**The list of my desires**

**Stage adaptation from the novel by**

**Grégoire Delacourt**

(Lattès Editions – F.)

**by Lorette Goosse**

English version based on the novel’s translation by Anthea Bell

(Weidenfeld & Nicolson Editions – U.K.)

**Monologue for a woman**

The protagonist performs all the characters of the play.

**ACT I**

Scene I

*A woman, forty-seven years old, is watching herself in her long bedroom’s mirror which isn’t fixed to the wall. During her contemplation she details the different parts of her body and her face (funny faces).*

*We can see that she is satisfied with herself.*

*Then her mind wanders and she dreams she slowly undresses. The gentle way no one has ever undressed her. She shivers.*

*She is dreaming with eyes closed and feels profoundly happy watching her beautifulness in the mirror!*

***J♀*** *(for herself): “I look beautiful, I really look beautiful, I am beautiful.” (She opens her eyes)*

*(To the audience):* ***We’re always telling ourselves lies…***

*She looks at herself again in the mirror which suddenly sways!*

***J♀****: “I must remind Jo to fix my mirror properly before it squashes me flat one of these days, while I’m in the midst of my contemplation!”*

*(Sound of Jo upstairs. Taken by surprise, she dresses up.)*

***J****♀: “Jo, are you there?”*

***J****♂: “Yes Jo, I’m here”*

**Jo is Jocelyn. My husband for the last twenty-one years. He looks like Venantino Venantini. The famous Italian actor who performed in successful French movies during the sixties. A kind of typical handsome macho with a ridiculous golden necklace. Except that my own Jocelyno Jocelini weighs ten kilos more than the film star and has an accent that’s far from turning a girl’s head. He’s been working for Häagen-Dazs ice cream company.**

**Me, my parents called me Jocelyne.**

**There was one chance in millions that I’d marry a Jocelyn. It happened to me.**

**We have two children. No, three in fact. A boy, a girl and a corpse.**

**Romain was conceived on the evening Jo told me I was beautiful.**

**There was one chance in thousands that I’d fall pregnant the very first time. It happened to me!**

**Nadine arrived two years later. I never returned to my ideal weight.**

**And the day of Nadège’s birth was also the day she died.**

**Jo gave up drinking real beers.**

**J♂: “Shit, life is a fucking shit. Life is a bitch. My baby, my girl, my little doll, where are you?”**

**On that evening Jo began dreaming of the nice things that would make life sweeter and blunt the pain:**

* **A flat-screen TV**
* **A Porsche Cayenne**
* **All the James Bond DVD’s**
* **Another wife, younger.**

**We live in Arras, under the grey sky in the north of France, a dreadful town, no airport.**

**Since the year I married Jo, I hold a haberdashery shop which has never done very well.**

**I’d already been working there for two years when the owner, Mrs Pillard, swallowed a button in the wrong way as she was biting it to make sure it was real ivory.**

**It was the noise of the eight thousand buttons rolling round and brought down with her body collapsing on the floor that alerted me.**

**A haberdasher choked to death by swallowing a button, takes some doing!**

**Next to my shop, there is Coiff’Esthétique. This hair salon is run by my friends, my two pretty thin twins Danièle and Françoise. Long legs, high heels…just my opposite.**

**Danièle:** “Jocelyne, give me your hand and act casual. Do you know why the wife of the owner of the Arcades bar has put on twenty kilos? Yes, my dear, twenty kilos! Her husband came out of the closet. Yes… he left with the shampoo boy of Dessange!”

**Françoise:** “Oh Danièle! You’re already there! Hush, hush, please! Jocelyne, give me your neck and act casual. Do you know why the wife of the owner of the Arcades bar has put on twenty kilos? Yes, my dear, twenty kilos! Her husband came out of the closet. Yes… he fell for the shampoo boy of Dessange! Well, what did I say girls? Danièle, men in Arras do have a terrible lack of imagination, don’t they?”

**Danièle:** “In Arras and everywhere else, Françoise. Remember when we tried online dating, as soon as they find out we’re twins, they just want a threesome.”

**Françoise**: “Yes, they get all excited, they think they’ve got two pricks! Oh, excuse me, penises I mean, you know...”

**Danièle:** “I’m fed up with this town, I feel like livingin a historic brochure! Give me your other hand Jo. In a year time, I will be far out in the sun and I will get a breast job.”

**Françoise:** “And I, I will have a foot surgery, so what girls? I have an awful anus valgus. Why do you laugh? I have a big bunion, girls! And what about my stilettos? And I will treat myself to gigolos. What about you Jo? You say nothing?”

**Danièle:** “No, Françoise, Jo never says a word, Françoise. Jo has her Jo! Oh Jocelyne! Your nails look gorgeous with this colour, don’t you think? Please, Françoise, tell her!”

**Françoise:** “Let me see. Oh yes, Jocelyyyne, you look terrifiiic!”

**Danièle:** “Well Françoise, let’s go biiick, my babyyy!”

Scene II

**So, there it is, I’m forty-seven.**

**Our children have grown up now and they have left home.**

**Romain is still in his second year of business studies in Grenoble. And Nadine is in England, babysitting and making video films.**

**Last Christmas, when her father asked what she exactly was doing she took a little camera out of her bag and plugged it into the TV set.**

**And her father said:**

**J♂:** “Well, with colour and with sound, on a flat screen, your little film wouldn’t be bad, my girl.”

**I was crying.**

**Nadine: “**Maman, I wrote Ravel’s Bolero in pictures so that deaf people could hear it too.”

**Romain arrived a little bit later, just in time for dessert and the presents, with a girlfriend. Oh my god, what a girl!**

**Romain:** “Father, Mother, I’m going to drop out of my studies and I’m going to work as a waiter in a creperie with her. What? In Uriage. It’s a town near Grenoble.”

**I looked up at my Jo, as telling him: “Jo, please, do something, say something!” But Jo, a non-alcoholic beer in his hand, wished him:**

**J♂: “**Good luck, good boy!”

**So, there it is, I’m forty-seven.**

**And me, my own dreams have run away.**

**When I was thirteen, I dreamed of being kissed by Philippe de Gouverne to a sexy music like “L’Eté Indien”. But it was Juliette Bocquet he kissed. Of course, he kissed *Juliette!***

**At seventeen, I dreamed that my mother would get up from the pavement where she had fallen down all of a sudden, uttering a cry that never came.**

**At seventeen, I was dreaming that my mother was immortal.**

**At twenty, I dreamed of being a fashion designer, of going to Paris. But my father was already sick so I took the job at Mrs Pillard’s haberdashery shop. I was the one who sorted out the eight thousand buttons.**

**At twenty, I was secretly dreaming of Prince Charming and of Kevin Kostner before he had hair implants, but it was Jocelyn Guerbette, my Venantino Venantini, comfortably chubby, who came along.**

**J♂:** “Hello, I would like thirty centimetres of lace, huh, of Valencienne’s lace…well, it’s for my mother.”

**J♀:** “Good afternoon, I suggest this one. It’s so fine, it’s a miracle...”

**J♂:** “You are the miracle! Would you like a coffee?”

**I blushed, he smiled.**

**Men know how much damage a few words can do to a girl’s heart, and poor idiots we are, we fall in the trap, excited because at last a man has set one for us!**

**Hundred times, I had dreamed this moment where a man would woo me, thousand times I had dreamed of being kidnapped and taken on a plane flying to islands that would smell jasmine and paprika.**

**But not, never, yes never of drinking a coffee at the bar Les Arcades in Arras, in the north part of France.**

**That evening, Jocelyn Guerbette put his clammy hand on mine, he kissed me, I opened my heart for him and let my dreams fly away.**

Scene III

**So, there it is, I’m happy with Jocelyn. He never forgets our anniversaries. So, there it is.**

**Every week-end, he likes doing do-it-yourself in the garage.**

**So, there it is.**

**And three months ago, he installed Wi-Fi for me because I decided to write a blog about my knitting and my sewing.**

**I called it “Ten gold fingers”. So, there it is.**

**J♂:** “Oh you, Jo, you’re a good girl, you’re a sweet girl, you’re always ready to help.”

**Jo, the subtlety of the words, he doesn’t know much about it. He loves the Columbo TV series because you know who the killer is from the start. And the word ‘symbiosis’ to him sounds like a shameful disease, like syphilis…or something.**

**J♂: “**Ah, Jocelyne, you make me hard, you excite me.”

**He prefers a quick rundown on a subject rather than a reasoned argument.**

**So, when we discuss Jo and I, I do most of the talking.**

**J♂:** “Oh, Jocelyne, Jocelyne ! You make me hot, yummy…!”

**But well, as we say, it’s “all talk but no action”.**

**J♀:** “Thank you Jo!”

**I love words.**

**When I was young, I kept a diary.**

**I gave up, the day my mother died.**

**When she collapsed, my pen collapsed as well and many other things shattered too.**

**J♀’s mother: *“You’re a smart girl, my daughter, you are a sweet girl. You will have a good life.”***

**Even mothers tell lies, because mothers are frightened too.**

**I’m happy with Jo.**

**In the summer, the children go to stay with friends and Jo and I have three weeks in the south of France, at Villeneuve-Loubet, at the Happy Face campsite.**

**I’m happy with Jo.**

**It’s not the life I’d dreamed of in my diary, when Maman was alive. But I’m happy with Jo.**

**It’s only in books, at the end of a sentence that you can find yourself on the far side of the world.**

Scene IV

**Françoise :** “A villa on the Côte d’Azur »

**Danièle :** “No, Françoise, a cruise around the world”

**Françoise :** “Oh yes, Danièle ! Islands ! Bora Bora ! ”

**Danièle :** “No, Françoise, a face lift ! ”

**Danièle and Françoise, my two pretty thin twins have been playing the lottery for eighteen years.**

**Every week they stake ten euros and dream about the millions.**

**Françoise:** “ Oh, Danièle, a Cartier diamond.”

**Danièle:** “No Françoise, pearls, real pearls, the kind Jackie Kennedy wore.”

**Françoise:** “Oh yes, Danièle, wasn’t she lovely?Ha, Jocelyne, every Saturday, when the balls go round, we could die…”

**Danièle:** “Die, Françoise! I don’t want to die at forty!”

**Françoise:** “forty years old, what a nightmare! But I mean Jocelyne, if we are forty, it’s been twelve years that we’ve known each other. Twelve years that we are neighbours, sisters, oh! girls, it rhymes together!!!

**With flowers too, girls! Twelve years that you offer me flowers but I’m allergic! This I’m keeping to myself, I would never dare to tell them.**

**Françoise:** “Chop chop girls, let’s celebrate that birthday, let’s go dancing at the Copacabana Club. The three of us might find a couple of good-looking guys there!”

**Danièle:** “No, Françoise, two Mister Right!”

**That night, a taxi passed and I heard myself say: “Please, Sir, far away Sir, as far as possible”, but I went back home.**

**Jo was asleep with his mouth open, snoring in front of the TV, a trickle of saliva on his chin, an empty bottle of fake beer in his hand. I switched off the T.V.**

**And I went to lay down beside my beautiful daughter Nadine who sang me a song as my mother used to.**

Scene V

**The Journalist:** “Mrs Guerbette, your blog is so unexpected. Mrs Guerbette, do you know why one thousand two hundred women visit your site every day to chat about clothes? Huh?”

**J♀:** “…”

**The Journalist:** “Mrs Guerbette, why this sudden passion for knitting, sewing, haberdashing? Huh?”

**J♀:** “…”

**This morning a journalist from the local newspaper came to my shop. She wanted to interview me about my “Ten gold fingers” blog!**

**Every morning, I write about the pleasures of knitting, sewing, embroidery, pearls pompons and fine Valencienne lace.**

**Journalist:** “Do you think we suffer from a lack of physical contact these days? Do you think the virtual world has killed off eroticism? Huh?”

**J♀:** “…”

**Journalist:** “Listen Mrs Guerbette, once, people would have kept a private diary, now they write a blog! Huh? Did you ever keep a diary?”

**J♀:** “No, I never kept a diary, and I have no answers to any of your questions. I’m terribly sorry.”

**Journalist:** “Listen to me, Mrs Guerbette. My mother’s been living alone for over ten years. Every morning she gets up at six. She prepares a coffee, she waters the plants, she listens to the radio. She drinks her coffee. She has a quick wash. One hour later, at seven, her day is already over.

One month ago, a neighbour told her about your blog, and she asked me to buy her one of these thingies – by a thingy my mother meant a computer. And since then, thanks to your embroidery, your funny Valentine lace - oh sorry your fine Valencienne lace and your pearls pompons, she’s rediscovered the joys of life. So, don’t tell me you don’t have any answers. I’ll be back soon, Mrs Guerbette, and then you will have the answers, huh?”

**Then I closed the shop, went home and I read back my teenage diary.**

**J♀:** “Heehee, I put tiny hearts instead of dots over the i’s in the name of Philippe de Gouverne. He was so funny but I never dared to approach him. He used the ordinary past tense!”

**I found old cinema tickets and a photograph of my first taste of flying with Papa. I was seven. Papa wouldn’t remember it now.**

**Since his stroke, Papa’s been living in the present. He has no past, no future. He lives in a present that lasts six minutes. And every six minutes, the meter of his memory resets itself to zero. Every six minutes, he asks “What day is it?” and every six minutes he asks: “Is Maman coming soon?”**

**J♀:** “And this sentence in violet ink written before Maman died on the pavement: - I’d like to have the chance to decide what my life will be like, I think that’s the best present anyone can get.

**To decide what my life will be like.**

**To decide what my life will be like.**

**J♀:** “I’m forty-seven now, Mum, so I don’t cry anymore. But you couldn’t say I ever decided what my life would be like. Ever.”

Scene VI

**Françoise:** “Jocelyne, come on. Come have a coffee with us at the bar Les Arcades and play the lottery!”

**Danièle:** “Come on Jo, have a go for once!”

**Françoise:** “You’re not going to remain a haberdasher all your life, Jo?”

**J♀:** “But I like my shop, girls.”

**Françoise:** “Don’t you ever want to do something else?”

**Danièle:** “Jo, come on have a go, for once!”

**J♀:** “Alright girls, but just once!”

**J♀:** *(to the newsagent)* “Good afternoon, sir, I would like a lottery ticket, please.”

**Newsagent:** “Which one?”

**J♀:** “Excuse me Sir, which what?”

**Newsagent:** “Which ticket, Lotto or EuroMillions?”

**J♀:** “How would I know Sir, could you please decide for me?”

**Newsagent:** “Try EuroMillions then, there’s a good jackpot this Friday… Do you pick the numbers or shall the machine pick them for you? You decide, honey.”

**J♀:** “Yes, Sir, I do decide. The machine decides for me.”

**Newsagent:** “Two euros, honey”

**J♀:** “Thanks a lot, Sir, and good luck, I mean for your flu!”

**J♀:** “I got it girls, are you happy?”

**Danièle:** “Yes, Jo, you did it, at last!”

**Françoise:** “At last! Our little Jo will have lovely dreams tonight!”

Scene VII

**Well, I slept very badly.**

**Jo was unwell all night. Diarrhoea, vomiting, vomiting, diarrhoea.**

**I called Doctor Caron.**

**Doctor:** “It’s probably the swine flu Jocelyne, I’m so sorry.”

**J♀:** “Argh, that horrible swine flu”

**Doctor:** “That will be twenty-eight euros, Jocelyne.”

**Jo fell asleep in the morning. I saw all those years of the past on his face, I saw time taking us away from our dreams and bringing us closer to silence.**

**J♀:** “Sleep, sleep, you are my sick baby. Jo, you are so lovely. Yes, I will always stay here, beside you Jo, because you need me.”

**I liked my lie but a woman needs to be needed.**

**J♀:** “Hello Françoise, Jo is sick, please stick a notice on the shop window – Closed on account of flu –”

**I posted the news on my blog. Within an hour, a hundred mails arrived.**

**People offering to run the shop. People asking me Jo’s size, to knit him pull overs, scarves and gloves!**

**Incredible!**

**My Ten Gold Fingers seemed to have created a strong bond.**

**An invisible community of women who, while rediscovering the simple pleasures of knitting and sewing had suddenly replaced the loneliness of the days with the joy of being part of a family.**

**So much unexpected solicitude had me all choked up. I wasn’t used to being given something I hadn’t asked before.**

**I went to see my father.**

**Papa:** “Who are you?”

**Six minutes were over.**

**Jo was better because one evening, he switched the TV on and when he opened a non-alcoholic beer, I knew he was back to normal.**

**In the following days, the haberdashery shop was never empty and Ten Gold Fingers had now five thousand hits a day. For the first time I was out of pearls pompons! Or rather THE pompon! The only one in stock because I never sold any pompons for twenty years!**

**I felt as if I were in the middle of a syrupy Franck Capra movie, and I can tell you that sometimes syrup tastes fucking tasty!**

*(She sings while sewing)*

Scene VIII

**But the most important event in that period of our lives – the one that sent the twins into a fit of hysteria – was the fact that the EuroMillions winning ticket had been sold in Arras.**

**Françoise:** “Arras ! Good Heavens Jocelyne ! The arse-end of nowhere, it could have been us!”

**Danièle:** “Eighteen million all right, all right girls. Ok, ok, it’s less than the seventy-five million won in Monaco last year (yes, it’s a scoop!) but imagine Jocelyne, eighteen million!”

**Françoise:** “Oh, it makes me a second arsehole!”

**Danièle:** “However, it’s apocalyptic – the holder of the winning ticket hasn’t turned up yet!”

**Françoise:** “And now, there are only four days left before the winner loses it all.”

**ACT II**

Scene IX

**I don’t know how I knew, but I knew it was me.**

**One chance in seventy-six million, it happened to me.**

**Eighteen million five hundred and forty-seven thousand three hundred and one euros and twenty-eight cents.**

**Then I fell faint.**

**Jo found me on the kitchen floor – just as I’d found Maman on the pavement thirty years ago.**

**When a person falls, you always reach it too late. Did you notice that?**

**J♂:** “Jocelyne, Jocelyne, Jocelyne, it’s that awful flu, I’m calling Dr Caron.”

**J♀:** “No, Jo, it’s nothing. I didn’t have time for a lunch, help

me to get up, I’ll sit down for five minutes and I’ll be all

right, I’ll be all right and I’m all right.”

**J♂:** “Right, right, right! You’re so hot!”

**J♀:** “I am fine Jo. I’m hot because… I’m having my periods.”

**-Periods- The magic word which puts most men off.**

**J♂:** “Should I warm up something for you Jocelyne or should I order a pizza?”

**J♀:** “We could eat out for once, at the Vietnamese restaurant?”

**J♂:** “I put on my jacket and I’m your man.”

**J♀:** “Huh, yes I’ll have… a dim sum, only one please.”

**J♂:** “I’m gonna have the bun tan – bum tan… number 27!

Jo, your eyes are shinning. Are you sure you’re all right?”

*Jocelyne looks down.*

**J♂:** “You don’t eat your, your ravioli… You don’t feel good?”

**J♀:** “There’s something I have to tell you Jo”

**J♂:** “Tell me, it’s nothing serious? You’re not sick, are you? Because… because if anything happened to you it would be the end of the world, I would die without you, Jo.”

**J♀:** “No, Jo, it’s nothing serious. Don’t worry. I just wanted to tell you… I love you, Jo.”

**And I swore to myself that no sum of money would be worth losing all this for.**

Scene X

**We made love very gently that night. Love with a capital L. Like in Albert Cohen’s novel Belle du Seigneur. The dream of all women.**

**Only love can defeat boredom.**

**That night I didn’t know. I do know now.**

**By God, what a beautiful night!**

**At dawn, Jo had disappeared.**

**It’s been a month since Jo started a morning course to become a foreman, to earn three thousand euros a month to get closer to his dreams. Ha! If he knew!**

**J♀:** “Jo, my love, if you knew… I can make all your dreams come true now. They don’t cost a lot your dreams, my love!

* A flat-screen TV set: 1400 euros
* A Seiko watch: 400 euros
* A new fireplace in the sitting room: 2000 euros
* A Porsche Cayenne: 89000 euros
* And all the James Bond DVDs, 22 films: 170 euros!”

**This is horrible. I’m thinking no matter how. It scares me silly. What’s happening to me? Maman, oh, Maman, who must I give eighteen million five hundred and forty-seven thousand three hundred and one euros and twenty-eight cents to, to have you back?**

Scene XI

**The receptionist:** “Ah, at last! You are the winner of Arras. I was so worried!”

**The receptionist is charming.**

**The receptionist:** “A cup of coffee or a cup of tea?”

**J♀:** “No, thank you, I already had three coffees this morning, I caught an early train and…”

**Immediately, I feel so stupid and provincial.**

**I have an appointment at the French gaming headquarters in Boulogne-Billancourt near Paris.**

**I think of myself, of all that will be possible for me now and I don’t want any of it.**

**I don’t want all the money in the world can buy but does everyone feel like that?**

**The receptionist:** “Could you please wait here for a moment, Mr Hervé Meunier will receive you.”

**Mr Meunier:** “Ah, Mrs Guerbette, at last, here you are Mrs Guerbette ! You had us worried Mrs Guerbette. But please, sit down, Mrs Guerbette. Make yourself comfortable, Mrs Guerbette, you are here at home now, Mrs Guerbette, huh huh huh.”

**My new home is a big office with a thick carpet. I unobtrusively slip off one of my comfortable flat shoes especially chosen this morning for the trip as my feet tend to swell in the train, and let my foot sink into -Hmm- the thick carpet.**

**It’s here, face to face with Mr Hervé Meunier, people receive the magic talisman that will change their life.**

**The holy grail.**

**The cheque.**

**Mr Meunier:** “Your winning ticket, Mrs Guerbette and your ID, Mrs Guerbette. Thank you, Mrs Guerbette. The cheque will be ready in a few minutes Mrs Guerbette, would you like a cup of coffee? Mrs…, Mrs Guerbette? Mrs Guerbette?

Well, Mrs Guerbette, I would like you to meet a colleague of mine, Mrs Guerbette. In fact, you must meet the psychologist, Mrs Guerbette.”

**J♀:** “I didn’t know that having eighteen million euros was a disease?”

**The psychologist seems to be a woman. She looks like the thingy Melania Trump, she has Daisy Duck lips.**

**The psych:** “Mrs Guerbette, what happens to you is both a stroke of good luck and a great misfortune. You are rich. You’ll be able to buy anything you want and to make a lot of presents. But, be careful, because when you have money all of a sudden, people love you. Total strangers will ask you to marry them. They’ll send you poems. They’ll ask your money to nurse a little girl who has multiple sclerosis, whose name is by chance Jocelyne. They’ll send you a picture of an ill-treated dog and they’ll promise you a kennel in your name, dog biscuits, dog show...

And I haven’t even mentioned bankers yet. Mrs Guerbeeette! Mrs bowing and snapping there.”

**J♀:** “May I have a cup of coffee now, please?”

**The psych:** “There has been many suicides, many, many, many depressions, divorces and tragedies;

* Strangulations with shower pipes;
* Burns with butane gaz;
* Cuts off fingers to get a credit card code;
* Contract killers like in a black film;
* False signatures;
* False documents.

Money makes people mad, Mrs Guerbette. I have no advice to give you, only this information: we have a psychological support service if you like to make use of it.”

**J♀:** “With a lot of sugar, please, thank you.”

**The psych:** “Have you told your family?”

**J♀:** “Sorry?”

**The psych:** “Have you told your family?”

**J♀:** “No, not yet.”

**The psych:** “Fabulous, we can help you to find the words to minimize the shock. Do you have children?”

**J♀:** “Yes, I do.”

**The psych:** “Well, now they won’t see you as a mother but as a rich mother! And your husband will want to give it up to manage your fortune because it will be his as yours.

He will offer you flowers every day.”

**J♀:** “No, I’m allergic to flowers.”

**The psych:** “Well, chocolates then. Anyway, he will lull you, he will spoil you, he will poison you. Remember the Borgias, the Agnellis, or more recently the Bettencourt family. Greed burns everything in its path.

These are four emergency numbers. Don’t hesitate to call us. Good luck.”

**Mr Meunier:** “Here is the cheque, Mrs Guerbette, a cheque of eighteen million five hundred and forty-seven thousand three hundred and one euros and twenty-eight cents to Jocelyne Guerbette, Mrs Guerbette! Mrs Guerbette? Are you sure you wouldn’t prefer, Mrs Guerbette, a bank, Mrs Guerbette, transfer, Mrs Guerbette?”

**J♀:** “I’m sure.”

**In fact, I’m not sure of anything now.**

Scene XII

**My train for Arras is in seven hours’ time. I take the opportunity to do a virtual shopping at the Chanel boutique and I dream in front of a crocodile bag, Maman would have loved to carry but never dared.**

**Price on application.**

**Where does a price on application start?**

**Making my way out of the boutique, I meet an actress whose name I can never remember, Pretty Woman style, carrying six large bags in each hand.**

**What a fuss!**

**The loneliness I saw in that actress’ face frightened me.**

**Ha, Ha, I’m starving.**

**On a bench in the Jardin des Tuileries, I sit on my beautiful bottom of callipygous Venus.**

**I have a terrifying fortune in my ugly bra and I savour the tuna sandwich that Jo prepared for me early this morning because they are all thieves, especially at railway stations… Hmm! It’s delicious.**

**Later, I forage about in the big textiles market, the Marché Saint-Pierre, my Ali Baba cave.**

**My hands plunge into the fabrics, my fingers tremble at the contact with organdie. I have the beauty of the world at my fingertips. I buy some sequined ribbons and pearls pompons. Many. My happiness costs less than forty euros.**

Scene XIII

**In the train on the way back to Arras, I have been thinking about my children. I wonder what Romain and Nadine could miss now that I can afford everything.**

**But does money cut distances short?**

**Jo was waiting for me at the station.**

**J♂:** “Oh, Jocelyne! I’m so glad to see you back. What about my sandwich, Jo? Was it good?”

**J♀:** “The best in the world Jocelyn, like you, my love.”

Scene XIV

**Françoise:** “Jocelyyyyne!

**J♀:** “Yes, Françoise! One moment please! I’m in the loo.”

**Françoise:** “Jocelyne! Guess what? She’s gone to collect her cheque! It’s a woman. She wants to remain anonymous! It’s written in the newspaper. She waited till the last minute! I would have gone off right away, I would have been afraid they might not pay me. Do you realise Jo? Eighteen million! Over a thousand years of underpaid job, Jo, shit!

**Danièle:** “Oh, my goodness, girls, I went to ask at the bar Les Arcades, no one knows who she is!”

**Françoise:** “Well, we will soon see a Maserati or a Porsche Cayenne around the place, then we will know who she is!”

**J♀:** “No, girls, these aren’t the kind of cars a woman would buy, girls. More likely a Mini or a Fiat 500? Or perhaps she won’t buy anything. Perhaps she won’t change anything in her life.”

**Danièle:** “Because you, Jo, you wouldn’t change anything, Jo. You would stay here in your little boutique selling fabrics to keep bored women occupied. Women not brave enough to take a lover! No, Jo, you would do the same as us, you would change your life. You wouldn’t think twice about the expense, you would buy a lovely house in Greece. And you, Jo, you would spoil your children!”

**Françoise:** “And your friends too!”

**Danièle:** “Well, and if you felt guilty…you could make a donation to cancer research!”

**Françoise:** “Or multiple sclerosis, or whatever…!”

**J♀:** “Yes, girls but that I can do that without winning the lottery.”

**Danièle:** “Yes, of course, but that’s not the same thing !”

**Françoise:** “Yes indeed, Danièle, it is not the same thing!”

**J♀:** *(ad libitum for herself)*

**“**Jo, it’s a woman, she’s gone to collect her cheque. Nobody knows her! It’s written in the newspaper. She wants to remain anonymous. We’ll soon see a Maserati or a Porsche Cayenne. We will know who she is! Those aren’t the kinds of a woman’s car! A Mini or a Fiat 500.

Change nothing!

Buy a lovely house in Greece, spoil my children and my friends…a donation to cancer or multiple sclerosis research…

I can do that without winning.

It is not the same thing, it is not the same thing…”

*(During her logorrhoea she looks for a place to hide the cheque.)*

**J♀:** *(interrupted by a client)* “Good afternoon, Mado.”

**Mado:** “Mrs Jocelyne, my grown-up daughter is in the hospital. She is dying of the horrible flu. Mrs Jocelyne, you use such lovely words in your blog, Mrs Jocelyne? How can I say goodbye to her? Can you give me some words, please?”

**J♀:** “A Maserati, a lovely house in Greece, the children, cancer research and multiple sclerosis…”

Scene XV

**Mother – Maman – Mummy**

**I’m beginning to lose weight.**

**I’m not hungry anymore. It’s stress. I get almost eight thousand hits a day now on my blog. I agreed to have advertising on it, now I can pay a salary to Mado. She works for me since her grown-up daughter died in intensive-care.**

**Mado loves the twins. She plays lottery with them.**

**Mado:** “Ah, Mrs Jocelyne, Mrs Jocelyne! If I won, you’ve no idea of all the things I would do!”

**J♀:** “What would you do Mado?”

**Mado:** “I don’t quite know but it would be extraordinary”

**It was the day I began my list.**

Scene XVI

**List of the things I need:**

* **A perroquet coat rack (bistro-style)**
* **Two pans (for pancakes)**
* **An apple peeler (only 1 euro, quite an economy!)**
* **Tweezers (that tweeze!)**
* **A magnifying mirror with a built-in light (I’m getting long-sighted!)**
* **Earplugs (one of us snores!)**
* **A new handbag (Chanel or Dior!)**
* **A new coat (at Caroll’s. Pretty coat, very comfortable, slimming effect, 330 euros)**
* **A new iron (in Leclerc, very nice steam turbo, 300.99 euros)**
* **A train ticket to London (two days at least with Jo)**
* **To re-read Belle du Seigneur**
* **To read the Personal Finances for Dummies**
* **Underpants, socks, slippers for Jo (???)**
* **A flat-screen TV (???)**
* **All the James Bond DVDs (???)**

Scene XVII

**J♀:** “Papa, I’ve won eighteen million! »

**Papa:**“That’s wonderful my little girl, you must be pleased.

Anyone would know what to do with a sum like that!

Have you told your mother?”

**J♀:** “Yes, I told Maman.”

**Papa:**“Do you have children, darling? Because if you do, spoil them, we never spoil our children enough!”

**J♀:** “Papa, do you think Jo would still love me if he knew?”

**Papa:**“Are you married? What’s your name?”

**Six bloody minutes.**

Scene XVIII

**The journalist came back in my shop this morning with her tape recorder and this time I was inexhaustible.**

**My life is simple and I love it that way.**

**My life is simple and I love it that way.**

**My life is simple and I love it that way.**

Scene XIX

**J♂:** “Surprise, Jo! My darling, this week-end I take you to Le Touquet! You have lost weight, you are working too hard, you must rest!”

**J♀ :** “Le Touquet, Jo, you’re crazy!”

**On the motorway to Le Touquet, seven Porsches Cayenne passed us, and everytime, I noticed in his eyes his sparkling little dreams.**

**J♂:** “Once we arrive in Le Touquet, my darling, I’ll buy you some chocolates at the famous shop Le Chat Bleu.”

**J♀:** “Le Chat Bleu, Jo, but you’re totally mad” *(she whispers in his ear)*

**J♂ :** “Tut Tut Tut ! Jocelyne! Chocolate contains magnesium, it’s good to fight your stress!”

**J♀:** “Ho, what surprising things you know Jo! You are a wonderful husband, you are a big brother, a father, you are all the men a woman could need.”

**I’m afraid, if he knew? Wouldn’t he fly to islands that smells jasmine and paprika? If he knew?**

**Here, the cold wind beats our faces, the salty air dries our skin. We shiver, but we are in peace.**

**J♂:** “Cheers! Jocelyne.”

**J♀:** “Cheers! Jocelyn.”

**J♂:** “Let’s hope we go on as we are!”

**J♀:** “Let’s hope nothing changes!”

**If he knew, it would be war, it would be chaos, if he knew.**

**Back home, in my mirror, I look at my naked body. My spare tire has deflated, my legs look slimmer. I have a body.**

**If I were rich, I’d think it ugly. I would want a complete makeover: breast implants, face lift, liposuction.**

**But I’m not rich, the only thing I have is the temptation of a new life hidden inside my mirror. But what I wish is nothing really different! Thank you, God for not having me cashed in this cheque, yet!**

Scene XX

**My wish list:**

* **A two-weeks holiday alone with Jo, and not at the Happy Face Campsite!**
* **Take Romain and Nadine to see Maman’s grave and tell them about her wonderful pastries.**
* **Buy the coat at Caroll’s, quick.**
* **Eat foie gras and drink Champagne with the twins. Talk about men all through the night.**
* **Spend a week in London with Nadine, re-read her The Little Prince.**
* **Tell Romain that his girlfriend of last Christmas was awful, nasty, vulgar, horrible. (Send him some money anyway).**
* **A Chanel bag.**
* **At Hermès, unfold a lot of scarves and then say: yes…I’ll think it over!**
* **Tell everyone I was the one who won the eighteen million.**
* **Be envied. At last!**
* **Go to a Johnny Halliday concert, quick, before he dies.**
* **To be told I’m beautiful!**

Scene XXI

**I almost had a lover once!**

**Not long after the birth of Nadège’s corpse when Jo was breaking things around the house and when I took it all.**

**J♂:** “My baby’s dead because you didn’t take care of yourself. Poor Jo, your body is a rubbish bin, a great fat disgusting rubbish bin. You’re a sow, a big fat sow, a fucking sow!”

**A thousand times, I thought of running away with the children, then I told myself all this would pass.**

**If I didn’t die then, it was first because of an ordinary little remark:**

“Let me help you”

**While I have been crying for eight months Nadège’s corpse, buried in a horrible little glossy white coffin, I am called a “mild case”.**

**Doctor Caron sends me away for a three weeks cure: “You must save yourself, Jocelyne.”**

**I go to Nice in 1994, in the Centre Sainte-Geneviève, at the Dominican nuns.**

**Every afternoon, after the siesta, I walk down to the beach.**

**At this time of the day, the sun is on my back. I’m putting on sun cream, but my arm is too short.**

**He:** “Let me help you!”

**He’s wearing a white shirt and beige trousers. He’s barefoot. Dark glasses.**

**I see his mouth and his lips coloured like a fruit.**

**J♀:** “No, that wouldn’t do.”

**He:** “What wouldn’t do? Me wishing to help you, or you to agree?”

**J♀:** “I’m just leaving anyway.”

**He:** “So am I.”

**We don’t move.**

**He’s good looking, I’m not pretty.**

**He’s a predator, a rapist, I’m sure of it.**

**No man ventures to speak to you like that in Arras. And I like it. I am crazy!**

**He:** “Come on, I’ll get you a cup of tea. Two cups of Ceylon tea, please! Orange Pekoe, prego signora!”

**J♀:** “Why are you doing this?”

**He:** “I saw you on the beach from behind just now and the loneliness of your whole body overwhelmed me.”

**He’s so handsome. Like Vittorio Gassman in Scent of a Woman. Like Kevin Kostner before his hair implants. And his kiss is long and warm, just like those kisses before Jocelyn Guerbette’s kiss…**

**J♀:** “No.”

**If that man can read my mind just by looking at my back, he can see in my eyes I’m a faithful wife. I went back to Arras the next day.**

**Jo’s anger had gone away.**

**The children had prepared fish and chips and rented the DVD of The Sound of Music.**

**But nothing is ever as simple as that.**

Scene XXII

**J♀:** “Papa, I’ve won eighteen million, it’s a torture!”

**Papa:** “Who are you?”

**J♀:** “I’m your daughter, Papa. I miss you, I miss your cuddles, I miss Maman, I miss my childhood.”

**Papa:** “Who are you?”

**J♀:** “I’m your daughter, Papa. I sell button’s trousers because Maman died on the pavement. Because you were already ill and I had to take care of you.”

**Papa:** “Who are you?”

**J♀:** “I’m your daughter, Papa, your only daughter. I grew up waiting for you and watching Maman draw the world. I grew up with the fear of being as pretty in your eyes as Maman was. I dreamed of designing pretty dresses to make all women pretty. I dreamed of being loved for myself without having to be always kind and nice.”

**Papa:** “Who are you?”

**Bloody six minutes.**

Scene XXIII

**List of my crazy notions:**

* **Close the haberdashery shop and go back studying fashion in Paris**
* **Lots of bags from Chanel boutique.**
* **Get a breast job: minimum 38 D, 42 E, 48 D, F, G, H, K… you are crazy? Yes, I know but it’s the list!**
* **And a full-time nurse for you Papa!**

**Papa:** “Thank you Mademoiselle, you are charming. Who are you?”

**J♀:** “Fucking six minutes!”

**Who are you?**

**Who are you?**

**Who are you?**

Scene XXIV

**Jo will leave early tomorrow morning to Switzerland, to finish his foreman’s training, to earn three thousand euros a month at Häagen Dazs.**

**If he knew?**

**The morning of his departure, Jo’s kiss is strangely sweet like a first kiss or…**

**Jo left three days ago.**

**I’m taking advantage of the evenings to re-read Belle du Seigneur, only this time I know the end of the story. The dreadful triumph of boredom over desire, the sound of flushing over symbiotic passion.**

**I finally fall asleep, exhausted, in love…**

**J♀:** “If he knew?”

**ACT III**

Scene XXV

**J♀:** “He knew, I knew it!”

**The bastard, the thief.**

**He found the cheque.**

**When?**

**How long had he known?**

**When I came back from Paris? Before Paris?**

**Before Le Touquet ? After Le Touquet?**

**When?**

**Of course, I called the headquarters of Häagen Dazs in Switzerland. No one knew a thing about Jocelyn Guerbette and the receptionist split her sides while I insisted. At the factory of course, Jo’s boss confirmed what I sensed. He had applied for holidays.**

**J♀: “**Holidays! I ought to have listened to my inner prompting to buy the steam turbo iron at three hundred euros and ninety-nine cents. You won’t be seeing Jo again, Jo.”

**He finally fixed my mirror and obviously discovered my hiding place. He scratched the final “e” of my first name and suddenly the cheque was made out in his name: Jocelyne minus “e” became Jocelyn Guerbette!**

**Our sweet kiss, the day he left, I knew it, I sensed it, it wasn’t a first kiss but the last one.**

**J♀:** “OhJo, my Jo, my love, you robbed me, you betrayed me, you abandoned me, you destroyed my life.”

**My life! What was my life? My life was our life, Jo. I deeply loved the life that we built together. I was waiting with all the enthusiasm of a young mother to be a grandmother someday.**

**That, Jo, the man that I loved, you stole it too. Daisy Duck was right: greed burns everything in its path.**

Scene XXVI

**In the move, I didn’t say anything to anyone, not even my children. The next day, I shut up the house and closed the haberdashery shop. Left the keys with Mado. Reassure everybody: “Jo and I have decided to take a well-deserved year off.” The twins drove me to the airport. They guessed Jocelyn had left me.**

Scene XXVII

**I didn’t go very far.**

**In Nice, the sun is shining. I’m losing weight, I dine alone, destroyed.**

**I don’t sleep well, I cry alone, mutilated.**

**Jo. Here you are!**

Scene XXVII

**Here we have our runaway.**

**His forehead is pressed to the window of the moving train.**

**He had found the cheque before Le Touquet.**

**The bastard had taken it just after the trip, because he felt she was going to burn it.**

**Arriving at Brussels Midi station, the first coffee of his new life is disgusting.**

**He has chosen Belgium because they speak French there,**

**the only language he knows.**

**Although not all the words. Symbiosis.**

**He looks ugly.**

**He was handsome when Jocelyne looked at him.**

**Venantino Venantini.**

**On the “show-off” place of the Grand Sablon, he rents a very big house.**

**He’s a rich man now.**

**He spends money.**

**He buys a powerful and expensive red car.**

**An Omega Speed Master Moon watch.**

**Berlutti boots.**

**Weston shoes.**

**Dior tuxedos.**

**He throws them away.**

**He goes back to drinking real beers,**

**men’s beers.**

**Bornem Triple.**

**And Kasteel Bier.**

**He’s putting on weight.**

**He spends his afternoons on café terraces. He tries to make friends. They make fun of him.**

**On week-ends, he goes to the seaside to Knokke-le-Zoute.**

**He lends a lot of money and never sees it back.**

**He tries to seduce a few girls.**

**He pays a lot of champagne, and sometimes, he’s allowed to touch a breast.**

**His nights are gloomy, cold and disenchanted.**

**It’s ten months after Jocelyn Guerbette left Arras that the cold takes possession of him.**

**He misses Jocelyne.**

**He wants to go home but he is frightened.**

**In Brussels, in a famous bookshop, he buys Belle du Seigneur**

**and a dictionary.**

**He’s reading.**

**He knows now what “symbiosis” means.**

**He decides to write a letter to Jocelyne.**

**A four pages letter.**

**He has a plenty of words for her now.**

**Full of hopes, he watches his hand throwing the letter into the letter box.**

**He goes back to his big empty house.**

**He has sold everything.**

**He’s waiting for the answer.**

**He waits a long, long time but no reply comes.**

**He’s lost.**

**He slowly agonises.**

**That was the “symbiosis”.**

**Only, he didn’t see it.**

**ACT IV**

Scene XXIX

**J♀:** “Jocelyne, I want to come back home, back to our house and the Radiola TV set, back to you. I love you, you’re the missing part of my life. I beg your pardon.”

**Fifteen million one hundred and eighty-six thousand and four euros and seventy-two cents.**

**A little bit more than three million had vanquished your dream and revealed your self-disgust.**

**Jo, I know now that love can stand up to death better than to betrayal.**

Scene XXX

**My last list:**

* **Go to the hairdresser. Manicure, pedicure, depilation and for the first time in my life, have someone other than me to remove the hair of ma Lady Garden, of course not the full Brazilian!**
* **Spoil and spoil and spoil again my children and my future grandchild, Nadine is pregnant.**
* **Spoil my two pretty twins and offer them two terrifiiic Minis.**
* **Choose a new wardrobe size 10. Now, men smile at me in the street.**
* **Buy a house with a view of the sea. Don’t ask the price, just fill in the cheque.**
* **Get Maman’s grave moved there and enjoy the sunny days with Papa.**
* **Give one million to someone at random. Who?**
* **Live with him!**

Scene XXXI

**Him. My Vittorio Gassman : “Let me help you”.**

**I had called him just after Jo’d betrayed me, without much confidence, about a year and a half ago. I’ve been living at his side for over a year now.**

**He:** “I was hoping to hear from you Jocelyne”.

**He’s as handsome as he was on the day we kissed, his lips still taste of Orange Pekoe tea, but my heart doesn’t race. Every afternoon on the beach, I put sun cream on my back, my arm is still too short but my skin doesn’t shiver anymore.**

**He:** “I would like to see you smile sometimes Jo.”

**I sometimes smile in the cool of the evening. I smile for six minutes as I invent a new life for Papa.**

**J♀ :** “ Today Papa, you are a famous doctor made Chevalier de la Légion d’Honneur. Yesterday you were a fabulous counter-tenor Papa. Tomorrow, I’ll tell you you were the most wonderful of fathers and also the day you told me I was as beautiful as Mother was and that made me cry.”

**He:** “You are beautiful, Jocelyne”.

**J♀:** “Yes. I just wanted to be beautiful for you Jo. I’ve loved you so much.”

**I’m loved. But I no longer love.**

**He:** “You are beautiful, Jocelyne”.

**Yes, I do smile in the evening. Sometimes.**

*She sings.*

**By the way, I did everything on my last list with the exception of a couple of details.**

**In the end, I did have a full Brazilian wax. It’s odd, very little girl-like.**

**On the other hand, I haven’t decided yet who to give the million to.**

**I’m waiting for a sign.**

THE START