

**WHO KILLED  
EMMA BOVARY?**

A play by

**COLIN DUCKWORTH**  
Based on Gustave Flaubert's novel  
**MADAME BOVARY**

Ma pauvre *Bovary* , sans doute, souffre  
et pleure dans vingt villages de  
France à la fois, à cette heure même.

No doubt my poor [Emma] Bovary suffers  
and weeps in twenty French villages  
all at once, at this very moment.

GUSTAVE FLAUBERT



## CHARACTERS

Emma Bovary: young and pretty; dark hair, centre parting — but lets her hair down. Pert, romantic, passionate.

The Judge: avuncular and ironic. He wears a judge's robe. A mysterious and authoritative entity, he exists on another plane from all the other male characters.

Charles Bovary: 33 years old; low-grade country doctor; fat, complacent, not very bright, but very kind.

Rodolphe Boulanger de la Huchette: 34, a good-looking womanising bounder.

Léon: a shy young lawyer's clerk with light brown hair.

The vicomte: elegant, handsome and a good dancer.

Bournisien: the priest; flustered, grey-haired, rotund and becassocked; proves useless when Emma needs help.

Lheureux: white-haired shop-keeper; obsequious, creepy, evil.

The play has been structured so that one actor could play all the male parts. He will have to establish character changes by quick (if simple) costume changes, wigs, and above all by changes in body-language, voice and accent.

**N.B. MONOLOGUE MODE:** *When a character is speaking a monologue, the other does **not** hear or react to it. ~~This will be obvious to most directors, but not, in this writer's experience, to all!~~*

~~It is a condition of the issue of a licence to perform that the Play shall be performed exactly as written and published unless the author (Colin Duckworth) has agreed in writing to changes. Otherwise, no alterations or additions shall be made to the text.~~

~~All indications in the text as to the sex of the characters and performers shall be followed at all times.~~

~~Unless agreed to by the Author no music is to be played while an actor is speaking. Any choice of music that is specified in the script is to be respected unless the Author has agreed to changes.~~

~~The Author's instructions as to the staging of the Work shall be followed in every detail unless he has agreed in writing to changes. The integrity of the Author's work shall be preserved at all times.~~

Registered with  
The Australian Writers' Guild 2008 ??

## WHO KILLED EMMA BOVARY?

### ACT ONE

#### SCENE 1

*As the lights go up, the Judge is already seated on a raised but delapidated "throne" upstage centre.*

*Emma Bovary enters and looks round nervously. She doesn't know quite where she is. The Judge gestures to her to sit — she is not treated as a prisoner at the bar.*

#### JUDGE

Please be seated, Madame. *(To audience.)* Members of the jury, we are here to decide if Madame Emma Bovary, née Rouault, had justifiable reasons to commit suicide, which some of you may consider to be a crime meriting eternal damnation. *(Emma reacts as if to object. The judge warns her with his hand not to interrupt.)* Was she morally justified in escaping from the situation in which she found herself? You must decide whether that situation was of her own making, or whether it was imposed upon her without her agreement.

#### EMMA *(diffidently)*

My lord, please excuse me, but I think you are — what's the word? — pre...

#### JUDGE *(helpfully)*

Prejudging?

#### EMMA

Yes, thank you, I'm rather nervous, *prejudging* the issue. Surely the point of this trial is to decide whether my death WAS in fact suicide — my life, I mean my death, depends on the verdict.

#### JUDGE

Do you know what the word *suicide* means, Madame? *(Emma nods.)* Well, did you or did you not kill yourself by taking arsenic?

#### EMMA

Well, yes, and a very stupid way of dying it was, extremely painful, I wouldn't do it again, not that way, but... I was driven to it, you see? I had no other choice.

#### JUDGE

No other choice? *Driven* to kill yourself?

#### EMMA

Oh yes, your honour, I can see that now, very clearly. That is why I am pleading against eternal damnation — you see how hard it is to shake off a convent education.

#### JUDGE *(slowly, very clearly)*

In this place, verdict and outcome depend on what you believe.

EMMA

Oh. But I'm not clear about what I believe — for very good reason. Now that my destiny's complete...

JUDGE

Please excuse me, Madame, but did you say "destiny"? As in "Fate"?

EMMA (*warily*)

Yes, my lord.

JUDGE (*makes a note*)

I see. Do go on.

EMMA

I am now able to look back on my life, with clarity, right up to the last agonising breath and heartbeat.

JUDGE

And what do you see when you look back?

EMMA

My life is a great surprise to me since I've been dead. At last I understand all the influences, betrayals, disappointments and manipulations that I was subjected to, like a boat at the mercy of tides.

(*The judge makes a note.*)

I had no will of my own, and so it was *inevitable* that I should kill myself. It was a very fashionable way out of an intolerable situation with the Romantics.

JUDGE

Romantics, you say?

EMMA

Yes, my lord, I was reared on the Romantics. They are part of my downfall. Perhaps I'd never have been taken in by love if I hadn't read about it.

JUDGE

Hm, yers... (*Lift of eyebrows.*) Well, Madame, that remains to be seen, that is what the jury is here to judge — the balance between responsibility and... unavoidable destiny. Where would you like to start?

*During Emma's next speech he vacates his seat and moves offstage.*

EMMA

I suppose everything that's happened since I was born has some part to play. As a child I was quite fond of literature, but I realise now that what really interested me were sentimental words like *bliss*, *passion* and *ecstasy*. I spent a goodly part of my few remaining years trying to find out what on earth they meant in real life.

My senses had not yet been awakened when I married Charles. Charles! A good man but so *dull!* What a mistake that was! I don't think I fully realised *what* a mistake until the ball at the château of La Vaubyessard.

## SCENE 2

*Emma and Charles are returning from the ball at La Vaubyessard. Emma is over the moon. Dances round ecstatically, humming a waltz — by Johann Strauss I, for example Tivoli Slide, 1830 .)*

EMMA

What a wonderful evening! The music, the food, the finery, the sheer grandeur! So different from this dump of a village, Tostes [*pron.* Tôte]. *Charles enters, hobbling, while Emma is in mid-flight. He sits, begins to take off his heavy boots.*

EMMA

Did you notice, Charles, the way the Marquess himself helped me down from our dog-cart and led me on his arm into the château? So gentlemanly.

CHARLES (*groans*)

Thank God we're back home again!

EMMA

I could have danced all night with that viscount.

CHARLES

My feet are killing me.

EMMA

I told you not to wear those great clumping boots.

CHARLES

They're good enough for the country.

EMMA

But not for a ball in a grand château! I hope you didn't dance.

CHARLES

No, I didn't dance.

EMMA

It's fortunate you didn't. You'd have had to operate on a few ladies' feet.

CHARLES

I just stood for five hours happily watching you enjoying yourself, my dear. You looked ravishing.

EMMA (*sotto voce*)

And you looked ridiculous.

*Emma is engrossed in her toilette, and does not hear or react to any of Charles's little monologue.*

CHARLES

What a happy man I am! Since I married Emma I haven't had a care in the world. My life had been barren and joyless until she said she would be my wife — my second wife. The first one was not a success.

When I first saw Emma — Mlle. Rouault she was then — I was putting her father's broken leg in splints. I was struck by the whiteness of her nails, almond-shaped, and so clean for a farmer's daughter. But her hands were too long, not beautiful at all. Not pale or soft enough. Rather dry around the knuckles. Her lips were full, her long black hair parted down the middle, with a bun at the back. But her eyes! They were really beautiful. They were brown, but her lashes made them look black. I thought the way she looked at you — that's to say, me — was direct to the point of boldness. That was my first impression.

Now I have this beautiful woman for life. I love to look at her lying by my side asleep in the early morning, as the sunlight strikes the soft down on her fair cheeks. When she wakes up her eyelids flutter several times, and her eyes look larger. I still can't help myself touching her and kissing her, and sometimes she laughs and playfully pushes me away as if I was a clinging child.

EMMA

He taught me to waltz in no time at all. *(Begins to hum waltz again as she brushes her hair.)*

CHARLES *(still removing boots)*

Who did?

EMMA

The viscount.

CHARLES

Oh him. *(Finally gets his second boot off with a sigh of relief. Wiggles toes.)*

Oooof, that's better. I'm off to bed. Busy day tomorrow.

EMMA

Goodnight Charles. *(He approaches her as if to kiss her. She waves him away.)* Good *night!* Your clean night-cap is under your pillow.

*(He goes off limping.)* He'll be snoring away by the time I go up. How I've tried to love him! I used to recite passionate poetry to him by moonlight in the garden, but the flint I struck in my heart didn't get any spark at all. I'm a good country doctor's wife, keeping house, doing the accounts, serving his dinner myself if he gets back after the servant has gone to bed. Then what does he do? He retires for the night and *snores*, which is quite a relief because his conversation is flat as a pavement. And my life is as cold as an attic with a north window. *(Sighs.)* Dear God, why did I marry him — oh, that ghastly wedding! — and not some, witty, distinguished, charming man? If only...

*(She sighs as she pirouettes and hums the waltz tune. The sound of the orchestra becomes louder.)* What a handsome man that viscount is! I think he found me attractive.

*The viscount enters, very handsome and elegant in his tight-fitting waistcoat, hair plastered down. He looks Emma up and down approvingly as she dances by herself.*

Oh yes, he must have done because he asked me not once but twice if I would dance with him.

VISCOUNT

Would you do me the honour of accepting my invitation to this waltz, Madame?

EMMA *(stammers, embarrassed)*

That is very kind of you, sir ... I ... I ... hate to refuse you again, but the truth is, I don't know how to do the waltz.

VISCOUNT

Is that all? It's dashed simple, you know. Just *one-two-three, one-two-three*. Just follow me, I'll guide you, you'll be quite safe in my arms. Clever girl like you will soon cotton on.

*He holds her by the tips of her gloved fingers and they slowly begin. The music gets faster, Emma sways to the rhythm of the orchestra. Then she feels giddy and stops. He holds her so close their legs are entwined. He looks down at her, smiling. They gaze into one another's eyes for a long moment, she feels weak at the knees, and rests her head against his chest, panting, eyes shut.*

VISCOUNT

I'll return you to your seat, Madame. *(He does so.)*

EMMA

Yes, excuse me, I felt a little dizzy. So silly of me.

*The viscount bows and exits.*

As he walked away from me his body gave off a subtle perfume. Everything was still turning, turning around me — the lamps, the furniture, the floor, the shimmering satins — like a disc spinning on a pivot. So I closed my eyes.

When I opened them I happened to glance at the window nearby and saw peasants' faces pressed against the bars, looking in. With a shock I pictured my father in his working clothes under the apple trees on our farm, and the muddy pond, and I saw myself dipping my finger in the milk-churns to taste the cream. Then the dazzling splendour of the present drove my past life out of my mind, so that I almost doubted I had ever lived it.

I even managed to forget that the marquess had invited us only because Charles had cured him of a mouth ulcer.

The next day seemed interminable as I walked up and down the paths in my little garden, past the four symmetrical flower-beds planted with a few dog-

roses, past that plaster priest reading his breviary under the young spruce trees.

*The judge enters and sits on his throne.*

How far away the ball seemed already! — the magnificent dinner, the feeling of being wrapped in warmth and opulence, the smell of roast meat, the odour of truffles and the scent of flowers, the candle-flames reflected in the silver dishes, the gilt-framed ancestors on the walls, knights and admirals wounded and killed in famous battles long ago. I carefully put away my beautiful ball gown and even my satin shoes, whose soles were yellow with wax from the ballroom floor. In the same way, wealth, riches, had rubbed off on my heart, and would never be removed. Like those great crevasses that a mountain storm can open up in a single night, the visit to La Vaubyessard had made a hole in my life.

JUDGE

May we stop there for a moment? You are telling us that you were generously given an opportunity to enjoy yourself for an evening in very select company. As a result of this initiation, you began to envy the kind of life, blessed by fortune, that rich people are able to lead. Are you seriously offering this, Madame, as a reason for your subsequent actions on the way to suicide?

EMMA (*pensively*): Was it just envy? Desire would describe it better. Yes, I think it was desire born of contrast and fantasy. The morning after the ball I was astonished... no, *stupefied* by the mediocrity, the sheer ordinariness of the things I saw in my house and my garden. I measured time by memories: every Wednesday I said to myself, "A week ago... a fortnight ago, three weeks ago...". On that awful bumpy drive back in our rickety dog cart, Charles picked up a cigar case that someone had dropped on the road. It was edged with green silk and had a coat of arms in the centre like a carriage door. I kept it in the linen cupboard, and every so often I looked at it, opened it, smelled its odour of tobacco and verbenas. Who could it belong to? The viscount no doubt. Yes, it must have been a present from one of his mistresses, who had embroidered it with her soft curls hanging over it. I caught a whiff of love and silent passion coming from its silken threads. Where was he now? In Paris of course. What was it like, Paris? I kept whispering the name to myself, *Paris! Paris!*, just for the pleasure of hearing it, ringing in my ears like a cathedral bell.

JUDGE

A *cathedral* bell? You associated a mistress with a cathedral? (*Emma nods.*) Hm. Very well, I'm sure the connection will become clear. Do go on.

EMMA

I saw things at the ball that opened my eyes to more than riches, my lord. I can remember three. Dinner was served at seven o'clock. The first thing I noticed was that several ladies did not put their gloves in their wine glass!

JUDGE

Is that significant?



EMMA

Oh yes, my lord. It meant that they were going to drink wine in a public place! Very sophisticated. Very Parisian!

JUDGE

Extraordinary.

EMMA

Then I observed an old man with bloodshot eyes at the top of the table, with his napkin tied round his neck like a child, and gravy dribbling down his chin. The lady sitting next to me told me it was the father-in-law of the marquess, none other than the Duc de Laverdière!

*Pause for effect! The judge searches his memory.*

JUDGE

Laverdière? Laverdière?

EMMA

The lover of Queen Marie-Antoinette! The favourite of the comte d'Artois — before he became King Charles the Tenth of course. What a life of debauchery he'd led at court — hobnobbing with royalty, fighting duels, carrying off women, sleeping with a queen! I couldn't take my eyes off him, that decrepit old man with the slobbering lips, he seemed so incredibly majestic.

JUDGE

Let's move on to your third revelation, shall we?

EMMA

Yes my lord. At the ball after dinner, a lady standing near me dropped her fan, just as a gentleman was passing. She asked him, "Would you be so kind as to pick up my fan? It's behind the sofa". He bent down and stretched out his arm, and as he did so I saw the lady throw into his hat something white folded into a triangle. The gentleman respectfully handed her the fan. She coolly thanked him with a nod and buried her nose in her bouquet.

I realised then that there was another world with different ways of how one should behave. A world so removed from my own.

JUDGE

And that world attracted you, did it?

EMMA

Oh yes — but I was so naïve, you see, I didn't associate it with doing anything wrong, just romantic.

SCENE 3

JUDGE

But you were educated in a convent school, were you not? Surely the nuns inculcated in you some sense of morality?

EMMA  
Inculcated?

JUDGE  
Yes, imbued.... (*Emma looks blank.*) Taught you.

EMMA  
Oh. (*She cogitates.*) It certainly had a long-lasting effect on me, my so-called education at the hands of Ursuline nuns, those pallid women wearing rosaries with brass crucifixes hanging from them. The good sisters. I was very fond of them.

My father took me himself to the convent when I was 13. On the way there we stopped at an inn for supper, which was served on plates bearing pictures of the Duchess de La Vallière, the mistress of the young Louis the Fourteenth.

JUDGE  
That is a curious detail to remember, Madame. Is it important?

EMMA  
I suppose it must be, your Honour, otherwise I shouldn't be telling you about it. When she grew old, about thirty, the King got tired of her she retired to a convent. Ah! The captions on the plates: they were almost completely scratched away but I could make out that they all glorified religion, refined feelings, and the splendours of life at court.

JUDGE  
Were you happy at the convent?

EMMA  
At first I was. Never bored. I was gently lulled by the mystic languor of altar perfumes, the chill of holy water in the font, and the warm glow of candles. I invented little sins when I went to confession so as to stay kneeling there longer with my hands clasped together and my face pressed against the grill, devouring the whispers of the priest.

JUDGE  
A model pupil, in fact.

EMMA  
I wonder. Looking back at myself then, so good and pious, I can glimpse the seeds of the woman I was to become. All those sermons about the betrothed, the spouse, celestial lover and eternal marriage, aroused a strange excitement in the depths of my being.

Soon, my favourite times were spent secretly reading novels lent to us by an old maid who mended the linen. They were about love, lovers, loving, swooning damsels in distress, dark forests, palpitating hearts, sobbing and kissing. The gentlemen were brave as lions, gentle as lambs, and impossibly

virtuous. So, I began to imagine myself living in some old manor house waiting for a white-plumed knight galloping towards me on a black stallion. But it was the keepsakes that really excited me.

JUDGE

What sort of keepsakes?

EMMA

Some of the rich girls used to bring back these albums, New Year's presents given to them by counts and viscounts. They had to be kept hidden from the nuns of course, which was quite a business. In the fine satin bindings there were engravings of English ladies with blonde curls and large bright eyes peeping out from under round straw hats. Others lounged in carriages gliding through parks, or lolled on sofas holding an opened letter and gazing wistfully at the moon through a half-open window. Sultans in the arms of dancing girls, minarets and Roman ruins, camels and lions and tigers in nice clean virgin forests. I was enthralled by these pictures of the world, lit by the shaded oil lamp hanging over my bed in the silent dormitory.

Then my mother died. I was only fifteen, and I wept for several days. I mourned her by having a picture made with her hair, and I wrote a very sad letter to my father asking if I could be buried with her in the same grave when the time came. He thought I must be ill and came to see me. But on the contrary, I was deriving secret satisfaction from passing so easily from mediocre emotions to the ideal state of Lamartinian melancholy. Harps on misty lakes, dying swans singing, leaves falling, pure virgins ascending to heaven, it was all so romantic at first.

Gradually I got bored with gloom, and woke up one morning with no more sadness in my heart than there were wrinkles on my brow.

The good sisters were astonished to find that the girl with a vocation was slipping out of their grasp. I realised I had loved the church for the sake of the flowers, and literature for the passions it aroused. Like a horse that is reined in too tightly, I became irritated by the discipline and rebelled against the pious mysteries of faith. No one was sorry when my father came to take me away from the convent school.

So, the answer to your question, your Honour, is Yes, my education taught me dancing, geography, embroidery and how to play the piano. But No, my education did not provide me with any sense of morality. The nuns should have served me as an example I suppose, but I ended up seeing them as kindly warders, and their life as voluntary imprisonment.

But my own humdrum life back on father's farm was hardly any better. Far removed from the real life I knew existed from the books I had read, and the keepsakes of the rich girls at the convent.

And yet in the depths of my soul I was desperately waiting for ... I don't know what. A bit like a lonely shipwrecked sailor, hoping to see a white sail on the horizon. But nothing did happen. Every morning... nothing. God made sure of that. The future was like a dark corridor leading to a locked door.

JUDGE

So are you saying the old maid with the novels and those rich girls were in some part responsible for your death?

EMMA

I'm still talking about influences. I'm not sure what part influences have on any of us.

JUDGE

Oh yes, you said (*he looks at his notes*): "At last I understand all the influences, betrayals, disappointments and manipulations that I was subjected to". Can we move on to the other factors, do you think?

EMMA

Yes, your Honour, I think we can now.

*The Judge exits.*

SCENE 4

EMMA (*to audience*)

Over the next eighteen months, after the ball, I turned into a nervous wreck, living in my imagination, more and more irritated by the absolute stupidity of my husband as he became fatter and duller. I can picture him still, after dinner, ruminating his happiness, with his thick fingers laced over his pot belly and his feet in the hearth.

I fell pregnant and as Charles was concerned about my health, he reluctantly decided we should move from Tostes to a market town, Yonville, not far from Rouen. As I was packing up and emptying drawers, I found my wedding bouquet and threw it on the fire. It burst into flames and went up the chimney like black butterflies.

The journey was terrible; my darling little greyhound escaped and ran off, and some of our baggage disappeared.

When we arrived it was evening. At the *Lion d'Or* the limping stable-boy with the club-foot helped with the bags. We stayed at the inn for dinner, but Charles abandoned me to talk shop with the pharmacist, M. Homais, but fortunately I was rescued from boredom by a young man with light brown hair who engaged me in conversation.

SCENE 5

*In the Lion d'Or.*

*Léon Dupuis enters.*

LEON

May I join you, Madame? Allow me to introduce myself: Léon Dupuis. I know you're the wife of the new doctor Bovary, who inexplicably seems to prefer the company of that old bore, Homais, to yours. That coach does shake one up, doesn't it?

EMMA

It certainly does. I wonder why it's called *L'Hirondelle*?

LEON

The swallow. Free as a bird. Not like us, eh? It's so dreary, being stuck in this dull little place. This is one of the most boring parts of France, you know, utterly without character. And they make the worst Neufchâtel cheese. (*They laugh.*)

EMMA

It can't be as bad as where I've just come from — Tostes.

LEON

Never heard of it.

EMMA

Now why doesn't that surprise me? I love moving about, seeing new places. But my husband... well... He says he does quite enough travelling on horseback visiting patients every day. Are there at least some interesting walks in the neighbourhood?

LEON

Oh, very few. There's a place called The Pasture I sometimes go to on Sundays, take a book and watch the sunset.

EMMA

I love a good sunset. Especially by the sea.

LEON

I love the sea.

EMMA

Don't you feel that the mind drifts more freely over that limitless expanse, and that contemplating it uplifts the soul towards the infinite and the ideal?

LEON

Oh, I do so agree. It's the same with mountains. I have a cousin who went to Switzerland last year, and he says you can't imagine the poetry of the lakes and whole valleys a thousand feet below you.

You know, a famous musician used to go and play the piano by some fabulous view just to stimulate his imagination.

EMMA

Do you like music, M. Dupuis?

LEON

Léon, please.

EMMA (*demurely, fluttering eyelids*)

But I hardly know you, Monsieur.

LEON

Forgive me. That was very forward of me.

EMMA

Oh no, not really. I suppose it's my convent education coming out.

LEON

Conventional!

*They laugh at the pun.*

EMMA

That's twice you've made me laugh. I haven't laughed in a long time. What were we talking about? Ah yes, I asked you if you like music.

LEON

Yes I do. German music preferably. It sets you off dreaming. When I get to Paris next year I shall go to the opera.

EMMA

Paris! And the opera! Oh, how I envy you. (*Pause as Emma daydreams.*) Why are you going to Paris... Léon?

LEON

To finish my law studies. I'm a clerk in Guillaumin's office here. He's the notary.

EMMA

And do you like reading?

LEON (*he gradually leans towards Emma and puts one foot on one of the bars of her chair.*)

There's nothing I like better than an evening with a book, by the fire, in the lamplight, with the wind rattling the windows. It's like travelling through countries of the mind. Above all I like poetry. It's more tender than prose and more likely to bring tears to one's eyes.

EMMA (*their heads and hands are by now almost touching.*)

But rather exhausting in the long run. At the moment I prefer stories that forge ahead and scare the wits out of me. And I can't bear ordinary characters with common or garden everyday emotions.

LEON

I sometimes feel that I'm living far from the real world. This is the first time I've been able to share my ideas and feelings with someone.

EMMA

Me too. (*They gaze into one another's eyes.*) Goodness, it must be getting late, and we haven't been to our new house yet.

LEON

Of course, I must return you to your husband. He's almost falling asleep over there by the fire. Dr. Bovary, your wife is getting very tired...

*Léon exits.*

## SCENE 6

EMMA (*to audience*)

Life was difficult in Yonville at first. Patients didn't take to the new doctor. But M. Homais, the pharmacist, put in a good word, which was good for his business too of course. He took a liking to me as well, and showed me round the medicaments and herbs in boxes and flagons in his store-room. There was a blue one marked "DANGEROUS" which he warned everyone, even his assistant Justin, not to touch, ever, as it contained arsenic.

As the time grew nearer, Charles took much more pleasure from my being pregnant than I did. He doted on me, he was brimming over with happiness.

I wanted a son. He would be dark and strong and I'd call him George. I felt a male child would be a kind of revenge for my own powerlessness, both past and present. A man is free and independent, he can explore passions and countries, conquer obstacles, taste exotic pleasures. But a woman is constantly thwarted.

I gave birth one Sunday morning. Charles triumphantly announced, "It's a girl", and I promptly fainted. We finally settled on a name for the child: Bertha. This was a name I remembered hearing the marquise say, at the ball. (*Pause for nostalgic recollection.*) Charles's father, the drunken old lecher, couldn't keep his hands off my uncorseted waist which annoyed his wife, and he baptised the baby with a glass of champagne, which enraged the priest.

I put the baby out to nurse with the carpenter's wife straight away.

Whenever I went to see the child, she vomited all over my dress. Motherhood did not seem to have many attractions for me.

One day I asked Léon if he would accompany me to visit the baby, as it was quite a long walk and the day was hot. I took his arm as we strolled along a path bordered with privet hedges. I remember they were in flower, and so were the veronica, wild roses, nettles, and brambles. In the back yard of one of the hovels we saw a pig asleep in the sun, lying on a dung-heap.

I saw Léon was not comfortable in the wet-nurse's miserable little cottage, so after picking the baby up and cuddling it for a bit, I took my leave, amid the wet-nurse's complaints about having to get up in the night and not being paid enough.

On the way back, along the river bank, I took his arm again. Being so close to him, I noticed how his well combed light brown hair fell over his black velvet collar, and how well tended his finger nails were. The only sounds we heard were the rustle of my dress, and the overhanging honeysuckle catching on the silk of my parasol.

Léon, became like one of the family. (*She looks wistfully into the distance. Then she goes to the mirror and undoes her chignon, and lets her hair down*) I knew from the way he looked at me and hung round me that he was in love with me, poor boy. But... I was very sensible.

#### SCENE 7

*Léon enters. Emma quickly picks up some embroidery so as to appear busy. There is an air of pent-up unexpressed emotion between them.*

LEON (*awkwardly*)

I hope I find you well, Madame?

EMMA

Tolerably well, thank you Léon.

*Pause.*

LEON

I only ask because you have been looking a little pale and peaky of late. You've lost weight.

EMMA

Oh.

LEON

And you're so quiet. (*He circles round her chair. When he is standing behind her his hands almost touch her neck. She senses this and stops plying her needle, eyes closed, half hoping and half fearful.*) Oh, this is madness!

EMMA

I beg your pardon?

LEON

I mean... I meant your decision not to renew your music subscription. It's madness. You can't be intending to give up music?

EMMA

Good gracious yes! Don't I have enough to do, running the house, a pile of other duties, keeping the accounts, my husband to look after?

LEON



Yes, yes, of course. I didn't mean to offend you. I haven't done anything to offend you, have I?

EMMA (*a tinge of regret here*)  
No, you haven't!

LEON  
It's just that you have been acting very coldly towards me lately. Almost as if you hate me.

EMMA (*shocked, she turns and takes his hand, but lets it go quickly*) Oh no! On the contrary!... I mean... I think you are a charming friend. To us both. (*Pause*) My husband's very kind — a fine man.

LEON  
Oh yes indeed. I like him a lot. More than I can say. Both of you. In fact (*nervous laugh*) I've had to stop singing your praises so much, because people were starting to talk.

EMMA  
Talk? What about?

LEON  
Well, talk, you know. As if we ... you and I ... were... you know...  
*Pause.*

EMMA (*her breathing becomes faster, her voice a mere whisper.*)  
Oh. I see.

LEON (*torn between caution and desire.*)  
I... (*love you — but he cannot say it*) Well, I must be going — I suppose. Unless there is anything else?... No, of course not. I bid you good evening, Madame.  
*He gives her a stiff little bow and exits. Emma stands and moves to the window, looks down at Léon in the street, and gives a little wave. Then she turns, throws down her embroidery and kicks the chair.*

EMMA  
Damn! Damn! Damn!  
*She bursts into tears. Then she recovers her composure and puts her hair in a bun again.*

## SCENE 8

*[The Judge enters and sits on his throne.*

JUDGE  
That was quite a painful memory for you, was it not Madame? Are you ready to continue now?

EMMA

Yes, your Honour. Quite ready, thank you. I'm afraid there may be more emotional outbursts before we are finished!

JUDGE

So was that the end of your relationship with the young man, Léon Dupuis?

EMMA

For the time being. He went on much as before, but for me, ] from that day on, everything changed. I became a model housewife and mother, and went to church regularly. When Charles came home in the evening, he found his slippers warming by the fire. I sewed on shirt buttons and piled his nightcaps neatly in the cupboard and even took pleasure in it. But inside me, it was a different story.

*The Judge goes off as Emma moves downstage.*

(EMMA cont.) I was in love with Léon, and the more I became aware of my passion for him the more I suppressed it. I'd have been glad if he had guessed, but at the same time I was terrified he might. Why? I'm not sure: modesty, perhaps. Or sheer laziness. I even took pride in looking at myself in the mirror and saying "I am a virtuous woman".

But soon the consolation of self-sacrifice gave way to sexual desire, and the longing for money and the things it could buy: the clothes I hankered after, or a bigger house.

Then there were moments of disgust at my hypocrisy. Why didn't I just tell Léon how I felt and elope with him, start afresh somewhere far away from this hole? Then I thought, no, he can't love me any more. I've frightened him off.

I became filled with lust, with rage and hate. The most exasperating thing of all was that the two men in my life, Léon and Charles, had no idea of the torment seething inside me. I needed help.

*She puts on her hat and cloak.*

SCENE 9

*She is in the parish church of Yonville. The angelus bell is ringing. The priest, Abbé Bournisien, is trying to keep a gaggle of boys (offstage) in order. He comes on looking behind him, wagging his finger.*

BOURNISIEN

Riboudet, if you do that again I'll box your ears, little rascal!

(Sees Emma.) Oh, excuse me Madame Bovary. I didn't see you there. Little brats, always the same at catechism class. No respect. (*Mops his brow with an enormous handkerchief.*) Ouf! How are you?

EMMA

Not at all well, Father. I am suffering.

BOURNISIEN

So am I. These first warm days of the year take it out of you. Ah well, as St. Paul says, we're born to suffer. What does Dr. Bovary think about it?

EMMA (*scornful gesture*)  
Oh him!

BOURNISIEN  
What? He hasn't prescribed anything?

EMMA  
It's not earthly remedies I need. I should like to know...

BOURNISIEN (*looks offstage*)  
Riboudet, last warning! And how is Dr. Bovary? Always very busy, I suppose. We are in the same business, I suppose. He heals the body, I heal the soul.

EMMA (*this is what she wanted to talk about...*)  
Yes, Father, you bring relief from all sorrows...

BOURNISIEN  
Ah! The farmers especially, they're having a hard time. *Turns round*  
Longuemarre, Boudet! Stop that, both of you! Heavens above! Boys!

EMMA  
Others have a hard time too; for instance...

BOURNISIEN  
Yes, they do — workers in towns...

EMMA  
But they're not what I...

BOURNISIEN (*straight on*)  
Poor young mothers, virtuous women, who don't have enough bread...

EMMA  
But what about the ones who have bread but don't have any...

BOURNISIEN  
... heating in the winter.

EMMA  
So? What does that matter?

BOURNISIEN  
Matter? Of course it matters. If one is well fed with a good fire in the grate...

EMMA (*puts her hand to her forehead.*)  
Oh my God. My God...

BOURNISIEN

Don't you feel well? I expect it's indigestion. Go home and have a nice cup of tea, or a glass of water with a spoonful of sugar. Oh, did you want to ask me something?

EMMA

I just... No, nothing, nothing...

BOURNISIEN

Well, in that case, duty calls, I must get back to my young scoundrels. First communion will soon be upon us. *(Looks off)* Riboudet! *(He runs off.)* My regards to your husband.

## SCENE 10

EMMA *(to audience)*

Shortly after this Léon left for Paris. We shook hands like a couple of English people. The next day was a day of mourning for me. I felt a wave of melancholy envelop me, a yawning despair, just like after the ball at La Vaubyessard. I was moody and became extravagant, buying unnecessary knickknacks for the house and myself.

One day, I was at my window as usual when I saw a gentleman in a green velvet frock coat and yellow gloves. He was coming to see Charles with his carter, a sorry-looking peasant who needed bleeding. I went to help Charles and held the bowl for him, as his usual assistant, Justin, the apprentice apothecary, was unwell.

*Rodolphe enters, dressed as described. Under the coat he wears a grey waistcoat and a shirt with frilly cuffs. He carries a fancy walking stick.*

RODOLPHE

Allow me to introduce myself, Madame: Rodolphe Boulanger de la Huchette.

EMMA

How do you do, Monsieur. Madame Bovary. Emma Bovary.

RODOLPHE

Of course you are. The doctor's wife.

*Emma opens her mouth to make a rejoinder, but just smiles instead.*

*They hold each other's gaze. He looks at Emma with an approving expert eye as she exits, hips swinging.*

RODOLPHE *(musing.)*

That's a dashed good-looking filly, the doctor's wife. Beautiful teeth, lovely dark eyes. That pale skin of hers... I love pale women! She must be Parisian, she has the style. I wonder where that great oaf of a husband found her. I'd hazard a guess that she's tired of him, bored to tears, panting for love, like a carp lying on a kitchen table gasps for water.

I think I shall have her! But how? She always has that kid clinging to her, and what with the maid, the neighbours, the husband, all sorts of complications... It'd take up too much time.

And yet, she has those eyes that go right through to your... heart, or whatever. I can just picture her naked — I bet she looks better than that fat little actress of mine. I'll find a way, damned if I don't. Maybe at the agricultural fair next week; she's bound to be there.

*Rodolphe exits.*

SCENE 11

*The agricultural fair. Sounds of animals (cows, sheep, crowds of people). Emma enters wearing a green hat. She impatiently addresses the creep Lheureux, who is offstage.*

EMMA

Thank you, Monsieur Lheureux, but I do *not* require an escort!

LHEUREUX (*Offstage: nasal, wheedling voice*)

Are you quite sure, Madame? I have some beautiful new ribbons to show you.

EMMA

I shall come to see them in your shop next week. Good day to you.

LHEUREUX

At your service at all times, Madame.

*Emma turns away and strolls round, humming, as if inspecting the animals and produce. The village band plays.*

*Unseen by Emma, Rodolphe enters. He has on a straw boater, which he wears at a rakish angle, and he has removed his frock coat, showing his grey waistcoat and shirt with frilly cuffs.*

*Rodolphe comes up behind Emma. The sounds of the fair get less and slowly disappear.)*

RODOLPHE

I thought you'd never get rid of that creep Lheureux.

EMMA (*startled*)

Oh, it's you. He was hard to shake off. (*Coyly, leaning close to him*) I was hoping I'd see you here. I like the way you wear your hat.

RODOLPHE (*as if relieved*)

Oh, were you? Were you really hoping? I'm so glad.

EMMA (*puts her arm through his as they walk*)

How are you?

RODOLPHE

Best not to ask. I'm plunged more and more in melancholy.

EMMA

You! I thought you were always cheerful.

RODOLPHE

I lead a solitary life, and wear a mask of lighthearted mockery in society. If only I'd met someone ... affectionate... and tender...

EMMA

I'd say you are hardly to be pitied. You're free. (*She hesitates.*) And rich.

RODOLPHE

You're mocking me.

EMMA

*Moi!?* Mocking you? (*Mock modesty, fluttering of eyelids.*) Surely, I wouldn't dare, Monsieur?

*Lighting change: ext. to int.*

RODOLPHE

Why don't we sit down here in the council room. It's cooler and quieter than the town square. (*They sit.*) And we're less likely to be seen together.

EMMA

What does that matter?

RODOLPHE

Well, with my reputation...

EMMA

I'm sure you do yourself an injustice.

RODOLPHE

Be that as it may... At least we can't hear the National Guard playing at toy soldiers, and those pompous flab-faced people out there making their stupid speeches about Duty. I'm sick of the word! Duty to do this and Duty not to do that.

EMMA

So you think one doesn't owe anyone anything?

RODOLPHE

Oh yes, but to my mind one's duty is to feel what is great, to cherish beauty, and not to accept all the conventions that society contemptuously imposes on us.

EMMA

But surely — sometimes — we have to pay heed to the opinions of others and accept their morality?

RODOLPHE

Ah, but you see, there are two moralities: the petty conventional one concocted and constantly changed by mere men, like that lot of imbeciles out there. But the other one, the eternal one, is all around us, like the countryside, and the blue sky above that gives us light.

EMMA  
Nevertheless...

RODOLPHE  
No, no. Why condemn passions? Passions are the most beautiful things on earth, the source of heroism, enthusiasm, poetry, music, the arts, of everything worth while. The world is full of tormented souls craving for dreams and action, the purest passions, the wildest pleasures. Happiness.

EMMA  
Happiness? Can one ever find it?

RODOLPHE  
Oh yes, one day, suddenly, when one is sunk in despair. You feel you have to take this person into your confidence completely. No need for explanations. You have already met this person, in dreams. (*He gazes into her eyes fervently.*) Like the treasure you have been searching for, shining, sparkling. And yet... and yet you have doubts, you can't believe it. *He passes his hand over his face as if he's feeling giddy, then lets it fall on Emma's hand. She tries to withdraw her hand, but feebly, so it stays in his like a captive bird.*

EMMA (*looks round nervously*)  
Oh, Monsieur...

RODOLPHE  
Oh, thank you! You do not repulse me! And please call me Rodolphe...  
Emma.

EMMA  
Yes... Rodolphe.

RODOLPHE  
Emma, don't you feel that Fate has brought us together?

EMMA  
Yes, perhaps. Oh yes, I do.

RODOLPHE  
We are drawn to one another like magnets, an irresistible attraction dating back to a previous life.  
*Their heads are dangerously close. Emma suddenly draw back.*

EMMA  
I think someone is coming!  
*They stand and separate.*

RODOLPHE

(*To himself.*) Damnation! (*Very loudly.*) And shall I see you and your husband at the banquet this evening, Madame?

EMMA

I expect so, Monsieur. *Au revoir.*

RODOLPHE

*Au revoir.* And my respects to the good doctor.

*The go off in different directions. Sounds of the fair, brass band, etc.*

SCENE 12

*Emma re-enters..*

EMMA (*to audience.*)

It was six weeks before I set eyes on Rodolphe again. My health deteriorated — the palpitations got worse. Then one evening, when I was alone, he strolled in. I was none too pleased.

*She picks up a book and reads. Rodolphe enters, wearing his frock coat again.*

RODOLPHE (*to audience.*)

I decided it would be a mistake to go back too soon. The day after the fair I said to myself, "If she fell for me like that straight away, she'll be impatient to see me again and she'll love me all the more". Anyway I had to go hunting.

(*Turning to Emma.*)

Good evening Emma.

EMMA (*Curtly. Goes on reading.*)

Good evening, Monsieur.

RODOLPHE

I apologise for not being in touch. I've been very busy. And I've been ill.

EMMA (*concerned*)

Seriously?

RODOLPHE (*sits beside her.*)

The fact is, I didn't want to come here again.

EMMA

Why not?

RODOLPHE (*melancholy*)

Can't you guess? I think of you night and day. I'm being driven to despair. Oh I'm sorry, I'll leave you alone. I shall go a very long way away and you'll never hear about me again. And yet... today... a power greater than my own will drove me here to you! One cannot struggle against what Heaven ordains. Why resist the smiles of angels? So I let myself yield to what is beautiful, charming, and adorable.



EMMA (*visibly melting.*)

Oh, oh my dear...

RODOLPHE

Every night I got out of my sick bed and walked to your house, and gazed at your bedroom window with your lamplight shining through it. Little did you guess that out there, hidden in the shadows, was a poor wretch.

EMMA (*with a sob.*)

You're so good, so good.

RODOLPHE

No. I love you. It's as simple as that.

EMMA

And you must go on being good.

RODOLPHE

I yes, I shall. We must find a way to be alone together. Just to talk, you know. In fact, I have a very good idea. Why don't you go horse-riding? It will be good for your health.

EMMA

How can I when I don't have a horse?

RODOLPHE

I'll lend you one of mine. Do you mind if I suggest it to your husband?

EMMA

That would be best.

RODOLPHE

Very well, that's agreed then. I shall return tomorrow with my carter — he needs bleeding again — and a couple of saddle horses. Just in case the good doctor thinks it's a good idea as well!

*They exit, laughing*

**END OF ACT ONE  
INTERVAL**

## ACT TWO

## SCENE 13

*This scene is a transition to the love-scene in the woods. Rodolphe has a riding whip.*

*N.B. initial note on MONOLOGUE MODE .*

EMMA (*to audience.*)

I made a show of not liking M. Boulanger's suggestion about horse-riding, and put on a sulky face. I said to Charles that it might look a bit odd, going off like that with M. Boulanger, but he said "I couldn't care less about that, health comes first! It's so gracious of M. Boulanger to suggest it."

*She dons a man's hat — not wide-brimmed — with a long blue ribbon down her back.*

RODOLPHE (*to audience.*)

I couldn't help smiling at Bovary's eagerness to push his wife into my arms, as it were. As we mounted, that idiotic apothecary Homais shouted, "Take care now, accidents can happen! Have a good ride!"

We galloped along, two abreast. I could see Emma was a good horsewoman, abandoning herself to the rhythm and motion of the saddle.

*The scene is in the woods. Sound of birdsong, trees rustling. They have just dismounted and are strolling hand in hand towards a clearing covered with soft leaves. Maybe there is a log they can sit on.*

EMMA

It was early October. A mist hung over the countryside. From the top of the rise the whole valley seemed like a vast pale lake evaporating into the air. A line of poplars, so tall they pierced the mist, looked like a shore-line wafting in the wind.

I knew Rodolphe was looking at me rather than the view, so I tried not to look at his face. We skirted the forest. The horses were panting, and the leather of the saddles creaked.

RODOLPHE

Just as we entered the forest, the sun came out. "God is with us!" I shouted, "come on!"

EMMA

Tall ferns kept catching in my stirrup, so he pushed aside the branches, and I felt his knee brushing against my leg. There were violet-coloured clearings, carpeted with heather in flower or with fallen leaves, grey, fawn and gold. Now and then, a little fluttering of wings or a soft cry of ravens as they flew off.

RODOLPHE

I tethered the horses, and I led her to a clearing. We sat down on a fallen log, and I started to talk to her in a calm, serious, and melancholy way of our love. She listened to me with lowered head, moving twigs and leaves around with the toe of her shoe. I thought I was doing well until I said: (*directly to Emma*)

So you see, you and I have a common destiny. We are...

EMMA (*jumping up*)

No, no! It's impossible and you know it!

RODOLPHE (*seizes her wrist*)

Please, Emma.

EMMA (*looks at him lovingly, tears in her eyes. Pause.*)

Well, let's not speak of it again. Where are the horses? Let's go.

*Rodolphe lets her go; shows his anger and annoyance.*

EMMA

Where are the horses? The horses!

RODOLPHE *stands and moves towards her with his teeth clenched, eyes hard, and a strange smile. He opens his arms, she recoils trembling. He takes her roughly in his arms.*

EMMA

You're frightening me! And hurting me. Let us go back!

RODOLPHE

If we must. (*Changing tactics. Respectfully, caressingly, timidly now.*) I don't understand you. What's the matter? Tell me. You've mistaken what I meant. In my soul you are a Madonna on a pedestal. I need you, I need your eyes, your voice, your thoughts. Please be my friend, my sister, my angel!

*He kisses her hand. She caresses his face with her hand. He puts his arm round her waist, and gently leads her to a mossy bank. They sit.*

EMMA

I mustn't. I'm mad to listen to you. I shouldn't... (*She lies back with a sigh.*) Oh, Rodolphe!...

*They kiss and make love. Afterwards, he nonchalantly moves away and takes a cigar from a cigar-case. He quietly goes offstage, without looking back, as Emma speaks.*

EMMA (*to audience*)

The evening shadows were falling and the sun dazzled my eyes through the branches. Everywhere was silent, but a strange tenderness emanated from the trees. I felt my heart starting to beat again and the blood flowing through my body like a river of milk. Then from far away, from the hills beyond the forest, I heard a vague and long drawn-out cry, a lingering voice, which mingled like music with the last fading throbs of my senses.

LIGHTS EXT. TO INT.

SCENE 14

*EMMA dons a housecoat.*

When I got back home, I went up to my bedroom and shut the door. My body felt as if it was still being embraced and possessed by Rodolphe. But when I looked at myself in the mirror I was astounded by the way my face had changed. My eyes had never looked so big and dark and deep. I felt and saw that subtle transfiguration come over me afresh. I kept whispering to myself, "I have a lover! I have a lover!" savouring the idea without remorse or anxiety or worry. You see, at last I knew what those words meant: passion, ecstasy, delirium, at last I was joining that lyrical chorus of adulterous heroines in the love-dreams of my youth. (*Passionately.*) And I deserved it! I'd suffered enough!

I made sure that I continued to fascinate Rodolphe, and he was a very good lover. Experienced, you know? Every day we either met and made love, or wrote to each other. Every time Charles went out early, I trudged across the fields, up to my ankles in mud, to Rodolphe's house. Then one day he told me that I was becoming reckless and was in danger of compromising myself. And him, of course.

*Emma sits and starts brushing hair. Rodolphe enters.*

RODOLPHE (*to audience*)

So we had to work out another way to meet. I said I would find a discreet house in Yonville, but I never did. Throughout that winter, three or four times a week, at dead of night, it was I who had to walk over to her house. I'd throw a handful of sand against the bedroom window to let her know I was down in the garden, then we'd go and make love in the arbour. God! It was cold!

EMMA (*dreamily – to audience*)

The cold made our embraces all the closer. The stars shone through the leafless branches of the jasmin. In the silence, our whispered words of love filled our souls and echoed there as clearly as crystal.

*She dons a cloak.*

*Dim light.*

RODOLPHE

Rainy nights gave us some respite from the chill. We took refuge in the consulting room, between the cart-shed and the stable.

*They sit huddled together and kiss.*

EMMA

Do you love me?

RODOLPHE

But of course I do.

EMMA

I mean *really* love me?

RODOLPHE

Absolutely.

EMMA

And you've never loved any other woman?

RODOLPHE (*laughing.*)

What do you take me for? A virgin?

*Emma starts to cry. He tries to console her.*

EMMA

It's just that I love you so much, I can't bear not being with you all the time. I wonder where you are, if you're with other women, if they're prettier than me. But I'm better at loving! (*Passionately, desperately.*) I am your slave and your concubine, you are my king and my idol! You're good, handsome, intelligent, strong...

(*She suddenly pulls away.*) Somebody's coming! (*They listen.*) Have you got your pistols?

RODOLPHE

My *what*?

EMMA

Your pistols.

RODOLPHE

What for?

EMMA

To defend yourself!

RODOLPHE

What from?

EMMA

Well... Charles!

RODOLPHE *stifles a laugh.*

Your husband? Oh, I don't think I'd have to shoot him, poor fellow.

*Emma's reaction is first to be offended, followed by admiration for her lover's bravery. She buries her head in his lap.*

RODOLPHE (*to audience.*)

I had no reason to hate her husband, not being the jealous type, but Emma's immediate recourse to pistols gave me pause for thought. It was part of her growing sentimentality. She had already insisted we exchange miniatures and handfuls of hair. And now she was asking for a real wedding ring!

EMMA

My life is so boring, and my husband is awful!

RODOLPHE

What do you expect me to do about it?

EMMA

We could go away together. Somewhere far away. Just you and I.

RODOLPHE

Are you mad? We can't!

*Emma turns her back on him and sulks.*

RODOLPHE (*to audience as he gets up.*)

Things were getting out of hand. Not only that, she was exhausting me!

*Rodolphe exits.*

EMMA (*to audience.*)

Slowly over the next six months I began to notice that he no longer murmured sweet and tender words that made me weep. His lovemaking was no longer fierce and passionate, driving me into ecstasy. I began to regret giving myself to him, and even toyed with the idea of trying to rekindle my marriage, particularly when Charles seemed on the brink of success, wealth and even celebrity with a new method of curing club-foot. The pharmacist, Homais, had talked Charles into trying the operation on the young stable-boy from the *Lion d'Or*. But it was a catastrophe. The poor lad was much worse off afterwards — his leg had to be amputated at the thigh, all due to the incompetence of *Doctor Bovary*. He thought of himself as dishonoured, ridiculed and ruined, but I felt another sort of humiliation: how could I have been stupid enough to imagine a man like that could ever do anything worth while?

But that wasn't my biggest concern: what I was really afraid of was that the great love of my life was diminishing, like a river drying up and becoming nothing but mud. By the spring, Rodolphe and I had become like a married couple only just keeping a domestic flame alight.

*She puts on her hat and coat in order to go out shopping.*

But I didn't want to believe it. I could not imagine life without Rodolphe, so I redoubled my affection and began to give him expensive presents which I got from Lheureux's emporium: there was a letter-seal for example, with the motto *Amor nel cor*, and a silk scarf, a cigar-case just like the viscount's, and so on. In retrospect, I don't know if I was buying my lover or selling myself.

SCENE 15

*Lheureux enters, carrying a portable counter full of trinkets, ribbons, etc. She walks over to him.*

LHEUREUX (*rubbing his hands together.*)

Good morning Madame Bovary? I hope I see you well?

EMMA

Good morning, M. Lheureux.

LHEUREUX

I've just received the last lot of things you ordered from Paris. Including the splendid riding whip with the silver-gilt handle. Shall I deliver that to Dr. Bovary?

*Reaches under the counter for a box.*

EMMA (*hurriedly.*)

No, I'll take it. Make sure it's wrapped.

LHEUREUX

Ah, I see. It's a surprise gift for him.

EMMA

How much do I owe you?

LHEUREUX (*dismissively.*)

Pray do not worry your head about that. A trifling amount. I'll just add it to your account.

EMMA

Yes, if you don't mind. My husband has a lot of patients who are very slow payers, once a year they settle up, on St. Peter's Day.

LHEUREUX

The end of June? Still some way away. (*Sotto voce.*) Well, well! (*Bows and scrapes.*) Always honoured to be of service, Madame.  
*He exits, carrying his counter.*

SCENE 16

EMMA

But Lheureux had a nasty little trick up his sleeve. He turned up a few days later on the doorstep, the morning after I had given Rodolphe the riding-whip, for which he showed his warm gratitude. Fortunately Charles was out when Lheureux came..

*Lheureux enters counterless.*

LHEUREUX

Good morning Madame Bovary.

EMMA (*taken aback.*)

Oh! It's you, M. Lheureux! I didn't expect...

LHEUREUX

I do apologise, Madame, for this intrusion, but our situation has become more serious than we thought.

EMMA

What do you mean?

LHEUREUX

I'm afraid my creditors are dunning me, and my capital is tied up, you see. Very unpleasant. So I'm having to call in some debts and outstanding accounts. This is yours to date (*pulls bill from pocket*) for 270 francs. I've let you off the centimes.

EMMA  
So much?

LHEUREUX  
If you would care to peruse the items, Madame...

EMMA  
No, no, I'm sure it's... but as I explained, things are difficult at the moment.

LHEUREUX  
I suppose I could take back some of the items. That riding-whip for instance, I'll just ask your husband for it back.

EMMA  
No! No! The other things but not that... (*An idea!*) Wait a moment please. *She goes indoors and searches on shelves, cupboards, desk...*

LHEUREUX (*chanting softly.*)  
I think I have you, pretty lady.

EMMA  
Now where did Charles put the money Dubois brought? (*She finds it.*) Ah! I'll pay it back somehow. (*Goes back to Lheureux.*)

LHEUREUX  
I've just thought of a way round this problem, a little arrangement whereby you...

EMMA  
Here you are! You owe me ten francs change.

LHEUREUX (*masking his disappointment.*)  
Capital! I look forward to being of service...

EMMA  
Goodbye, M. Lheureux!  
*He bows and exits.*  
Creep!

#### SCENE 17

EMMA (*to audience.*)  
Madame Bovary and I had never liked each other. I mean, of course, Charles's mother. She had never approved of me or anything I did such as reading novels, or the way I dressed, or my housekeeping. When she had a stand-up quarrel with her husband, she came to stay with us.



Things came to a head when I accused her of having the manners of a peasant and told her to get out. Charles begged me to apologise and looked so pathetic that finally I did say Sorry. Then I ran to my room, threw myself on my bed, and wept bitter tears.

That was a turning-point. I got a message to Rodolphe to meet me in the arbour urgently.

SCENE 18

*Rodolphe enters. As soon as Emma sees him she runs to him and throws herself into his arms. He looks round nervously.*

RODOLPHE

Do be careful, my sweet.

EMMA (*hysterically.*)

I don't care! I've had enough!

RODOLPHE

What on earth's happened?

EMMA

If only you knew, she interferes all the time, nagging me about this and that, calls me insolent...

RODOLPHE (*bewildered.*)

Who?

EMMA

My mother-in-law of course! Charles is less than useless, taking her side against me...

RODOLPHE

I don't know what you're talking about. Calm down, my love. You ought to try and be more patient.

EMMA

Patient! Don't talk to me about patience! I've been through this hell now for four years! I can't go on being tortured like this. Please save me! Please! *She presses herself up against him, her eyes brimming with tears, looks at him imploringly. He is actually affected by her unhappiness. She looks very lovely.*

RODOLPHE

What do you want me to do?

EMMA

A love like ours should be proclaimed to the high heavens! Take me away! Carry me off! Oh, I beg you. *She kisses him long and passionately.*

RODOLPHE

But...

EMMA

But what?

RODOLPHE

What about your little girl?

*Pause for thought.*

EMMA

We'll take her with us. That the only thing we can do. Oh, it will be so wonderful to travel with you. There is not a desert, precipice or ocean I wouldn't cross with you, my love.

RODOLPHE

Think it over, darling. You may come to regret it.

EMMA

Never! Every day together will be like a more passionate embrace. No more worries or obstacles. Just us, for ever! Oh, Rodolphe, I do so love you. Now I must go. You must get passports and tickets, and I have to get trunks and cases and new clothes. Oh! Isn't this exciting?

*Emma kisses him and exits. Rodolphe is infected by her happiness, but obviously not overjoyed by the prospect.*

## SCENE 19

RODOLPHE

I really did intend to go through with this mad little adventure. We were due to leave in June, but I needed more time to arrange my affairs. Then I was ill, and went away for a bit. Finally we settled on a date: Monday the fourth of September. I had the passports, and tickets: a coach to ourselves from Paris to Marseilles. Then I was to buy a carriage and we'd go straight to Genoa.

We met on the Saturday evening. Only two days to go. A full moon was rising above the horizon and shining through the branches of the poplar trees round her garden. We didn't talk much. I told her I adored her. I said Yes, I had the passports, and assured her I'd be waiting at the Hôtel de Provence on Monday at noon.

But walking back home I began to think what an idiot I was, going into exile lumbered with a child. The complications, the bother, the expense! Christ almighty! What was I thinking of? She was a pretty mistress, but anyway...

By the time I got home I'd convinced myself. I went straight to my desk and started writing. Well no, first I looked at some of her keepsakes — her miniature with crumpled corners, and her letters, a garter, locks of hair...

"Flummery and bunkum!" I said to myself, and settled down to write.

*(He writes.)*

***"Be brave, Emma! Be brave! I don't want to be the one who ruins your life."***

Well, that's true. I'm acting in her interest. And being straightforward and honest.

***“Have you weighed up carefully what you were about to do? Do you realise the depths I was dragging you into? Have you thought that we shall tire of each other, and I cannot bear the thought of your remorse. I shall never forget you, but you must forget me. Why, oh why did I have to meet you? It is not my fault you are so beautiful. Fate is to blame!”***

Yes, that's an impressive word: Fate!

***“It is a cruel world we live in, my angel. You would have had to put up with indiscreet questions, calumny, contempt, even insults. We did not think of that.”***

Now, how to finish? Ah yes.

***“I am going into exile to punish myself for the harm I have done you, and to escape the temptation of seeing you again. I don't know where I shall go, but I shall be far away when you read this. Perhaps in the fullness of time we can meet and chat about old times.”***

*Emma enters upstage, reading the letter. They speak at the same time.*

EMMA

*“... I shall be far away...” Oh, my God! I can't believe... “... fullness of time...”*  
*She goes on reading.*

RODOLPHE

Now, how shall I sign off? *Adieu!* Yes. Then what? *Your friend.* (He writes.)  
That'll do. Now for a few tears.

*With his finger he sprinkles a few drops of water from a carafe on his desk. He exits folding the letter.*

EMMA (*appalled; stunned; quietly.*)

*Your friend ! Your friend?*

*She sits, clutching the letter, in a daze.*

*If possible, there should be a window with a full moon shining through it — as in the keepsake album mentioned in Scene 3: “English ladies [...] lolled on sofas holding an opened letter and gazing wistfully at the moon through a half-open window.”*

SCENE 20

*Emma recovers, advances front stage, and addresses the audience. The Judge enters and sits as soon as he is ready.*

EMMA

My first reaction was to throw myself out of the bedroom window, but at the last moment I couldn't. I became prostrate and delirious for weeks. In October I developed pains in my heart, in my chest, my head, and limbs. Charles sat with me for forty-three nights. Apparently the only words I pronounced were “The letter!”.

Charles began to be financially embarrassed. I was very expensive, what with medications and specialist consultations. He had to employ a cook and the food bills increased enormously, even though I ate almost nothing.

Then Lheureux presented Charles with a grossly inflated bill for the trunks and clothes, and threatened to take him to court if he didn't pay. Finally he forced Charles to take out a short-term loan of 1250 francs at six per cent interest.

The priest was called in, but all I did was to call upon the Lord using the same words I had once murmured to Rodolphe.

When I could walk again, Charles thought it would do me good to go to the opera in Rouen. *Lucia di Lammermoor* of all things! I heard the sound of bagpipes through the mist, as I had when I first read Sir Walter Scott. When Lucia begged for wings, I longed to escape from life and fly away in a lover's embrace.

In the theatre, who should we meet but Léon. During Lucia's mad scene I felt faint — I suppose it was the heat or Donizetti's music, or Lucia's shrill screaming. I don't know. So Léon offered to take me out into the fresh air, and we went to sit on the terrace. He suggested I should stay in Rouen to see the last act the next night. When Charles joined us, he agreed — but he had to return to Yonville next morning, so there I was — alone. Léon came to my hotel room next evening, and we talked for hours, and somehow we never got to the theatre.

#### SCENE 20A

*In the hotel room. Emma and Léon are deep in conversation. She is languidly reclining.*

EMMA

Forgive me for prattling on like this, Léon. You must be bored, listening to my tales of woe.

LEON

No, not at all. Far from it.

EMMA

I've been so ill, you see. I almost died. If only I had, I shouldn't be suffering now.

LEON

I'm so sorry to hear it.

EMMA

If only you knew... such dreams I had...

LEON

I often wrote you letters.

EMMA

I never got them!

LEON

That's because I always tore them up. Many times I imagined I glimpsed you in the street, just because a woman was wearing a veil like yours, and ran after her.

EMMA

What a child you are!

LEON

I've been suffering as well. Many times I've envied the peace of being laid to rest in a grave. I even wrote a will directing that I should be buried in that lovely quilt you gave me.

EMMA

The one with velvet stripes? *(He nods.)* But why?

LEON

Why? *(Pause. He moves behind her so that she cannot see his face.)*

Because I loved you so much. *(He looks calculatingly at her to see if she has fallen for his ploy. Pause.)*

EMMA *(happily – a complete change of mood from sombre to radiant.)*

I always thought you did! *(She extends her hand, which he kisses passionately.)* My poor dear!

LEON

I've loved you from the first time I set eyes on you. I had fits of despair thinking how happy we'd have been if we'd met earlier. *He kisses her bare arms. She feebly resists.*

EMMA

I've had thoughts like that. But we must be sensible. You will have other women to love.

LEON

Not like you, my love.

EMMA

Goodness! How late it is.

LEON

Too late for the opera! But I must see you again. Tomorrow.

EMMA

Very well. Meet me tomorrow at eleven. In the cathedral.

LEON

I'll be there. *(He plants a long kiss on her bare neck.)*

EMMA *(laughing.)*

You're mad, quite mad.

LEON

Till tomorrow then, my love.

*He exits.*

EMMA

After Léon left I did some thinking, and I wrote him a letter straight away saying we must never see each other again, for both our sakes. I meant to give it him next morning, but I never did somehow. As we drove away from the cathedral in a cab, I tore the letter up and threw it out. The bits fluttered in the wind like white butterflies. We closed the blinds of the cab.

The affair lasted a few months, then we both tired of it. Once again I found in adultery all the platitudes of marriage.

What was happening at home was much more devastating. Charles wasn't able to pay off Lheureux — I had made a few foolish purchases on top of the existing debt. Lheureux conned me into taking on more debt. I sold my old gloves, hats, any old junk, and borrowed money from anyone silly enough to lend it to me. I even pawned six silver teaspoons. Day and night I read erotic horror stories, half-naked on my bed, longing for Léon to make love to me.

One day I got a document which began: "By virtue of the seizure consequent upon the judgment, Madame Bovary must pay within twenty-four hours the sum of 8000 francs... or her furniture and effects will be seized." Twenty-four hours! And Charles knew nothing about it!

I went to see Lheureux and even put my hand on his knee. I promised to sign anything, but all he said was "I've had quite enough of your signatures!". The next day I went to Rouen and saw bankers. They laughed in my face. I called on Léon at his lodging.

"Listen, I need 8000 francs."

"You must be mad."

"Not yet," I said.

He did have the decency to try three people, but it was useless.

The notary tried to seduce me. Then I thought of the obvious solution: Rodolphe! He was so good, so understanding, so generous! *(Rodolphe enters and sits, very relaxed in a smoking jacket.)*

I rushed to La Huchette, unaware that this was abject prostitution.

SCENE 21

RODOLPHE *(stands.)*

Oh, it's you! Well well!

EMMA

Yes it's me. Rodolphe... I need your advice.

RODOLPHE

You haven't changed. Charming as ever.

EMMA

I've been through a lot.

RODOLPHE

That's life for you.

EMMA

Perhaps we should never have parted.

RODOLPHE

Yes... Perhaps.

EMMA (*draws closer to him.*)

Do you agree? Oh Rodolphe, how I loved you! (*She takes his hand.*)

RODOLPHE

It was a long time ago, Emma.

EMMA

Three years, yes, I know. But we can start again, can't we?

*He draws her on to his lap, strokes her hair, and kisses her eyelids very delicately. She bursts into tears.*

RODOLPHE

Forgive me, you're the only woman for me! I've been a wicked fool! I love you and I always shall. What's the matter? Tell me!

EMMA

Well... the fact is... I'm ruined, my love. I owe 8000 francs.

RODOLPHE

But... but... (*stands.*)

EMMA

They going to seize our furniture, everything. Even 3000 might stop them. I'm counting on our friendship. You said you were my friend.

RODOLPHE

The truth is, dear lady, I don't have that much.

*She looks at him in disbelief.*

EMMA

What! You don't have it? Don't have it! You never loved me. You're no better than the others! I should have spared myself the trouble and shame of coming here.

RODOLPHE

And I thought you came because you loved me! I'm sorry, I just don't have it. If I had it, I'd give it to you.

*He goes off.*

EMMA (*shouts after him.*)

I'm so sorry for you, you poor man, surrounded by treasures in your fine château, hunting to hounds, sporting your gun with silver on the butt... (*The Judge re-enters quietly and sits. Emma becomes more and more distressed and emotional.*) ... And the Boulle clock over there inlaid with tortoiseshell. I would have begged on the streets just for a smile from you. But you spurn me because it would cost you 3000 francs.

*She weeps with anger.*

## SCENE 22

JUDGE (*offers her a handkerchief, which she takes.*)

Would you like to take a break, Madame?

EMMA (*shakes her head. Pulls herself together.*)

No, thank you. You're very kind. Silly of me to get so upset. I'm sorry. After all, that's all behind me now, isn't it?

JUDGE

But it's not the end, is it? Perhaps the last straw, but not the end.

EMMA

No, my lord.

JUDGE

Tell us how and when you decided the only way out was to end your life on earth.

*Judge exits during Emma's next speech.*

## SCENE 23

EMMA

How? When? I don't know. I was driven by some strange force, as if I was sleepwalking in a nightmare.

I fled from the château, through the courtyards, stumbled across the park, my heart pounding and fireworks going off in my head... I don't know, I suppose I went mad with fear, feeling utterly abandoned by the man I'd loved so much.

The money problem didn't occur to me, all I could think about was lost love. I felt as if my soul was seeping out of me, like the life-blood dripping from a wounded soldier close to death.

In a state of heroic euphoria I went straight to the pharmacy. You remember that a long time ago, Homais the apothecary had shown me round



the substances locked in his store-room. Justin, the young assistant was there.

“Give me the key to the store-room.”

“What for?”

*(Wheedling.)* “Come on, Justin, you know me. I have some rats that keep me awake, and I need to get rid of them.”

He gave me the key, and I went straight to the shelf where the blue jar stood, pulled out the cork, and took a handful of the white powder. I stuffed it in my mouth and swallowed it. Then I went home, feeling strangely peaceful. I lay on my bed. I had a bitter inky taste in my mouth, and I thought, Dying is not so bad. I’ll just fall asleep, that’s all.

*Emma lies down. Charles runs in.*

CHARLES

But what’s all this! Why is the furniture being taken away? Emma! Where is she? Emma! *(He sees her lying down.)* What’s the matter? Are you ill? *(Takes her pulse.)* You’re sweating. White as a sheet. Hardly any pulse. Is it something you’ve eaten?

*She starts to groan.*

EMMA *(whispers.)*

Yes. Arsenic.

CHARLES

Arsenic! Poison! Poison! What’s the antidote for arsenical poisoning? Homais! Homais! Come and help me!

*(To audience.)*

Homais came and did an analysis. Dr. Canivet came over post haste from Rouen and told Homais he’d have done better if he’d just stuck his fingers down her throat. But they could do nothing. She wanted to see our daughter, but the child was frightened by her pallor and sweating. Emma started convulsions, and screamed in terrible pain. I called in the priest, and she seemed more serene after she had taken communion.

*(Goes back to Emma, distraught.)*

Why did you do it, Emma? Who made you?

EMMA

I just... had to. *(He begins to weep)* Don’t cry. Soon I shan’t be any more trouble to you.

CHARLES

Is it my fault? Weren’t you happy? I’ve done everything I could.

EMMA

Yes, you have. You were good.

*She strokes his hair and mumbles something.*

CHARLES

What did you say, my love?

EMMA (*feebly but clearly.*)  
Nobody... is... to... blame.

CHARLES  
That's right. Fate is to blame.

**THE END**