

Meursault's Labyrinth



by

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CAST

Samia Ben Bouali	FLN militant during the Battle of Algiers (1956-57)
La Blonde	The woman of Samia's dreams
Jean Verger	Samia's French-Vietnamese lawyer
Col. Yves Godard	French counter-insurgency chief during the Battle of Algiers.
Frank Kenner	American (30's) visiting Algiers in 1997
Marie Kenner	Frank's mother, deceased just before Frank's visit to Algiers in 1997
Sam (Samia) Hacini	Algerian (30's) lives in Madrid. Visiting Algiers in 1997.
Meursault	The narrator of <i>The Stranger</i> by Albert Camus
Marie Cardona	Meursault's girlfriend
Raymond Degueldre	Meursault's thuggish neighbor, an OAS commander
Albert Camus	Writer, ladies man, and fugitive from literary justice
Miram	a mother on a bus in Beirut, 1975

STAGE

In a near perfect world, the play would be performed in the sprawling living room of an abandoned and slowly crumbling colonial villa with an enormous balcony overlooking the Mediterranean.

At the back of the playing area is a large white wall with its paint flaking off.

PROJECTIONS

Texts, photos, and bits of films and newsreel footage are occasionally projected onto that large white wall. These images appearing and then vanishing again as if in a haunting half remembered dream. Two films in particular are prominently featured: *The Battle of Algiers* (1966) and *The Stranger* (1967).

STAGING

People fade in and out of the action without warning - appearing as if out of a dream or memory and then vanishing again. Sometimes they are physically together in the same time and place. Other times they're not. Sometimes it's difficult to say.

SETTING

The action drifts from Algiers to Madrid to Beirut to...

TIME

It floats from 1957 to 1975 to 1997.
And then back again.

Meursault's Labyrinth premiered at Station Beirut, Lebanon, November 29, 2019.

Director	Doyle Avant
Producer	Sahar Assaf

Cast

Samia Hacini, Marie Kenner	Sahar Assaf
Samia Ben Bouali	Pascale Chneiss
Jean Verger, Meursault	Sani Baki
Col. Yves Godard	Elie Youssef
Raymond Degueldre	Jawad Riskhallah
Albert Camus, the Blonde, Miriam	Basma Baydoun
Frank Kenner	Doyle Avant

Movement 1

Scene 1

Onscreen: the iconic photo of Albert Camus in a trenchcoat and with a cigarette in his mouth.

Onstage: A match flares, illuminating ALBERT CAMUS - sitting sits at table with a typewriter. He lights a cigarette and starts typing.

CAMUS (v.o.)

Maman est morte. Aujourd'hui.

*He stops typing - savors the sound of that.
Then another thought line comes to him.
He types.*

Ou peut-etre hier, je ne sais pas.

*He nods - liking it.
Sound: pounding of a judge's gavel.
Camus ignores it.*

JUDGE (unseen)

The court will come to order. Please state your name.

*Camus finally looks up.
Smiles enigmatically.*

CAMUS

Just think of me as...the Rumi on the beach.

As Camus fades away, the sound of his typewriter morphs into a gentle cacophony of a telegraph and then into intermittent gunfire.

This fades to radio news reports in a babel of languages: English, French, Arabic, Vietnamese. One signal growing clearer then fading back to static again until another signal fades in. As if someone is slowly spinning the tuning dial across a shortwave radio bandwidth - spanning both time zones and time itself.

RADIO 1 (Arabic)

....in Algeria, militants from le Group Islamique Armée stuck the western town of Rais just after midnight. Authorities have put the death toll at 234. Survivors insist that nearby army units failed to respond during the two-hour attack....

The signal fades out and back in to:

RADIO 2 (BBC)

...this morning as Xuan Loc fell and North Vietnamese forces continue their relentless push southward - now bringing them within forty kilometers of Saigon...

RADIO 3 (French)

.....in Cambodia, the Khmer Rouge have overrun government forces on the northern outskirts of Phnom Penh and now seem poised to enter the capitol.

70's sound:

RADIO 4 (Arabic)

....temperature in the low 20's. A slight chance of rain in the morning, but after that it should be another beautiful day in Beirut.

The radio reports fade into the sound of ocean waves gently rolling onto the shore.

Film: Battle of Algiers - the blonde bomber at the checkpoint. (04)

*Text: Samia Ben Bouali.
Arrested: Algiers 13 January 1957*

Text: Beirut - 12 April 1975

Onstage: SAMIA appears.

SAMIA

Emi tuuffiat alyawm. (beat) Maman died today. And yesterday and the day before that all the days before that - for the last hundred and forty five years. Cause of death: History.

She fades out.

GODARD fades in.

Video: Godard marching into Algiers. (BOA)

Text: Col. Yves Godard

Disappeared: Algiers, 5 July 1962

Wanted by: French Surete National

Text: Beirut - 12 April 1975

GODARD

Maman died today. At least that's the best estimate I can make based on the limited intelligence available. When I returned to the hotel from breakfast, the concierge handed me a typewritten note with four words.

MEURSAULT

"Mother deceased. Deepest sympathy."

GODARD

Alors elle est morte. (beat) Unless it's some kind of code and maman is, in fact, alive and well.

Fade to Sam.

Text: Sam Hacini

Madrid - 30 October 1997 (06)

SAM

Mi Madre se murio hoy. O quisas ayer. My brother called me but the phone connection c'etait pas bonne.

She speaks into her mobile PHONE.

Halo. (listens) Wa alekum a salaam.

She listens - and her face hardens.

Hu Idradat Allah? God's will? Tu es sure?

Tucks away phone. To us:

Apparently the wine killed Maman. She never touched it but it sure touched her. Walking back home from the pharmacy -

on the edge of Place Tahrir where a huge crowd was (arabic) jamming with that badboy Cheb Hasni about wine, sex and all the fakihat mamnooa. (forbidden fruits).

Fade to Frank.

*Text: Frank Kenner
Alger - 30 October 1997*

FRANK

Maman died today. Or maybe it was yesterday. Je sait pas. I got a telegram from the old folks home. "Mère décédée. Burial tomorrow. Sentiments distingué."

I was 19 years old when I first read those words - the opening lines of Albert Camus' L'Etranger. At the time, of course, I was fascinated by the main character - Meursault - because he is without a doubt the most deadpan guy in the history of deadpan guys. Look up blasé in the dictionary and he doesn't even bother to show up. That's how blasé he is. And me - well, I was looking for a role model.

Fade to SAM.

SAM

The salihin from the neighborhood had warned Cheb Hasni to shut the fuck up - but Hasni had an angel in him that just couldn't stop singing. So one of the enlightened packed some plastique into a wine bottle and set it on the middle of the crowd, knowing that someone would get thirsty and...

Sound: EXPLOSION

...the tiniest needle of glass found maman here.

She gently taps her temple.

Samia watches from the wings:

SAMIA

Some things...are not written.

SAM

The very next day one of these hajji-thugs was at the corner café - bragging about how he'd done it. Sheik Ahmed. A real charmeur who grew up downstairs from us. He was a low-life shaafet khara

back then and well...some things just never change.

Fade to GODARD.

GODARD

I won't be going to the funeral. Nor the wake nor the burial. Or anywhere near the village. *(beat)* One of the oldest tricks in the book is to wait for you at the cemetery, hoping that your guard will crumble and you'll come in from wherever it is you've disappeared into. I know because I wrote *the book*.

Fade to FRANK.

FRANK

For Meursault it's not going to his mother's funeral that puts the final nail in his coffin....

*Film: Maman's burial - (Visconti's
The Stranger). (09)*

...but the fact that he never sheds a tear. And then the very next day - he goes to the beach and meets Marie.

*Film: a beautiful young WOMAN in bathing suit
emerges from the sunlight, smiling. (10)*

They swim....and then....luxuriate.
His head rising and falling with her breathing.

*Film: MEURSAULT and MARIE lying on a massive
raft offshore. His head resting on her
stomach. (11)*

Later when he's asking her out - she notices the black armband on his jacket.

Film: dialogue from The Stranger. (12)

MARIE

Are you in mourning?

MEURSAULT

Yes. For my mother.

MARIE

When did she die?

MEURSAULT

Yesterday.

Film: Marie flinches. The image freezes.

FRANK

See that? As if suddenly she knows where the story is leading - but then she goes to the movies anyway.

Film: Meursault and Marie at the movies, watching the film, laughing, kissing. (13)

FRANK

After the movie, Meursault takes Marie to dinner, takes her home, takes her clothes off - et voila.

Fade to SAM.

SAM

When I was fifteen Ahmed caught me in the stairwell and tried to get a hand up my skirt....

She wavers for a second.

Film: a nightmarish flash of a DARK STAIRWAY in an old building. (14)

and got an eyeful of fingernails for his trouble.

She admires her nails.

A nice shade of red by the time I was done.

SAMIA appears in the distance - watching Sam from another time and place.

SAMIA

There are two kinds of stories. The ones we can't live with. And the ones we can't live without.

SAM (to us)

After that Ahmed became a dope-smoking skaf-drinking grandma-mugging punk - holding up the walls along with the rest of his going nowhere pals. Until one day they all dropped by neighborhood sheik - and la ilaha illa illa illa - and then walked out with a virgin slate. *(smiles sweetly)* Isn't that

beautiful?

Fade to Samia.

SAMIA

I arrived in Beirut yesterday. I'm here at the invitation of Al Nisaa al Ahrar men Falastin al Horra. The Free Woman of Free Palestine. They're honoring me for...still being around, I suppose. The ceremony will be held in a place called Shatila.

Fade to Sam.

SAM

When Ahmed and his boys got righteous, I could see that days were numbered for a woman like me. You know - the kind of woman who's having a lot more fun than they are. And Ahmed fucking *hates* that shit. You see, that khasir** (loser) can bounce his head off the floor all day long but this...

She gestures to her face and body.

is still driving him sakhif majnun** (fucking crazy). And so I vanished my way onto a boat that sailed me all the way to *España*. But now Maman est morte and it's time to go back home - back into the labyrinth of...

SAMIA

...Shatila. Such a beautiful name. But not such a beautiful place. (beat) As for Beirut... it...reminds me of something. Maybe something from a dream I once had. But was it a good dream or the kind that you want to...

Fade to Frank.

FRANK

The next morning Meursault wakes up and breathes in the scent of Marie's hair.

Film / The Stranger: Meursault smelling his pillow.

FRANK

Then goes out onto his balcony - and spends the entire day just sitting there - watching the world go by.

Film: Meursault seated backwards on a chair - watching people passing on street below. (16)

Onstage: GODARD appears - sitting like Meursault - also watching the people pass.

GODARD

This is the moment quand je vous envie. Because if it were me sitting there on that balcony - my eyes would never stop moving, never stop gathering intelligence. Never stop looking for the one thing I'm not quite seeing.

Film: MEURSAULT watching from his balcony. (17)

Onstage: Meursault mirrors the film. And describes what he sees - but as if he were Godard.

MEURSAULT

The newspapers folded beneath the young boy's arm.
The black umbrella in the gentleman's left hand.
The red hat his wife is wearing doesn't go with her outfit.
Is the color a code or merely an unfortunate fashion choice?
And is she really his wife? wife, or...

GODARD (to Meursault)

But you barely have a thought in his head the whole time.
You just lets the day roll over you like one big meaningless ocean wave.

*Film: Gradually the street grows dark.
Meursault gets up and goes inside.
Closes the balcon door balcony, looks out. (18)*

FRANK

And when night falls...

MEURSAULT (rises)

I realize that another Sunday has come and gone, maman is dead, and really...nothing has changed.

Meursault fades - onstage and onscreen.

FRANK

When I was 19 years old, I couldn't imagine anyone cooler.
And now, well...let's just say that I got older and Meursault stayed the same age. Maybe that's why I betrayed him in the end.
And didn't breathe a word when....

Scene 2

Title: 1956

Film / Battle of Algiers: an ALGERIAN is dragged towards the guillotine - struggling with his executioners. (19)

GODARD

12 June 6:03 a.m. - FLN militant Abdelkaer Ferradj is executed at Barbarousse prison in Haute Casbah.

Onscreen: Ferradj is slid onto the guillotine.

GODARD

Ali La Pointe is also there that day - watching Ferradj's last moments from his prison cell.

Film: ALI'S EYES gazing through the prison bars.

GODARD

Taking a long hard look at what the future holds for him.

Film: Sound of the guillotine falling - then slam cut to Ali's EYES - and freeze.

Onstage: Samia appears. Caresses the back of her neck.

SAMIA

They say that after you lose your head, for several seconds your eyes continue to see everything around you.

Video: Meursault and Marie swimming in the ocean.

SAM

The dust settling. A wave rolling gently onto the beach. The smile on her face.

Samia fades.

Film: Ali's eyes - from before, still frozen. (21)

The film REVERSES at high speed: the prisoner removed from the guillotine, dragged backwards - and PAUSE.

And REPLAY: The prisoner dragged to the guillotine once more - this time in slow motion.

FRANK appears - watching the screen.

FRANK

I don't know about you - but playing that scene...would scare the shit out of me. I'd be like: yeah I know it's a movie - but what if they get so caught up in the story that they really cut my head off.

Frank looks into the film actor's eyes.

Maybe that's why your performance is so convincing.

Music comes up faintly: "Hasta Mañana". (22)

SAMIA appears in some nether-space: dancing uneasily, her body not quite able to find the rhythm.

Video: The blonde dancing. (23)

Godard watches her from the wings.

GODARD

30 September 3:33 p.m. Three bombs explode within seconds of each other in Alger's centre ville. The first is at the race track.

Film: an EXPLOSION rocks the grandstands. (24)

Samia flinches - continues dancing.

The second at Le Cafématik.

Film: a café explodes.

Samia flinches again....and dances.

The last... at Le Dance Bar.

Film: The Dance Bar explodes.

Samia receives an invisible blow to the stomach....and continues dancing.

GODARD

Seconds after that - General Salan is on the phone.

Godard picks up the phone.

Mon General.

SALAN (voice / Frank)

Trouvez tous les terroristes responsables...
et les ex-ter-min-ez.

GODARD

Oui, mon general.

He hangs up. To us:

For me - the men and women planting these bombs - they're not *terrorists*. They're *soldiers*. (beat) If I were in their shoes, perhaps I'd be bombing cafes too.

And a smile for life's ironies.

But here's the thing you need to remember: I'm not in their shoes.

Scene 3

Film: an impressionistic dreamscape of flaking paint and rusting metal slowly moving before our eyes.

Sound: an old bus rumbling through Beirut streets.

We hear but do not see Miram.

MIRIAM

Ibni, I wish you could have been there with me today
- to see our numbers and our passion our solidarity.
To hear the singing and the speeches and the cries of fury...
and the cries of hope.

Hope. I'm not sure if it's a good thing or....
some other very different kind of thing.

All I know is that this journey today has carried me as far from
you as I have ever been. And now I'm returning.

Scene 4

*Text: Hotel Aletti
Algiers 1997 (25)*

*FRANK enters the HOTEL BAR with his suitcase -
sees SAM sitting at a table with a bottle of
wine. He pauses - some flicker of half
recognition in his eyes.*

FRANK (hesitant)
Pardon, est-ce que vous êtes...

SAM (acid)
Lah.

FRANK
Ah - smahili. J'ai pensé que...

SAM
Croyez-moi - whatever woman you're dreaming of...
c'est pas moi.

FRANK
Vous avez raison.

Frank walks away. Lights flicker.

FRANK (to us)
An hour later - purely by accident - we reshoot this scene.

*Onscreen: a film CLAPPER with Scene # hits
B makes the sound of a guillotine.*

*Frank approaches the bar from a different direction
- sees SAM - starts to go the other way.*

SAM
Je suis désolé.

FRANK
Pardon?

SAM
I'm sorry. About before.

FRANK (stops)

No. Ma fi...Il n'y a pas de problème.

SAM

I'm Sam.

FRANK

Sam? That's your name?

SAM

Yes.

FRANK

Oh. I'm Frank.

SAM (amused) (french?)

Frank? Is that your name or just the way you describe yourself?

FRANK (thrown)

It's....no, I'm not exactly frank - not that way.

SAM

Alors your name...ne te convient pas.

FRANK

Doesn't what?

SAM

...really suit you.

FRANK

Ah..no, I guess it..doesn't.

SAM

Qu'il doit être très difficile pour vous.

FRANK

Could be worse. I know a guy named Goodman and he's a real...

SAM

asshole.

FRANK (smiles)

You know Goodman?

SAM

Je connais toute la famille.

FRANK

It's a big family.

*They smile. But the banter has run its course.
Sam stares at Frank - deciding whether to...*

SAM

Tu veux m'accompagner - Frank but not Frank?

Frank is surprised. He stares at her.

But instead answering her - he turns to us and...

Scene 5

Film: The Stranger. (27)
Raymond and Meursault talking, drinking.

Frank appears in the wings.

FRANK

In chapter three of *The Stranger* - Meursault's neighbor Raymond invites him up to his place for dinner.

Onstage: Raymond and Meursault talking, drinking.

RAYMOND (onstage)

I'm telling you - only thing this broad is interested in is hopping in the sack and spending my dough. Just like all broads.

FRANK

Raymond's not exactly the sensitive male type. Claims he works at a warehouse along the docks but everybody knows he's a pimp. He tells Meursault about some trouble he's having with this woman that he's sure is cheating on him.

RAYMOND (to Meursault)

Yeah, so I knocked her around a bit and drew a little blood. But I don't feel like she's really been punished enough. What I'm thinking is I write the bitch a letter saying - you know - how sorry I am and how terrible I feel and *please - habibti*, just give me one more chance. When she comes back, I'll take her to bed for one last dip in the ocean...and then once I shoot, I'll SPIT in her face and tell that whore just what kind of a whore she is. (pause) So what'd'ya think?

MEURSAULT (neutral)

Well...I suppose that would punish her.

RAYMOND

Right? But seeing's how I'm not so hot at writing letters... I was thinking maybe you could - you know - write it for me.

FRANK (looking on)

The crime that Meursault commits later on the beach is *nothing* compared to this one.

RAYMOND

What do you say?

*Meursault drunk, exhausted.
Does he want to help or not?*

MEURSAULT

Sure, why not?

Both ONSCREEN and ONSTAGE: (28)

Raymond slides a sheet of paper and pen in front of Meursault. Meursault picks up the pen - gazes at it as if seeing one for the first time.

MEURSAULT

What's the woman's name?

RAYMOND

Djamila.

SAMIA appears in the wings - furious.

SAMIA (to Frank)

Hazihi Kizba! (That's a fucking lie!**) The woman doesn't have a name because Camus never bothered to give her one.

FRANK (to Samia)

Barif - bas...I'm giving her one.

SAMIA

(Arabic) And who the fuck are you?

FRANK

Ana Frank.

SAMIA

(Arabic) Well! (English) Sounds like you're giving yourself a name too. (acid) You must be...trés important.

Samia fades, leaving Frank.

Onstage + Film: Meursault begins writing as if in some kind of fugue state, the words pouring out of him almost unconsciously. (29)

FRANK (to us)

The letter that Meursault writes to Djamila...this is the missing Dead Sea Scroll of this entire narrative labyrinth.

MEURSAULT

In my dream, the roses I got you are on the table and there are candles and a good bottle and jazz on the radio and all your favorites from the shop downstairs. And I got my wine and my cigarette and I'm watching you there at the stove and the watching is.....mmmm.

FRANK (to US)

The unknown fatal words that gently lead us to his infamous literary crime on the beach. The irreversible moment when Meursault and Camus drink this - our blood - and become one.

Meursault's fever slowly building as he channels Raymond.

MEURSAULT

I'm gazing at your wild beautiful hair and the curve of your back through your blouse and your neck and shoulders moving together like a miracle - and your underarms are wet, the sweat mixing with the smoke and the wine and the meat and I lean in just a little closer...and I inhale you.

Scene 6

SAM (to us)

A few days after I get to Madrid, I find a cold water flat in Malasaña - in a building full of putas y maricones - my kind of gente. The very first night there I have this dream about my father and...

MOTHER/MIRIAM (off)

(Arabic) Was it a good dream or the kind that...

SAM

he's tearing the house apart - looking for photos, clothes, toys, scrapbooks - any trace of me he can lay his hands on. And he dumps everything into this barrel on the balcony and then lights it all on fire.

The next day I call maman and tell her the dream and she says: *benti*, that wasn't a dream. It really happened - exactly the way you saw it.

MOTHER (Miriam)

(Arabic) Your father erased you.

SAM

Your father *erased* you.

Scene 7**FRANK**

Though he doesn't know it yet - Godard is also trying to erase a woman. But before he can erase her - he's got to find her.

Onscreen: Godard appears - with a piece of chalk - begins making triangles.

Dissolve to...

Film / Battle of Algiers: military patrols moving through dark alleyways. (31)

FRANK

By night, his paras flow silently through the pitch black veins of the Casbah...casting their invisible nets and pulling in suspects. They are fishers of men. And women.

Film: captured Algerians are marched off into the night.

And each one they reel in - if properly persuaded...

Film: Glimpses of torture.

will give up the names of two others.

Film: The blackboard. Lines are drawn to the two other names - then a third line - closing the triangle.

and these two names will...give up two more names...

Film: shots of men being tortured and lines being drawn dissolve into each other. Then more triangles building up to a pyramid.

who will give two more names...
and two more names...
and two more names.

Scene 8

Hotel café.

Sam clicks her tongue disapprovingly.

SAM

Ttt ttt - you're an American. C'est impardonnable.

FRANK

It's not my fault.

SAM

Then whose fault is it?

FRANK

I asked to be German but they said I wasn't sufficiently - you know - organized.

Sam (muses)

Un Americain b'Aljazayir. (Arabic) Alors, there goes the neighborhood. (beat) I'm assuming you are mixed up somehow... in the oil business.

FRANK

I put some gas in my car every now and then.

SAM

And you are a spy?

FRANK

Not that I'm aware of.

SAM (nods)

An unaware spy masquerading as a well-intentioned tourist.

FRANK (hedging)

Yes and no.

SAM

With commitment issues.

FRANK

I'm writing something.

SAM (amused)

(Arabic **) A writer.

Ibn Tankis! (Son of a degenerate.)
 Hadhih algisat tazdad su'ana wa'aswa.
 (This story gets worse and worse.)

FRANK

Excuse me?

SAM

Let me guess: now you do *le recherche* - taking the local color?

FRANK

I think the expression is: taking in the local color.

SAM

I think I prefer *my expression*.

FRANK

Fine. *(beat)* But no, I'm not taking the local color.
(pause)
 My mother died.

Sam flinches. Bores her eyes into Frank.

SAM (pointed)

Was she from Alger?

FRANK

No.

SAM

But she *lived* here at some point?

FRANK

As far as I know, she was *never* here.

SAM

Alors pourquoi tu es ici? Leish enta hon?

FRANK

It's a long story.

SAM

Habibi, I've got all the time in the world.

FRANK (smiles wistfully)

You always *think* so.

Sam Fades.

Frank turns to Godard.

Frank

And what do you think?

Scene 9

Faint ticking sound. (32)

GODARD (to us)

It isn't my job to *think*. My job is to *know*. Alors pour moi, l'interrogation - c'est une science exact. An archeology of the mind. You sift carefully through the rubble of lies and evasions - until you uncover the sacred text...the map of words that leads you to the diamond.

Film: mugshots of Samia.

SAMIA appears - sitting on a stool in the interrogation room. Her arms bound behind her.

Under normal circumstances, one of my men would conduct the interview. But in Samia's case, I have to make absolutely sure I find the diamond before the next café blows up in my face. The clock is ticking.

Godard enters the interrogation room - circles Samia.

GODARD

Bienvenue. Je suis Colonel Godard. Can I get you something to drink? Water? ou peut-etre une verre du vin.

He takes a chair - turns it backwards in it and faces Samia.

GODARD

You know you and I have something in common. We both have a mission. Only *one* of which can succeed. *(beat)* This conversation we're about to have - it can last a few seconds...or it can last the rest of your life.

*He waits for her decision.
With her silence - she makes it.*

*Godard is not sadistically cruel - but surgically.
And perfectly amicable. And gracious.*

GODARD

Nom?

SAMIA

Ismi Samia Ben Bouali.

GODARD

Age?

SAMIA

Zooj u esherin

GODARD

Occupation?

SAMIA

Taleb jamiia.

GODARD

Ah bravo. What's your concentration?

She looks at him witheringly.

SAMIA

La science politique.

GODARD

It's a science? I had no idea. (*casual*) Speaking of science, what was the exact date and time and place that you lost your virginity?

Samia just glares at him.

Politically speaking, of course. (*silence*) I know that with a girl like you it's probably hard to remember - mah hek? (*beat*) We'll come back to that. (*beat*) Adresse?

SAMIA

Mah aandi beit. **

GODARD

Non? You are homeless?

SAMIA

Masbout. My home vanished 6 September 1956.

GODARD

Homes usually don't just vanish.
Perhaps you simply...misplaced it.

Film / Film: The Battle of Algiers. (33)
A pied noir furtively lights a fuse -
runs off into the night. A flash of white followed
by an avalanche of wood and stone.

SAMIA

Go and see for yourself. Go and sift through the dust.

(mocking him)

Your beloved rubble of lies and evasions.

GODARD

Perhaps I will. *(beat)* Mais pour le moment, do you mind if I ask
you something, Samia? *(leans closer)* Where is he?

Scene 10

Text: 24 minutes into the Interrogation (34)

Frank and Sam sit drinking wine.

FRANK

So your name - Sam - is it...?

SAM (curt)

Yes - short for Samia.

FRANK

And are you...

SAM (abrupt)

Yes. Yes. Yes - I'm named for Samia Ben Bouali.

FRANK

You don't look too ecstatic about it.

SAM

How could I *not* be ecstatic? There is an entire ecstatic generation of us - almost young women named for the heroic beautiful bomber of the revolution.

(smiles wistfully)

Unfortunately none of us are quite as beautiful as la Moujahidieh Samia. Much less heroic. And you know what the worst part is?

(beat) None of us are bombers.

Scene 11

Interrogation room.

GODARD (even)

You smell good. (beat) Once when I was on leave in Saigon, the Viet Minh bombed a perfume shop on Rue Catinat and for a week the whole neighborhood smelled like a beautiful woman you passed once the street years ago and never saw again. (beat) You know the one I'm talking about?

Did you remember to bring your bathing suit?
I thought we might have a quick...

Godard grabs Samia by the hair and pushes her head down into a barrel of water - and holds it.

Onscreen: Water torture glimpse. (35)

Onstage: Godard yanks Samia's back up and she gasps for air. And again. His actions clinical, dispassionate.

GODARD

Je te batise au nom de ton pere... (dunk) au nom de ta mere...
(dunk) et Simone de Beauvoir. (dunk)

*She resurfaces - coughing up water.
Godard calm, soothing:*

I hear that Simone is quite smitten with you. Though I suspect it's purely physical. (beat) You're not a boy-girl, are you? Ça fait rien a moi if you are. I'm just curious.

He takes a seat.

En fait, I want to know *all* about you. The books you like to read. The radio shows you like to listen to. And...as long as we're here talking....I'd love to know what was going through that exquisite head of yours the day you walked into Le Dance Bar and...

Godard fades away. -

*Samia rises up out of her chair.
Music from the Dance Bar fades in.*

Along with the faint sound of ticking.

*Film: glimpses from The Battle of Algiers.
The Dance Bar. Young people dancing. Samia by
the jukebox, dancing awkwardly, trying to fit in.*

*She speaks to herself as if in some kind of dream-
reverie - gradually finding her rhythm.*

SAMIA (Arabic)

I arrive at the end of the world and the wave washes over me and
I am...weightless

(English)

....floating there with the rhythm - in my world and the world
is mine. Gently held in that oasis of innocence - all those happy
young people laughing and drinking and dancing...and for just a
moment, I forget how much I hate you.

*Godard yanks Samia out of this reverie and pushes
her back down onto her chair.*

GODARD

On 30 September 3:25 p.m.- you placed an explosive device inside
Le Dance Bar and then exited the building. Eight minutes later,
the bomb detonated.

Samia almost in a trance - trying to remember.

SAMIA

C'était ou ca?

GODARD

Le Dance Bar en Place Bugeaud.

SAMIA (thinking)

Le Dance Bar.....non, c'était pas moi.

GODARD

I'm afraid we have an witness who saw you hovering next to the
jukebox. Half a witness anyway. A shard of one of the records
shredded his left eye. (beat) But his right eye saw you just
fine.

SAMIA

Your witness must have me mixed up with some other arab girl.
We all look the same, you know.

GODARD

Well, I guess you made quite an impression on him - because the second he saw you, he offered to buy you a drink. But you said...

Across stage - Frank tries to pour more wine for Sam.

SAM

Non, merci.

The focus returns to Godard and Samia.

SAMIA

Well, I never drink with strange men in strange bars that I've never set foot in. I swear on the holy...

(smilies coquettishly) bible.

Godard punches her in the nose - but surgically - without anger. Samia brings her hand to her face and blood flows through her fingers.

GODARD

You think you can just flit and flirt and fuck your way into history? Get your pretty face on the five franc bill? Maybe even a Hollywood film about your heroic life?

(smiles)

No. Croyez-moi habibti - in no time at all, everyone is going to forget all about you.

SAMIA

They'll remember how I died.

GODARD

Died?

He places a hand gently on her face.

This face will *never die*. This face is going to *vanish into thin air*. Like dust.

He raises his palm, blows "dust".

But before you leave us....dit-moi quelquechose, Samia.
Where is he?

Scene 12

FRANK

The he - of course - being Ali La Pointe.

Film / Battle of Algiers: Ali on the move.

By this point Godard has captured all the pieces of his pyramid.
All except Ali.

Film: Police mug shots of Ali.

The dark angel of Almugawama** . A (Arabic) badboy who had thieved and dealt and pimped on these very streets and then picked up a gun with one hand and lifted up his people with the other.

*Film: Ali, enraged, leading a mass of people
through Casbah towards the French checkpoint.*

And every hour that Godard couldn't find him was another hour
that Ali was still somewhere out there in the Casbah - fighting
until the very end.

Film: the image freezes.

*SAM appears - speaks to Frank - but not so that he
literally hears her.*

SAM

(Arabic) Oh dear. (English) I hope you're not one of those
Americans who sees *La Bataille d'Alger* and suddenly thinks he
understands the whole country. (beat) Or worse - one of those
Americans who watches it again and again and again until he
finally falls hopelessly in love with the beautiful bomber.

*Sam fades - leaving Frank to wonder:
am I one of those Americans?*

Scene 13

*Interrogation room.
Godard gently takes one of Samia's hands.*

GODARD

You know you have beautiful...hands. Des beaux doigts effilés.
And your nails sont vraiment exquis. (beat) How many do you
have? Shall we count them? Un.....

*Godard fades - leaving Samia there to ponder that
moment when...*

*She gets up and begins dancing - but very
awkwardly, like someone learning to walk.*

Film: SAMIA in the Dance Bar.

SAMIA

(Arabic) a new song comes on the juke box....and I feel
this....light glowing inside me... (English) and for a few
seconds I forget where I woke up this morning and forget the
golden swimsuit in my bag and forget why I'm here...

GODARD

deux...

SAMIA

...and just look at all those beautiful young people dancing and
drinking and losing themselves in a moment in time that would
never come again.

*We hear Godard's voice (OS) as he continues
counting Samia's fingers.*

GODARD

trois...

SAMIA

A nice looking boy comes to me and...

Film: we see YOUNG MAN dancing.

BOY

Voulez vous de vin?

GODARD

quatre...

SAMIA

And I know that all I have to do is say yes - but then I see you across the room...

*Film: a fleeting glimpse of a young French woman -
THE BLONDE - dancing. She turns to Samia and...*

SAMIA

...and you smile at me as if we know each other from some other time...

GODARD

cinq

SAMIA

or place....

GODARD

six...

SAMIA

or lifetime.

GODARD

sept...

SAMIA

And you beckon me to walk across the room and join you.
And I think: enti majnoon?! Can't you hear it?!
Time is ticking! We'll never make it to the end of the song.

GODARD

huit...

*Film: The Blonde continues dancing, blissfully
oblivious to what's about to happen.*

I know I should stay and dance with you until the end....

*Onstage: Godard comes into view - a pair of pliers
in his hands.*

GODARD

neuf...

SAMIA

...but then I'll lose the thread that leads to....

GODARD

dix.

Film: The Blonde fades.

*Samia lets out a silent scream - just breath - that
morphs into a kind of demented pleasure. pleasure.*

Scene 14

Film: Ali leading the masses through the Casbah - the crowd demanding vengeance....and freeze.

FRANK

Just like he did with the rest of the cast - the director found someone who had never acted before in his life to play Ali La Pointe: Brahim Hadjadj. His performance is *transcendant*. And because you've never seen Hajjaj anywhere else - it's easy to lose yourself and start to think that you're actually watching the real Ali La Pointe. That he somehow survived the war...

Film: Ali, Omar and Hassiba crouched inside their hiding place.

and then gave his life to make the film.

Film: the house explodes...then freeze. Rewinds. Un-explodes. Returns to Ali in his hiding place.

FRANK

It is, alas, a once in a lifetime performance. In the years that follow, Hadjaj is only offered forgettable parts in mostly forgettable films. Films like...Luchino Visconti's *Lo Straniero*.

Film / The Stranger: The "Arab" gazing at Meursault. Meursault wincing at the blinding sun - raises the GUN. An explosion of white. Freeze.

FRANK

If you guessed that Ali is ironically reincarnated as Camus' nameless arab on the beach who Meursault shoots because the sun gets in his eyes....then you guessed wrong.

The film rewinds until: Hajjaj is standing behind "the Arab" with the knife. Freeze.

FRANK

No, Hadjaj is the nameless Arab's nameless friend on the beach. Onscreen for a only few seconds and he never says a word. By the end of the movie - Ali la Pointe has vanished into Meursault's indifference and we've forgotten all about him.

Scene 15

Samia sits a black cloth over her head. Godard flicks a lighter near her face. She flinches from the light. Godard lights his cigarette. Exhales toward her. Checks his watch.

GODARD

I'm sorry - I completely forgot to give you a break.

He removes the cloth from her head.

I'm not keeping you from anything - am I? A hot date with a nice pied noir boy perhaps. Movie, dinner and then back to his place pour le petit mort? Oui? Non? Peut-etre.

*He opens up a bottle of beer - takes sip.
Offers it to her.*

GODARD

Birra? (no answer) I know exactly how you feel right now.
(*smiles knowingly*) Don't you hate it when people say that but really they have no idea what the fuck they're talking about?
(*beat*) Well, you'll be happy to learn that I do know what I'm talking about...because back when you were still crawling around in diapers and terrorizing no one but your father - I was busy killing Nazis with the Resistance. Right up until my luck ran out and I was captured. And as you can probably imagine, the Nazis had a few questions for me that I didn't really want to answer.

(*sips beer*)

And the Germans, believe me, they're much more... *enthusiastic* than I am - they actually *enjoy* all this. You wouldn't think so because - well - *they're German* - but...

Fade to Frank - still looking on:

FRANK

Curiously the only professional actor in *The Battle of Algiers* is the one who plays Godard: Jean Martin.

Film / The Battle of Algiers: Godard and his paras marching into Algiers.

Back to Godard and Samia.

GODARD

You know how I got through it - this little tete a tete with with my enthusiastic German friend? By dreaming. Dreaming about all the things I was going to do to him once the tables were turned. (beat) Do you ever have dreams like that? It's perfectly fine if you do. So long as you remember one important thing: *this table...is never going to turn.*

Fade to Frank.

FRANK

Godard and the man who plays him onscreen had some interesting things in common. Before becoming an actor, Martin had also been a paratrooper and fought in Vietnam.

Onscreen / Photos: Martin in uniform.

Indeed, some unmistakeable spark from that experience seems to emanate from the very core of his being and light up the screen.

Film: Godard at a press conference (BOA).

GODARD (onscreen)

We are neither madmen nor sadists. Those who call us fascists forget the role many of us played in the Resistance. Those who call us Nazis forget that some of us survived Dachau and Buchenwald. We are soldiers. Our duty is to win.

FRANK

Not just another pretty face.

GODARD (onscreen)

Now it's my turn to ask a question. Should France stay in Algeria. If your answer is "yes" then you must be prepared to accept *toute les consequences*.

FRANK

It's almost as if the director found Godard's twin to play him.

Onstage to Samia:

GODARD

In a way, you and I - we're almost like twins. Identical twins who know each other in ways that other people never will. For instance, I know there's something you're just dying to tell me.

FRANK

Martin's first big break as an actor came just before the war in 1953 when he was cast in the original production of a very unusual play presented in a small Paris cafe.

PHOTO: two TRAMPS standing on an empty stage.

Yes that one. *Waiting for Godot*. If you guessed that Martin was one of the tramps...you guessed wrong again.

GODARD (to us)

I was Lucky.

Photo: Zoom in on one of the actors until you recognize Jean Martin. Lucky is a human pack animal clown, with a rope around his neck.

Fade to photo of SAMUEL BECKET. Piercing eyes and a labyrinth of lines etched into his face.

FRANK

One night, Martin pulls Becket aside and...

Godard slips a nose over his neck.

GODARD (as Jean Martin)

Monsieur, il y a quelquechose que je comprend pas. My character is a human pack animal who can't speak and staggers around on all fours with a rope around his neck.

Frank stands in front of the projection so that all you see is Becket's craggly face.

FRANK (as Becket)

Et quoi? You seem to understand the character perfectly.

GODARD (Martin)

Oui - mais pourquoi je m'appelle *Lucky*?

FRANK (as Becket)

Because you have no hope.

Frank fades.

Godard removes the noose from his neck - turns back to Samia.

GODARD

How about you? Feeling hopeful....or feeling Lucky? (beat)
If you tell me (your secret) - no one else will ever know.

he takes his lighter- flicks it.

Film: a blowtorch explodes to life.

Where is he?

Scene 16

Hotel bar.

Sam looks around in vain for a waiter.

SAM

Yalla where is this guy! The service here, c'est comme le glacier.

FRANK

What glacier?

SAM

The very slow one. La morte ou mes pomme frites - which will arrive first?

FRANK

You ever see *Waiting for Godot*?

SAM

See it? I *lived* it. *(beat)* And *starred* in it.

FRANK

The play?

SAM *(feigned annoyance)*

Don't look so choqué. We have theater in Algeria. And fast food. And louche politicians. Nous sommes très modernes.

FRANK

I had no idea.

SAM

Nous faisons *Godot* a la universite.

FRANK

And who were you?

SAM *(relish)*

Pozzo.

FRANK *(smiles)*

The one who drags Lucky around at the end of a rope.

SAM (impressed)

Well, regarde-toi. A true Man of Godot.

FRANK

I do my best.

SAM

The director thought I was born to play this part, this Pozzo.

FRANK

And how was it?

SAM

Rayie! (Marvelous.***) (beat) Pozzo, that is.
The play - ttt - not so much happens.

FRANK

I think that's the point.

SAM (shrugs)

A lot of words from a man with such a...
(holds two fingers close together)
tiny point - mah hek?

FRANK

I guess.

SAM

You *guess*? You can leave at intermission and you don't miss a thing.

FRANK

I suppose.

SAM

You can miss the *whole* play and not miss a thing.

A silence.

FRANK

Did you know that Becket originally wrote *Waiting for Godot* in French?

SAM

No, bas that would explain a thing or two.

FRANK

Apparently Becket's French was okay - but it wasn't *great*.
So writing the play in French would force him to keep the
dialogue simple - you know - keep him from getting too clever.

SAM

Yanneh - if he didn't want to get too clever...then I would say
the play - it's a *big success*. (nods) *Oui!* Bravo, Sam!

Scene 17

*Film: the dreamscape of rusting metal....a massive
bus wheel turning.*

MIRIAM'S VOICE

I am only twenty or thirty minutes from home....
but in a far away country I've never laid eyes on in my life.

It's lucky that I'm on this bus -
a ship sailing across an indifferent sea -
safely behind my window looking out onto this strange world -
passing quickly and quietly through it -
and not wandering these dark sunlit streets alone.

Scene 18

Hotel bar.

FRANK

...and so the guy at the front desk says: Monsieur, le centre ville est très tranquile, but *whatever you do* - never ever ever wander around in the Casbah. Which is...

SAM

The last thing anyone should ever tell you.

FRANK

So take a wild guess where I went *first*.

SAM (nods)

And?

FRANK (reverie)

It's like time held its breath. It's like you're right there - in the middle of all that history. Only it doesn't even feel like *history*. It feels like it's *now*.

SAM (unmoved)

Le concierge a raison. You shouldn't go wandering around in there.

FRANK

I'll be fine.

SAM

This is what an Italian NGO worker said last month - right before someone found him at dawn in the Marche des Voleurs with a "Salafi smile".

She runs a finger across her neck.

FRANK (beat)

I don't know. When I was there, I just had this feeilng that nothing was going to happen to me. That everything was...familiar somehow. Like I'd been there before. Like I was *supposed to be there*.

SAM (an edge)

Did you feel l'euphorie?

FRANK

In a way - yeah, I did.

SAM (cynical)

Akeed you did.

FRANK

Ca va dire quoi?

SAM

It means you Americans are *so predictable*.

FRANK (stung...smiles)

I think *that observation* is so predictable.

SAM

Ah tu vois - I *knew* you'd say that.

FRANK

Ah oui? What am I going to say now?

SAM (dismissive)

Barif.

FRANK

Alors dite-moi.

SAM

Faites-moi confiance.

FRANK

Why should I fait-toi confiance?

SAM

Parcque je suis une femme. Women never lie. (beat)
And even when we do lie, we tell you.

FRANK

Anything you'd like to tell me?

SAM

How about this: I'll bet I can tell you something that you packed
pour ton voyage in that mysterious bag of yours. I mean other
than clothes and toothpaste et tout ca - something unusual and
yet....predictable.

FRANK

What do you wanna bet?

SAM

How about a bottle of wine?

FRANK

D'accord.

Sam gazes at his bag.

SAM

I'll bet that somewhere in this bag you have...an old fashioned wind-up clock.

FRANK (stunned)

How did you know that?!

SAM

I told you - tu es très....predictable.

FRANK

Did you look in my bag?

SAM

Ttt-ttt - Haram! That would be cheating. (*deadpan*) In my culture such things are mamnue.

Frank ponders that...shrugs.

FRANK

Well, I guess my culture is buying the next round.

SAM

Not so fast. Let's see the clock.

FRANK

Leish? I've got an old clock. Tu as gagné.

SAM

How do I know you have this clock? How do I know this isn't some clever trick of your culture to get me drunk and steal our women?

Frank pushes his suitcase and to Sam.

She takes the clock out his bag - listens to it.

SAM

It's *old* time.

FRANK

What do you mean?

SAM

It's running out.

*Fade to Godard and Samia.
(onscreen?)*

GODARD

Did you feel that? *(beat)* You just got a little older.
Time keeps moving et ne bouge que dans une direction. *(beat)*
But if you just say the words....I can make it stop.

*Fade back to hotel bar.
Frank points at Sam's bag.*

FRANK

Do you mind?

SAM *(beat)*

J'ai rien à cacher.

*Frank pulls out a SWITCHBLADE.
Flicks the blade out.*

FRANK

Something you'd like to tell me now?

SAM

I think I just did.

Parlez Moi d'Amour plays. *Sam suddenly becomes
aware of it - her head jerking violently toward the
sound.*

SAM

As long as you're playing with that knife, why don't you tell the bartender to turn off that fucking music.

FRANK

What - you don't like the...?

SAM

Khallas - fais-la!

*Frank gets up and walks off. The music shuts off.
Sam relaxes. But as this scene fades out -
the music fades back in.*

Scene 19

*Interrogation room. SAMIA slumped in a chair.
The music continues...grows louder, then deafening.*

Godard holds a hand out to Samia - inviting her to dance. She doesn't register it. He picks her limp body up off the chair. Sets one of her hands on his shoulder. Takes the other and extends it outward. They dance a "Tango of the Damned". Samia staggering to his lead.

*MARIE 25 appears in the wings (or onscreen **) - writing in her journal. She looks up at Godard and Samia dancing. Not actually seeing it but somehow aware of it - if only much later.*

Godard twirls Samia and she loses her balance and crumbles to the floor. Godard looks at her there - then turns and locks eyes with Marie 25. He holds out his hand - inviting her to dance.

Scene 20

Sam pulls an old leather NOTEBOOK from Frank's suitcase. Opens it.

SAM

Something you'd like to tell me? Shu haida? The great white masterpiece you're writing?

FRANK (takes it)

It's not my masterpiece. It's my mother's.

Sam fades.

Frank rises - approaches us.

I never saw my mother's ashes... but - unlike Meursault - I was there when she vanished without a thread. She took a deep breath... and never let it out. A little later the nurse comes into the room...

Film: a dreamlike clip from The Stranger. Meursault is at his mother's wake. He looks up to see a Nurse in white crossing the room - the middle part of her face and nose covered with a white bandage.

She picks up the bottle of morphine from beside the bed and pours it down the drain...and I think: merde, I wish I'd gotten to it before she did. Then she comes back and hugs me and I can feel her breasts pressing into me. And for just a moment there, my mind...wanders.

Film: the Nurse seems to look up at Frank and...fades to white.

Onstage: some seismic movement within Frank.

It's July 1962 and my mother is backpacking her way down the Spanish coast - long before respectable women did that kind of thing. (beat) On the opposite shore of the Mediterranean - just twenty-four hours earlier - Algerie Française has come to end.

Text: Marie Kenner Kenner

Frank reads a bit from his mother's journal.

FRANK (reading journal)

In Malaga all the hotels son completos.

I'm sitting in this little café along the port...

Two versions of Frank's mother appear:

MARIE KENNER aged 25 - played by SAM.

MARIE KENNER aged 38 - played by SAMIA

Marie Kenner 25 sits in a café.

*Marie Kenner 38 observes from the distance,
narrating the adventures of her younger self - as
written in her journal.*

MARIE K. 38 (cueing from Frank)

...watching the battered freighters arrive - packed with pieds
noirs desperately fleeing Algeria. They cling to the railings in
dazed disbelief - then stumble uncertainly ashore.

*Marie 25 writes feverishly in the journal.
Then looks up and...*

One passenger in particular catches my eye as he comes down the
gangway - maybe because you don't look dazed or uncertain at all.

*GODARD appears carrying a small traveling bag -
identical to the one Frank has.*

You're handsome in some inscrutable way. Tall, lean, coiled and
forever 49. In one quick sweep, your eyes drink in the entire
port - committing every face to memory...just in case.

Godard walking, taking in everything.

You stride off towards a narrow back street - knowing exactly
where you're going. But something tells me that it's all just an
act - that you've never been here before in your life. That
you're un extranjero just like me. (beat) And then suddenly...

*Godard spots something - stops - and circles back
and sits at the cafe table next to Marie 25. He
gazes straight ahead.*

you stop. Willing yourself into invisibility.

Godard takes out a newspapers - thumbs through it.

Your eyes now drinking in my cigarettes - ravenous.

*Marie Kenner 25 picks up the cigarettes - offers
one to Godard. He takes it.*

I pay la cuenta and we take a meandering path back to my hotel
and make love until long after the city has vanished into dreams.

Marie lights Godard's cigarette.

Scene 21

Continuing their game from before - Frank gestures Sam's suitcase on the floor.

FRANK

How about double or nothing?

SAM

Sure.

Sam looks down at his suitcase.

I think....

*Frank holds up a hand.
His turn. Looks at her bag.*

FRANK

I think.... you've got....a swimsuit.

SAM

That's your guess? Talk about predictable. We're at a hotel with a pool and a block from la plage.

FRANK

In a land where your friendly neighborhood jihadis will slit your throat to win your heart and mind.

SAM

One piece or bikini?

Frank stares into her eyes.

FRANK

One piece.

SAM

Tu es vraiment...

Frank pulls out Sam's BIKINI.

...terrible at this game.

Film: Samia and two other women changing out of their haiks and into western clothes. Samia dying her hair blonde. Yacef handing over the bages with the bombs inside.

Scene 22

Text: Spain. 4 July 1962.

*A hotel room - dawn. The sound of the sea.
MARIE KENNER 25 wakes up in bed alone.*

MARIE KENNER 38 continues her narration:

MARIE K. 38

The next day I wake up to find that you're gone.

Film: The Stranger: Meursault waking up alone in bed - pressing his face into the pillow....disssolving into Kenner 25 the same thing.

I press my face into the pillow and breathe in the smell of your hair - and commit it to memory. And then...

Godard enters carrying two cups.

GODARD

Quieres un café con leche?

MARIE K. 25

Ah si! Me gusta café con leche!

GODARD

Yo tambien.

MARIE K. 38 (to us)

We sit on the balcon looking out over the sea.

Godard and Marie 25 sit gazing out over the water.

MARIE K. 25

The water sure looks tempting.

GODARD (uncertain)

It does look tempting.

MARIE K. 38

We walk down to the beach....

Onscreen: the ocean.

MARIE K. 38

run straight into the surf and bury ourselves in the furious caress of the waves.

Onscreen / onstage:

They are in the water - floating where the waves take them. Slowly this merges with:

Film: The Stranger. Meursault and Marie swimming.

we swim for bit and then suddenly your arms around me and...

GODARD (to himself)

I want to disappear inside you and...

MARIE K. 25

..(we) frolic there in the warm indifferent embrace of the sea...

Onscreen: the sea fades to Marie 25 and Godard beside each other in bed (but separate onstage).

MARIE K. 38

Afterwards, we're lying side by side in the room - the balcon doors open, the languid ocean breeze sculpting our bodies. I have known you for exactly one day of my life.

Onstage: Marie 25 and Godard lie side by side.

MARIE K. 25

So I guess it's time for me to ask that question.

Godard braces himself. Lightly:

What's your name?

Godard hesitates.

Marie smiles, amused.

If you're not sure, just say the first thing that pops into your head.

GODARD (beat)

Meursault.

Marie K. 25 smiles.

Looking on and writing on in her journal
 - Marie K. 38 says:

MARIE K. 38 (to us)

And that's when I know that you've pulled a disappearing act.
 Know that you must be running from something.

MARIE K. 25 (to Godard)

Looks like they let you walk away from death row.

GODARD (impressed)

You know *l'Etranger*.

MARIE K. 25

Well, we do get books in America - at least every now and then.
 I read the first two chapters and then tossed it into the nearest
 poubelle.

(Godard looks wounded.)

Sorry if I've insulted your beloved *L'Etranger*.

GODARD

It's not *my* beloved *L'Etranger*. The truth is - the story,
 it goes... - how do you say - down the hill after Part I.

MARIE K. 25

It goes down the hill after line 1. *(beat)*
 It's a ridiculous book, mais j'aime beaucoup Meursault.
 The wine - that is. Speaking of which, why don't I pop out and
 get us a bottle?

*Once again, a flicker of concern passes over
 Godard's face - then passes.*

GODARD

C'est une idée inspirée.

He reaches into his pants - takes out some money.

Tien.

MARIE K. 25

No.

GODARD

Si. Yo tengo mucho mas. And none of it is mine.

MARIE K. 25

Really? What are you - an outlaw?

GODARD

As a matter of fact *I am*.

A beat. Marie takes the money.

MARIE K. 25

In that case, I'll get two bottles.

GODARD

Get some cigarettes too.

MARIE K. 25 (salutes)

Oui, mon general.

Godard shudders. Recovers.

GODARD

By the way - there's something I have to ask you.

That sounds ominous.

What's *your* name?

MARIE K. 25

Marie.

GODARD

C'est pas vrai.

MARIE K. 25 (smiles)

Si c'est vrai. Marie and Meursault.

MARIE 38 speaks to us:

MARIE K. 38

Some of these stories are true. Others are...

MARIE K. 25

I'll be right back. Try not to shoot any Arabs while I'm gone.

Godard shudders faintly - then smiles.

GODARD

Je te promets.

Godard fades.

MARIE K. 38 (to us)

I'll never know whether you kept your promise or not because when I return with the Meursault and the cigarettes - you're gone...but la Guardia Nacional are there waiting for me.

A GUARDIA appears, holding out a photo.

GUARDIA

Tu has visto este hombre?

Onscreen: Godard in uniform - eyeing camera warily.

MARIE K. 25

Nunca. Who is he?

GUARDIA (curt)

No te preocupes con eso. Just let us know if you see him.

MARIE K. 25

Bueno. I'll keep my eyes open.

The Guardia fades.

Marie turns on the radio: Hasta Mañana, Maria.

Scene 23

SAM (to us)

I always had my eyes on him. Ahmed. You know, the al'ahmaq**
(**asshole**) neighbor whose eyes I just about scratched out when
he tried to get his hand up my dress in the stairway....

*Film: a nightmarish flash of a DARK STAIRWAY in an
old building.*

Anyway, Ahmaq Ahmed used to have nothing better to do than hang
out in front our building - holding up the wall.

*Film: Ahmed (played by Rayond) leaning against the
wall, smoking.*

Sometimes - just to mess with his head - I'd do the same thing,
right across the street. Just stand there holding up the other
wall and wait for him to notice me. Wait to see some vague
flicker of recognition in his eyes - see the thought drift
through that imbecilic skaf-fried brain of his: *hey...isn't that
the charmuta I tried to fuck once on the stairway?* (beat)

But I never quite see it. That flicker in his eyes. (beat)
Once in awhile he does look my way - but blankly - like I'm
a complete stranger. Or like I'm not even there.
And never have been.

Scene 24

*Film: more impressionistic patina of rusting metal
- pierced by small holes.*

Sound: a bus rumbling through Beirut.

MIRIAM

I've lived every day of my life in this country -
and yet the people here look at me and see a stranger.
Or they don't see me at all.

Recently I've started to wonder if I'm really even here.
Or just dreaming my entire life.
Or a ghost.

She Walks up to a woman in the audience.

I want to ask you something.
Can you see me?

Scene 25

*Text: 2:57 p.m.
30 September 1956*

We hear gentle strains of "Hasta Mañana".

Film / Battle of Algiers: Samia smiles coquettishly at the soldiers at the checkpoint and walks away.

SAMIA

I pass through the checkpoint - invisible - and continue on toward the beach. I've looked out onto the sea every day of my life but I've never actually set foot in it.

I'm eager to get there, slip into one of those cabins, slip into my swimsuit, step out into the sun, the light touching all these parts of me for the first time - and then plunge into the water...

Film / The Stranger: Marie dives into the water.

...and float peacefully in the waves, held in the warm and gentle embrace of the sea. (pause) Then I look up and....

Samia stops walking. Looks out at:

and see that I've reached the shore...

Film: The sea. It's exquisite.

...and suddenly remember that this isn't where I'm supposed to be at all. For just this one day, je suis une actrice. And when you're truly in character, it's easy to forget that there's a timebomb in your bag.

She smiles wistfully.

And so I turn around and make my way to Le Dance Bar.

FILM: the dancers fade in - (Samia standing in the middle of the projected image). In super slow motion there is a flash of white and dancers are thrown through the air.

Tu veux danser?