Characters:

(The author felt obliged to change some names, but the readers will be able to guess the real ones.)

Captain Dreyfus

Major Fabres¹

Major Esterhazy

Colonel Picquart

Colonel Rishardon

Cretinion, expert²

Chief of Police

Minister³

General Mons⁴

Lawyer Demange

Lucie Dreyfus

Bellboy

Secret Agent

Captain of the Gendarmerie

Clerk of the Council of War

General

Armed Guard

Prison Director

Inspector

Guards

Gendarmes

Soldiers

Public

¹ Fabres has two historical prototypes: Deputy Chief of the Intelligence Services, Colonel Fabre, and Major Henry.

² The handwriting expert whose conclusion was presented to the judges during the Dreyfus court-martial was named Bertillon. “Cretinion” is obviously a meaningful name.

³ In 1894 (Acts 1-3), the Minister of War was General Mercier, mentioned by name in Acts 2 and 5. In 1896 (Act 4), it was General Billot.

⁴ General Mons stands for Deputy Chief of the General Staff, General Gonse.
ACT ONE

(The scene takes place at the Second Department of the General Staff of the Ministry of War in Paris. On the right, there is a small desk with a chair. On top of the desk are an ink-stand, pens, papers, and a bell. At the back of the stage, on the right, there is a door. At the front, a secret door hidden behind a curtain. On the left, one can see a chart with lists of names on the wall. Monochrome maps on the walls.)

SCENE 1

(MAJOR FABRES, BELLBOY)

FABRES

(At the desk, rings the bell. A BELLBOY appears dressed in a yellow livery, approaches FABRES, respectfully stands at attention, and waits silently.) Take this letter to General Mons, that one to Colonel Picquart, and this envelope to the Minister!

BELLBOY

All right, Major.

(Takes the three documents.)

FABRES

Is there anybody outside?

BELLBOY

No, Major.

FABRES

Very well, go! Close the door and don’t let anybody come in, I have very important work to do, I don’t want to be disturbed.
BELLBOY

    All right, Major!

    (Marches out.)
SCENE 2

(MAJOR FABRES, ESTERHAZY)

FABRES

(Goes to the door through which the bellboy has left. Makes sure it is locked, puts his ear to it to make sure there is nobody outside, then goes to the secret door at the front, lifts the curtain, and says,)

Come in!

ESTERHAZY

(He wears a Major’s insignia. He is 50, with rare grey hair and a pointed beard. He has the eyes of a bandit, a happy face, and his tone is not serious.)

Good afternoon, Major!

FABRES

Don’t speak loudly and be quick! I don’t want anybody to know that you are here!

Has anybody seen you enter?

ESTERHAZY

No, nobody.

FABRES

Through which door did you enter?

ESTERHAZY

Through the little door in the garden. It was locked. I opened it with the key you had given me. There was nobody behind the door. And nobody in the garden.

Nobody on the stairs! So, my dear Fabres, don’t worry and don’t be afraid.

FABRES
Easy to say! I am trembling day and night! Think, my friend, if someone sees you in the Ministry of War, sees you enter my office, it will be our end. Ah! This business we are doing is terrible and can lead us to the gallows!

ESTERHAZY

True, Fabres, but it is impossible that two intelligent people like us could be caught. We have been doing this business for [___] years, and [___] has happened. Besides, Fabres, this business pays well, no?

FABRES

(Furious.)

Not so loud, sacre bleu! You want someone to hear us?

(Goes to the door, puts his ear to it, and returns.)

And now, quickly, why did you come? You can’t remain here long. What is new?

ESTERHAZY

I came to inform you about a problem.

FABRES

(Frightened.)

What problem?

ESTERHAZY

Don’t worry, it is a small one, an accident.

FABRES

Speak! What accident?

ESTERHAZY
I will tell you. Yesterday I was supposed to go to the German embassy to deliver to Major Schwartzkoppen the documents that you gave me... well, you remember, the plan of mobilization...

FABRES

Yes, I know, continue!

ESTERHAZY

You also know that Schwartzkoppen was going to pay me 8,000 francs for these documents...

FABRES

He did not want to give you the money?

ESTERHAZY

On the contrary, he was happy to do so, because the secret information on the mobilization of the French army we had provided costs a lot more than that. During our meeting, he let me know that he had not received the bordereau I had brought him four days earlier. I responded that I had delivered the bordereau to his house and gave it to his doorman. He told me that it was true, his doorman had received it but never saw it again. Schwartzkoppen thinks that this bordereau was stolen from his doorman’s booth by a secret agent from the French police and that this agent is going to bring the bordereau to this ministry.

FABRES

Oh! This is possible! And this bordereau was written by your hand?

ESTERHAZY

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5 The term commonly used to refer to Esterhazy’s memorandum.
Yes.

FABRES

Signed?

ESTERHAZY

No, not signed.

FABRES

This is bad! Everybody knows your handwriting. And if—O God!—this bordereau
is brought here, it may be the end for both of us! You see that I had a reason to
tremble?

ESTERHAZY

Come on! You are afraid of such little things!

FABRES

How can I not be afraid? This bordereau is going to lead to our end, our
disgrace! And it is possible that at this moment it is handed to Colonel Picquart!

ESTERHAZY

Picquart? I haven’t heard this name before.

FABRES

He is our new chief, he got this position three days ago. At this moment, he is in
the office next door.

ESTERHAZY

What kind of person is he?

FABRES

He is someone who does not look at [___]. Woe is us if we get in his hands!
ESTERHAZY

It seems you are not fond of him!.. 

FABRES

I can’t stand him!

ESTERHAZY

Has he done anything to you?

FABRES

No, my friend, but he stole my position! Imagine, I had been waiting for the position of chief of this department for three years. Last week, when the previous Chief, Sandherr, died, I thought the Minister would give me his position. But no, the Minister chose this damn Picquart! Oh, I hate this man! And I would be happy to hear about his death! Imagine, my friend, what is going to happen to us if the stolen bordereau falls into his hands! What if he learns that in a department of the General Staff of the Ministry of War there is a traitor who is stealing secrets and selling them to Germany? Can you imagine how I would end my days? Indicted, arrested, tried, condemned, dishonored, hated by everybody, and then locked in some dark hole for the rest of my life! No, when I think about it my soul shudders!

ESTERHAZY


6 Major Henry was bypassed by Lieutenant-Colonel Picquart who was appointed Chief of the Intelligence Service after the resignation of Colonel Sandherr. However, this happened later, in July 1895.
But there is nothing to be afraid of! Even if this bordereau falls into the hands of your chief, Colonel Picquart…

FABRES

If it falls into his hands! You think it is difficult to find who wrote the bordereau?

ESTERHAZY

And even if they find out that I wrote it, you have nothing to fear.

FABRES

Esterhazy, you are talking like a child. As soon as they learn that this bordereau was written by you, the next day they will know that I am an old friend of yours and that the traitor who steals the secrets from the General Staff is Major Fabres!

Even a child could figure it out!

ESTERHAZY

But tell me, Fabres, who receives the papers delivered by the secret agents?

FABRES

I do.

ESTERHAZY

In that case, there is nothing to fear.

FABRES

Why is that?

ESTERHAZY

Since you know my handwriting, when they bring you the bordereau I wrote, you will recognize it right away.

FABRES
And so?

ESTERHAZY

So, instead of passing it to your chiefs, which would be very stupid, tear it into pieces and discard it.

FABRES

(Thinking.)

You are right, Esterhazy. But sometimes, when I leave the office, either to eat or to do something, the papers are brought to Colonel Picquart.

ESTERHAZY

So, for one or two days don’t leave your office. Have them bring you food here until you get my bordereau. This way nothing will happen to us and we will continue our little business without being disturbed.

FABRES

Yes, Esterhazy, your advice is good, and I will follow it. I will not leave my office until I receive your damn bordereau. And now go, quickly, you have spent enough time here.

ESTERHAZY

(Laughing.)

What? You don’t want me to give you your part of the 8,000 francs?

FABRES

(Frightened.)

Here? In my office? Are you out of your mind? Come to my house for dinner tonight. My wife will be happy to see you!
(Pushing him out.)

And now, go! And make sure nobody sees you!

(Esterhazy leaves through the secret door.)

FABRES

Bad and dangerous business! It was a big mistake to join this bandit! But what could I do? Poverty is a bad advisor! But it is too late to go back! A quarter of what I have done is enough to convict me to the gallows! What is the difference? One dies only once. Forward, Fabres, courage! And if you are unlucky and your treason is discovered...

(Terrified.)

Oh no! I won’t let them prevail! Before I am buried, let others fall, whether guilty or not!

(Thinking, his eyes down.)
SCENE 3

(FABRES, PICQUART)

PICQUART

(Dressed in a red uniform and carrying a sword. He is 40, tall, friendly, his face is open and honest. He enters through the door on the right. FABRES sees him and sits down at the desk. When he hears PICQUART’s voice, FABRES turns to him with emotion.)

Hello, Major.

FABRES

(Respectfully but with an evil look.)

Hello, Colonel.

PICQUART

Major, I need some information on the work of this department.

FABRES

(Still standing.)

I am ready to provide it, Colonel.

PICQUART

Tell me, until now, who has been receiving the papers delivered by our spies?

FABRES

I have, Colonel.

PICQUART

Do you read them?

FABRES
Yes, Colonel. After this, I have to send them to the department of photography to be photographed. And only then are they sent to the chief of the department.

PICQUART

Very good, Major, but I don't want it to continue this way. It is my order that from now on the envelopes are first shown to me without being opened. I will be the first to see them, and only after that, if I find it necessary, will I send them to you.

FABRES

But why, Colonel?...

PICQUART

(Looking at him strictly.)

Major Fabres, since when do you dare ask your superiors for reasons and explanations?

FABRES

I am sorry, Colonel, I forgot myself for a moment.

PICQUART

(In a commanding tone.)

Very good, let it be the last time! So, all papers delivered to the ministry by our secret agents must first be sent to me. This is the Minister’s order! Do you understand?

FABRES

Yes, Colonel.

(A knock on the door.)

PICQUART
(Looking through the papers on the desk.)

Major, go see who that is.

FABRES

(Goes to the door unwillingly. Aside.)

Oh, how I hate that man!

(Goes to the door, opens it, receives a big envelope, and closes the door.

Examines the envelope.)

PICQUART

(Busy with the papers, asks without lifting his head.)

Who is it?

FABRES

(Coming close to PICQUART.)

It is an envelope that was just delivered by one of our agents.

(Frightened, aside.)

The agent from the German embassy! I am sure it contains the damn bordereau.

Oh, I wish I could tear it into pieces!

(Looks at the envelope as if ready to tear it.)

PICQUART

(Lifting his head and looking at him.)

Very good!

FABRES

(Coming closer to PICQUART.)

Here it is, Colonel.
(Reluctantly gives him the envelope.)

PICQUART

Very good, you can leave, I am going to work here for another few minutes.

FABRES

(Aside.)

Now I am sure it is our end!

(Leaves slowly, keeping his eyes on PICQUART and the envelope.)
SCENE 4

(PICQUART alone)

PICQUART

(Opens the envelope and reads for some time in silence.)

Oh! Oh! What is this? It is a very important document!

(Looks at the letter in silence.)

Oh! Oh! Oh! It is more important than I thought!

(Reads.)

“Dear Seniorr, I have the honor of sending you five documents some of which are very important: 1) an artillery manual, a very rare book; 2) a plan of mobilization of the 27th corps of the army established at the border; 3) a note on the war in Madagascar; 4) a description of the new cannon used by the French army; 5) a description of the newly invented electric brake.

I hope, Senior, that you will be glad to receive this packet for which I ask 8,000 francs [___] which you have promised me.”

PICQUART

Oh, oh! This is complete treason! So, at the Ministry of War, there is a traitor who steals secrets for the enemy of his motherland! And he is doing this for money? Is this possible? Yes, this is possible, it is certain, and here is the proof! This unsigned letter demonstrates it!

(Examining the handwriting.)

Whose handwriting could this be? It is not familiar to me! But I will find the author! What a scoundrel! Selling his motherland for money!...
(For a moment remains preoccupied and indignant. Suddenly rings the bell. Enter the BELLBOY.)

Who brought this envelope?

BELLBOY

One of our spies, Colonel, the one in charge of the German embassy.

PICQUART

Is he at the ministry now?

BELLBOY

Yes, Colonel, he is waiting downstairs.

PICQUART

Tell him to come here, I want to talk to him.

BELLBOY

All right, Colonel.

(Leaves.)
SCENE 5

(PICQUART, the AGENT in plain clothes)

PICQUART

You are the one who has just brought a sealed envelope?

AGENT

Yes, Colonel.

PICQUART

Where did you get it?

AGENT

From the German embassy in Paris.

PICQUART

Did you steal it from there?

AGENT

No, Colonel, the doorman gave it to me himself.

PICQUART

The doorman at the embassy?

AGENT

Yes, Colonel, this doorman gives me some mail sent to his boss, Major Schwartzkoppen.

PICQUART

Do you pay him for this?

AGENT

Yes, Colonel.
PICQUART

How much did this envelope cost you?

AGENT

100 francs.

PICQUART

How do you explain that the doorman gave you the bordereau without the five documents included in the envelope?

AGENT

The doorman cannot give me everything he receives, because he is afraid to be caught. He gives some papers to me and some to his boss.

PICQUART

Did the doorman tell you who had brought this bordereau?

AGENT

No, Colonel, he was not there when it was brought.

PICQUART

And can you tell me who delivered this bordereau to the German embassy?

AGENT

No, Colonel, but if you want, I can try to find out.

PICQUART

Very good, find out, but without betraying yourself.

AGENT

All right, Colonel.

(Leaves.)
PICQUART

(Alone. Thinks for a moment and stands up.)

I will go to the Minister!! My duty is to inform him about what is going on.

(Leaves carrying the bordereau.)
SCENE 6

(FABRES alone)

FABRES

(Puts his head in the door and seeing that there is nobody, enters.)

This is the end!! This is our end! This scoundrel Picquart went to the Minister with the bordereau in his hand! When he walked past, I saw the bordereau, and immediately recognized Esterhazy’s handwriting. Ah! Esterhazy! What did you do! And now, who knows what is going to happen to us! The storm is approaching and will strike our heads. What can I do? How can I avert this terrible disgrace? Very soon they will start an investigation, and it is easy to find the traitor. Everybody is going to ask: who at the ministry is Esterhazy’s friend that would pass to him the secrets of the General Staff? And everybody will say: his friend is Major Fabres who sells the secrets of his motherland to the enemy. He is the scoundrel who joined a bandit and dishonors the army! And one day police agents will come and seize me by the collar, and tie my hands, and take away my sword, and tear off my epaulets and medals, and arrest, try, and condemn me, and curse me, and all of France and the entire world will hate my name!

(Silent, then in a terrible voice.)

Oh, no! No! I will not allow this to happen! This will not happen! Before Major Fabres’ head falls off, let hundreds or thousands of other heads fall off! Oh, we will see!

(Thinking, his eyes down.)
On whom should suspicion be cast? I have to think! I must find someone who would pay for me! If I am guilty, let him be the victim! Let justice look for the culprit. In order to keep it away from me, I must show it a criminal, even if he is innocent, and say, “Here is the criminal. This is the culprit! This is the scoundrel who betrayed his motherland! Seize him! Kill him! Bury him! He does not deserve any mercy!” This is how I will save myself!

(Thinking.)

Yes, but who, whose head should the lightning strike?

(Takes the chart off the wall.)

Let’s read this list. Maybe I will find a name, one of those cursed by God and people!

(Silent, then as if answering a question.)

Innocent? What does it matter? The important thing is to save myself!

(Reading.)

Dupont, Chevalier, Lacordaire... No! Not those, they are known for their honesty. Nobody is going to believe they are guilty. I have to look for others.

(Reading.)

Lavigny, Lapière, Cazimir, Dubois, Sénéchal.

(Continues reading, murmuring until he comes to the name “Dreyfus” which he pronounces loudly and jumps up.)

Dreyfus!... Oh! Dreyfus!... A Jew! The only Jew at the General Staff!

(Hitting his forehead.)
Why didn’t I think of this? Where was my mind? A Jew! A Jewish Captain! Who is more capable of betraying his motherland than a Jew? Who will doubt his culpability! Judas Iscariot was a Jew! If he sold our Lord Jesus for thirty ducats, who is going to be surprised that another Jew sold his motherland? Oh! How could I be so foolish? Why did I search for so long? Right here, in the office next door, is this Captain Dreyfus, the only Jew who until now has entered the General Staff! Who is the traitor? Dreyfus! Who is the wretched author of this bordereau? Dreyfus! Who is the scoundrel that passed the secrets of his motherland to the enemy? Dreyfus! Who deserves to be dishonored, arrested, condemned, hated by God and people, despised by the entire humanity? Dreyfus, Dreyfus, Dreyfus!!!...

(Thinking, his eyes down and his arms crossed.)

And now, I must develop a secret and terrible plan in order to make the world believe in this Jew's guilt. Like an author composing a tragedy, I must produce scene after scene, act after act. Working with great intelligence and great patience, I must instill suspicion into the empty heads around me, into the mind of General Mons, and even the Minister. This terrible and sinister work won’t be easy, but I hope to succeed. I will be able to mold the minds of my superiors, like a baker molds the dough, and instill in them the ideas I want, and for this I will use antisemitic newspapers. By inflammatory articles written in such a way that nobody will know they are mine, I will excite the hearts of the French population by spreading threatening rumors, convincing everybody that only a Jew could have sold his motherland. Of course, there will be one person-- this damn Colonel Picquart--who won’t be misled by me, but woe is he if he gets in my way! Let
him and this Jew be cursed together with their races! Forward, Fabres! Courage!
And remember that in the battle you are starting you can lose your head and with it your honor and future! So, forward, and woe is this Jew!
ACT TWO

(The scene takes place in the same office. In addition to the desk, there is a small table at the center of the stage with everything necessary for writing on it.)

SCENE 1

(FABRES alone)

FABRES

(Standing, reading the newspaper *La Libre parole* whose title appears in such big letters that it can be seen by the audience.)

“Our information was confirmed in every detail. Our readers know that we never say things or mention facts that are not true. When we accuse someone, we have grounds for our accusations. We said many times here that Jews are a race of traitors. Nobody wanted to believe us. But now everybody can see we were right. Today it is absolutely clear that a Jew penetrated the Ministry of War, the offices of the General Staff, in order to trade the most terrible and hidden secrets of national security. What we wrote cannot be denied, because there are many terrible proofs of it. Today we do not yet want to cite this scoundrel’s name, but tomorrow everybody will know it. We are sure that General Mercier, the Minister of War, will be able to fulfill his duty and will not allow himself to be persuaded by the usual Jewish arguments, which are money and bribes. If it is indeed true that 5,000 French soldiers died in Madagascar because of General Mercier, we can assure him that his crime will be forgiven if in this case of treason the Minister is energetic and takes quick measures to arrest this Jew who until now
has been hiding in the offices of the General Staff, and all true patriots will support him and unite around him!”

FABRES

(To the audience.)

This is the article I sent to the newspaper without a signature. This article will appear today, and today this wretched Jew will be arrested here, in this office. Thus all of France will learn this afternoon that the traitor is a Jew, and nobody will know who wrote this article. Now, the Minister will feel obliged, even against his will, to act in a way that would earn him forgiveness for the death of 5,000 French soldiers on the roads of Madagascar, as well as the friendship of the bandits writing in these papers, such as Henri Rochefort and other brigands of journalism. No matter what, the Minister will have to sacrifice the Jew, even if he discovers that he is not guilty!! So, everything is going well!

(In a threatening tone.)

Ah! Colonel Picquart! You want to be the first to receive the papers delivered to the office? Enjoy! And you will think this bordereau was written by Esterhazy and will try to find the real culprits? You are a child! I will manage to prove to you that Esterhazy’s handwriting belongs to the Jew Dreyfus! You will see how one handles an investigation! The Minister put Colonel Rishardon and the expert Cretinion in charge of the investigation. It is impossible to find better people than these two. Both are crazy, proud of their science and its infallibility. After five minutes of conversation with them, I convinced them that the culprit could not be anybody but Dreyfus. They agreed and went to look for proofs. At this time, the
two must be comparing handwritings and collecting information from the people whom I taught how to respond. And all this without letting anybody know that I am interested in this Jew being found guilty. So, everything is going very well!

(Rubbing his hands with joy.)

The mechanism is functioning according to my wish and in a few minutes the Jewish captain will be arrested here, in this office, in my presence, and will pay with his freedom and possibly his life for the crime committed by another. Don’t be afraid, Esterhazy, while Fabres is here, you can sleep tight!

(Folds the newspaper and puts it in his pocket.)

Now, to work!

(Sits down at the desk.)
SCENE 2

(FABRES, RISHARDON)

RISHARDON

(Entering. Tall, dry, thin, unpleasant. His gold-rim glasses are falling off all the time, and he adjusts them with the gestures of an automaton. He moves as if made of cardboard. He turns his body as if it were made of one piece and always remembers to straighten his back, like a soldier. Moustache, no beard, red uniform, a sword. He speaks in a conceited and curt tone and does not tolerate contradictions.)

_Bonjour_, Fabres!

FABRES

(Standing up.)

Ah! Rishardon! _Bonjour_, How are you?

RISHARDON

Very well, _merci_.

(Shaking hands.)

FABRES

(Offering him a chair.)

So, what did the investigation show?

RISHARDON

(Sitting down with his legs stretched, rocking in his chair.)
Full success! We have caught the dirty Jew! Imagine, my friend, what this scoundrel did. There are people who betray their country and trade the secrets of national security!

FABRES

(Pleased.)

Oh! How did you learn this?

RISHARDON

I found out that, when he was at school in Bourges, he tried to study in detail the secret mechanism of cannon no.120.\(^7\) A friend assured me that exactly at that time Germany received from France a description of this cannon. The conclusion is obvious: who is the author of this description? It can be only Dreyfus!

FABRES

This is certainly obvious!

RISHARDON

There is something else. A captain from the 24th regiment assured me that during the manoeuvres in Chalons he saw in the hands of Dreyfus an artillery manual and the bordereau mentions exactly this manual. I think this proof is sufficient!

FABRES

Of course!! More than sufficient!

RISHARDON

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\(^7\) This is a reference to the hydrolic (not electric) brake of the 120 mm cannon, a description of which was one of the five documents sent by Esterhazy to Schwartzkoppen.
(Nonchalantly.)

It is true that three colonels and the general of this regiment assured me that Dreyfus did not participate in the manoeuvres in Chalons. But they could have forgotten. For this reason, I did not take their testimonies into account!

FABRES

You did the right thing! Empty words that do not deserve attention. I see, Colonel, that the Minister was right to have put you in charge of the investigation. You are conducting it like the most experienced of all professional judges.

RISHARDON

(Conceitedly.)

This is not the first time I am in charge of this kind of task. I have sent to the gallows quite a few people! I am quick! Is this one guilty? I can tell this at first glance.

(Looking fixedly over his glasses.)

I look at the criminal fixedly! If his eyelids blink, if his finger trembles, if his color changes, if only his eyelashes quiver,

(Extends his arm.)

he is guilty! My science never errs. And let all witnesses of the world tell me, “This man is innocent!”

(Shuts his eyes and covers his ears.)

I close my eyes and ears and don’t want to see or hear. Away, false witnesses! This man is guilty, he must go to the gallows!

(With great conceit.)
Colonel Rishardon cannot err!!

FABRES

Bravo, Colonel, bravo! It is the first time I see a professional like you! Bravo!

Many false witnesses will want to talk to you, Jewish money is so powerful! One person will tell you that Captain Dreyfus did not participate in the manoeuvres in Chalons. Someone else will say that the handwriting of the bordereau is not similar to that of Dreyfus but to the handwriting of another officer, for example, to yours, mine, or that of a certain Major or Captain of this or that military corps!

Don’t listen to them!

RISHARDON

(Laughing.)

The handwriting? Let the most famous scientists in the world tell me that I am wrong, I am not going to change my opinion. And my opinion is that the bordereau is written by Dreyfus. I can take seventy letters written by this Jew and compare them with the bordereau. And do you know what I discovered?

FABRES

What?

RISHARDON

I discovered that the handwriting of the bordereau does not resemble at all that of Dreyfus’ letters!

FABRES

Oh!

RISHARDON
No. This is why I can say that the bordereau is written by Dreyfus.

FABRES

But if the handwriting is different?

RISHARDON

This is exactly why! Don’t be a child, Fabres. Do you think a person who writes to an agent of an enemy kingdom, a person who wants to betray his country, will be so stupid as to use his normal handwriting? Of course not. He will fake his handwriting and use a different one. The bordereau is written in a different handwriting, hence, it was written by Dreyfus. Is this clear?

FABRES

Clear as day! Congratulations on this discovery! No one but you could have discovered this!

(A knock on the door.)

Come in!
SCENE 3

(The same, CRETINION and the CHIEF OF POLICE. Enter and shake hands with FABRES and RISHARDON.)

FABRES

Ah! Here is the wonderful Se. Cretinion and the Chief of Police. So, what is new?

CRETINION

Our suspicions have been fully confirmed. The traitor is Dreyfus and nobody else!

FABRES

What is your conclusion based on?

CRETINION

On the handwriting of the bordereau. This handwriting is exactly the same as that of the Jewish captain.

RISHARDON

(Laughing with contempt, balancing on one foot that he keeps behind himself.)

Ah! And you can prove it?

CRETINION

Of course!! I have at my disposal 69 letters written by the culprit!

RISHARDON

I have 70!

CRETINION

My science never fails!

RISHARDON

Mine never errs!
CRETINION

(Stubbornly.)

I maintain that the bordereau is written by Dreyfus!

RISHARDON

I claim the same.

CRETINION

You also claim this? But I think you have just said that the bordereau is not written by Dreyfus.

RISHARDON

Pardon, I have always insisted and will continue to insist that the bordereau is written by Dreyfus!

CRETINION

And that the handwriting is similar to that of the letters?

RISHARDON

No, it is not similar, it is different!

CRETINION

Different? But if it is different, how can you say that it was written by Dreyfus?

RISHARDON

(Conceitedly.)

This is what you don’t understand!

CRETINION

I claim that the handwriting is similar to that of Dreyfus!

RISHARDON
And I claim that it is not similar!

CRETINION

(Furious.)

Colonel!

RISHARDON

Senior!

(They threaten each other.)

CRETINION

My science never fails!

RISHARDON

My science never errs!

CRETINION

(Becoming more stubborn.)

I have 69 letters written by the criminal!

RISHARDON

I have 70!

(They jump at each other.)

FABRES

(Separating them.)

Gentlemen, don’t fight, you are in agreement! Colonel, do you think Dreyfus is guilty?

RISHARDON

Yes, he is guilty!
FABRES

And you, Se. Cretinion, what do you think?

CRETINION

Dreyfus is guilty!

FABRES

So, you are in complete agreement. You arrived at this conclusion from different directions, which proves that the science of the one is as reliable as that of the other! Now, shake hands as the two wonderful gentlemen that you are!

(RISHARDON and CRETINION shake hands.)

And you, Se. Chief of Police, what new information do you have?

CHIEF OF POLICE

Unfortunately, I don’t have any good information. As I have learned, Dreyfus is rich, from a good family, he is married and loves his wife and their two children. He does not gamble or drink and leads a very stable life. Consequently, I could not find any reason why he would betray his country!

RISHARDON

(Laughing.)

Ha, ha, ha! This is a good one! Se. Chief of Police, I see that you don’t know human nature! A man can gamble and drink without anybody knowing about it! You say that Dreyfus is rich, but he makes only 20,000 francs, and they say he spends more than 60,000 francs a year. Where does he get all this money? People also say that he gambles at the races and loses big sums. They also say he was seen entering many places and clubs where they gamble big stakes. And it is not
clear whether this officer has such a stable family life as you say. I was told that many times he was seen in phaetons with circus actresses. What do you think of all this?

CHIEF OF POLICE

Everything you were told is based on rumors while the Prefecture’s information is reliable!

RISHARDON

Ah, Se. Chief of Police, when it comes to a Jew, one should believe every rumor!

If someone tells me that a Jew has stolen the moon and swallowed Mount Levan, I will immediately believe it. Jews are capable of anything!

FABRES

So, Colonel, what is your conclusion about Dreyfus?

RISHARDON

(Stretching out his arm.)

Guilty!

FABRES

And yours, Se. Cretinion?

CRETINION

(Stretching out his arm.)

Guilty!

FABRES

And yours, Se. Chief of Police?

CHIEF OF POLICE
Since everybody here believes that Dreyfus is guilty, it must be so!

**FABRES**

The unanimous conclusion is that he is guilty! Colonel, what are you planning to do?

**RISHARDON**

Immediately arrest the scoundrel.

(Consulting his watch.)

It is ten minutes before ten, in ten minutes he will be here. Yesterday I wrote him asking him to come to this office at ten in the morning to discuss some matters. We will see him here in ten minutes. But before I arrest him, I want to subject him to the final test. I want him to sit at this table and write under my dictation a letter very similar in content to the *bordereau*, and you will see two things. First of all, Se. Cretinion, that Dreyfus’ handwriting is completely different from that of the *bordereau*. Secondly, Se. Chief of Police, when he hears the words that are used in the *bordereau*, the scoundrel will begin to tremble, because he will understand that this is a farce and that at the ministry we are on the alert, each at his post.⁸

You, Fabres, go there.

(Pointing to the desk.)

You, Cretinion, go to that corner.

(Pointing to the corner on the right at the back of the stage.)

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⁸ This is a translation *ad sensum* of the following unclear phrase: *estamos suyendo la eskalera del ministeryo, kada uno asu posto.*
You, Chief of Police, stand next to Cretinion, and all of you must pretend you are busy, but follow everything he does or says! Don’t take your eyes off him when he begins to write, watch his fingers! And if you see him tremble, don’t hesitate to tell him so, because the more witnesses the better! Are you ready?

ALL

Yes!

RISHARDON

(Sitting down at the table in the middle, while FABRES is at the desk.)

Now, quiet! I hear footsteps! This is he! Attention! Here he is!

(Everybody pretends to be busy, RISHARDON and FABRES are writing, CRETINION and the CHIEF OF POLICE are examining the maps on the walls.)
SCENE 4

(The same, DREYFUS)

DREYFUS

(Entering, in a good mood. He is wearing a black uniform of the artillery, with horizontal cords on his chest and a kepi with shiny braid, gold-rim glasses, a sword. Takes off his kepi and walks directly to Rishardon’s table, and greets him.)

Good morning, Colonel!

RISHARDON

(Writing, gives him his left hand without lifting his head.)

Ah! Are you Captain Dreyfus? How are you? You are precisely on time for the rendez-vous.

DREYFUS

Thank you, Colonel. Punctuality is the virtue of the military.

(Everybody is looking at him from the corner of the eye. DREYFUS walks to FABRES and shakes his hand.)

Good morning, Major, so early at work?

FABRES

(Laughing.)

Good morning, Dreyfus, what can I do? Work is also a virtue of the military!

DREYFUS

(Laughing.)

Good response!

(Waves at him. DREYFUS greets the others.)
How are you, Se. Cretinion and Se. Chief of Police? I am sure some case of espionage must have brought you here! Oh! It is terrible that there are scoundrels capable of selling the secrets of national security! They deserve the gallows!

CHIEF OF POLICE

You are right, Captain, you are right!

RISHARDON

(Without turning to him.)

Captain Dreyfus!

DREYFUS

Yes, Colonel!

(Approaches RISHARDON and respectfully stands in front of him.)

RISHARDON

(Stands up.)

I want to send a confidential letter to someone. Would you kindly write it under my dictation?

DREYFUS

I will be happy to, Colonel. Glad to be useful to you.

RISHARDON

Sit down at this table and prepare to write.

DREYFUS

(Sitting down at the table in the middle.)

All right, Colonel.

(He gets ready, everybody is watching him.)
RISHARDON

(Stands by the table, puts one foot over the other.)

Write!

(Dictating.)

Senior, I have the pleasure to send you hereby five very important documents whose high value you will be able to appreciate. 1) An artillery manual...

DREYFUS

(Writing, repeats the words.)

...manual…

(The others stand up and little by little get closer to him.)

RISHARDON

Manual… 2) A description of the mechanism of the 120 field cannon, recently invented...

DREYFUS

(Writing.)

..Invented

(The others make one more step in his direction and watch him fixedly.)

RISHARDON

Invented… 3) A study of the war in…in Madagascar…in Madagascar… (At this moment, Rishardon bends over Dreyfus in order to see him better.)

DREYFUS

(Writing.)

...in Madagascar…
(At this moment, the others come close and surround Dreyfus shouting in unison.)
He is trembling! Trembling!
(All hands are pointing at Dreyfus, and all are eating him with their eyes.)

RISHARDON
(Inflamed.)
His fingers trembled! When he was writing “Madagascar” his fingers trembled! I saw it! Did you see it?

ALL
(In unison.)
Yes! Yes!

DREYFUS
(Looking at them perplexed.)
What is going on with you? What happened to you all of a sudden? And why are you standing around me? Why are you looking at me like this?

RISHARDON
(In a terrible voice.)
No doubt this scoundrel is the culprit! Chief of Police, perform your duty!

CHIEF OF POLICE
(Puts his hand on Dreyfus’ shoulder.)
In the name of the law, I arrest you!

DREYFUS
(Standing up.)
You arrest me? Are you out of your mind?
FABRES

(In a hostile tone.)

Quiet! You are a scoundrel! You are the culprit!

DREYFUS

Scoundrel? Culprit? All of you are out of your mind! What does this mean? What is all this farce about?

RISHARDON

Dreyfus, instead of denying it, confess!

DREYFUS

Confess? Confess what?

RISHARDON

The horrible crime that you have committed! Oh! Don’t pretend you don’t know, you know very well why we arrest you and what horrible crime you have committed.

DREYFUS

Horrible crime? I have committed a horrible crime? O God! Am I awake or is this a horrible dream? Are you talking to me, Colonel, to me, Captain Dreyfus?

RISHARDON

To you, Captain Dreyfus, to you, confess that you have committed the most horrible crime! In your best interests, confess it.

DREYFUS

God in Heaven, give me patience! Colonel, I swear to you that I am a victim of a terrible misunderstanding! I am a criminal? My superiors have never censured me
for anything! Colonel, I swear to you by my honor of an officer, by the lives of my beloved wife and my two dear children, I swear to you that all this is a horrible lie! I am innocent of all sins!

(Furious.)

You don’t have the right to arrest me without any proof!

RISHARDON

(Laughing.)

Proof? Our hands are full of proof!

DREYFUS

That I am guilty? O God!

RISHARDON

(Harshly.)

Enough, we are wasting our time! The minister is waiting for me, I must give him a report. Major Fabres, take away his sword and go with him.

(To CHIEF OF POLICE.)

Take this scoundrel to the military prison. Put him in the most secret cell! And make sure that no human being can see him or talk to him! Absolute secrecy!

FABRES

All right, Colonel.

(To Dreyfus.)

Your sword!

DREYFUS

(Turning to him and seizing his sword.)
Oh, no! I am innocent! My sword belongs to me! You don’t have the right to take it away!

(They surround him and take it from him by force.)

Oh! I am dishonored! One day you will regret what you are doing now. It will be the day when the truth comes out and the real culprit is found!

(With tears.)

Oh! This is horrible!

RISHARDON

Major, go!

DREYFUS

Colonel, at least tell me what I am charged with, of what horrible crime am I suspected? I have the right to know this!

RISHARDON

You will learn it later! Go!

DREYFUS

(Does not move. Suddenly hits himself on the forehead.)

O my wife! O my children! What are they going to think, what are they going to say when they hear what happened to me! Oh!

(Covers his eyes and cries.)

FABRES

Go! Let’s not waste time!

DREYFUS

(Shouts energetically.)
I am innocent!

(He is dragged away.)
ACT THREE

The scene takes place in the provisional prison at the Council of War where DREYFUS is on trial.

SCENE 1

(DREYFUS alone.)

DREYFUS

(Seated, pensive, sad. He is wearing his uniform and carries a sword. There is no furniture on the stage except DREYFUS’ chair and a little table on which his elbow is resting. Dark walls without pictures or paintings.)

Today my fate will be decided. In the last two months, my soul has been suffering terribly, and I don’t know when this torture will be over and whether it will indeed be over one day or whether I am predestined to suffer till my last hour! I am dreaming, but this dream is filled with fears and horrors. I lived happily and joyfully with my beloved Lucie and my two dear children. Life ahead appeared like a green meadow full of flowers and roses. My superiors complimented and praised me, and everything made me hope that I would soon be promoted to Major, and then... Lieutenant-Colonel, Colonel, perhaps General...

(Shakes his head.)

Oh! Dreams! Dreams! Vanity! Smoke!... Suddenly everything fell apart.

Suddenly, everything around me turned into ruins! My future is destroyed! My happy life is overturned! The future of my name and of my family is disgraced. And why? For what crime? For the crime of someone else!

(Stands up, in a terrible voice.)
Oh! This scoundrel, this traitor who wrote the bordereau, I want to know who he is and where he is hiding, so that I could pull off his mask to show his face to the world in order for everybody to see that I am innocent, and that I am paying for the crime of another man.

(Pensive.)

Who could this be? Who is the scoundrel that was able to do this? And that is now hiding knowing that an innocent man is sacrificed instead of him? Who, who can this be?...

(Silent, sits down feeling desperate.)

And now it is all over! There is no more hope! In a few minutes, I will hear the sentence of the tribunal that tried me. Oh, this trial! What a terrible time I had! Everybody, including my best friend, turned into my enemy! Everybody accused me and blamed the innocent! And Major Fabres more than anybody else! What did I do to this man to make him persecute me with such animosity? I have always treated him in a friendly and respectful manner!

(Silence.)

Among so many enemies, only Colonel Picquart showed me a little pity. He alone did not let himself be blinded by the general hatred of the Jew!... The Jew! Yes! My only fault is being Jewish! If I were not Jewish, nobody would dream of making such a terrible accusation against me!! It is certainly my being Jewish that caused me so much hatred and suffering!...

(With feeling.)
Oh! How much pain will this cause my relatives, brothers, and wife! What are my children going to say not seeing me any more? They will say, “Maman, when is papa going to return from his trip?” Oh!

(Stands up in tears.)

God! You who read in human hearts, only you know whether I am guilty or innocent, take pity on my sinless children. Take pity on all mine, and on me, give me the strength to endure this terrible misfortune and let me live until my innocence shines like the sun!
SCENE 2

(DREYFUS, CAPTAIN OF THE GENDARMERIE)

DREYFUS

(Turning to the entering CAPTAIN, dries up his tears.)

So, Captain, what is the news? What is my fate? Was my innocence finally proven?

CAPTAIN

How can one prove a criminal’s innocence?

DREYFUS

Ah! And you, too, believe in it?...

CAPTAIN

I believe what everybody believes. If you listen to me, you will do the right thing: confess.

DREYFUS

Confess? Confess a sin which I have not committed? What are you asking me to do, Captain?

CAPTAIN

Do what you want, my duty is to tell you this.

DREYFUS

And my duty is to answer you by telling you the truth: I am innocent.

CAPTAIN

All right, this is up to you. Captain Dreyfus, I came to tell you that the tribunal has already announced the sentence.
DREYFUS

The sentence! Oh! Please, tell me, what is it? Innocent or guilty?

CAPTAIN

I don’t know! They are coming to read it to you now, brace yourself and …

Courage!

DREYFUS

Courage? Oh! This is the end! I am dishonored!

CAPTAIN

Here they are!
SCENE 3

(The same, enter the CLERK of the tribunal in a military uniform and LAWYER DEMANGE followed by armed SOLDIERS.)

DEMANGE

(Shakes DREYFUS’ hand.)

Courage, my son, I will never abandon you!

CLERK

(He has a paper in his hand. The soldiers present arms.)

Captain Dreyfus, listen to the sentence of the Council of War!

(Reading.)

“In the name of the French people, we, the Council of War of the 2nd Arrondissement of Paris, inform defendant Dreyfus Alfred of the following: the judges of the Council of War in response to the question, “Is defendant Dreyfus Alfred, artillery captain, guilty of trading to a foreign country secrets of national security?” The unanimous response to this question was, “YES!”

(DREYFUS moves. DEMANGE who, at this moment, is holding his hand stops him.)

As a consequence, defendant Dreyfus is condemned to a life imprisonment in an isolated fortress to pay for his horrible crime. He is also condemned to public degradation, which will take place today in the courtyard of the Military School in
the presence of two battalions of the garrison of Paris! For the Council of War, President: Colonel Just.\textsuperscript{9}

(To DREYFUS.)

Do you have anything to say?

DREYFUS

Yes!

CLERK

What?

DREYFUS

(Energetically.)

That I am innocent!

CLERK

Anything else?

DREYFUS

No!

(The CLERK leaves followed by the SOLDIERS.)

\textsuperscript{9} The Council of War was presided over by General de Luxer. Hence, “Just” appears to be a meaningful made-up name. (It would be Juste in French.)
SCENE 4

(DREYFUS, LAWYER DEMANGE, then CAPTAIN OF THE GENDARMERIE)

DREYFUS

(Who, until then contained himself, falls into DEMANGE’s arms weeping.)

Oh!

DEMANGE

(Crying and holding DREYFUS in his arms.)

Courage! Courage, my son! You must save your forces to endure this terrible suffering. You must think about your family. Also, starting now, from this very moment, you must prepare your rehabilitation!

DREYFUS

(Lifting his head, in a desperate tone.)

Oh! It is not worth it! It is all over for me! Why exhaust myself in vain? Let me rot in the hole in which they are going to lock me! Don’t think of me any more, I am cursed!

DEMANGE

And the honor of your name which you received from your father unstained? And your children who do not deserve this dishonor and for whom life would become a horrible hardship? No, Dreyfus, you have no reason to despair! Where is a desolate family going to find means to prove your innocence? Also think of the millions of your coreligionists who will suffer oppression and pain for you. Everybody believes in your guilt. You must live in order to prove that you were
convicted erroneously, that you are innocent, and that the scoundrel who sold his motherland is not you, but another man!

DREYFUS

Oh! My dear friend, I am very grateful to you for your advice and encouragement! Yes, you are right, I must live, live in order to prove to the whole world my innocence, I must live in order to discover the true culprit, no matter where he is hiding, I must live in order to find him, I must find him! My brothers and wife must use all resources to discover him! Let all my money be spent on this! Search, search, don’t stop until the truth about me comes out! And I will patiently endure all tortures and pain in the hope that one day the light of truth will open even the eyes of the blind!

CAPTAIN OF THE GENDARMERIE

(Entering.)

Se. Demange, the half hour is over.

DEMANGE

(Opens his arms.)

Let me embrace you, my son! My heart is mourning your fate and crying about your misfortune, but don’t lose courage! And have faith in your relatives and me! Farewell!... No, goodbye! I am sure we will see each other again. Courage!

(DEMANGE leaves with a worried look on his face, DREYFUS covers his face with his hands.)
SCENE 5

(DREYFUS, CAPTAIN OF THE GENDARMERIE)

CAPTAIN

    Well, Dreyfus!

DREYFUS

    (Lifting his head.)
    What?

CAPTAIN

    Don’t you hear those shouts?

DREYFUS

    What happened? What is going on?

CAPTAIN

    Those are the people who came to watch your degradation.

DREYFUS

    My degradation! Oh!!

CAPTAIN

    In a few minutes, they will come for you, take you and put you in front of the crowd and armed soldiers, and degrade. They will again take away your sword, they will strip you of your epaulets and buttons and remove the braid. This is going to be horrible!

DREYFUS

    Oh!

    (Covers his face.)
CAPTAIN

Will you be able to endure this public dishonor?

DREYFUS

No, no! It is better to die!

CAPTAIN

I agree!

(He draws out a revolver and puts it on the table.\(^{10}\))

An officer should not wait till he is publicly dishonored. For the sake of his epaulets and sword, he must take drastic measures before this happens. Listen, Dreyfus, innocent or guilty, remember that you are an officer and don’t wait until four gendarmes come and take you by the collar! Farewell!

(As he leaves, he shows to Dreyfus the revolver on the table.)

DREYFUS

(Alone. Takes the revolver.)

This Captain is right -- death is better than dishonor! An officer should not wait for public degradation. Thank you, Captain, thank you for giving me this weapon. My salvation is in it! Unfortunate Jew brought to this world to suffer, put an end to your miserable life, so that one day people would say, “He lived innocent and died courageously!”

(He puts the revolver to his temple. Enters his wife.)

\(^{10}\) Dreyfus was offered a revolver on the day of his arrest by Major du Paty de Clam who was in charge of the investigation, but he refused to kill himself.
SCENE 6

DREYFUS, LUCIE DREYFUS

(LUCIE DREYFUS enters and stops for a moment petrified. Suddenly, with a terrible cry, she rushes to her husband and snatches the revolver from his hand.)

DREYFUS

(Turns around and sees his wife.)

Lucie!

LUCIE

(Moved, desperate.)

You want to kill yourself? Are you out of your mind? Why do you want to do this?

DREYFUS

(Entirely downcast.)

My dear Lucie, life is very hard and very cruel to me! Outside, people are preparing to attend my degradation and enjoy this show. I won’t be able to endure this disgrace! It is better to die! Give me the weapon that you snatched from me.

LUCIE

(Putting the revolver farther away.)

Die! And what will the world and our enemies think and say? They will say, “See, he killed himself because he knew he was guilty!” This way you will make everybody believe that you are the true traitor! Oh, Alfred, I did not expect this from you!

DREYFUS
What can I do, my dear Lucie? The whole world rose against me and accused me. My best friends suspect me. Who believes in my innocence except God who reads in my heart? No, give me that weapon, I am tired of life!

LUCIE

But what about me, about your children, what are we going to do in this world? Should we also be killed? Do you think we will be able to live with a stained, mistrusted name? No, no, Alfred, you don’t talk like a courageous man, you need a woman to come and wake you up from the dream into which your mind has fallen. Wake up, my dear husband! Don’t worry that there are few of us who believe in your innocence. You and I and our friend Lawyer Demange suffice, it is enough that we believe that you are the most honest man! God will take pity on us and will show us what road to take in order to make your innocence shine!

DREYFUS

But, dear, in a few minutes I will be degraded!

LUCIE

What does it matter! Keep your head high and to every torture, to every injury respond that you are innocent! If the people don’t hear these cries, God will!

DREYFUS

Oh, Lucie! You are right! Don’t worry, I promise I won’t think of killing myself again, and I will endure every torture with serenity!

(He takes her hands.)

Thank you, my courageous friend, thank you for your words. They brought me consolation and courage, which I had lost.
(Silent. With great emotion and in a trembling voice.)

And… the children?... How are they?... What do they say?...

LUCIE

(Moved.)

Don’t worry about them, they are happy and healthy, they don’t know anything, I told them that papa went away on a long, very long trip and that he will come back later. God willing, this trip won’t be too long!

(They cry.)

CAPTAIN OF THE GENDARMERIE

(Comes in.)

Madam, it is time for you to leave the prison!

(DREYFUS and LUCIE embrace crying. LUCIE leaves with a worried look on her face. DREYFUS is lost in his sad thoughts, his face covered with his hands.)
SCENE 7

(DREYFUS, CAPTAIN OF THE GENDARMERIE, GENDARMES)

CAPTAIN

   Hey, Dreyfus, it’s time!

   (Enter four GENDARMES with unsheathed swords.)

DREYFUS

   (Straightens up his shoulders, makes an effort to appear calm, and says,)

   Let’s go!

   (They leave, DREYFUS walks with determination. His head up, making efforts
   not to show his feelings. The four GENDARMES surround him, and the group
   leaves. The curtain falls.)
SCENE 8

(In the courtyard of the Military School. A crowd is gathered at the back of the stage. Gendarmes, armed soldiers, officers. The gendarmes and soldiers are containing THE PUBLIC which is trying to get to the front of the stage. In the front are PICQUART on the right, FABRES, ESTERHAZY, CRETINION, and RISHARDON on the left.)

PUBLIC

Here he is! Here he is! Here he is!

(Everybody moves and stands on tiptoe to see offstage right where DREYFUS is going to appear. Enter the CAPTAIN OF THE GENDARMERIE with the four GENDARMES, all with unsheathed swords, and, surrounded by them, comes DREYFUS. The group walks across the stage from right to left. DREYFUS turns his back to offstage left, looking at offstage right through which he entered. The four GENDARMES stop behind him. Noise in the PUBLIC. They are trying to get closer to DREYFUS, but the soldiers contain them. Enters a GENERAL followed by a group of officers. The GENERAL stops in front of DREYFUS with his back to stage right. The officers stop behind the GENERAL. Silence. The GENERAL draws out his sword. The soldiers present arms, the GENERAL raises the sword and gives a signal. Immediately, one hears the sound of a drum. At the second signal of the sword, the sound stops.)

GENERAL

(Addresses DREYFUS.)
Dreyfus, in the name of the French people and in accordance with the sentence of the Council of War which condemned you, I declare you undeserving to carry the sword and order that here take place your degradation!

(During this time, DREYFUS is standing straight and looking fixedly at the GENERAL.)

DREYFUS

(Shouting.)

I am innocent! They condemned an innocent man!

(Loud shouts in the PUBLIC which wants to jump at DREYFUS. The sound of the drum covers DREYFUS’ voice. At the signal of the GENERAL’s sword, the CAPTAIN OF THE GENDARMERIE stands in front of DREYFUS, draws his sword out, snaps it into two across his knee, and throws the pieces down.)

PUBLIC

Death to the Jew!

DREYFUS

(Lifting his head and extending his arm.)

I am innocent!

(Sound of drum.)

PUBLIC

Shut up, Judas Iscariot! Traitor!

(The CAPTAIN OF THE GENDARMERIE rips off DREYFUS’ epaulets one after the other and throws them down.)

PUBLIC
Death to the traitor!
(The PUBLIC is trying to jump at DREYFUS.)

DREYFUS
(Responding to the PUBLIC.)
I am not a traitor, I am innocent!
(Shouts and drumming.)

PUBLIC
Death to the Jew! To the gallows him!
(Noise, drumming, shouts. As DREYFUS, escorted by the GENDARMES, walks around the stage, everybody is shouting.)
Death! Death to the Jew!
(And every time DREYFUS responds.)

DREYFUS
I am innocent!
(ESTERHAZY and FABRES are furious and vengeful and shout.)

ESTERHAZY and FABRES
Death to the traitor!
(DREYFUS is taken away. People are leaving little by little, still shouting and making noise.)

PICQUART
(Aside.)
This man is innocent!
(Leaves.)
FABRES

(To ESTERHAZY.)

And now we can sleep tight!


ACT FOUR

(The scene takes place in Colonel PICQUART’s office. A desk, a chair, maps and pictures on the walls.)

SCENE 1

(PICQUART alone, then BELLBOY, AGENT)

PICQUART

(He is looking through the papers on his desk. Takes a sealed envelope and reads what it says.)

“Secret documents seized at the German embassy!”

(Speaking.)

What! There are still scoundrels who are trading with our country’s enemies? When Dreyfus was here, all crimes were blamed on him. He was the only traitor! But the Jew has not been here for more than four years, he has been kept in the most remote and isolated prison since four years ago. He does not see a human being, a human face. How is it possible that secrets of national security are still being sold to our enemies?

(Silent.)

I have always believed that this man is innocent, that it was not he who committed the horrible crime of betraying his country. It is certain that he paid for someone else’s crime. But who is this man? Who is the scoundrel who wanted to have an innocent person condemned instead of himself, and is still continuing to steal the secrets of our army and sell them to the enemy? Who, who can this be?

(Silent.)
Perhaps this envelope will tell me. Ah! If only I knew the scoundrel’s name I could save the unfortunate who is suffering immensely!...

(Tears the envelope.)

What is this? A cable addressed to a French officer!

(Reads.)

“To Se. Esterhazy, Major of the 24th army corps, 27 Rue de la Bienfaisance, Paris.”

(Speaking.)

Esterhazy! It is the first time I see this name!

(Rings the bell.)

BELLBOY

(Entering.)

Colonel!

PICQUART

Who brought this envelope?

BELLBOY

The agent in charge of the German embassy. He is downstairs.

PICQUART

Tell him to come here.

BELLBOY

All right, Colonel.

(Leaves.)

AGENT
(Enters.)

Colonel!

PICQUART

Are you the person who brought this envelope?

AGENT

Yes, Colonel.

PICQUART

Do you know what is inside?

AGENT

Yes, Colonel, a cable addressed to Major Esterhazy.

PICQUART

Where did you get this cable?

AGENT

It was given to me by the doorman at the German embassy. He took it from his boss who left it on a table on the way to the telegraph.

PICQUART

Are you sure of this? If it is true, this Major Esterhazy is collaborating with the German embassy.

AGENT

Colonel, my words are absolutely truthful, and it is true that Major Esterhazy is collaborating with the enemies of France.

PICQUART

Are you sure?
AGENT

To begin with, the content of this cable shows it.

PICQUART

(Opens the cable and reads.)

“All will expect you tomorrow you know where, do not forget the piece you promised—6,000 francs.”

(Speaking.)

No signature!

AGENT

Of course, such documents are never signed, they are always anonymous.

PICQUART

And what sort of person is this Major Esterhazy?

AGENT

He is fifty. Separated from his wife and living with a bad woman! Spender, gambler, drinker, and dissolute! A complete bandit! He is the kind of person who would sell his God, his soul, and his country for money!

PICQUART

Oh! Oh! A full portrait! A real brigand ready to cut purses and throats! Exactly what is needed to make one a traitor! Tell me, can you get me a few letters of this evil person?

AGENT

(Laughing.)

Colonel, I knew you would ask for this. Here!
(He takes letters from all his pockets.)

PICQUART

Oh! Oh! So many letters!

AGENT

Se. Esterhazy is a great letter-writer. There is no banker, tailor, butcher, grocer, or baker to whom he has not sent lots of letters asking them not to persecute him for his debts and promising to pay them. I collected all these letters in two or three days.

PICQUART

What is your name, my friend?

AGENT

Toma Tomas to serve you, Colonel.

PICQUART

Very good, my friend Tomas, I am very pleased with you! I will award you 300 francs, and when I talk to the Minister, I will be sure to tell him about you.

AGENT

Oh, Colonel, this is very kind of you.

PICQUART

But you must open your ears and shut your mouth. You must see a lot and speak little! I want to know who this Esterhazy is, how he lives, what he does, where he comes from, and where he goes. Follow his steps, become his shadow. Learn all about his life. Watch him carefully and report to me every day where he goes and what he does. Do you understand me?
AGENT

Yes, Colonel. You can count on me.

PICQUART

Very good, you can go!

(The AGENT leaves.)
SCENE 2

(PICQUART alone)

PICQUART

(Looking through Esterhazy’s letters.)

This handwriting is familiar to me!

(Silent, gets up from his chair, opens an iron box in the corner of the office, takes out a big envelope, puts it on his desk, takes out the bordereau, and compares it with the letters.)

Oh!! There can be no doubt! The handwritings are identical! Only a blind person would not see it! The author of these letters is the person who wrote the bordereau for which Dreyfus was condemned. The wretched traitor who sold to the enemies the secrets of our army is this scoundrel Esterhazy, this bandit, deep in debt and crimes, while the unfortunate Dreyfus is innocent! Until now, there could still be doubt, and I had no proof, but now there can be no doubt that Dreyfus is innocent and the culprit is Esterhazy!

(Pensive.)

What should I do? Reveal the truth? Go to the Minister and show to him that a terrible mistake was committed? Show him, with proofs in hand, that instead of the guilty man we condemned an innocent one? That while the innocent man is kept there, in his isolated prison, the culprit is here, continuing his terrible trade? It is my duty to reveal the truth, but I will acquire so many enemies! All those who tried and condemned Dreyfus—officers, investigators, judges, ministers, deputies, journalists, and antisemites—everybody is going to rise against me and
accuse me! For fear to be blamed for condemning an innocent person, they will unite in order to prevent the truth from coming out. They will even accuse me of receiving money from the Jews! My career will be destroyed and my future ruined!

(Pensive.)

Think well, Picquart! Your future is at stake! At 38, you are Colonel, the youngest colonel in the French army. No doubt, in two years, you will be promoted to General. You can jeopardize this brilliant future, ruin it in a moment! If you take the side of truth, if you decide to help the innocent man triumph, know that your future and perhaps your life are in danger, the Minister himself will not be able to help you! Think, think well!

(Silence. Suddenly makes a step forward as if to strike an enemy.)

Evil spirit, you are trying to divert me from my way, spirit of Satan, go away! I don’t want to listen to your voice and your vain promises! You say everybody is going to become my enemy? My future will be ruined, my life threatened? So what? What does it matter? I have to fulfill my duty! There, in his isolated prison, on a far-away island, an unfortunate human being has been kept for four years, separated from his family, his children, the humanity. Day and night, he is stretching his arms to God saying, “Isn’t there anybody who would have pity on me?” And this man is innocent, he is a victim of the blind justice carried out by humans. And I who know the truth, who have handfuls of proofs of his innocence and of another man’s guilt, I would keep silent and let this injustice happen
without protesting, without raising my voice to shout to the world, “Dreyfus is innocent! Dreyfus is innocent!!...”

(Joyfully.)

Hey, Picquart, fulfill your duty, and happen what may!

(Resolutely.)

I am going to talk to the Minister!

(Collects the papers. He is ready to go to the Minister. Enters CRETINION.)
SCENE 3

(PICQUART, CRETINION)

CRETINION

_Bonjour, _Colonel._

PICQUART

_(Turning to him.)_

Cretinion! Ah! Heaven sent you here. Cretinion, look at this.

_(Shows him one of Esterhazy’s letters covering the signature.)_

CRETINION

Oh! This is the handwriting of that scoundrel Dreyfus!

PICQUART

Why do you think so?

CRETINION

This is the handwriting of the _bordereau._

PICQUART

Are you sure?

CRETINION

My science never errs!

PICQUART

Yes, I think you have said this many times. Can you repeat in writing what you

have just said?

CRETINION

What? That this handwriting is that of the bordereau?
PICQUART

Exactly!

CRETINION

Of course I will do this, and twice instead of once!

PICQUART

(Pointing to the desk.)

Please, do write!

CRETINION

All right!

(Goes to the desk and begins to write, but stops.)

What is the signature on this letter? Dreyfus, right?

PICQUART

First write.

(CRETINION writes.)

CRETINION

(Giving him what he has written.)

Here! And now tell me who signed it.

PICQUART

Read it yourself.

(Shows him the signature.)

CRETINION

(Standing up.)
Esterhazy! Oh! I must have made a mistake! I did not look well! I did not examine it carefully!

PICQUART

Your science never errs!

CRETINION

True, but it is necessary to examine this signature, to photograph it, to analyze, and only then will I announce my conclusion.

PICQUART

But in order to conclude that it was Dreyfus’ handwriting, you did not need to photograph or analyze it, and now that you know it belongs to another officer, you need to examine it carefully?

CRETINION

It is self-understood, Colonel, that when it comes to a Jew, and especially a criminal like Dreyfus, I believe anything, but here we are dealing with another person, a respectable officer…!

PICQUART

(Laughing.)

Oh! Respectable!

CRETINION

Anyway, if we are dealing with someone who is not Jewish, it is necessary to examine it!

PICQUART

Very well, you will examine it, but I will show your conclusion to the Minister.
CRETINION

As you like, Colonel, I will be able to show to the Minister, and with proofs, that this signature does not resemble that of the bordereau. Goodbye.

(Leaves furious.)

PICQUART

(Alone.)

This is one of those people who send a man to the gallows! Their science is empty, if these madmen condemn an innocent person to death!

(Enters FABRES.)
SCENE 4

(PICQUART and FABRES. This scene is the most dramatic one in the play and should be performed with attention. Then it will make a great impression on the audience.)

FABRES

(Greeting him.)

Colonel!

PICQUART

Come here, Major, I have some good news that will please you!

FABRES

What news?

PICQUART

Dreyfus is innocent!

FABRES

(Laughing)

You have told me this a hundred times!

PICQUART

True, but this time I have proof in my hands.

FABRES

(Serious and frightened.)

Proof? That Dreyfus is innocent?

PICQUART

Yes, definitive proof.

(Showing him one of Esterhazy’s letters.)
Is this writing familiar to you?

FABRES

This handwriting?

(Aside.)

Oh! A letter written by Esterhazy!

(Aloud.)

No, Colonel, this handwriting is not familiar to me.

PICQUART

Read the signature.

FABRES

(Reading.)

Es...Ester...Esterhazy?

PICQUART

Do you know this person?

FABRES

No. I have never heard this name before.

PICQUART

I haven’t either. So, Major, the traitor who sold his motherland is not unfortunate Dreyfus, but this scoundrel Esterhazy.

FABRES

Is this possible?

PICQUART
It is certain! This Esterhazy is the worst bandit under the sun. Oh! I have some beautiful information about him that presents him as the most unruly officer in the French Army.

FABRES

Colonel, you may be mistaken, this… what is his name? Rastarazy…?

Esterhazy? Ah! Esterhazy! This Esterhazy may be unruly and even a bandit, as you say, but a traitor to his country…! You need definitive proof!

PICQUART

I have such proof, proof that this scoundrel is collaborating with the German embassy in Paris. Here it is, Major, read this cable that was delivered here today, and you will be convinced.

FABRES

(Having read silently, aside.)

This is the end, our end! What can be done? This threatens my life! What can I do to avert the storm?

(Aloud.)

Colonel, this cable can be fake, perhaps one of Esterhazy’s enemies wrote it in order to harm him?

PICQUART

Impossible, Major, this cable was stolen from the German embassy as it was going to be taken to the telegraph. You know that the agents we use for espionage are reliable.

FABRES
In any case, I find it impossible that an officer of the French Army would betray his country.

PICQUART

But what about Dreyfus?

FABRES

Oh! Dreyfus is another case! Dreyfus is a Jew! Jews are traitors by nature, they will sell their God for an asper. A Jew!

PICQUART

Well, Major, you are wrong, the Jew Dreyfus is innocent, and the Christian Catholic [sic] Esterhazy is the true culprit, and we have the proof.

FABRES

And what are you going to do?

PICQUART

Reveal the truth to the Minister.

FABRES

I would not recommend you do this.

PICQUART

Why?

FABRES

Because, even if Dreyfus is innocent, you will make many enemies. Your intervention cannot succeed, the Minister will not be able or willing to change what has been done, because this would mean admitting that there was a mistake and that the judges who condemned Dreyfus made an error.
(Menacingly.)

You will do well if you don’t stir the old ashes, or you may burn yourself with hidden coals.

PICQUART

This is not my way of thinking, I believe that my duty is to reveal the truth.

FABRES

(Getting angrier.)

But, Colonel, your enemies will say that you received money from the Jews for saving one of them and charging an honorable Christian officer.

PICQUART

Let them say so!

FABRES

The antisemitic papers will publish terrible lies and calumnies about you.

PICQUART

Let them do so! I am ready to take all grievances and fulfill my duty.

FABRES

But, Colonel, the Chief of Police, General Mons, and the Minister will not be happy to see you take this road and will show you their disapproval.

PICQUART

Let it be so! I will do what my conscience tells me to.

FABRES

Your future will be ruined!

PICQUART
Maybe, but this concern will not divert me from my road!

(In a strict tone.)
Major, enough!! In fact, I don’t understand in whose interests you are arguing! Is this Esterhazy a friend of yours?

FABRES

No. I have already told you that I don’t know him.

PICQUART

If this is so, why are you insisting that I change my mind?

FABRES

Colonel, I am doing this in your own interests.

PICQUART

Thank you, worry about your own interests and let me fulfill my duty.

(Collects the papers and wants to leave.)

FABRES

(Furious, stands in front of him.)
Where are you going?

PICQUART

To the Minister!

FABRES

(Furious.)
No! You won’t go to the Minister!

PICQUART

Are you out of your mind, Major Fabres?
FABRES

No! I am not out of my mind! I don’t want you to go to the Minister!

PICQUART

(Contemptuously.)

And how are you going to stop me?

FABRES

With reason or…

(Taking out his revolver.)

Or with other means!

PICQUART

(Laughing.)

Oh! Oh! Means of tragedy! And you think your revolver is going to frighten me and divert me from fulfilling my duty! You are a child!

(In a strict tone.)

Get out of my way!

FABRES

(Menacing.)

You won’t go to the Minister, I tell you! Back! And if not!...

(Raises his revolver.)

PICQUART

And if not?

FABRES

If you don’t stop, I will shoot!
(Pointing his revolver at PICQUART.)

PICQUART

It is interesting how you are going to shoot your superior!

(In a very strict tone.)

Major Fabres, you have lost your mind! Your crazy conduct is inexplicable! You know that all you can get is the Council of War and twelve bullets in your body!

Enough, get out of my way!

(PICQUART advances. FABRES slowly retreats, frightened and furious. Silence. When he reaches the door, PICQUART turns and goes back one step at a time as if a new thought has entered his mind. Staring at FABRES with wide eyes he approaches him, one step at a time, and speaks while carefully enunciating each word):

Perhaps, you and he!... Oh! It must be so!...

(Shaking FABRES by the shoulder.)

Speak! Answer! Major Fabres, answer! Is it true that you participated in this treason, that it was committed with your help?...

(In a terrible voice.)

Is this possible??

FABRES

(Completely scared, falls on his knees crying.)

Oh! Colonel, Colonel, mercy! Don’t talk like that! Ah! If you knew this scoundrel! Yes, you are right, he is a bandit, a real bandit!...

PICQUART
(Bending over him, holding him by the shoulder, he is shaking him and interrogating like a judge an accused.)

You know him?... Speak! Do you know him?

FABRES

Ah! Colonel, take pity on me! Don’t force me to speak! My words would be a disgrace to our army!

PICQUART

But I want to know! Confess! Is it true that you know this Esterhazy? Tell me the truth! Is he your accomplice in this treason? Confess!

(Shakes him furiously.)

Confess!

FABRES

(Getting up.)

What? What did I say? What did I tell you? I am his accomplice! I am Esterhazy’s accomplice! Who is this man? I don’t know him! I have never heard about him! If he betrayed the army, what does it have to do with me, Major Fabres? You want to go to the Minister, Colonel? Go! I don’t know why I wanted to stop you!

PICQUART

(Looking at him with suspicion. Aside.)

This man is full of secrets! Ah! I wish I could read his mind! He knows Esterhazy and could be his accomplice!

(PICQUART leaves.)

FABRES
(Looking backstage.)

He entered the Minister’s office!

(Silent. Making a decision.)

And I, too, will go to the Minister, and we will see which of us, Picquart or Fabres, will leave his office victorious!

(Leaves.)
SCENE 5

(The office of the Minister of War. Furniture, paintings and suits of armor on the walls.

MINISTER, MONS, RISHARDON, PICQUART, FABRES.)

MINISTER

(Seated at a desk.)

General Mons, what do you have to tell me?

MONS

Only the truth, Se. Minister. All the newspapers are talking about it. In the city, societies are formed to support the innocence of this Dreyfus. The French people are divided in two: one part believes in his innocence, and the other in his culpability.

MINISTER

And you, Rishardon, what do you think about this?

RISHARDON

(Laughing.)

Oh! Ignorant people can say what they want, they have not seen anything. But we who have the proof, and especially I, who conducted the investigation, I swear that Dreyfus is guilty, and again guilty!

MINISTER

Meanwhile, there is an unpleasant discussion in the Chamber [of Deputies]. All my enemies accuse me of keeping in prison an innocent man! And if now the people believe that this Dreyfus is innocent, if the papers unite, what are we going to do? Ah! Mons, it is difficult to be a minister in these troubled times! Before,
those who allowed themselves to speak against the government were sent to prison! And now with this freedom they gave to the people and the press!...
Rishardon, come here! Are you sure you did not do anything stupid and condemned an innocent man?

RISHARDON
Se. Minister, I swear to you by my honor of an officer that Dreyfus is guilty, twenty times guilty! My science never errs!

MINISTER
Ugh! Such self-confidence!

(Enters PICQUART.)
Ah! Here is Colonel Picquart! He can clarify this matter for us. Colonel, what is your opinion? Is Dreyfus guilty or innocent?

PICQUART
Innocent, Se. Minister.

ALL
(Scandalized.)
Innocent!

PICQUART
Yes, innocent! And I have proof of this with me!

(He gives the papers to the MINISTER, who is seated, and describes them to him in a low voice.)

RISHARDON
(To Mons.)
General, what do you think of the Colonel?

MONS

That he is out of his mind!

(Enters FABRES.)

FABRES

(To MONS.)

No, he is not out of his mind.

(Takes MONS and RISHARDON by the arm and walks with them to the front of the stage.)

But there is something I can tell you if you promise to keep it a secret!...

MONS

Speak, Major, you can count on our being discrete.

FABRES

(In a low voice.)

They say that Colonel Picquart received 600,000 francs from Jewish bankers to save Dreyfus and put in his place another officer.

MONS and RISHARDON

Oh!!

FABRES

This is what they say. Obviously, I was not there.

MONS

(Looking at PICQUART, who is still speaking with the Minister.)

Oh! Oh! Colonel Picquart! We must warn the Minister!
FABRES

As you wish, General.

PICQUART

(Having talked to the MINISTER, PICQUART leaves him to examine the documents and comes up to RISHARDON.)

How is it going, Colonel?

(Gives him his hand, but RISHARDON and FABRES walk away without taking his hand.)

PICQUART

(Aside.)

What does this mean? This snake must have said something about me! Oh! Let him say what he likes! Fulfill your duty, Picqua rt, and happen what may!

MINISTER

(Stands up and walks to the front of the stage.)

Seniores, the proof which Colonel Picquart gave me is quite serious, and I, too, begin to believe that we might have condemned an innocent man!

MONS

(Speaking into the MINISTER’s ear.)

Your Excellence, I was told that Colonel Picquart received 600,000 francs from the Jews to save Dreyfus and put in his place another officer.

MINISTER

Are you sure, General?

MONS
The person who told me this is very well informed and can be fully trusted.

MINISTER

Oh! Oh! This changes the situation!

(Looks at PICQUART in silence. Calls him.)

Colonel!

PICQUART

(Coming up to him.)

Your Excellence!

MINISTER

Listen to me, Colonel, don’t get involved in this case. Leave this Dreyfus to his misfortune.

PICQUART

But, your Excellence, this unfortunate man is innocent, and the culprit is someone else!

MINISTER

Come on! What does it matter to you? Dreyfus is not your brother! And, after all, he is a Jew!

PICQUART

But, your Excellence, this Jew is innocent and is suffering terribly!

MINISTER

Colonel, since you don’t want to listen to my advice, I suppose you will listen to my order!

PICQUART
(Touches his forehead.)

Ready, your Excellence!

MINISTER

I order you not to engage in the Dreyfus case any more!

PICQUART

(Bows.)

All right, your Excellence!

MINISTER

Today you will quit the ministry. I am giving you a new employment. On the Tunisian border, there is an army corps fighting with the savage Beduins of the desert. You will leave today without delay!

PICQUART

All right, your Excellence!

(The MINISTER, MONS, and RISHARDON leave.)

FABRES

(Proudly walks past PICQUART. Aside.)

Next time you will know not to mix in my affairs!

(Leaves.)

PICQUART

(Still with his hand at his forehead as if petrified! Comes to and says with pain.)

This is what one gets for wanting to establish justice and fighting for the truth!

My future is destroyed! My enemies have prevailed! I am even sent away from the ministry and will not be able to engage in the fate of this unfortunate and
innocent Jew! As a reward for my investigation I am in disfavor, and now I am sent to fight against the savage Beduins of the desert! This means condemning me to a certain death! My enemies expect that with my death, the secret I have discovered will be hushed and nobody will ever talk about Dreyfus’ innocence!

(Silent.)

But no, the secret will not be hushed! Yes, your Excellence, I will execute your order. I will go to Tunisia, because a soldier owes obedience to his superior! I will probably die in this war, but rest assured, Se. Minister, my secret will not die with me! I will not take it with me to the grave! And since Dreyfus is innocent, Dreyfus must be saved!
ACT FIVE

(The scene takes place in Devil’s Island, in DREYFUS’ prison. Naked grey walls.)

SCENE 1

(DREYFUS, GUARD. The only door is on the right, and next to it is an armed GUARD. On the back wall, there is a small window with iron bars through which, from time to time, one can see another guard, walking back and forth outside with a gun on his shoulder. On the left, there is a pile of straw, a bucket, a zinc plate, and a piece of dark bread. In the center of the stage, DREYFUS is sitting on a small bench. His left hand is chained,¹¹ his hair is white, his face is thin and sad, his right elbow is resting on his knee, and his head is on his hand. He is staring sadly into space and looks pensive. The GUARD does not take his eyes off him!)

DREYFUS

(Dressed in a shirt that comes down to his knees, his hair is unkempt.)

Four-and-a-half years! It feels as if four centuries have passed since the day my life was ruined by the sudden blow that struck me! Four-and-a-half years! How many more years will I have to spend on this isolated island separated from the world in this horrible prison, where I am losing my strength every day! How long will this horrible martyrdom of an innocent man last?

(Raising his voice in pain.)

Isn’t there any more justice in this world? And if human justice is blind and erroneous, where is your justice, powerful and merciful God? Why do you allow

¹¹ In the original: *La mano syedro atados kon una kadena.* It can also be interpreted as “his left hand and his right hand are chained.”
such unfairness? Why do you allow that an innocent man suffer instead of the
guilty one? God who created heaven and earth, how long is this torment going to
last and when are you going to take pity on my misfortune?

(Lowers his head and remains pensive.)

In the last three months, I have not received any letters from my family, for these
three months I have been forgotten and left to rot here like a cursed outcast! For
three months I have not been receiving news about my brothers, family, or
children! Why? What does this silence mean? Is it because they have lost all
courage and are no longer trying to save me? Oh! Have they really lost courage?...
No, this is impossible! Who knows what could have happened? Perhaps a ship
sank!

(To the GUARD.)

Guard, are there any letters for me today?

GUARD

(Coldly.)

No!

DREYFUS

It has already been three months that every day I ask him the same question, and
it has been three months that he responds the same way in a dry and discouraging
tone! Every day I hope that the next day I will receive a packet of letters as I used
to earlier. But all my hopes are vain! What can be the reason for this silence, for
this neglect?

(Silent, then with feeling.)
How are my relatives, my brothers, my dear Lucie, my children? Oh, my poor children! What do you think about your father not returning from his long trip? You probably don’t laugh any more and are wondering about the reason you are dressed in black! Oh, poor children!

(Cries.)

If only I could get out of this dark prison, if I could take a walk outside like in earlier times! For some reason, six months ago, my prison became darker and the conditions more horrible. I cannot take walks on the seashore any more. A wall has been built around my cell, so that I cannot see the color of the sky. My hands and feet have been chained as if I could dream of escaping! Escape! An innocent man unjustly condemned does not think of running away but hopes there will be a day when his innocence will shine like the sun and his chains will be broken. And how can one escape from such a place when day and night I am watched by a guard armed from head to feet and there are always armed guards outside?

(At this moment, a guard walks past the window.)

Walking there day and night! Ah! If only I could see the color of the sky! If I could look at the sea! Perhaps, hope would enter my tormented heart!

(Tries to get up.)

GUARD

Sit down!

DREYFUS

I only wanted to look at the sky!

GUARD
Sit down!

DREYFUS

Only to look at the sea!

GUARD

Sit down! I have orders to shoot if you don’t listen!

DREYFUS

So, they want my death! What is the reason for such strict and cruel orders?

GUARD

I don’t know!

DREYFUS

He is right, this is not this poor man’s fault. He executes the orders he received.

GUARD

Move to the center.

DREYFUS

Can I take a few steps outside today?

GUARD

No!

DREYFUS

Oh, guard, good guard, take pity on me, let me see the sky! Today my heart is particularly heavy! If you don’t want me to die of sadness and pain in this place, I beg you, good guard, let me go to the window!

GUARD

Impossible!
DREYFUS

Guard, don’t you have children?

(Silence.)

Why aren’t you responding? You are not a father?

GUARD

Yes, I have two children, a boy and a girl.

DREYFUS

Like me! I also have two children, a boy and a girl, but at this time they are far away, perhaps crying about being far from their father.

(The GUARD dries up a tear.)

Ah! You shed a tear! So, you have a kind heart! So, guard, I beg you in the name of your children, let me have a glance through this window!

GUARD

(Hesitantly.)

All right. But wait till I make sure the sentinel is far away!

(Looks out of the window.)

Nobody! Go to the window, but don’t be long!

DREYFUS

Oh, thank you, good guard, God will reward you for this!

(Walks with difficulty, his chains clattering. When he reaches the window, he breathes heavily. Speaking slowly as if chanting.)
Oh! The air is so fresh! My soul is illuminated by the view of the blue sky and the sea in the distance! Ah, if I could be free like that distant boat navigating in the sea!

(Raises his gaze.)

If I had your wings, birds that are flying in the air!

(With great feeling.)

O birds, tell me, where are you going? If you are flying to the land of France, that dear land where I was born, O birds, do not forget to go to my family’s house, fly over the garden with the big trees! If you see there two innocent children playing, they are mine! Tell them, tell them, O birds, that their father is still alive, but he is going to die soon! Tell my relatives that I am tired of suffering, tired of living, and my strength is gone! Tell them to hurry to save me, tell them not to forget the poor prisoner! Tell them also that my soul is consumed by love for them, that day and night my eyes are filled with bitter tears! Birds of the sky, flying to the land of France, take with you my love for my relatives and kisses for my children!

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Dreyfus names two kinds of birds: *golondrona* and *yelik*. The former means “lark,” whereas the latter, not registered by Ladino dictionaries, is likely to be a Turkish loan, *keklik*, meaning “partridge.” The Turkish *keklik* would have obtained the form *yelik* by way of regressive dissimilation of the first K and subsequent loss of the second one.

Since, on the one hand, I am not sure about the meaning of this word in Ladino, and, on the other, partridges are not migratory birds and larks do not migrate to South America, I chose to use the general term birds to refer to both kinds.
(Watches the birds fly, leans at the window until he cannot see them any more and says bitterly:)

I don’t see them any more! They have disappeared! Merciful God, watch over them until they arrive at their destination! Let no harm happen to them in their flight, so that, seeing them, my relatives would know that they come from the place where an unfortunate and innocent man is kept in prison!

(Silent, pensive.)

I want to write to them!

(Leaves the window and returns to his place.)

Every day I send them long letters, do they receive them? Perhaps they are stopped on the way! What does it matter? This will not prevent me from writing to them! At least it will free my heart of its pain and sadness!

(Takes from the bench a sheet of paper and a pen, sits down, puts the paper on his knee and writes, pronouncing the words out loud.)

My dear Lucie, my beloved children...

(The pen falls from his hand, and he starts weeping covering his face with his hands.)
SCENE 2

(DREYFUS, GUARD, DIRECTOR OF THE PRISON, INSPECTOR)

DIRECTOR

(Enters speaking from backstage.)

Here he is, Se. Inspector, the prisoner is kept here. Please go inside.

INSPECTOR

(Enters and looks around.)

The cell is very small, prisoners may quickly die here due to the lack of fresh air!

(Comes closer to DREYFUS.)

Chains on his feet and straw for the bed, bread and water for food!

(To the DIRECTOR.)

Since when is this prisoner subject to such a strict regime?

DIRECTOR

Six months ago, I received strict orders which I had to obey.

(In a low voice.)

This is so since the campaign for the revision of his trial has started, since the day when Zola wrote his famous letter in the newspaper *L’Aurore*!

INSPECTOR

Ah! Ah!

DIRECTOR

Since then, not a single day passes by without my getting some new order. Last week, the minister sent me a cable ordering to chain him.

INSPECTOR
Which minister?

DIRECTOR

Minister Lebon.  

INSPECTOR

(Aside.)

“Lebon” means “a good one.” What would it be if he were called “a bad one”?

(To DREYFUS, putting a hand on his shoulder.)

Dreyfus!

DREYFUS

(Who until this moment was lost in his painful thoughts. Lifts his head.)

Who called me?

INSPECTOR

I did. Were you sleeping?

DREYFUS

Sleeping? No! I was thinking about my children.

INSPECTOR

Don’t worry, your children are in good health as well as your whole family.

DREYFUS

(quickly standing up.)

Oh! Thank you, senior, who are you? You must have been sent by God to console me!

INSPECTOR

---

13 Minister of Colonies in 1896-1898.
I am an inspector of prisons.

DREYFUS

(Sits down discouraged.)

Inspector!

INSPECTOR

Do you want anything? Would you like to ask for something?

DREYFUS

Yes, I want my trial to be revised, so that the world would know I am innocent.

INSPECTOR

Anything else?

DREYFUS

I want to receive letters from my relatives! In the last three months, I haven’t received any news from them. And this silence is more unbearable for me than death.

INSPECTOR

(To the DIRECTOR.)

Why don’t you give him the letters from his relatives?

DIRECTOR

An order from above!

INSPECTOR

Does he know that the whole world is talking about him and that the Court of Appeals has reopened his case?

DIRECTOR
He does not know anything, I have the order not to tell him anything.

INSPECTOR

Does it come from Minister Lebon?

DIRECTOR

Yes.

INSPECTOR

Dreyfus, give me your hand.

(DREYFUS does not understand.)

I am a doctor, I want to check your health.

(DREYFUS gives him his hand.)

Oh! Great weakness! Beginning of a cold! Se. Director, it is necessary to take quick and serious measures, or else I cannot be responsible for his life!

DIRECTOR

(Frightened.)

Oh! Se. Inspector, please, prescribe him something! If he dies here, I will be later accused of poisoning him. Please, give him some medicine!

INSPECTOR

I will do this! Dreyfus, we must save you, because you are very weak. Here is a box of pills\textsuperscript{14} for the cold. These pills will bring you health. After we leave, take one pill every hour, do you promise?

\textsuperscript{14} I believe that this is a pun based on two possible readings of the following strings of Hebrew letters: "kaph waw tet waw" and "het aleph peh yod samech." \textit{Kutu de hapes}
DREYFUS

I will promise if you promise to give me the letters from my family.

INSPECTOR

Well, Dreyfus, listen to me. If you open this box to take the pills, I promise that you will receive letters from your wife.

DIRECTOR

Why did you make a false promise?

INSPECTOR

It doesn’t matter. It is necessary for him to take the pills, or else he will die.

DIRECTOR

And what do these pills contain?

INSPECTOR

Everything he needs -- strength, energy, and joy. Tomorrow, when you come here, you will see a great change in the prisoner’s condition. Let’s go, let’s leave him alone!

(To the GUARD.)

(two Turkish words, the second one governed by a Romance preposition and supplied with a Romance plural ending) means "a box of pills." However, the Turkish word combination kötü hapis means "a bad prison." Given Loria's full proficiency in Turkish, his sense of humor, a taste for mysteries, and the pun on the French name "Lebon" above, this appears to be a play on words intended to convey a second meaning, indeed a secret one for most Sephardi readers.
I order that the prisoner remain alone! Everybody out! He needs to rest alone until the evening! Goodbye, Dreyfus! Courage!

(Everybody leaves.)
SCENE 3

(DREYFUS alone)

DREYFUS

(Looking at the box.)

“If you open this box to take the pills, I promise that you will receive letters from
your wife.” What did this inspector mean? Why did he promise that?

(Opens the box and looks inside.)

There are no pills inside!

(Looking carefully.)

A sheet of paper!

(Takes out a letter.)

What does this mean?

(Opens the letter.)

A letter!

(Reads.)

Lucie Dreyfus!

(Quickly stands up.)

God in heaven, a letter from my wife! Oh! O merciful God, you heard my
tormented voice! Thank you, compassionate God! And you, friend, sent by God,
thank you, thank you from the depths of my tormented heart.

(Reading with tears in his eyes. This letter should be read with feeling. Depending
on the passage, DREYFUS shows joy, concern, or surprise. He becomes
concerned a few times and dries his tears.)
Dear Alfred,

The person who is going to find a way to deliver this secret letter to you is a dear family friend, join us in blessing his name. Before telling you about the purpose of this letter, I want to let you know that all of us are fine and strong, hoping for your near salvation, day and night doing everything possible and impossible to attain a retrial. The children are very good and every day ask when papa is going to return from his long trip.

(Covers his face, and his voice trembles.)

And now I will give you the great news. Know, my dear unfortunate Alfred, that your martyrdom is approaching its end. Know that men of honor and talent took up your cause and, day and night, are acting in your interests, writing in newspapers, organizing lectures and rallies. These people of good will are: Zola, Pressensé, Bernard Lazare, Guyot, Joseph Reinach, Clemenceau, Trarieux, Gabriel Monod, Duclaux (Director of the Pasteur Institute), and others, hundreds, thousands! The whole world is concerned about your misfortune. There is no family where they do not speak about you. Every week in the last six months, there have been heated discussions in the Chamber. Our enemies are making desperate efforts not to allow the truth to come out, but the opinion of educated people is in our favor. Everybody understands that a terrible error was committed. You should also know that the scoundrel instead of whom you were condemned is known, and his cursed name is Esterhazy! Major Fabres was his accomplice, his associate, which is why he was so terrible to you! Know that this Major Fabres
killed himself in prison and that our true savior is Colonel Picquart, who was the
first to discover your innocence!

(Troubled, he stops reading. Speaking.)

Oh! I am reading without understanding anything, this must be a dream! Fabres is
Esterhazy’s accomplice! Fabres is a traitor! Fabres killed himself in prison! Is this
possible?

(Continues to read.)

Have courage and hope, dear Alfred, because your sufferings will end in a few
days, the Minister of Justice has already sent your case to the Court of Appeals.
Perhaps, before this letter reaches you, you will receive notification from the
Court of Appeals informing you that your trial will be revised. We are waiting for
this day with impatience and great joy. Courage, dear Alfred, be healthy and
strong, so that you can enjoy this sublime happiness!

I embrace you with tears in my eyes, your beloved and faithful wife who does not
forget about you for a minute, Lucie

(Raising his eyes.)

Merciful God, who accepted the sacrifice, let the smallest of your creations thank
you for what you did for me, for making it possible for the truth to come out and
the true culprit to be discovered! And you, people of good will and justice, who,
without any self-interest, rose in defense of an innocent man, all of you, accept
the gratitude from the depths of my heart! Your names will remain engraved in
my heart and my memory, I will never forget them!
SCENE 4

(DIRECTOR, DREYFUS, two GUARDS)

DIRECTOR

Dreyfus, I have good news for you!

DREYFUS

O God!

(He is worried and appears ready to faint.)

DIRECTOR

Courage, Dreyfus! God took pity on you for your suffering!

DREYFUS

Speak! What news? You see that I am trembling and am barely able to stand.

DIRECTOR

The Court of Appeals has reopened your case.

DREYFUS

So, this is true, God in heaven?

DIRECTOR

And decided that your trial must be revised. Read this cable which came from the Court of Appeals.

DREYFUS

(With tears in his eyes and trembling hands, tries to open the cable but cannot and returns it to the DIRECTOR.)

I cannot, I am so nervous! Take it, Se. Director, open it yourself and read it, I won’t be able to!
(Sits down almost fainting.)

DIRECTOR

(Opens the cable and reads.)

“The Court of Appeals, in its solemn session of May 24 of this year, unanimously reached the following decision: the trial of convict Dreyfus Alfred must be revised. It stipulates that convict Dreyfus be immediately brought to France in order to be retried.

For the Court of Appeals,

President Loubet

DREYFUS

(Stands up.)

So it is true! My trial will be revised! My innocence can come out! I will be able to leave this prison, this cursed island!

DIRECTOR

Yes, Dreyfus, you are going to leave this prison today, you are going to depart for France on the ship that came especially for you. Dreyfus, I congratulate you and am glad for you!

(Shakes his hand.)

DREYFUS

Thank you, Se. Director, on this happy day, my heart is filled with joy. I have forgotten all the wrong done to me by my enemies and forgive them. May God also forgive them.

DIRECTOR
I will also give you the news I have learned. Know that Colonel Rishardon lost his mind. General Mercier who was the Minister of War when you were tried, is an object of contempt of all of France and the whole world. But we are wasting time talking. Come, Dreyfus, you have to change your clothes. The ship you are going to take is waiting for you.

(To the GUARDS.)

Remove his chains!

(The GUARDS remove the chains.)

DREYFUS

(To his prison.)

Dark prison where a martyr passed almost five years in pain and suffering, if you are going to keep in your walls another innocent man, another innocent soul, may you be cursed! And now, friends, let’s get out of this horrible place, let’s go to the light, let’s go to freedom!

(Curtain.)
APOTHEOSIS

(When the curtain goes up, one sees a live picture\textsuperscript{15}. In the center Dreyfus, dressed in an officer’s uniform, is standing on the bench, 30 or 40 centimeters high. In front of Dreyfus, Madame Dreyfus is seated on this bench, embracing her children, one on each side. On Dreyfus’ sides are standing Picquet and Zola, and Dreyfus’ arms are resting on their shoulders, behind their heads. Next to Picquet and Zola, one can see Demange, the prison Director, the Inspector, and all Dreyfus’ friends forming a semicircle in which Dreyfus occupies the center. Behind this semicircle is the public, everybody holding hats in their hands, their arms raised in salute. Bengal fires until the curtain falls.)

(Curtain.)

END

\footnote{This is a parenthetical gloss of the French \textit{tableau vivant}. However, Loria’s Ladino transcription--\textit{tablo vivante}--is erroneous.}