how do you do.

RODOLPHE

Mr. Bovary, I discussed your lady's health with her.

CHARLES

Dar Sir, I am worried about her condition. She was having anxiety attacks again.

RODOLPHE

Horseback riding might prove beneficial.

CHARLES

Yes, definitely! Excellent, just what is needed... It is a good suggestion. Horseback riding!

EMMA

But... I have no horse.

RODOLPHE

I will get one for you, Mrs. Bovary.

CHARLES

No, no, I'll buy one for her. If it helps Emma's health I shall buy one for her.

EMMA

I have no riding outfit.

CHARLES

If you have none you can order it. Am I right? Mr. Rodolphe, I am very glad of your suggestion. My wife will be ready at her earliest convenience. I am counting on your complaisance.

(Charles shakes hands with Rodolphe, raises his hat and goes away. Rodolphe embraces Emma and kisses her.)

SPEAKER AT A COUNTRY GATHERING

Where do we find more patriotism than in the countryside, more self-sacrificing for the common good, in short, more prudence? Gentlemen, I am not speaking of the surface prudence which is the empty adornment of idle minds but of the deep, modest prudence veering only towards useful ends, thus contributing to the welfare of every individual, to a general bettering of circumstances and the preservation of the state, being the fruit of respect for the law and devoted to carrying out one's duties.

CHAOS

THE APOTHECARY

Mr. Bovary, listen to me, I've read about a new method of treating clubfeet. Actually

it is a very simple operation without any risk involved on the part of the doctor or the patient. We have just such a patient here. It is necessary only to check for strephopody, endostrephopody or possibly exostrephopody.

CHARLES

But I am not that kind of a doctor. It should be done...

THE APOTHECARY

You must do that, you of all people! The boy's foot almost looks like a horse's hoof, equines as it were, together with something of a varus, turning the foot inwards, or else a slight varus with a strong tendency to equinus. So, it will be necessary to cut the tendon of Achilles and the anterior tibia muscle...

CHARLES

Why don't you do the operation, seeing as you know so much about it?

THE APOTHECARY

Oh, I cannot, the law forbids it. I am not a doctor. And you are. I can assist you. Just think of the boy's gratitude and of the many patients this operation may bring you. And Mrs. Bovary, oh, she will be the wife of a famous and well-respected doctor.

CHARLES

Well, all right, perhaps you are right... We can take a look at this foot.

(Charles and the Apothecary walk to the side of the stage where the club-footed boy is waiting. Charles examines him with the Apothecary assisting.)

THE APOTHECARY

The title of the doctor's paper... Oh, I forget the name, but it says the incision is to be done here and... It's as easy as bleeding a patient.

(Charles takes his scalpel, getting ready to cut the tendon. Meanwhile on the other side of the stage Rodolphe takes off the top of Emma's dress, he bares her chest and back. Two ropes drop from above. Rodolphe binds Emma's hands so that she is now hanging by the ropes...)

RODOLPHE

Emma Bovary. They all call you that, but it is not your real name. It is somebody else's name. The name of another person.

EMMA

Yes, yes, I am somebody else. My »other person« is somebody else.

RODOLPHE *(taking his horsewhip)*

Can you ride a horse?

EMMA

No, you shall teach me.

RODOLPHE

Yes, I'll teach you to ride. You must open your heart and eyes to me, spread your knees, brace your hips... But first you must learn how to be obedient.

EMMA

Yes, Rodolphe, teach me and I shall learn. Oh God, how I hated myself and my body...

(At the other end of the stage Charles has already performed his operation.)

RODOLPHE *(He hits Emma with his horsewhip; Emma shrieks in surprise.)*

You are not allowed to hate the body assigned to you that is more costly than any garment. Whoever hates his body deserves to be punished.

(He hits her with his horsewhip; Emma cries out.)

But I am not worried about my body. It is the spirit which is an enigma! My spirit is flexible! I am chewing, chewing and ruminating, yet I cannot swallow it or spit it out! That is the way it is...

(He cracks the whip; Emma gives a low-pitched sigh.)

You need to use spices.

(He cracks his horsewhip; Emma cries out in ecstasy.)

Salt, pepper, cumin... Three drops of gin.

(He cracks his horsewhip; there is a shout.)

THE APOTHECARY *(He is reading from a piece of paper, inspired.)*

Mr. Bovary, one of our most eminent practitioners, has operated on stableman Hippolite Tautain's clubfoot...

RODOLPHE

Half a cup of wine... To be boiled for ten years... On the slow fire of sin.

(He cracks his horsewhip; Emma cries out while Rodolphe kisses the sore spot.)

THE APOTHECARY

Tautain being a stableman from Yonville. The operation was delightfully simple. A few drops of blood, nothing more.

RODOLPHE

And then suddenly... When you least expect it... Enlightenment...
Transformation... Faith...

(He cracks his horsewhip and starts kissing Emma's back again.)

THE APOTHECARY

The patient did not complain of any pain.

RODOLPHE

The lights of a divine city.

(He cracks his horsewhip, kissing Emma all over; now, at one time with Emma, Hippolite cries out as well.)

THE APOTHECARY

Even though the closely woven net of prejudices continues to cover a part of Europe's face there is light spreading across our rural parts...

RODOLPHE

The body falls, powerless... But it does not rot or decompose... For the fall is part of the pleasure...

(He cracks his horsewhip, both Emma and Hippolite cry out; Rodolphe is kissing her.)

THE APOTHECARY

So, honour and glory to the magnanimous scientists...

CHARLES

Oh, but that is too much! Too much!

RODOLPHE

You indulge, you search for love...

(He cracks his horsewhip, both Emma and Hippolite cry out.)

Life is hard... Perhaps it is impossible.

(He cracks his horsewhip, both Emma and Hippolite cry out.)

THE APOTHECARY

Faced with such an event, who would not exclaim: The blind shall see, the deaf shall hear, the lame shall walk.

RODOLPHE

For anything that is real is coming from God... Life is sinful.

(He cracks his horsewhip; this time, Hippolite's cry is louder than Emma's.)

THE APOTHECARY

Science has prevailed!

RODOLPHE

Sin does not come from God... Death is but a vision...

(He cracks his horsewhip; Hippolite cries out while Emma only gives a sigh.)

And the world is but an illusion.

(He cracks his horsewhip.)

THE APOTHECARY

Glory to them! Glory!

(Rodolphe drops his horsewhip; he embraces Emma from the back and starts kissing her passionately. Hippolite is screaming his heart out.)

EMMA

Oh, he is strong but tender, cruel but compassionate. Oh, dear Jesus loves...

HIPPOLITE

Help me! I'm dying! Oh!

CHARLES

What is it? What is happening?

THE APOTHECARY

I don't know about out clubfoot man. But he doesn't look right.

CHARLES

But... But I did everything just as we read in the paper. And you said that...

THE APOTHECARY

I know what I said. But I don't know what you did.

CHARLES

We must... do something.

THE APOTHECARY

I'll send for Dr. Canivet.

CHARLES

Right, right, we need a doctor.

(At the other end of the stage.)

EMMA

Do you love me?

RODOLPHE

Of course I do.

EMMA

Very much so?

RODOLPHE

To be sure.

EMMA

And I love you so much that I cannot live without you! Oh, I am your servant and your mistress. And you are my king and my idol! You are ever so good, so handsome! So smart! So strong! Save me!

RODOLPHE

What shall I do? What do you want?

EMMA

Take me away! Take me away! I implore you.

CHARLES *(Shouting from the other end of the stage.)*

Emma! Emma! Where are you?

(Emma dresses herself slowly, then she approaches Charles.)

EMMA

What do you want?

CHARLES

Emma, my dearest, there is something wrong with Hippolite! Something has gone wrong. It may be a valgus and not a varus. Oh my God, I am so sorry! Hold me... Kiss me, honey.

(Charles tries to embrace Emma.)

EMMA

Let go of me.

CHARLES

What is it with you? What is it with you? Don't be like that! You know I love you. Come here!

EMMA *(She cries at the top of her voice.)*

Enough! I've had enough!

THE SAW

DR. CANIVET

Is everything ready?

THE APOTHECARY

My nerves are so...

DR. CANIVET

I am not surprised. You apothecaries stay in your kitchens for days on end and that must affect your health. Take a look at me: every morning I get up at four, I shave using cold water, I never have a cold and my stomach is always healthy. Now live in this way and then in another; I am a philosopher; I eat whatever is at hand. That is why I am not as sensitive as you are and it is all the same to me whether I'm cutting a Christian or a chicken. Is the patient under sedation?

THE APOTHECARY

I administered him a good dose of laudanum with twice the usual amount of opium.

DR. CANIVET

All right. Get hold of his foot.

(Dr. Canivet picks up a small saw; he places it against Hippolite's foot and starts sawing. Hippolite's weak moans are heard.)

(Meanwhile, Rodolphe is sitting at a small table, reading his letter to Emma.)

RODOLPHE

Be brave, Emma! Be brave! It would be hard for me to bear the burden of having caused your unhappiness... One day our love would surely fade. It is the fate of all things human. We would tire of each other and I would hate to watch you regret it. The very thought of your sadness that is approaching torments me. Why did I have to meet you? Why were you so beautiful? Was I to blame? Forget me. Or better blame our lot. The world is cruel. We would be persecuted wherever we went. I am punishing myself for the misfortune I have caused you by going into exile. I am going away. Where to? I do not know. Always be good. Forget the wretch who has made you unhappy. Teach your child to say my name and to

remember me in his prayers. Good-bye.

(Hippolite gives a moan. Then he starts crying.)

JESUS AGAIN

EMMA

I was unhappy. Dishonoured. Offended. He left me. I wanted to die. Why not end it all? Who is telling me not to? I stood by a window in the attic and looked into the abyss. Death will take pity on me. One more step and... it will be all over. If life is cruel then death means liberation. But then along came Charles.

CHARLES

Emma! Emma! Where are you, for God's sake? Come already! Soup is on the table.

EMMA

So I went and ate the soup. I saved the memory of Rodolphe at the bottom of my heart. There he reposed, solemn and motionless like a royal mummy in his underground grave. And I took to bed. I didn't say anything. I heard nothing. I felt nothing. Nothing at all. For forty-three days Charles never left my bed. He administered mustard plasters and cold compresses. He felt my pulse ten times a day. And the first time I sat up in bed and ate bread and jam Charles burst into tears.

(Charles is crying.)

CHARLES

I am your Charles who loves you.

EMMA

Something powerful passed through me, something that took away all my pain, all

my perceptions and all my feelings. My relieved flesh stopped deliberating. It was as if another, unearthly life had begun. My body started rising towards God, disappearing into this love like burning incense. In the heavenly expanse I heard the thrumming of celestial harps and up in the azure heaven, sitting on a golden throne, surrounded by saints holding green palm fronds I saw God the Father in His radiant magnificence and angels with fiery wings drifting towards planet Earth at his signal, ready to carry it off in their arms. I wished to become Jesus' body again. I wanted to be a saint. My soul, hardened by arrogance, rested nesting in Christian humility. My will was not my will. It was love above all other kinds of love, a kingdom of innocence floating above the Earth, spilling across the sky.

THE APOTHECARY

Castigat ridendo mores – laughter is a healer! Stop your bigotry, Mrs. Bovary. (*To Charles*) Take your wife to the theatre where she can distract herself, relax and enjoy herself. For on stage, virtue is professed in the guise of amusement, proclaiming virtue. Now is your chance. The famous singer Lagardy is coming to the theatre in Rouen.

THE PARISH PRIEST

I do not agree. A mixed company gathering in attractive surroundings adorned with worldly finery, pagan fancy-dressing, make-up, lights and effeminate voices, it all breeds debauchery of the spirit; it stimulates foul thoughts and sinful temptations.

THE APOTHECARY

Come on, the Bible itself contains things that are – how shall I put it? – peppered and bold. I even think this book of yours is not fit for young girls or for married women either.

THE PARISH PRIEST

The Bible is recommended by Protestants, not by us.

THE APOTHECARY (*to Charles*)

Take your lady to the theatre. Lagardy will only appear on the stage once. A great lad, so they say. He comes from England where he gets exceptional fees for his appearances. He's wallowing in gold. He always brings three girls and a cook with him on his tours. All these great artists lead dissolute lives that stir their imagination. Then they die in almshouses because they fail to economize while they're young. It can't be helped.

CHARLES

How about it, darling? Shall we go?

EMMA

No.

CHARLES

How about it? Shall we go?

EMMA

No.

CHARLES

How about it? Perhaps we could...

EMMA

All right. Let's go.

THE THEATRE

(Emma and Charles are sitting centre stage, facing the audience. Emma has small opera glasses which she uses now and then to look around the hall. Music is heard. Lucie de Lammermoor, the French version, Act I, Scene VIII, the duet of Lucie and

Edgard.)

EDGARD

*C'est moi, Lucie.
J'ai voulu te parler sans témoins en ce lieu.
Un sort cruel flétrit ma vie.
C'est horrible! ô mon Dieu !
De notre Ecosse avant demain, chère âme,
Je serai loin.
(It is me, Lucie. I wanted to talk to you here
Without anyone present.
A cruel fate has ruined my life.
It is terrible! Oh my God!
Dear soul, tomorrow I shall be far away
From our Scotland.)*

LUCIE

*O ciel !
(Oh, heaven!)*

EDGARD

*J'irai trouver mon ennemi,
Le conjurer d'oublier notre haine,
Et, ma main dans sa main, te demander à lui.
(I am leaving for France,
My country demands it.
Tomorrow, tomorrow, without delay.)*

LUCIE

*M'abandonner seule en ma peine !
(You are leaving me alone in my suffering!)*

EDGARD

*J'irai trouver mon ennemi,
Le conjurer d'oublier notre haine,
Et, ma main dans sa main, te demander à lui.
(I am going to find my enemy,
Ask him to forget our hatred
And, shaking hands with him, ask for your hand in marriage.)*

LUCIE

*Edgard, ô ciel ! Qu'entends-je ?
Fatal amour ! Ah ! Meurs,
Eteins-toi dans nos cœurs !
(Edgard, oh heaven! What do I hear?
Fatal love! Oh! Die
And be extinguished in our hearts!)*

EDGARD

*Je devine, un refus ! O destinée étrange !
Quoi! ses projets de vengeance assouvis,
Mon père mort, mes biens qu'il m'a ravis ...
C'est peu ! De sa colère
Il me poursuit encore. Mon sang, ma perte entière,
Voilà son voeu.
(He will refuse me, I surmise! Oh strange destiny!
What? His thirst for revenge appeased,
My father dead, all I had taken away...
It is not much. His anger
Pursues me still. My blood, the estate plundered,
Here is his vow.)*

CHARLES *(He is shouting because the music is too loud.)*

I find his speech hard to understand. What did he say?

(Emma puts her fingers on her mouth, asking him to be quiet.)

THE DUET

EDGARD

*Il me haït.
(He hates me.)*

LUCIE

Edgard!

EDGARD

*Grand Dieu !
(Lord Almighty!)*

LUCIE

*Par pitié! point de blasphème.
(Please, do not blaspheme!)*

CHARLES *(He is almost shouting.)*

I have a feeling that this guy is almost shouting.

(There is no reaction from Emma.)

EDGARD

*Sur ton frère, anathème !
Qu'il tremble ...
(May your brother be cursed!
Let him tremble...)*

LUCIE

Edgard!

EDGARD

*Juge toi-même.
Sur la tombe de mon père,
J'ai juré, dans ma colère,
A ta race vengeance et guerre;
J'ai juré mort en retour.
Je te vis, et dans mon âme
Dieu mit un rayon d'amour,
Mais mon serment me réclame;
Je puis l'accomplir un jour.
(You judge by yourself.
On my father's grave
I declared, angry as I was,
Vengeful war upon your race;
I swore death as retribution.
I saw you and in my soul
God lit up a ray of love,
But my promise demands it;
One day I shall fulfil it.)*

CHARLES

Again, I didn't understand a word. But I find it interesting.

LUCIE

*Qu'il me reste l'espérance !
Vois l'angoisse de mon coeur;
De celui qu'en ta vengeance
Tu maudis, je suis la sœur.
De tes yeux, éteins la flamme,
Vois les miens de pleurs s'emplir,
Oh ! la vengeance est infâme,*

*Edgard, si j'en dois mourir !
(I still have hope!
Look how fearful my heart is;
To him that you call curses upon
In your lust for vengeance I am sister.
Put out the flames in your eyes
And see mine fill with tears.
Oh, your vengeance is infamous,
Edgard, if it is to bring me death!*

(The music dies down.)

EMMA

Lagardy sang and brandished his naked sword. Anger, vindictiveness, jealousy, terror, pity, they all seethed came from his mouth at once. From the stage he looked at me sometimes. He was looking at me; there is no doubt about it. Oh, if only it were fated we would meet and fall in love. I would travel all the countries in Europe with him from one capital to another, I would embroider his costumes and collect the flowers flung on stage. Oh, if only it were fated I would devote all my passion and all my dreams to him, to him alone... And then young Leon appeared.

LEON

(Music and singing from the opera are heard in the background.)

EMMA

Young Leon was the fourth man in my life. We met him at the opera house.

(Leon arrives. He brings up a chair and sits down by the Bovaries.)

LEON

Oh, Mr. Bovary! Madame. *(He kisses her hand.)*

EMMA

So you have returned from Paris?

LEON

Yes, I have returned.

EMMA

How long have you been here?

LEON

A couple of months. I work with...

EMMA

Air, give me some air, there's no air here...

CHARLES

My wife is recovering after her illness. She almost died.

LEON

My God!

EMMA

Air... Water... It is so hot in here.

CHARLES

I'll fetch you some water. *(He walks off the stage.)*

EMMA *(She is staring at Leon.)*

Never had I found a man so handsome. His face showed a charming innocence. His downcast eyes were shadowed by tender upturned eyelashes. His tender cheeks were flushed. I felt an irrepressible desire to kiss him on the cheek.

(Charles returns, carrying a glass of water.)

CHARLES

Here's some water.

EMMA *(To Charles.)*

Let's go! Let's go home!

CHARLES

But Lucia di Lammermoor let down her hair. Tragedy is about to begin.

EMMA

Pooh, she is screaming too loudly. I have a headache.

CHARLES

Yes, well, a bit, perhaps...

LEON

It is truly hot.

EMMA

I am suffocating. Let us leave.

CHARLES

If you wish... Still, Lagardy is excellent in the second act, I hear.

LEON

Oh, yes, in the second act he is magnificent, sublime... But there'll be a reprise tomorrow. You can stay on and...

CHARLES

Oh, no, we cannot stay. I must return to Yonville. Unless you'd care to stay, dear.

EMMA

I wanted to say no.

CHARLES

You can come home on Sunday if you want. It's up to you to decide.

EMMA

I wanted to say no.

CHARLES

Do not be unwise if you feel this change might suit you.

EMMA

I was about to say no, but the change was agreeable.

CHARLES

Oh, why am I wasting my breath? Mr. Leon, my wife will be available at her earliest convenience. I am counting upon your complaisance. Am I right, my dear?

EMMA

I wanted to say no.

(Charles leaves.)

EMMA

Charles said yes. Even though I was still trying. In the evening I wrote a letter to Leon to say no, but I never sent it because I didn't know his address. I wanted to give it to him in person. We had a date in the cathedral.

THE CATHEDRAL

JANITOR AT THE CATHEDRAL

The construction of the cathedral began in the 12th century but it is not yet completed. There used to be a church at this very site as early as the 4th century, later expanded by St. Audoin. Charlemagne visited it in the 8th century. In the IXth century it was burnt down by the Vikings, but by the grace of God, in the Xth century the Viking king Rollo, later renamed Robert I, king of Normandy, was christened and later buried here.

EMMA

I am too old and you are too young. Forget me.

LEON

No, I have suffered too much because of you.

EMMA

Oh, why am I not dead? It would be best for everybody. Neither you nor I would suffer any longer.

LEON

I wanted to die as well. One evening I even wrote a will, demanding to be buried in that pretty carpet with a velvet hem that you gave me as a present.

EMMA

Why was that?

LEON

Why? Because I loved you with all my heart.

JANITOR AT THE CATHEDRAL

Here we see the bulk of the magnificent Ambois' bell. It weighed 40,000 pounds and there was not another like it in the whole of Europe. The worker who cast it died with joy.

LEON

Let us go.

JANITOR AT THE CATHEDRAL

Sir, I do not wish to appear rude but I have to warn you that you have not as yet seen the belfry which stands 440 ft high, thus being only nine feet lower than the great Egyptian pyramid.

LEON

Stop, I've had enough. Let's go, Emma.

JANITOR AT THE CATHEDRAL

If you really have to leave, go through the northern entrance where you can see the Resurrection, the Last Judgment, Paradise, King David and the Outcasts in Hell Fire.

(The janitor leaves.)

LEON

Let us go, Emma. I shall hire a carriage.

EMMA

That... That would seem indecent.

LEON

That is the Parisian way. I shall make you come with me.

EMMA

I was forced to comply. Without any hesitation or announcement of some understanding sensibility he grabbed my hand and dragged me to the carriage. Oh, I was so helpless, dazed by his tempestuous hands. I was full of pity for Leon, for myself, for Charles, for the world; it was hard for me to hold back my tears of happiness.

LEON

Oh, Emma, I...

EMMA

Hush, boy!

LEON

I went silent. I threw her on the bench, tore off her dress and started sketching her breasts, her hips and belly with my tongue...

EMMA

His fingers were re-creating my body; I was as soft as clay that was becoming meat...

LEON

Thereupon my kisses added colour to the dark landscape rising between her thighs...

EMMA

I was on my back, watching the universe appearing on the carriage roof and comets bringing a message of life...

LEON

Now, now, I whispered and dove into her as if she was a salty ocean...

EMMA

I clutched at his hair so the wind from his lips wouldn't blow me away...

LEON

Then... Then I flipped her over and held her as if I were hugging myself.

EMMA

I dug my face into the velvet bench and waited.

LEON

I took time. I wanted to admire this body that gave me godlike power...

EMMA

Oh, I felt that power!

LEON

I was a mortal and a slayer of death! In a single moment I embraced eternity.

EMMA

I soothed him and gave him directions. We caught on the rhythm coming from the depths of the planet...

LEON

We were one! I was Emma!

EMMA

And in this rhythm my aroused skin sang out its sweet pain with ardour, yet silently.

LEON

Yellow flashes in my closed eyes! There was a thunderous tempest raging inside me! Hot rain boiled up from inside of me!

EMMA

I was a volcano disgorging boiling lava down its slopes.

LEON

She turned her head and looked at me with a mixture of terror, sensuality and pain, which roused me even more.

EMMA

Cramps in my toes crawled up to my ankles, my knees, my thighs, to my hips that started dancing svagely as if thirty gipsies had a birthday celebration there.

LEON

I was God...

EMMA

Unknown voices were singing inside of me.

LEON

It was as if someone else tried to crawl out of my skin.

EMMA

I wanted him to stop... Never to stop...

LEON

Grand-Pont, Place des Arts, Quai Napoléon, Pont-Neuf, Pierre Corneille...

EMMA

La Fayette, Oyssel, Quatremares, Sotte-ville, Grande-Chaussee...

LEON

Elbeuf, Jardin Botanique, Saint-Sever, Quai des Curandiers, Quai aux Meules...

EMMA

Champ-de-Mars, Boulevard Bouvreuil, boulevard Cauchoise, Mont-Riboudet,
Deville!

LEON

Saint-Pole! Lescure! Mont-Garganu! Rouge-Mareu!

EMMA

Place Gallarbois! Rue Maladrerie! Dinanderie! Saint-Romain! Saint-Vivien!

LEON

Saint-Maclou!

EMMA

Saint-Nicais! Basse-Vieille-Tour!

LEON

Trois-Pipes!

EMMA

Cimetière-Monumental...

LEON

Beauvoisin...

CHARLES'S HEAVEN – A CONFESSION

The Apothecary and the Parish Priest are standing centre stage. Charles is sitting on some sort of a three-legged stool by the back wall. He is leaning his head against the wall as if he was sleeping. His head is covered by his celebrated hat. To the left and right of him there are a bed, a catafalque, a coffin or simply a kitchen table where Emma is laid out, dressed in a white nightgown.

THE APOTHECARY

Quos ego. Quoquoquoquoquoquoos eeeegooooo!

THE PARISH PRIEST

Ridiculum est.

(He looks back at Charles.)

THE PARISH PRIEST

Quis es iste qui venit? Who comes there?
My God, what is that thing on your head?

CHARLES

It is a hat.

THE PARISH PRIEST

A hat?

THE APOTHECARY

That is a hat?

THE PARISH PRIEST

Well, let us take it analytically: so this is a cap...

THE APOTHECARY

A fur cap...

THE PARISH PRIEST

It is also a soldier's hat...

THE APOTHECARY

A round hat...

THE PARISH PRIEST

An otter hat.

THE APOTHECARY

A cotton cap.

THE PARISH PRIEST

In short, it is something almost alive, a creature whose mute ugliness and deep expressiveness compete with the face of an idiot.

THE APOTHECARY *(He is pointing at Charles in a solemn way.)*

Et voilà! There you are!

CHARLES

Please stop making fun.

THE APOTHECARY

Come a little closer.

(Charles is staring at him perplexedly, thereupon he approaches the Apothecary.)

Come, come... How do you feel?

CHARLES

I don't know... I'm all right.

(The Apothecary feels his forehead. Then he holds him by the hand and feels his pulse.)

THE APOTHECARY

This is ridiculous?

CHARLES

What is ridiculous?

THE APOTHECARY

You are cold. You have no pulse. After a short deliberation I'd say you were –dead.

CHARLES

It is impossible. I do feel a bit strange, yet... Please write a letter to Dr. Canivet telling him I want him to come here forthwith.

THE PARISH PRIEST

I cannot, unfortunately.

CHARLES

All right, then write a letter to Dr. Larivier.

THE PARISH PRIEST

I cannot do that either. He is not here.

CHARLES

I know he's not here, that is why I told you to write him a letter.

THE APOTHECARY

It is over, Charles.

CHARLES

What? What is over? Where is everybody?

THE PARISH PRIEST

Isn't it touching?

THE APOTHECARY

Very touching.

THE PARISH PRIEST

He is so used to living that he simply cannot give up the habit.

THE APOTHECARY

He knows of no other condition.

THE PARISH PRIEST

Charles!

(Charles stops and looks at the Parish Priest with a frightened face.)

It is the end. You are dead.

CHARLES

No.

THE APOTHECARY

It is over.

THE PARISH PRIEST

Like it or not.

CHARLES

I never wanted to die!

THE PARISH PRIEST

Yet you are dead. Well?

CHARLES

Yes... It's true... I didn't want to go on living.

THE APOTHECARY

It is something of a paradox... You didn't want to die and yet you died because you didn't want to go on living?

CHARLES

Not wanting to live didn't mean I wanted to die.

THE PARISH PRIEST

That's very profound, my dear Charles. Why are you suddenly so profound?

THE APOTHECARY

This is not profundity, my dear colleague. It is – emptiness. He died simply because he forgot to breathe. And your wife...

CHARLES

What about my wife?

THE APOTHECARY

Your wife Emma died because she didn't want to live either?

THE PARISH PRIEST

Oh, she did want to go on living but her wishes were not in line with her intentions. She wanted more than she could do. She was a sinner...

THE APOTHECARY

She was a great woman who suffered a lot...

THE PARISH PRIEST

Vain, lascivious, greedy, and she will pay for her sins....

THE APOTHECARY

Pay? Just listen to yourself! She will pay?! You speak like a spiritual usurer! In my professional opinion she was sick.

THE PARISH PRIEST

Of course she was sick. She had everything a normal woman could want: a roof over her head, food, a husband, a child; yet she took pleasure in her fantasies and in... something I'd call masturbation! A disgusting word but true. She suffered from masturbation of the soul.

THE APOTHECARY

You are sick!

THE PARISH PRIEST

I hate to pass judgment, but I think she'll burn in hell, all things considered...

THE APOTHECARY

Shame on you! You'd be willing to burn her!

THE PARISH PRIEST

Not I, my friend...

THE APOTHECARY

You condemn her and yet you say you do not wish to pass judgment!

THE PARISH PRIEST

I have nothing to do with it, but God has.

THE APOTHECARY

God? God?! That word offends me.

CHARLES

I do not wish to contradict you. I do not know much. I heard that Emma was a sinner. That she is guilty of having sinned. Others will say Rodolphe was to blame for having seduced her. Or Leon. Some say the main culprit was the shopkeeper or the banker for lending her money at usurious rates of interest. At first I thought it was – fate. But... But... Perhaps it was nothing of the above. I was her husband; and a slave to her beauty. I believed in her more that she herself did. At times when I should have acted as her husband, I know, but I couldn't. I should have done something. But how could I raise my voice to a woman I adored like a goddess? I was afraid of profaning her. Did Emma love me? No, but at least she tried to love me. I know that. I know that now. Was she loathsome, bad and contemptible, a monstrous creature with a perverted imagination? Oh, please! I was proud of being this woman's husband! I, Charles Bovary, was Emma Rouault's husband. I, a little man. A modest man. A dead man. So tiny am I that God never noticed I wasn't there. Small, modest and dead. So I am asking you: Why not judge me? Why not judge me? Because I am too small. I am too modest. Judge me. Judge me because I am innocent. Can't you judge innocence? I loved Emma. I loved her. I loved her, loved her, loved her. Is love everything a man needs? I loved

her. I needed to love her. She was the only thing in my small, modest, innocent life that was stronger than my smallness, my modesty. Stronger than my innocence. Trust me, I am guilty. My guilt is small. My guilt is innocent. But I am guilty of doing everything to be even smaller, more innocent.

We, the small ones, are the guilty ones. We, the innocent ones, are the guilty ones. I am guilty. Find me guilty.

(Charles walks back to his stool and buries his face in his hands. There's a pause.)

THE APOTHECARY

So you are of the opinion that a dead person... What? Goes to God to confess to Him?

THE PARISH PRIEST

Of course he does. Well, first he soaks in the sauce of his own sins, for every person is a sinner.

THE APOTHECARY

What a grandiose, stupid, cruel and ridiculous a word. God.

THE PARISH PRIEST

In order to understand this word you'd first have to believe.

THE APOTHECARY

Believe? Believe in what? In a word I don't understand?

THE PARISH PRIEST

It is not just a word. It is – power, providence...

THE APOTHECARY

Good gracious, come on! You speak of God's providence and celestial benevolence. I don't see a single reason for believing you. Do you know how I imagine this God of yours? God is someone having fun, testing people to see how much pain they can endure. Isn't your God stupid and cruel like a child who tears off a bug's wings, its legs and then its head, knowing it would die? God? This word is but an excuse for man's stupidity. Still, I understand you. You know, man had to believe in God before he could understand science. And you are that man.

THE PARISH PRIEST

What man?

THE APOTHECARY

The man who doesn't understand science.

THE PARISH PRIEST

And you are a man who doesn't understand religion.

THE APOTHECARY

I do understand it. It is, how shall I put it, stupid.

THE PARISH PRIEST

Your beliefs and scientific self-sufficiency... they are beyond vanity.

THE APOTHECARY

Let me tell you this: if God was once the one who knew everything, truly everything, nowadays man is approaching this kind of knowledge because of his progress. God is another word for knowledge.

THE PARISH PRIEST

You just said it was another word for stupidity.

THE APOTHECARY

When I said that God is another word for...

THE PARISH PRIEST

Please be so kind as not to pronounce that word again!

THE APOTHECARY

One day man will know all the things that you presume this... *(He mumbles something.)* of yours knows. This was what I wanted to say. And he will only profit from this knowledge, as distinguished from you who hardly profit from God's knowledge.

THE PARISH PRIEST

I'm warning you!

THE APOTHECARY

All right, all right. You see, your ignorance is making you aggressive.

THE PARISH PRIEST

For God's sake, sir, here are two bodies! Show some respect and let me pray for their souls.

(He kneels in front of Emma and starts praying.)

THE PARISH PRIEST

My Lord, you are not the God of the dead but of the living.
All those you have called forth now live inside you.
We remember all the deceased whom we use do love
And in whose company we used to live.

Your benevolence is what binds us to them,
The benevolence which you show love to them and us alike.
Before you, we remember all the deceased,
All the forgotten and obliterated names.
The deceased that no one mourns;
The missing whose fate is unknown to us;
The desperate who have taken their own lives;
All those who have been murdered.
We know that you are holding them in your arms and we implore you:
Please accept them all to be your happy children.

THE APOTHECARY *(He kneels in front of Charles and starts touching him – his joints, his legs, his thighs...)*

I do hope Mr. Bovary bequeathed his body to some hospital or other. After all he was a healthy man when he died. It would be such a shame not to profit from it. As for the lady... I doubt that she could be useful. A body full of arsenic... But perhaps it would still be serviceable... for chasing away...

(Emma starts to cough. Everybody stiffens. Emma sits up and starts looking round, perplexed. She is pale and looking tired. Charles runs to her.)

CHARLES

Emma! Emma!

(Emma stretches her hand towards him in a sign of rejection. She comes to the centre of the stage and starts to sing.)

MADNESS

EMMA

(She sings the aria of Lucia from Lucia di Lammermoor, Act III, Scene VI.)

Le chant de la fauvette au fond des bois résonne !...

*Tressons ma couronne...
Quelle douce harmonie ! elle descend du ciel...
C'est l'hymne des noces... – L'autel
Pour nous s'apprête... O délice !
Le bonheur dans mon âme a versé son calice.
L'autel rayonne... un doux parfum dans l'air.
Se respire. Voici le prêtre.
A toi ma vie, et tout mon être !
Conduis-moi par la main, ô mon Edgard si cher !
(The sound of birds singing echoes from the forest!
Let us weave me a crown.
Sweet celestial harmony is descending from the sky.
It is our wedding hymn. The altar
Awaits us... Oh, what happiness!
The chalice of happiness is overflowing in my soul.
The altar is spreading sweet perfume in the air.
I feel it. Here is the minister!
I give you my life and all of me!
Take me by the hand, my dearest Edgard!)*

THE APOTHECARY, THE PARISH PRFIEST, CHARLES

*D'un Dieu vengeur, que son bon ange
Apaïse le courroux.
(Let the vengeful God's guardian angel
Appease his anger.)*

EMMA

*L'azur sans mélange
Vous brillerez pour nous,
De mon Bonheur un ange
Du ciel serait jaloux.
(Pure heavenly azure
Will shine on us.
An angel from heaven
Would envy me my happiness.)*

THE END