

**THE
RISE AND FALL
OF THE
FIRST EMPRESS BONAPARTE**

**BY
PIETER-DIRK UYS**

The Cape Times, Friday, August 19, 1977
Review: JOSEPHINE AND HER MANY BONAPARTES

THE RISE AND FALL OF THE FIRST EMPRESS BONAPARTE, A PLAY BY
Pieter-Dirk Uys with a cast from the University of Cape Town Drama Department.
Directed by Pieter-Dirk Uys. At the Little Theatre.

The story of Napoleon and Josephine must be as daunting to playwrights as it has been irresistible to film producers. There have been several screen impersonations of Napoleon including those of Charles Boyer, Marlon Brando and Rod Steiger, but how many playwrights have tackled this absorbing love tale, I do not know.

In any case most of the film versions have concentrated on the great man himself with all the artificial trappings of power, conquest and pomp; and for this reason alone they have been superficial and often silly. They have also treated Josephine as a mere secondary figure.

Pieter-Dirk Uys has turned the whole thing inside out and in doing so has shown his sure dramatic sense and knowledge of human motives. It is Josephine who occupies the centre of the drama and how absolutely right this is, for when one looks at Napoleon and all his brothers and sisters during this episode of history, it is Josephine who is the real magnet of their emotions whether those emotions were love, hatred or envy. She was the light and the rest of them were moths.

And it was as Josephine's lover and husband that Napoleon himself became an ordinary man rather than a hero and the way Uys humanizes and universalizes him is one of the many delightful things in this play.

As Uys says in a programme note: "It is not history that interests me primarily but what lies behind history – the intrigue, the tears, the laughter and the reality"

One realizes as the play progresses how skilfully the playwright has taken advantage of every possible comic and dramatic opportunity that the story of Josephine offers.

History tells us that Josephine was married to Napoleon in a civil ceremony in 1796. She was an indifferent wife and when he was in Egypt she failed to answer his passionate love letters and flirted outrageously with someone else.

Napoleon eventually forgave her. He paid all her enormous debts and she in turn caused no more scandals. After he became Emperor in 1804, she persuaded him to marry her again by religious rites. He was crowned the next day and her position in the world appeared supreme.

It is at this stage that Uys gathers all the envious and scheming Bonaparte brothers and sisters, with their spouses, around her. They despise her, envy her, hate her. There is gossip, scandal, intrigue. Many situations arise between her and her ambitious in-laws. They undermine her confidence. She can't give the Emperor a son and heir. For the sake of France a marriage is arranged between the Emperor and Marie-Louise of Austria. The story is often bawdy and hilarious, more often amusing and in the end moving.

The fluent dialogue flashes along at an easy pace, the period costumes and musical effects add much to the atmosphere and one brilliant scene gives way to another.

There are a number of players in the cast. Uys uses three of Bonaparte's brothers and three of his sisters, all of them married. The women do most of the talking. There are Josephine's son and daughter, there is Tallyrand, the Duchess of Gordon, Theresia Tallien, Madam de La Rochefaucauld and a number of other characters including Napoleon's mother, Letizia. All of them act extremely well and the whole ensemble knits together beautifully.

One would like to mention every player in the cast but space does not permit. However, one can't overlook Margot de Villers as Josephine, Robin Lake as Napoleon, Fiona Louw as Caroline Bonaparte Murat, Fay Marais as Pauline Bonaparte Borghese, Terry Norton as Theresia Tallien, John Cavaggia as Tallyrand, Alexandra Wiessler as Catharine Bonaparte, Margot Pitt as Julie Clary Bonaparte, Wendy Sher as Hortense de Beauharnais Bonaparte and Di van der Merwe as Madame de la Rochefaucauld.

It sounds like a formidable army of Bonapartes, but they clarify themselves as the play goes on and at the end of it all one feels one has seen a truly thoroughbred play in the most lively traditions of the theatre.

I would say it is Pieter-Dirk Uys's best so far.

BRIAN BARROW

THE CHARACTERS OF THE PLAY

<i>JOSEPHINE DE BEAUHARNAIS BONAPARTE</i>	- JACQUI SINGER
<i>NAPOLEON BONAPARTE</i>	- RON SMERZAK
<i>HORTENSE DE BEAUHARNAIS BONAPARTE</i> (Josephine's daughter)	- JOCELYN BROODRYK
<i>LOUIS BONAPARTE</i> (Hortense's husband)	- ANDREW BUCKLAND
<i>CAROLINE BONAPARTE MURAT</i> (Napoleon's sister)	- DIANE BRITZ
<i>JOACHIM MURAT</i> (Caroline's husband)	- JAMES BORTHWICK
<i>ELIZA BONAPARTE BACCIOCHI</i> (Napoleon's sister)	- CLAIRE STOPFORD
<i>PAULINA BONAPARTE BORGHESE</i> (Napoleon's sister)	- ADRIENNE PIERCE
<i>EUGENE DE BEAUHARNAIS</i> (Josephine's son)	- MARTIN LEMÂTRE
<i>AMALIE DE BEAUHARNAIS</i> (his wife)	- CAROL ANN KELLEHER
<i>THERESIA CARRABUS TALLIEN</i>	- CHRISTINE LA BROCK
<i>CHARLES DE TALLYRAND</i>	- MICHAEL MCABE
<i>CLAIRE DE REMUSAT</i> (Josephine's lady-in-waiting)	- JENNY SHARP
<i>MADemoiselle GEORGES</i>	- CAROL ANN KELLEHER
<i>MADAM MÈRE</i> (Napoleon's mother)	- SHEILA FERGUSON
<i>THE FOOTMAN (ALSO CONSTANT)</i>	- FRANZ DUBROWSKI
<i>CONSTANT</i>	- GRAHAM HOPKINS

The action takes place in France at the turn of the 19th Century – in the *TUILERIES PALACE* with its reception rooms, passages and personal apartments of Napoleon and Josephine; - and in the *GARDENS OF MALMAISON*, Josephine's country chateau.

ACT ONE (1803 – 1804) : ACT TWO (1808 – 1809)

The play has a continuous narrative to which changes of place and time should seem incidental.

ACT ONE

'THE MARSEILLAISE' LEADS US INTO THE PLAY.

*IN A SPOT AT THE STATUE OF NAPOLEON IN GREEK STYLE, IS TALLYRAND.
HE SPEAKS TO US.*

TALLYRAND: Ah, Robespierre, they're playing our tune.
HE LOOKS UP TO THE SKY AND WAVES. THEN SMILES AT US.

Good evening, Fellow Citizens.

Or could you allow me the subversive honesty of “**Madame**” and
“**Monsieur**”? Old matters die hard.

You look startled, Citizeness. Ah yes, do you also feel a sudden
constriction of the throat? The red congealing perspiration of
Revolutionary fever stains your expensive transparent muslin
gown? Come come, Citizeness, we are now respectable; we are
already erecting the monuments to our recent madness and to
those who helped us out of it

HE REFERS TO ANOTHER OF US.

Citizeness, you languish plumply, nibbling keenly at chocolates
through the recital of that very National Anthem that set you
screaming after blood and patriotism – my goodness, could it
only be seven years ago? Ah, the healing flippancy and frivolity
of fashion and tonight we welcome you to a different kind of
dance. Victories Ball – red ribbons, hair up.

LIGHTS UP. CHARACTERS IN GROUPS IN SPOTS, MOTIONLESS.

For the purposes of this entertainment and the unfortunate need
for historical clarity, I am Charles de Tallyrand. I will portray
France's Foreign Minister to this new Regime of The People.

HE STEPS UP TO THE CHARACTERS.

A new scenario; an old story.

The ruthless businessman, his elegant wife and the in-laws; the
Leader, the First Lady and the Family.

HE GOES TO JOSEPHINE.

Josephine, Our Lady of Victories starting life as a Creole. The glittering ex-Vicomtesse de Beauharnais, now the dazzling superstar of society who lost her first husband to our hungry guillotine, escaped herself and survived brilliantly on her wits to marry a little Corsican Corporal, six years her junior.

HE GOES ON TO EUGENE.

Eugene, son of Josephine from her marriage to the late, (and alas) little-lamented Alexandre de Beauharnais.

HE GOES ON TO HORTENSE, AND LOUIS.

Hortense, her daughter from the same marriage, cleverly betrothed into the Corsican Clan through Mama's unobtrusive self preservationist flair in match-making.

HE GOES TO THERESIA TALLIEN.

Ah yes, my old friend, Theresia Carrabus Tallien, the once exquisite outrageous centre of our social lives after the Bloody Terror. The Grand Horizontal among those in high places – Jean Tallien, whom she married; Paul Baras with whom she bedded Josephine; Robespierre, whose downfall she stage managed from between the sheets of my bed; Napoleon Bonaparte, whose destiny she allied with that of la Beauharnais. Theresia Tallien, the horror in every successful respectable man's life – the old lay.

HE GOES ON TO CAROLINE, ELIZA, PAULINA, MURAT.

Behold, Citizens, the Corsican Sisters – Maria-Anna, Maria-Paola, Maria-Annunziata; renamed and revalued as the Bitch Pack: Caroline, Paulina, Eliza – veterans in the art of turning dirty washing into flags, each wedded-off by the Leader of the Pack as an investment for the future Dynastic Manoeuvres; sisters-in-law to Josephine: Madam Murat, The Princess Borghese, Madame Bacciochi.

HE GOES ON TO NAPOLEON.

And last, but not least, our little Corsican Corporal disguised as the First Consul of France – Josephine's Puppy Dog who will become Europe's Werewolf.

A colourful line-up of history's martyrs, matriarchs, murderers and monsters.

But tonight, it is not History that is the issue, but those unwritten emotions that usually end up as a footnote on page 678. It is the human footnotes that make our History monumental. Let us say that this entertainment has been inspired by two such footnotes: 'He marries Josephine de Beauharnais'; 'He divorces his wife'.

LIGHTS OFF. TALLYRAND TO STATUE.

But, do keep in mind, Citizens, while you identify with our Bonapartian Gods picking their noses on their pedestals that for every laugh tonight, a thousand young men died on the battlefields of Europe; that for every domestic flippancy a thousand women were widowed; that for every trivial luxury a thousand children were orphaned.

For as much as humanity is a cumbersome burden to History, it is the only treasure with which we can create our Heirlooms.

I thank you, Citizens of the Theatre.

On with the dance!

HE BOWS DEEPLY.

LIGHT CHANGE. A PASSAGE IN THE TUILERIES.

THERESIA TALLIEN ENTERS WITH CLAIRE DE REMUSAT.

CLAIRE: This is as far as I dare accompany you, Madam Tallien. The Parade is due to start. Please forgive me, I have my position to consider.

THERESIA: Of course, Madame de Remusat, I really don't intend showing the first passing footman my inner thighs!

CLAIRE: I must implore you to be more discreet, Madame Tallien. The First Consul has a horror of intrigue.

THERESIA: Claire, I only want to see Josephine, not take over the government! Don't worry, my dear, if I'm exposed, I'll make up a marvellously sorry-story. And I promise to keep my bodice on. *(CLAIRE EXITS. THERESIA LOOKS DOWN AT HER BOSOM).* The older one gets, the more one leaves to that great ally imagination. *(REFERS TO STATUE OF NAPOLEON.)* Oh my Greek God, how the mighty have fallen! Which sorry-story about myself could I possibly tell you that you don't already know? Bloody Corsican Peasant!

TALLYRAND GLIDES TO THE FORE.

TALLYRAND: May I request any reason for your imposed presence here, Madam Tallien?

THERESIA: My God, Charles, age has just skimmed you by. Is that what happens when you sell your soul to the devil? Oh. Little me? Well, I intend visiting an old friend.

TALLYRAND: The First Consul has strictly forbidden you to attend parades or receptions at the Tuileries, Madame Tallien.

THERESIA: Napoleon Bonaparte wasn't the old friend I had in mind, Monsieur de Tallyrand.

TALLYRAND: I must insist that you leave, Theresia. If you were discovered here by one of the Bonapartes, Josephine will be placed in an awkward position. I hope she is not involved in this little intrigue?

THERESIA: It's been a long time, Charles, a long lonely time separated from one's friends and the life one invented.

TALLYRAND: My dear Theresia, by all means take credit for ending the Terror in your own subtle way, but this New Society is not of your invention.

THERESIA: You flatter me, darling. The death of Robespierre because of the lusty whims of an ambitious tart just won't wash with the historians. Allow my poor Tallien his one moment of glory.

TALLYRAND: Of course. I gather both he and Barras are frantically writing their memoirs.

THERESIA: Yes. They'll make sure that history inherits their exclusive point of view of our new First Family and their instant friends.

TALLYRAND: I doubt if history will take much heed of sour grapes.

HE PULLS HER INTO HIDING BEHIND STATUE AS HORTENSE AND LOUIS ENTER.

LOUIS: . . . and those are Caroline's very words: Napoleon is the father!

HORTENSE IS HEAVILY PREGNANT AND IN TEARS.

HORTENSE: How can you even repeat that! It's blasphemous, Louis

LOUIS: I'm not saying I believe her, I'm only repeating what she said. Oh, don't start weeping again, Hortense, you look ugly. Where are the others

(HE STARTS OFF, THEN TURNS.)

Come on, damn it, Hortense, I will not have it said that I'm not punctual.

HE EXITS. SHE UNCOMFORTABLY FOLLOWS HIM OFF WEeping.

THERESIA: The child looks ill. My God, Charles, is Napoleon the father? I'd say you were the most reliable source of rumour in France?

TALLYRAND: (*SMILES*) I'm quite innocent, dear friend.

THERESIA: (*EXPLODES*) What is happening here! I insist on seeing Josephine. Charles! I have a right to friendship.

TALLYRAND: No, your intrusion would be inconvenient. Madame Bonaparte has more on her mind that she could possibly handle.

THERESIA: Not another lover!

TALLYRAND: No, her recent ill-fated indiscretion was enough to frighten her into taking his marriage seriously at last.

THERESIA: Yes, unfortunately Josephine has never been a subtle coquette.

TALLYRAND: No, fortunately the First Consuls love for her is greater than the venom of his Family.

HE PULLS HER INTO HIDING AS CAROLINE AND MURAT ENTER.

CAROLINE: Murat, don't be such a brute!
(*HE PASSIONATELY PUSHES HIS HANDS DOWN THE FRONT OF HER FLIMSY GOWN.*)
. ow! You bastard! Take those damn rings off before you grab. If you've scratched them, I'll scream!

SHE RUBS HER BREASTS GENTLY, PROVOKING HIM.

MURAT: Come on, Caroline, we've got time. Quickly, like the good old days – behind the tapestry.

CAROLINE: Don't be disgusting.

MURAT: I'll keep my boots on. Just for you.

CAROLINE: (*PURRS*) You're such a pervert.

MURAT: You love it, slut.

CAROLINE: Slut? On your knees, little man. Now, pay homage to your slut.
(*HE LIFTS UP HER DRESS AND PUTS HIS HEAD UNDER IT.*)
Oh you're such a pig

*TALLYRAND PEERS OUT FROM HIS HIDING PLACE AND COUGHS DEMURELY.
DISAPPEARS. CAROLINE AND MURAT ARE STARTLED.*

MURAT: What was that?

CAROLINE: Ghosts, you bloody fool. So many kings and queens snuffed it here, I'm not surprised. Come on, Murat, let's get this thing over and done with. This place gives me the shits.

THEY EXIT.

TALLYRAND AND THERESIA REAPPEAR.

TALLYRAND: Behold, the First Family.

THERESIA: Ghastly bloody Family!

TALLYRAND: Now you see, you would just revive unpleasant memories of those days when Josephine's reputation for good conduct virtually mirrored what we've secretly witnessed.

THERESIA: She is my friend!

TALLYRAND: Alas, the First Consul controls even her friends. He must wipe out her past association with our corrupt revolution and its passionate leaders. Her Barras. Her Theresia Tallien. Her indiscretions. The Corsican Puritan sweeps the dirt under the carpet. Maybe it is for the better.

THERESIA: My God, you're a pompous old

TALLYRAND: Fool? No, my dear, I'm a professional. I work with great dedication for whatever figurehead's in power - be it your Tallien, Barras, Robespierre or Bonaparte.

THERESIA: You work for the Bonapartes.

TALLYRAND: I work for my living, my dear Theresia.
(HE SUDDENLY PUSHES HER BEHIND SOMETHING INTO HIDING.)
Here comes Josephine! Not a murmur, for her sake, not a murmur
.

THERESIA IS HIDDEN. TALLYRAND WAITS SMILING.
JOSEPHINE ENTERS. SEES TALLYRAND. IS TENTATIVE, AS IF SHE WANTS TO ASK HIM SOMETHING THEN WALKS ON AND EXITS. THERESIA IS SEEN TO WATCH HER GO.

THERESIA: She's so thin

TALLYRAND: Yes, but then you've picked up weight since our more flamboyant days together. Ah well, all France seems to be doing the same after her little Revolutionary Diet. It can't be very healthy, wouldn't you agree, Madame Tallien?

THERESIA: All revolutions vomit up the worst in a nation. A leader will emerge one day.

TALLYRAND: We have a Bonaparte.

THERESIA: Oh come on, Charles, don't try and impress me with small men with big ego's! Terrible in bed and male chauvinist pigs to boot! God help this country.

TALLYRAND: We're working on Him. Come old friend, I'll show you out safely.

THERESIA: Since I've arrived at the Tuileries, my neck has become rather painful from having to look over my shoulder all the time. Sheath your little dagger, darling, cold steel doesn't arouse me anymore.
(TALLYRAND EXITS.)
(THERESIA LOOKS AROUND.)
And I thought she'd at least found a home. It's a circus!

LIGHT CHANGE: EXTERIOR. OUTSIDE THE TUILERIES PALACE, SUNSHINE.

FOOTMAN: Monsieur and Madame Louis Bonaparte!

LOUIS AND HORTENSE ENTER.

LOUIS: Damn it, Hortense, no one's here. You know I hate being first at these official do's.

HORTENSE: (TEARFUL) Well then, let's go home.

LOUIS: Don't be daft. Napoleon insisted that I attend. Why you couldn't stay at home like any other woman in your condition, I wouldn't know. You look grotesque.

HORTENSE: Louis, my mother specifically requested that I attend

LOUIS: Your mother, your mother

FOOTMAN: General and Madame Murat!

CAROLINE AND MURAT ENTER.

CAROLINE: So you are first! I should've known. You see Murat, there was no need to rush, brother Louis would've held the fort.

MURAT: You look like you could burst any moment.

HORTENSE: Sweet of you to notice, dear brother.

CAROLINE: It's difficult to miss, dear sister. Who is coming? Eliza can't, she's down with . . . something, Paulina isn't, she's down **on** someone, so it's just us.

HORTENSE: And Mama.

CAROLINE: Oh of course, Ma-Ma! Silly to forget old Ma-Ma. Where is dear Josephine, Hortense?

HORTENSE: I don't know. The First Consul must be delayed by Affairs of State.

CAROLINE: You know, Louis, this little wife of yours slays me, the way she picks up the local jargon – 'Affairs of State', 'the First Consul', 'The This', 'The That' – one would swear you were born an aristocrat, my dear.

HORTENSE: I was, my dear.

CAROLINE: Like hell, my dear.

LOUIS: Caroline!

CAROLINE: Ooops, nearly forgot. Family rule Numero Uno. ‘Don’t fight with Louis’s little mummy, the one with the tummy’. Might set the birth mechanism in gear ahead of time. Sorry, brother, promise to be good.

(WARMLY TO HORTENSE:)

Dear dear sister, how’s your garden? Growing?

HORTENSE: Thank you.

CAROLINE: Goodness, the little one has to do for thanks. Oh, where’s the champagne! What’s all this franc-pinching – I mean, who’s running this bloody country!

HORTENSE: Your brother?

CAROLINE WANTS TO REPLY.

FOOTMAN: Madame Napoleon Bonaparte!

CAROLINE: Smile for the old lady, children.

JOSEPHINE ENTERS.

HORTENSE JOINS JOSEPHINE IN CONVERSATION.

LOUIS: Caroline, some times you go too far.

CAROLINE: Belting off to Old Jo at the drop of a clanger. Oh Louis, poor Louis, you would allow yourself to be saddled with a Beauharnais.

MURAT: Doesn’t your mother-in-law look charming, Louis?

LOUIS: Who? *(SNEEZES)*.

CAROLINE: The old bag in white!

LOUIS: Oh . . . bloody drafty palaces.

MURAT: When's the baby due?

LOUIS: Who cares – any day.

CAROLINE: And Old Jo will be a grandmother. How insecure for her.

LOUIS: Why do I come to these receptions!

CAROLINE: A good question, brother.

FOOTMAN: The First Consul!

MURAT: And here comes the answer.

NAPOLEON ENTERS BRISKLY IN UNIFORM.

NAPOLEON: Hortense, you should be in bed.

HORTENSE: Why? I'm fine.

NAPOLEON: Louis, why is your wife not in her bed?

HORTENSE: Papa, the baby isn't due for some time.

NAPOLEON: Nonsense! It could appear at any moment. You are carrying my heir, Madame. We want you to be in the best of health.

LOUIS: I'm sure it'll be a son, dear brother.

NAPOLEON: Of course it'll be a son!

LOUIS: **My son, my heir!**

*NAPOLEON GLARES AT HIM. THERESIA TALLIEN HAS UNOBTRUSIVELY
MOVED NEARER TO JOSEPHINE. NAPOLEON TURNS TO HER.*

NAPOLEON: (SNAPS) And what are you wearing, Madame? We are not still
storming the Barricades! Bring out some Army blankets! I want
to be sure to avoid an epidemic, because the weather is cold and
some of these ladies are practically naked!

HE STOMPS OFF TO ONE SIDE WITH MURAT.

JOSEPHINE: My dear, don't take my husband too seriously. He's tired. I think
you look charming.

TALLYRAND IS CLOSE-BY. THERESIA CATCHES HIS EYE.

TALLYRAND: Quite charming. Quietly charming.

THERESIA GETS THE HINT. JOSEPHINE DOESN'T RECOGNISE HER.

THERESIA: Eh . . . thank you, Madame Bonaparte, and may I say the same
about you and your lovely daughter. She . . . eh

TALLYRAND: She carries her child well, not so Madame?

THERESIA: Yes, oh yes

JOSEPHINE: Yes, my husband and I are hoping for a child of our own very
soon.

CAROLINE: (LOUDLY) Surely not, sister, you'll be a grandmother soon.

JOSEPHINE: Madame Murat, my daughter here is good proof of my capabilities.

CAROLINE: Oh yes, but please remember, you were a **great** deal younger then.

HORTENSE: (*ANGRILY*) Madame Murat!

NAPOLEON: (*SWEEPS UP*) Tactless as you are, Caroline, even you should know that there are times when the truth is best left unspoken! (*A STUNNED PAUSE.*)
Josephine, Tallyrand tells me that you have Royalist friends in London, who fled there during the Revolution.

JOSEPHINE: I . . . eh

NAPOLEON: And that they intend to visit us, now that we are at peace?

JOSEPHINE: They wish to return to France, Bonaparte.

NAPOLEON: And why not? Paris is safer than London. My good new laws will protect even the Émigré Renegades!

HE LAUGHS AND THE ASSEMBLY GIVES A HALF-HEARTED SUPPORT.

HORTENSE: Mama, I'd like to sit down

JOSEPHINE: Bonaparte?

NAPOLEON: Yes, of course, you must protect my heir.

MURAT: (*ENTERS*) The Parade is ready for you General Bonaparte.

*BONAPARTE EXITS WITH ALL EXCEPT JOSEPHINE, HORTENSE, TALLYRAND
AND THERESIA.*

JOSEPHINE: Monsieur de Tallyrand, please arrange that I am informed when
the Parade is over.

TALLYRAND: But Madame

JOSEPHINE: No, I have a headache.

TALLYRAND: We all have headaches, Josephine. Unfortunately yours is one we
are all forced to share.

JOSEPHINE: Then share it. **You** amuse my husband.

TALLYRAND: I can only try, Madame. If you do not come now, Madame, you
will lose your seat.

(TAKES OFF THERESIA, THEN SAYS TO HER, ASIDE.)

. . . if not your head

THEY EXIT.

*JOSEPHINE WATCHES THERESIA SADLY - THEY GIVE EACH OTHER A LITTLE
WAVE.*

HORTENSE: Do you really have a headache, mama?

JOSEPHINE: Why is he so rude! He knows how tenderly I feel about children .
. . . .

HORTENSE: I'm sure he didn't mean to be cruel, he's tired

JOSEPHINE: Yes, we have terrible scenes, Hortense. He shows such violence and I cry. Then he smiles and forgets and I have to suddenly forget and smile too . . . holding his mad jealousy at bay with much silence. Bonaparte is now at last convinced I have only eyes for him. Like a little mouse watching the snake before he strikes – all eyes, all eyes. (*SHE SIGHS*) Does your lumbering Louis shout at you.

HORTENSE: Only when he feels obliged to say something to me.

JOSEPHINE: (*LAUGHS*) Poor darling, please don't be unhappy. Shouting is a Bonaparte habit. I get shouted at mostly about money. How imaginative. What are debts after all? Debts are debts.

HORTENSE: And how much are yours, as a matter of interest?

JOSEPHINE: As a matter of interest? Oh, I'd say, one or two . . . million . . .

HORTENSE: Mama! It's a scandal!

JOSEPHINE: Yes, isn't it wonderful; gives the in-laws something to bitch about – trivial enough to ignore.

THEY LAUGH.

HORTENSE: Oh mama, you're a tonic. In spite of marrying me off to Louis, I love you . . . no, I promise, I'm happy . . . I'm happy.

JOSEPHINE: Of course. We are all happy of course. I wished I'd been taught more about looking after babies.

HORTENSE: I can look after my baby, mama.

JOSEPHINE: My baby – my Bonaparte! He is naughty to frighten people so; they only come to me instead. Tallyrand once called me a rival. It's true; I do more pleading for France than he.

HORTENSE: Tallyrand still regards you as the Vicomtesse de Beauharnais. You shouldn't allow him to take advantage of your past.

JOSEPHINE: The past is dead, I am the wife of a soldier.
(LOOKS AROUND HER AND SEEMS COLD.)
I see poor Marie Antoinette everywhere. Sometimes I wake up at night and feel her in the room with me – I hear her weeping and her agony. *(PAUSE)* Funny, after the hell of the Revolution, after the prison and the dirt and death, the simple barrack life as army wife became the most beautiful thing in the word. Goodness, those months in Italy, bumping and clattering after Bonaparte. I nearly drowned in a river; I was bitten by bugs

HORTENSE: *(AMUSED)* It sounds quite beautiful, mama.

JOSEPHINE: It was **hell**!
(THEY BOTH LAUGH.)
It's good to be alone with you. I have no friends, Hortense. Those I had, Bonaparte won't allow into the Tuileries. Part of his 'respectability campaign'

SHE PULLS HORTENSE INTO HIDING.

CAROLINE AND MURAT ENTER.

CAROLINE: . . . and now you've heard it straight from Napoleon. The sky's the limit and I want you to be right there!

MURAT: There's no war on.

CAROLINE: So what, plan for the future. One of the joys of peace is that it never lasts. Oh you're such a thick nit, Murat, the world's waiting on a plate!

MURAT: A thick nit, Caroline?

CAROLINE: Why must I push you all the time? Stand on your own two feet!

MURAT: Not easy if you push me onto my back all day and night.

CAROLINE: Very funny; you're such a rude bugger
(HE KISSES HER IN THE NECK, HANDS ROVING HER BODY.)
. . . mmmm . . . I want us to stop in at Eliza's. We've a lot to discuss. Hortense's new baby is going to muck up our plans considerably. Oh stop pawing me, Murat, your hands are sweaty!

THEY EXIT.

JOSEPHINE: Poor Bonaparte. Respectability should start at home.

HORTENSE: I can understand Papa being touchy about the past.

JOSEPHINE: Hortense! How can you forget our friends? Without their help I would've followed your poor father to the guillotine.

HORTENSE: They were never my friends, mama. Of course I'm grateful to them and Madame Tallien – but we owe them nothing.

JOSEPHINE: No? Not even Bonaparte?

HORTENSE: Nothing!

JOSEPHINE: Everything!!
(*CLAIRE ENTERS.*)
Ah, Claire, I gather from your frown that my husband is waiting for me?

CLAIRE: Yes, Madame, in your apartments.

JOSEPHINE: Damn! He fiddles with everything – splashed around priceless perfume like holy water, and then he makes a scene about my debts! I'm glad you didn't marry intelligence, Hortense. At least you can win against mediocrity – I can't tame an Enigma. (*THEN SOFTLY*) My darling, I see you so seldom – don't forget me
(*THEY EMBRACE.*)
How I envy you your discomfort.

SHE LIGHTLY TOUCHES HORTENSE'S PREGNANCY, THEN EXITS.

CLAIRE: Madame Bonaparte is tense.

HORTENSE: Occupational hazard. And now, Madame de Remusat, will you please help me to find **my** husband?

THEY EXIT.

LIGHTCHANGE. A PASSAGE IN THE TUILERIES.

THERESIA TALLIEN AND TALLYRAND ENTER.. THERESIA IS COUGHING AND DUSTING OFF HER CLOTHES. TALLYRAND IS AMUSED.

THERESIA: Dust . . . dust . . . dust! Damn you, Charles!

TALLYRAND: Ah, but Theresia, you must admit: the excitement of the Parade, the Flags from the glorious Italian Campaign, the young soldiers
.

THERESIA: And the Dust and the Camels

TALLYRAND: You do understand that I had to keep you well out of sight, my dear friend.

THERESIA: In the bloody Camel compound?

TALLYRAND: I thought it might bring back fond memories of the Egyptian Campaign.

THERESIA: (SNORTS) Dust and stinking camels! My only vivid memory is Bonaparte deserting his own army and scuttling home like a nervous schoolboy, to find Josephine in bed with that boy Anyway, Charles, the Egyptian Campaign was a flop!

TALLYRAND: Not in our books, Theresia. Egypt was a triumph.

THERESIA: Mmm, rewriting history must be a full-time job.

TALLYRAND: Let us rather call it 'the importance of controlling historical extremities'.

THE FOOTMAN ENTERS QUICKLY WITH A NOTE. SEES TALLYRAND AND IS BADLY FLUSTERED.

FOOTMAN: Madame Tallien . . . oh

TALLYRAND HOLDS OUT HIS HAND AND IS GIVEN THE LETTER.. FOOTMAN EXITS FLUSTERED. TALLYRAND OPENS LETTER.

TALLYRAND: (READS) 'My darling little Theresia, I am constantly being watched . . don't forget me . . . J'. Highly cryptic. What could she mean.

HE TEARS UP THE LETTER.

THERESIA: Is there no privacy left? No freedom!

TALLYRAND: Let us call it 'the importance of controlling hysterical extremities'. Stay away from her, Theresia Tallien. You carry with you the stench of mouldy intrigue.

THERESIA: Don't think I'll take this lying down!

TALLYRAND: How refreshingly unpredictable you are.

HE EXITS. SHE PICKS UP THE PIECES OF LETTER.

THERESIA: Liberty, Equality, Fraternity. Oh Christ, what the hell went wrong.

LIGHTCHANGE. JOSEPHINE'S APARTMENTS.

NAPOLEON IS AT HER DRESSINGTABLE 'FIDDLING'. THERE IS A LARGE BED. JOSEPHINE ENTERS.

JOSEPHINE: Bonaparte, what are you doing!

NAPOLEON: Making up for your absence. If I can't have you, allow me to conjure up your smell.
(HE SPRINKLES PERFUME AROUND. SHE TRIES TO STOP HIM. LAUGHS)
And how is your Official Headache, Madame? I wished you'd attended the Parade with me, Josephine, you know I can't abide the chatter of those stupid women. Their dress would even put your dear Theresia Tallien to shame.

*(JOSEPHINE REACTS TO THERESIA'S NAME SHARPLY,
NAPOLEON DOESN'T NOTICE.)*

Is Hortense feeling better? You must tell her that if that house on the Rue de la Victoire doesn't please her, I'll find her a new one.

JOSEPHINE: Bonaparte, we two were very happy in that house

NAPOLEON: Especially when I was away – you and your sycophantic little paramours could flirt very happily there.

JOSEPHINE: Please don't start on that again. You know I won't try and defend myself. I merely said we two were very happy in that house.

PAUSE. HE SWITCHES TACTICS.

NAPOLEON: You don't like it here?

JOSEPHINE: I like it here.

NAPOLEON: You can't go back to those days now, Dearest. You are destined for greater things.

JOSEPHINE: *(AUTOMATICALLY)* Yes Bonaparte.
(HE SPRAYS HER WITH PERFUME CHILDISHLY.)
Leave that, Bonaparte, it was very expensive.

NAPOLEON: But what matters expense to you, eh? Come Josephine, I want to watch you prepare for bed.

JOSEPHINE: I'm not tired.

NAPOLEON: No, you have The Headache, it is I who am tired. Here, take this expensive ointment.

HE MAKES TO THROW THE JAR AT HER, THEN DOES. SHE CATCHES IT AND CAN'T HELP LAUGHING.

JOSEPHINE: Oh, have done now, Bonaparte, have done!

HE LAUGHS AND SITS ON THE BED. SHE TRIES TO RECREATE SOME ORDER ON HER DRESSINGTABLE.

NAPOLEON: Josephine?

JOSEPHINE: Yes?

NAPOLEON: I want to talk.

JOSEPHINE: Very well.

SHE SITS NEXT TO HIM ON THE BED. TAKES HIS HAND.

NAPOLEON: What would you do if I were assassinated.

JOSEPHINE: Oh Bonaparte, please

NAPOLEON: There have been two attempts on my life. What would become of you, of France. I have a tiresome family. Well?

JOSEPHINE: Yes, you do have a tiresome family.

HE GRUNTS AND GETS UP AND PACES.

NAPOLEON: Without me they would still be in Corsica: now they all have power. I gave them power, I can deny them power. But if I die, who will succeed me! Bonapartes will destroy France with Civil War.

JOSEPHINE: You are Consul for Life.

NAPOLEON: Not if I die! Who can succeed me? Joseph, pompous puritan? Renegade Lucien? Lumbering Louis with his flat feet and sinuses? Pimpley Jerome who's just discovered the pleasures of climax? Slut Caroline? You! I'm saddled with a chorus line of tarts and fools! There's no one to take my place!

JOSEPHINE: I

NAPOLEON: Don't interrupt! Louis will have sons; Caroline, Eliza – They're Bonapartes – they will have Sons!

JOSEPHINE: And your favourite, the Princess Borghese?

NAPOLEON: Ah, la principessa Borghese – as harmless and mysterious as the Queen of Hearts. No sense of decorum. Paulina never showed much subtlety.

JOSEPHINE: (*SMILES*) Never.

NAPOLEON: She remarried without my permission. She doesn't count!

JOSEPHINE: Bonaparte, at least she's become a real Princess?

NAPOLEON: **Without my permission!** Josephine, if I die

JOSEPHINE: Stop it! Don't think about it.

NAPOLEON: But I must! I am the centre of too many things – France, Europe, my laws, educational reforms, my survival – my Destiny! When the Directory collapsed round my feet, your dear friends had left less funds in France's financial reserves than you have debts! Do you see why your debts must infuriate me?

JOSEPHINE: (*COOLLY*) I must look good for you, sir.

NAPOLEON: Of course you must, Josephine. My perfect consort, my gracious
 hostess. You are my symbol of the New France. A little up here .
 . (*INDICATES HER HEAD*)
 . . . a little more down here . . .
 (*INDICATES HER BREASTS*)
 . . . and a lot more down

SHE SLAPS HIS HAND AWAY.

JOSEPHINE: I have a headache.

NAPOLEON: A son!

JOSEPHINE: A son?

NAPOLEON: You must give me a son!

JOSEPHINE: I know . . . I try . . . God knows we try You said the
 Bonapartes are fertile

PAUSE. HE FEELS HIS INADEQUACY.

NAPOLEON: I'm tired

JOSEPHINE: Rest.

NAPOLEON: No.

JOSEPHINE: (*FIRMLY*) Rest, Bonaparte. I'll reread the bit you missed last
 night.

SHE PICKS UP A BOOK.

NAPOLEON: I heard it.

JOSEPHINE: Impossible. You were asleep.

NAPOLEON: Ah. Very well.
(*HE LIES BACK. SHE OPENS THE BOOK.*)
And the hand? Please?

HOLDS OPEN HIS HAND AND SHE GENTLY STROKES THE PALM. SHE STARTS READING. HE IS STILL. SHE STOPS READING AND STROKING AND LOOKS BACK AT HIM. HE GRUNTS AND PRODS HER WITH HIS OPEN HAND. SHE CARRIES ON READING AND STROKING.

LIGHTCHANGE.

TWO BONAPARTE SISTERS WALK PAST A SEXY FOOTMAN AND MIME ORAL SEX WITH HIM.
AS THEY LEAVE IN GIGGLES, AT THE STATUE STANDS TALLYRAND.

TALLYRAND: It must be a terrible psychological shock for those used to the elementary delights of slum or suburbia, to be suddenly propelled into the Sun for all to see and Smell. Take, for example, those overnight sensations: the Bonaparte Girls. Our First Consul has elevated his sisters from the gutters of provincialism and prostitution to the cesspools of power and perversion – and yet: nothing has changed.

Eliza paints her face to look like Paulina, Paulina paints her face to look like Caroline, who in turn paints her face to look like Josephine – who in terror paints her face to look as young as Paulina . . . (*CHUCKLES*) Come Citizens, let us become garden gnomes at Malmaison and watch our First Family at rest and play. Anyone for croquet?

*LIGHTCHANGE. THE GARDENS OF MALMAISON. BRIGHT SUNSHINE.
NAPOLEON AND THE FAMILY RUN ACROSS, PLAYING LEAPFROG OR
“PRISONERS BASE” OR BLIND MAN’S BUFF.
CAROLINE AND ELIZA ENTER LAUGHING BREATHLESSLY.*

CAROLINE: Madonna mia! He has more energy than ten Murats!

ELIZA: Si

CAROLINE: I really love it when Napoleon plays these games. Ha, the old
bitch can’t take all the running around. Makes her gasp for breath
and show her rotten teeth.

ELIZA: We can all look like virgins if we cover the gutters behind our
lips.

CAROLINE POSES AND MIMICKS JOSEPHINE BRILLIANTLY.

CAROLINE: “Dear sister, I’m so glad you could joins us for tea

ELIZA: “Tea in the Gardens

CAROLINE: “The Gardens of Malmaison

ELIZA: that I bought with Government money stolen for me by my
old lovers

CAROLINE: . . . where my little paramour fondled me so intimately

ELIZA: But don’t tell your brother

CAROLINE: . . . he’ll be so jealous

ELIZA: I might lose my Creole head!

CAROLINE: Like Marie Antoinette!

ELIZA: Like my first husband Alexandre

CAROLINE: So noble!

ELIZA: So proud!

CAROLINE: So dead!"

THEY SHRIEK WITH LAUGHTER..

THE FAMILY RUN ACROSS AGAIN.

PAULINA REMAINS BEHIND.

CAROLINE: (WAVES OFF) Bravo Napoleone!

PAULINA: Look at Eugene run.

CAROLINE: Lovely.

ELIZA: Nice thighs.

PAULINA: (MURMURS) He's a big boy.

ELIZA: (WIDE-EYED) Paulina you haven't!

PAULINA: Of course not, Eliza, if you handle turds you soil your hands. Pity he's one of the Creole bitch's litter, though. Caroline and I once came upon him near the lake. He was . . . eh . . . 'dreaming about girls'.

ELIZA: (BREATHLESS) And you saw? Everything? You didn't tell me! You never tell me anything!

PAULINA: (PURRS) I'm telling you now, Eliza, Eugene's a Big Boy.

CAROLINE: Which reminds me, where is my Little Husband?

ELIZA: Probably in her rose garden. I jumped on some of Josephine's best blooms.

CAROLINE: The English Roses? Well done, patriotic sister.

PAULINA: Tomorrow we demolish her Austrian Peach tree. Vive le France!

THEY LAUGH. THE FAMILY RUN ACROSS AGAIN AND PAULINA REJOINS THE GAME. HORTENSE ENTERS WITH HER BABY IN ARMS.

HORTENSE: Caroline? Have you seen your brother Louis?

CAROLINE: Why, dear Hortense, have you misplaced your neurotic husband again?

HORTENSE: I haven't seen him all afternoon.

ELIZA: (SNIGGERS) Probably near the lake, dreaming about girls.

CAROLINE: And wondering whether it **does** lead to madness.

ELIZA: In his case it certainly does!

CAROLINE: I wouldn't wander around looking for him, Hortense. You might trip over a peacock and kill your little Heir Substitute.

ELIZA: Poor Old Jo's last hope.

JOSEPHINE ENTERS WITH WHITE PARASOL IN HAND.

JOSEPHINE: (*GRACIOUSLY*) Dear sisters, I'm so glad you could join us for tea . . .

CAROLINE: Tea in the Gardens.

ELIZA: The Rose Garden of Malmaison.

JOSEPHINE: (*GUARDED*) We can have it there if you like.

CAROLINE: (*SNIFFS*) What's that awful smell, Eliza?

JOSEPHINE: What?

CAROLINE: Smell!

ELIZA: Yes . . . poo!

JOSEPHINE: I don't smell anything

CAROLINE: I do. An odd smell. Distinctly rotten like bad breath!

ELIZA: Or like something dying.

CAROLINE: Sweet sister, forgive us. We are in need of air

ELIZA: Fresher air.

THEY GIGGLE AT JOSEPHINE AND EXIT.

HORTENSE: Mama! How can we allow that? I will speak to Papa!

JOSEPHINE: No, Hortense, Bonaparte can do nothing. They are little tarts, pay no attention to them. They're harmless.

(NOISE OFF DIVERTS HER ATTENTION. LOUIS STROLLS ACROSS, LUMBERING, SNIFFING AND BLOWING HIS NOSE. THEY FOLLOW HIM WITH THEIR EYES.)

Why doesn't your Louis join in the game?

HORTENSE: Too many aches and pains. He heard about a disease last week and came out in all the symptoms before he found out it was restricted to sheep!

THEY LAUGH.

JOSEPHINE: Come, I'll attend to little Napoleon-Charles. Go on, Hortense, Bonaparte will be so pleased if you take an interest in his little game. Lord knows, his elegant sisters can't afford to perspire under all their make-up. The grass will be littered with faces!
(NOISE OFF MAKES HER START.)

Oh God! He fell, I'd better . . .

(LOOKS AND LAUGHS.)

No, it's alright. Goodness that man makes me laugh. I seldom see him enjoy himself like this.

HORTENSE: Malmaison makes him relax, Mama.

JOSEPHINE: Yes, Malmaison is good for us . . . the house, the gardens. An exquisite consignment of roses arrived from London this morning. How I'd love to visit Kew Gardens. Oh well, thank God for peace with England. My plants can now be sent here legally. I am awful, aren't I.

(SHE GIGGLES AND WAVES OFF.)

It's quite wonderful how close he and Eugene have become. How sad that Bonaparte isn't capable of giving me a child.

(SHE TAKES THE BABY AND COOS AT IT.)

I'm afraid the little Heir 'Substitute' has wet his pants.

THEY LAUGH. HORTENSE HOLDS UP A SMALL TAPESTRY IN FRAME.

HORTENSE: Oh, mama, this is pretty.

JOSEPHINE: For Grandma. A ship is off to the West Indies next week. I must still finish it. Poor Grandma isn't well.

HORTENSE: Why doesn't she come to France!

JOSEPHINE: She won't leave Martinique. Your grandmother is a well-anchored person; she doesn't understand . . . all this, I suppose. Anyway, Hortense, can you see my Creole Mother making polite conversation with Bonaparte's Corsican Mama?

HORTENSE: Yes. They both come from provincial islands. They both share the same destiny.

JOSEPHINE: 'The Destiny', 'The Star' . . . all I want is to continue to be the wife of the First Consul, no more

HORTENSE: Mama, you amaze me – your indifference to the National Destiny

JOSEPHINE: Hortense, my only concern with politics is the effect it has on me. I don't understand politics; I never have. Bonaparte knows what he's doing. I won't interfere.

HORTENSE: This talk of your association with France's old enemies

JOSEPHINE: Talk! Eternal talk! I help them not because they are Royalists, but because I remember what it felt like not to belong, not to be wanted. It's so exciting, next week Bonaparte's amnesty for Royalists of all classes comes into effect. Paris will be bright again!

HORTENSE: There will be new intrigues and assassins!

JOSEPHINE: (SNAPS) Oh stop making it all sound so important! You become more like the Corsicans each day – intrigue, power, the destiny! (HORTENSE TAKES HER BABY AND MOVES AWAY UPSET). Oh forgive me, my darling . . . Bonaparte's real enemies are among his own Family, feeding his ambition with their talk of Dynasty, Divorce and remarriage. It is against me they plot, not with the Royalists. Don't help them.

HORTENSE: But Mama, you have Napoleon in the palm of your hand.

JOSEPHINE: Don't make him sound like an acorn! My influence over Bonaparte is on trivial matters only, my darling. I am no Pompadour!

WITH A ROAR NAPOLEON ENTERS WITH EUGENE, FOLLOWED BY ELIZA AND CAROLINE, PAULINA AND LOUIS.

NAPOLEON: . . . no, no, you don't run from point A to point B just to get there first – you run carefully so that you get there, full stop!

EUGENE: Not if you fall.

NAPOLEON: I fell, because you rushed me into making decisions. I use my head, Eugene. Josephine, kindly inform your son that I'm not a soldier for nothing.

JOSEPHINE: (TWINKLES) Eugene, your harassed stepfather is not a soldier for nothing.

NAPOLEON: I'm not harassed; I'm hot.

JOSEPHINE: Put on something warm, Bonaparte, you'll catch a chill.

NAPOLEON: Nonsense.

HORTENSE: You forget that Papa isn't a soldier for nothing, mama.

(MURAT ENTERS)

MURAT: General Bonaparte, your meeting with the new British Ambassador? He and Foreign Minister Tallyrand have been waiting for some time.

NAPOLEON: Let them wait. Hortense, give me the baby?

HORTENSE: No sir.

NAPOLEON LAUGHLINGLY PURSUES HER ROUND JOSEPHINE.

NAPOLEON: Come, Hortense please? Have I offended you? Don't be angry with me?

HORTENSE: *(SMILES)* Napoleon Bonaparte, if you fall running across the grass empty handed, what would you do with a baby in your arms?

NAPOLEON ROARS WITH LAUGHTER AND TWEAKS HORTENSE PAINFULLY ON THE CHEEK.

NAPOLEON: A good little mother! The Creoles are taking over!

HORTENSE: I'm not a Creole; I'm a Bonaparte
(SHE IS AWARE OF ELIZA AND CAROLINE'S SMIRKS.)
I am a Bonaparte!

NAPOLEON: Of course you are.

ELIZA: Of course she isn't. She's a Creole, just like her Mother!

NAPOLEON: This woman is my wife! She will be greater than Venus the Goddess and brighter than Venus the Star – my sweet Josephine.
(CAROLINE AND ELIZA REACT WITH 'POLITE APPLAUSE'.)
Murat, ask Tallyrand to amuse our British Ambassador – show him the mummy I brought Josephine from Egypt. Louis, go and blow your nose somewhere else.
(MURAT LAUGHS AND EXITS.)
And now Hortense, bring your little son into the Rose garden, before the English send over their damned rain! Eugene!

*NAPOLEON EXITS WITH HORTENSE AND EUGENE.
CAROLINE AND ELIZA STROLL AFTER THEM.*

CAROLINE: Of course, it's an Egyptian Mummy. How silly of me, thinking it was a statue of the lady of the house.

ELIZA: Great likeness, though, you must admit.

THEY EXIT. PAULINA LINGERS BEHIND.

LOUIS: (SNEEZING) Your choice of English roses leave much to be desired, dear sister. The food was also terrible.

*EXITS.
JOSEPHINE SUDDENLY BURSTS OUT LAUGHING.*

JOSEPHINE: I who always asked God to preserve me from big families!
(SHE BECOMES AWARE OF PAULINA. MOCKINGLY)
Ah 'Your Royal Highness', Princess Borghese of Rome, we are alone together, at last. Just you, me and your new title!
(GOES INTO A DEEP CURTSEY.)

PAULINA: I have a right to my title.

JOSEPHINE: (*COLDLY*) We all have a right to marriage and happiness.

PAULINA: Not when the rightful heritage of others is diverted. Mama should be here at Napoleon's side. You are keeping her away!

JOSEPHINE: That is your mother's choice, she won't come to Paris.

PAULINA: Only because of you.

JOSEPHINE: It's her decision.

PAULINA: And Lucien? Jerome? Napoleon's own brothers! They should be here too!

JOSEPHINE: I didn't ask them to remarry without Bonaparte's permission.

PAULINA: You've just said we all have a right to happiness.

JOSEPHINE: Paulina, your family intrigues are none of my business. I find them boring, trite and highly unimaginative. And painfully amateurish. Your brothers married without the First Consul's consent. He has a right to be angry. He has showered you all with honours – in spite of everything – the intrigues, the lies, the arrogance.

PAULINA: I owe Napoleon nothing. I am Princess Borghese through a marriage of my own choice.

JOSEPHINE: Yes, a marriage you engineered without his consent. Just like your brothers. However, you've been forgiven, because he adores you. But I can assure you, if you'd married an innkeeper instead of an Italian prince, you too would still be out of favour.
(*SOFTLY*) Paulina, I have no quarrel with you, I could even try and enjoy your friendship.

PAULINA: No. One day you will drop your carefully conceived defences and then I want to be free to watch you go down without any conscience. You have used Napoleon's love. You married him to wipe out your infamous past and I salute your guile as you no doubt admire mine?

JOSEPHINE: Touché. But I have grown to love him, Paulina. Very deeply.

PAULINA: But can you grow sons in your garden at Malmaison? Your epitaph will be an Unfulfilled Marriage, Madame Bonaparte, and we all know Napoleon is not at fault, don't weEnjoy your dignity and your power while it lasts, for time, dear sister, is on our side.

SHE EXITS.

JOSEPHINE: Why am I suddenly reminded of a pertinent joke about in-laws?

LIGHTCHANGE.

A PASSAGE IN THE TUILERIES. MADEMOISELLE GEORGES ENTERS WITH THE FOOTMAN, WHO HAS AN AIR OF GREAT SECRECY.

GEORGES: Is all this necessary?

FOOTMAN: I have my instructions, Mademoiselle.

GEORGES: It reeks of quasi-Machiavellian intrigue. Rather like the new play I'm in.

FOOTMAN: I wouldn't know, Mademoiselle. I haven't seen it.

PAULINA, CAROLINE AND ELIZA ENTER QUICKLY.

GEORGES: (*AMUSED*) The Three Graces.

CAROLINE: Be quiet and let me come straight to the point, Mademoiselle Georges.

GEORGES: If you'd be so kind, Madame Murat. I find all this very depressing.

ELIZA: Your personal feelings are unimportant.

CAROLINE: According to our information, you and Napoleon have spent no less than one hundred and fourteen hours together.

GOERGES: Good heavens. Unfortunately I have to believe you. I didn't clock up on my hours of intercourse.

ELIZA: Are you pregnant?

GEORGES: I sincerely hope not, Madame Bacciochi. I have a career to uphold. I'm an actress.

CAROLINE: We'll make it very worth your while, if you do fall pregnant by Napoleon.

PAULINA: We can greatly improve your connections in the Theatre, Mademoiselle Georges.

GEORGES: The casting couch is no novelty to me, Your Highness.

PAULINA: You will report to Madame Murat's personal physician once a week for a thorough examination. It is imperative that Napoleon prove his fertility. You must help him prove it.

GEORGES: I'm happy to be of service to you, Mesdames. Although you must realize the sacrifices I'm making.

CAROLINE: Your 'sacrifices' will be in the interests of France, Mademoiselle.

PAULINA: Make no mistake, Mademoiselle Georges. I would do anything to prove our sweet Josephine barren. Don't fail us. I am a keen understudy.

GEORGES: Your Highness! What a shocking thing to say – you, his own sister!

PAULINA: *(TO CAROLINE AND ELIZA)* She tends to overact, don't you think? Hope she's better in bed!

*LIGHTCHANGE. JOSEPHINE'S APARTMENTS IN THE TUILERIES.
JOSEPHINE IS WEeping. EUGENE STANDS BY HELPLESSLY.*

JOSEPHINE: What do I do . . . she's with him now! Now! This moment! Oh, Eugene, I'm so unhappy

EUGENE: Mama, you must try and stay calm. This is a passing fancy.

JOSEPHINE: Oh no, oh no!

EUGENE: Believe me, Papa considers himself especially privileged to have these little fancies.

JOSEPHINE: Little fancies! I know all about his 'little fancies'. Believe you me, the affections towards his sisters is more than just family feeling.

EUGENE: Mama, what are you saying!

JOSEPHINE: I know what I'm saying! I will not be silenced any longer! He's a monster; I wouldn't put anything past him.

EUGENE: The First Consul works under a terrible strain.

JOSEPHINE: Especially on top of 'little fancies'!

EUGENE: Once in a while

JOSEPHINE: This is not the first time. Two weeks ago she was seen sneaking into the West Wing. Then again on Sunday **and** Monday in the morning. In the morning! It's indecent!

EUGENE: How do you know all this?

JOSEPHINE: I have arranged my household in order to be informed.

EUGENE: You spy on Napoleon?

JOSEPHINE: Yes! And look what I find. A common actress with a man's name!

EUGENE: Her surname is Georges, Mama.

JOSEPHINE: He will not love me

EUGENE: Napoleon loves you dearly. Your sweetness and gentleness give him peace. Don't agitate him, Mama, you'll lose your hold.

JOSEPHINE: I have no hold over him, Eugene. I can't even give him that son. He will divorce me and marry the actress.

EUGENE: He fears his own inadequacy; he's a Bonaparte. He needs to prove his fertility.

JOSEPHINE: By testing his semen on every tart in town!

EUGENE: No, Mama.

JOSEPHINE: Yes , Mama! Anything to get rid of me!

EUGENE: Don't worry, mama, there'll be no divorce.

JOSEPHINE: But this Mademoiselle Georges?

EUGENE: A choice of two evils : a divorce or an actress.

PAUSE. SHE SNIFFS AND THINKS.

JOSEPHINE: You know her?

EUGENE: The actress, mama?

JOSEPHINE: Who else?

EUGENE: I've seen her at work.

JOSEPHINE: Oh stage, I presume.

EUGENE: *(SMILES)* Where else.

JOSEPHINE: Mmmm. She tends to overact, don't you think?

EUGENE: Not always.

JOSEPHINE: *(TRIUMPHANTLY)* Ah, but often!

CLAIRE ENTERS NERVOUSLY.

CLAIRE: Madame Bonaparte, the First Consul

NAPOLEON ENTERS BRISKLY.

NAPOLEON: Madame de Remusat? Ask Foreign Minister Tallyrand to bring the papers down to me; I wish to show them to my wife.

CLAIRE EXITS.

Madame, good news.

JOSEPHINE: (*COLDLY*) Mademoiselle Georges fell down the stairs broke her legs, and then overacted the pain?

NAPOLEON: What?

EUGENE: Has it been signed?

NAPOLEON: Legs? What!

EUGENE: Has it been signed.

NAPOLEON: Ah yes, Josephine, you will be happy.

JOSEPHINE: Happy.

NAPOLEON: The Church is restored to France.

JOSEPHINE: Restored to France? But I don't understand . . . the Pope.

NAPOLEON: He and I signed an agreement. The Church lands stay the property of France in exchange for the restoration of the Church to its previous splendour etc. etc. etc. I need the Church. Josephine? Are you happy, dearest?

JOSEPHINE: Yes. I love the Church

NAPOLEON: Good. We'll clean out Notre Dame. Who knows, Eugene, we might need it for a marriage soon.

HE LAUGHS AND NUDGES EUGENE BOYISHLY.

JOSEPHINE: Bonaparte, with regard to marriages

NAPOLEON: There can be two marriages, but the law will first recognise the civil contract above the religious ceremony. So our little unsanctified marriage remains legal, Madame Bonaparte.

JOSEPHINE: Of course. Will there be Mass on Sunday?

NAPOLEON: And why not. We will even include the representatives from England. They will take Mass.

EUGENE: The English aren't Catholic.

NAPOLEON: These English are now in France, Eugene, and come, Josephine, when in France?

JOSEPHINE: (*FORCED*) When in France, do as the Bonapartes do.

NAPOLEON GIVES A HOOT OF DELIGHT AND EXITS.

NAPOLEON: Eugene

JOSEPHINE HOLDS EUGENE BACK IN A TIGHT GRIP.

JOSEPHINE: Sweet Jesus, I'll be annulled!

EUGENE: Control yourself! Mama, you've just heard: civil contracts signed during the Revolution are still valid.

JOSEPHINE: My marriage now lacks the sanction of the church – which means I live in sin! Eugene, he could easily annul me and cast me aside for any young girl wait, wait let me think At the civil ceremony I had two witnesses, Barras and Tallien.

EUGENE: No one will doubt the validity of the Directors of France.

JOSEPHINE: Probably not, but Bonaparte has as witness a mere child, his little aide-de-camp. Also we were married by

EUGENE: The Mayor of Paris.

JOSEPHINE: Eugene, don't you start believing what you read in the newspapers. Napoleon and Josephine were married by some half-drunk fellow with a wooden leg; the Mayor was God-knows-where an old fellow with a wooden leg My God! I think he was one of the cleaners! Oh, if only I could remember more. The ceremony was so rushed, so routine. Bonaparte has just been given his Italian Command. It was all so unimportant, so trivial! (GASPS) The papers! We must find the papers! Come, Tallyrand will you help me! There might be a loophole he can use to prove my marriage valid. We must find him immediately. Where is he? Wasn't Claire sent to fetch him? Go and see if he is in his office. I'll find Claire

EUGENE: Mama, this is madness!

JOSEPHINE: Yes. But I am too old and tired to start from scratch. Come! If Bonaparte casts me aside, I die!

SHE HOLDS OUT HER HAND TO HIM AND LEADS HIM OUT. EXIT.

JOSEPHINE ENCOUNTERS CLAIRE IN THE PASSAGE.

JOSEPHINE: Claire! Where is Tallyrand? Did you find him? Is he with Napoleon?

CLAIRE: No, Madam.

JOSEPHINE: We must find him, Claire, even if I have to ask Napoleon myself.

CLAIRE: (*STOPPING HER*) Madam, the Foreign Minister is not with Bonaparte. (*GENTLY*) It's late.

THEN SHE STARES AT CLAIRE IN HORROR.

JOSEPHINE: The actress?
(*CLAIRE NODS.*)
Oh no, this is unendurable!
(*SHE NEARLY REVERTS BACK TO TEARS, THEN AS SUDDENLY BECOMES A FIGHTER.*)
Come, I'm going to surprise them together!

CLAIRE: Madame, please

JOSEPHINE: Follow me, Claire!

CLAIRE: Your intrusion would be indelicate enough; mine would be intolerable.

JOSEPHINE: In a brothel one needs no discretion or delicacy or tolerance – nor in this marriage. Don't you dare desert me, Claire, this woman must go!

THEY EXIT.

BLACKOUT.

FOUR LOUD SCREAMS FROM MADEMOISELLE GEORGES IN THE DARK.

*LIGHTCHANGE. NAPOLEON'S APARTMENTS. HE LIES SLUMPED DOWN IN A
FAINT.*

JOSEPHINE AND CLAIRE ENTER QUICKLY.

JOSEPHINE: Oh my God, he's had a seizure!

SHE FUSSES AROUND HIM CONCERNED.

CLAIRE: Probably exhaustion.

JOSEPHINE STANDS BACK COLDLY.

JOSEPHINE: Yes. Obviously 'exhaustion'. Who screamed?

MADemoisELLE GEORGE APPEARS HALF-NAKED IN DISTRESS.

MLLE GEORGES: I screamed! Oh God it was hell. **Hell!** Is he dead? **Is he dead!**

JOSEPHINE: I suddenly recall your performance as Clytemnestra,
Mademoiselle Georges. **That** was over-acted too.

*NAPOLEON HAS RECOVERED AND LOOKS UP TO SEE WIFE CONFRONT
MISTRESS.*

NAPOLEON: (GROANS) Oh my God.

SINKS BACK IN HORROR.

MADemoisELLE GEORGES RECOGNISES JOSEPHINE.

MLLE GEORGES: (SCREAMS) Oh my God! **Oh my God**

SHE DROPS HER COVERING AND RUNS OUT NAKED.

JOSEPHINE: She **does** tend to over-act, don't you think?

BLACKOUT.

LIGHTCHANGE. JOSEPHINE'S APARTMENTS.

AN HOUR LATER.

JOSEPHINE: (*EXPLODES*) How could he humiliate me like that, the little . . .
Dwarf!

CLAIRE: (*SUPPRESSES GIGGLES*) Madame, please

JOSEPHINE: And on top it all, he obviously has a marriage in mind for Eugene, God knows to whom!

CLAIRE: Mercifully all the sisters are spoken for. He won't force your son the Viceroy de Beauharnais into any marriage against his will.

JOSEPHINE: That doesn't mean a thing – they're being carefully stored for later use. Their involvement in this little farce goes further than family interest.

(*CLAIRE STARTS DRESSING HER HAIR.*

JOSEPHINE LOOKS IN THE MIRROR).

Oh God, I look so old.

CLAIRE: Madam, you're the type of woman who will look 30 for the next 15 years.

JOSEPHINE: With all my rivals half my age, that's a great consolation.

CLAIRE Oh Madame really, you know that you knock the pants off the Bonaparte girls.

JOSEPHINE: *(DRYLY)* That's not exactly what I had in mind, Claire. Hmm, that silly little actress, I nearly burst out laughing. Actually I'm quite cross for not crying. A good scene would've gone down very well!

NAPOLEON HAS ENTERED.

NAPOLEON: I will have no more scenes. You did well, Josephine, you behaved with dignity. You were the only one who didn't over-act!

(TRIES TO RAISE A LAUGH. JOSEPHINE AND CLAIRE ARE COOL).

Madame de Remusat, you may retire.

JOSEPHINE: Madame de Remusat, you will stay.

NAPOLEON: *(HEARS)* **Leave!**

(CLAIRE HURRIEDLY EXITS.

NAPOLEON CARRIES ON WITH THE HAIRDRESSING WHILE WATCHING JOSEPHINE CAREFULLY.)

Are you very hurt?

JOSEPHINE: *(BITTERLY)* Why her! Why anyone!

NAPOLEON: And who are you to complain, Madame? After making me the laughing stock of Europe, flirting with every bright-eyed young officer, even in my presence! I loved you always, blindly indifferent to the rumours of the bored new Madame Bonaparte and her roving eye; even the proof I forgave you! I still love you. So who are you to play the novice with me!

JOSEPHINE: I was foolish then, Bonaparte. When we met I was still fighting for my survival and for that of my children.

NAPOLEON: (*CONTEMPTUOUSLY*) Oh, spare me your speeches.

JOSEPHINE: (*ANGRILY*) Alright! Damn you, Bonaparte, alright! It was a last passionate fling of youth! It's over. I swear, I know, forgiven and I'd hoped forgotten. We are growing old together. Surely you know that I love you, Bonaparte. That it is my greatest wish to love you, no more than that, to adore you

HE IS MOVED BY HER AFFECTION.

NAPOLEON: I won't see her again.

JOSEPHINE: But there will be others!

NAPOLEON: (*EXPLODES*) I am not a man like other men! The laws of morality and of society are not applicable to me! I have the right to answer all your accusations with an eternal I!

JOSEPHINE: Bonaparte, I only

NAPOLEON: I detest bossy and meddlesome women!
(*SHOUTS OFF*)
Constant! My bath!
(*THEN SUDDENLY STOPS AND TURNS TO HER*).
Don't sleep. Wait for me.

TALLYRAND ENTERS.

TALLYRAND: Sire, it might interest both you and . . . 'The Empress'. . . to know that the results of the plebiscite show a three and a half million vote for – and less than three thousand against.

NAPOLEON: Three thousand against?

TALLYRAND: Not counting the other twenty-five and a quarter million French citizens who abstained from voting. It seems to have become a fact, Your Majesties.

NAPOLEON: A fact?

JOSEPHINE: Bonaparte, what is this?

TALLYRAND: My dear Josephine, they want to kill our Bonaparte. We must defend him so we make him immortal. We make him Emperor!

NAPOLEON: They? Who are the 'they' to whom you refer, Tallyrand? The twenty-five million Frenchmen who voted against me?

TALLYRAND: Abstained, Sire.

JOSEPHINE: But surely it is undemocratic to assume the right

NAPOLEON: Right? What do you know of rights! I will be proclaimed Emperor of the French with Imperial Dignity hereditary in my Family.

JOSEPHINE: But

NAPOLEON: Tallyrand, we will call in the Pope.

TALLYRAND: If you insist, Sire.

JOSEPHINE: Bonaparte, stop playing games.

TALLYRAND: However, I feel it illogical to call in the Head of one Church, just when a nation is proclaiming freedom of religion.

JOSEPHINE: Surely

TALLYRAND: Surely it is more important to establish that it is the People, and not God, that give crowns.

JOSEPHINE: Empire? Bonaparte, no one will understand the necessity behind it; everyone will attribute it to ambition and pride!

NAPOLEON: The Bourbons will gain nothing by having me assassinated!

JOSEPHINE: But we have no heir!
(PAUSE. THEN NAPOLEON TURNS ON HIS HEEL AND EXITS ABRUPTLY, TALLYRAND FOLLOWS.)
But . . I can't give you an heir

BLACKOUT.

LIGHTCHANGE. RECEPTIONROOM IN THE TUILERIES.

ENTER RAPIDLY IN COURT ATTIRE: EUGENE, HORTENSE, LOUIS, CAROLINE, ELIZA, MURAT, TALLYRAND, FOOTMAN.

CAROLINE: *(FURY)* Well, I think it's the bloody limit. I think it stinks!
Stinks! Haven't we all stood by him, helped him? Given him strength, inspiration?

ELIZA: Tallyrand, you must help us!

TALLYRAND: *(AMUSED)* I am now only the Grand Chancellor, Madame Bacciochi, not a magician.

CAROLINE: Louis, you saved his life once. He owes you a favour!

LOUIS: I'll try and put in a good word for you, sisters. I can't really afford to do more, can I?

CAROLINE: Of course not. Prince Louis wants to be the Emperor's heir, doesn't he? Can't make him angry, can he? Porco!

ELIZA: I agree with Caroline. It stinks!

CAROLINE: After all our sacrifices, now this?

ELIZA: And Mama? Where's Mama!

CAROLINE: This is all the old Creole's doing, the old

EUGENE: Silence! Madame Murat, you are slandering the Emperor of the French!

ELIZA: Blaming the Emperor's wife to be exact. Come Eugene, I'm sure secretly you're on our side. What's in it for you?

CAROLINE: Oh, 'Prince Eugene' is just a goody-goody. Typical Beauharnais!

FOOTMAN: Paulina, Imperial Princess Borghese!

PAULINA ENTERS GRANDLY.

PAULINA: Greetings, Chancellor Tallyrand, Imperial Prince Louis, Imperial Princess Hortense, Marshall Murat

CAROLINE: (SNAPS) Grand Admiral!

PAULINA: Grand Admiral? Already? So what does that make you, sister Caroline, the ship's cat? (GIGGLES AT REACTION) Ah sister Eliza? Where's your little bourgeois husband? And a kiss for my favourite Imperial Prince Eugene.
(SHE TWINKLES AT EUGENE, WHO IS STILL ON EDGE).
What a lovely party.

CAROLINE: You're not supposed to be here! This is a close family affair.
Shouldn't you be back in Roma wallowing in your goat milk bath
with your seventeen-year old gigolo?

PAULINA: Mind your leathery old tongue, Madame Murat! Remember that
in all this Do-It-Yourself-Imperialism, I am the legitimate wife of
a real Royal Prince. I am not here waiting for my share, Madame
Bacciochi. The Emperor of France, my brother, needs all the
support he can get.

CAROLINE: I'll scream! I'll scream!

TALLYRAND: (*HISSES*) Control yourself Caroline! Or I'll put you across my
knee and spank you beyond enjoyment.

FOOTMAN: Napoleon. Emperor of the French!

NAPOLEON ENTERS. CAROLINE AWAITS HIM KEENLY.

CAROLINE: Napoleon?

HE WALKS STRAIGHT PAST HER TO PAULINA.

PAULINA: (*CURTSES DEEPLY*) You Imperial Majesty.

NAPOLEON: (*SMILES*) My Imperial Princess.
*(HE OFFERS HER HIS ARM AND THEY PARADE. CAROLINE
AND ELIZA HUFF INTO A GROUP AND SULK.
TALLYRAND WHISPERS TO NAPOLEON.)*
Yes yes
(LOUDLY)
Her Gracious Sublime Majesty, Josephine, Queen of Italy,
Empress of the French, by the Grace of God?

(JOSEPHINE ENTERS IN MAGNIFICENT ATTIRE. THE FAMILY PAY HOMAGE IN BOWS AND CURTSEY EXCEPT ELIZA AND CAROLINE.)

You will curtsy! Eliza! Caroline!

(THEY DO IT WITH DIFFICULTY AND SIGHS.

NAPOLEON AND JOSEPHINE WATCH EVERYONE IN THEIR DISCOMFORT; HE WINKS AT HER).

Right! Enough! Terrible! You will all attend Curtsey Classes as from tomorrow. You look like the Chorus from an Italian Opera. And as from now you will all pay her the homage due to an Empress. Caroline, you begin.

CAROLINE GIVES HIM A GLARE. PAINED PAUSE.

CAROLINE: *(WITH DIFFICULTY)* I do admire your necklace, Madame Bonaparte.

JOSEPHINE: Yes. It was presented to me by the City of Venice.

ELIZA: A marvellous gift.

JOSEPHINE: Yes.

PAULINA: A gift to Napoleon. To France.

JOSEPHINE: No, your Highness. A gift to me. To Josephine.
(ANOTHER PAINED PAUSE.)
Your Highness is wearing magnificent emeralds.

PAULINA: Yes, indeed, the heritage of the great Borghese Family.

NAPOLEON: *(SNAPS)* Every gaudy bauble of it! Princess Hortense

HORTENSE: Sire?

NAPOLEON: The Empress and I hope you will bring your son to Malmaison on Saturday?

HORTENSE: Yes, Sire. (*CURTSY*)

NAPOLEON: Princess Borghese? Will you join us?

PAULINA: If it is your wish, Sire.

NAPOLEON: It is our command, Highness.
(*CAROLINE WAILS IN FRUSTRATION.*)
Madame Murat, are you in pain?

JOSEPHINE: Bonaparte, don't tease her.

NAPOLEON: Madame Murat? Your Emperor wishes an answer!

CAROLINE: To hell with you!

NAPOLEON: (*ROARS*) Madame!

CAROLINE: What have I done to deserve this!

ELIZA: And I!

NAPOLEON: What are you shouting about?

CAROLINE: What am I shouting about; "Imperial Princess, Princess, Princess!" And Paulina didn't even get hers from you. The others are strangers!

NAPOLEON: Madame, take care!

CAROLINE: I only want what is mine!

NAPOLEON: Ha! Really sister Caroline, to hear you talk, one would've thought we'd succeeded to the Crown of our late father, The King!

CAROLINE: I deserve a title!

ELIZA: And I!

NAPOLEON: Yes. **Bitch! Bitch!** My God, compared to my Family negotiations with the Pope are a game. I haven't been elected Emperor for your benefit, dear sisters!

CAROLINE: But we are Bonapartes! Look at her lot! They get preference.

ELIZA: Where are the rest of our Family?

NAPOLEON: (*GLARES*) They also married nobodies! Like **you!**

CAROLINE: But so did our brother Louis! And that nobody is now an Imperial Princess!

ELIZA: And Mama?

NAPOLEON: Mama will come to the Coronation. She will sit in Notre Dame next to the Pope. And she will have an official title 'Madame Mere'..

PAULINA: Notre Dame? The Pope?

NAPOLEON: Of course.

PAULINA: Not bad....

CAROLINE: And us? Your own sisters? Where will we sit?

NAPOLEON: You won't be sitting anywhere. You will be carrying her train.
(*INDICATING JOSEPHINE*).

CAROLINE: (*WAILS*) That's not fair

NAPOLEON: (*EXPLODES*) You will in future speak only when spoken to,
Madame Murat!

(*DANGEROUS PAUSE. NAPOLEON NOW PLAYS FOR EFFECT.*)

With regard to my wife! Do I now dismiss her because I am rising in the world? If I had been thrown into prison or been exiled, she would have shared my fate. Because I am becoming powerful, am I to send her away?

(*SMILES AT HER AND SHE GOES INTO A DEEP CURTSY.*)

My sweet Josephine. Not only will you remain my wife, not only will you accompany me to the Coronation, but my incomparable Josephine will be anointed and crowned Empress by my own hand!

(*CAROLINE COLLAPSES IN A POOR IMITATION OF A FAINT.*

NAPOLEON PEERS DOWN AT HER).

I can't stand overacting. Remove her!

(*CAROLINE RECOVERS REMARKABLY QUICKLY AND RUDELY PUSHES AWAY MURAT AND LOUIS. SMOULDERS AT NAPOLEON AND JOSEPHINE, THEN STALKS OUT FOLLOWED BY ELIZA.*)

And now I have at last brought the Revolution to a smooth close – no, Grand Admiral Murat, please allow me to flatter myself – in spite of your Caroline's tantrums very smoothly indeed.

(*POLITE AMUSEMENT AT MURAT'S EMBARRASSMENT.*)

We are now safe from both the Royalists and the Revolutionary Jacobins. Fusion will become a reality. With regard to my heir – as Emperor it is my prerogative to nominate a successor. The

Empress has a son. I look upon Prince Eugene as likely to become one of the first commanders of a united Europe.

EUGENE: Thank you, Sire.

HE JOINS JOSEPHINE AND HORTENSE IN THEIR MOMENT OF TRIUMPH.

NAPOLEON: And now – we will dine. Come, a napkin for the Princess Borghese – we don't want her to spoil her jewels!

HE LAUGHS HEARTILY AND LEADS THEM OUT. PAULINA CURTSEYS DEEPLY TO JOSEPHINE AND WINKS AT HER IN A CONTROLLED TRUCE.

*LIGHTCHANGE. A PASSAGE IN THE TUILERIES PALACE.
THE FOOTMAN AND THERESIA TALLIEN ENTER.*

THERESIA: What else have you heard about the preparation for the coronation?

FOOTMAN: Only that when the Pope arrived in Paris there was no one to receive him.

THERESIA: (*SMIRKS*) Alas, our new Royal Family is no hotbed of religious fervour.

JOSEPHINE ENTERS QUICKLY.

FOOTMAN: (*BOWS*) Your Majesty

JOSEPHINE: Shhhh. Cover your ears.
(*AUTOMATICALLY THE FOOTMAN DOES SO AND STANDS MOTIONLESS.*)
Who is it this time?

THERESIA: Madame Grazzini. Opera singer.

JOSEPHINE: Damn him!

THERESIA: According to my information, this woman poses no threat to you, Josephine. She's another novelty.

JOSEPHINE: Theresia, I am not legally married. I'm as much a mistress to Napoleon as this slut soprano. I must force him to marry me . . . somehow

THERESIA: Take care, Josephine, don't tweak the tiger's tail!

JOSEPHINE: You must help me find something I can use!

THERESIA: I am already dangerously involved.

JOSEPHINE: Then I'll use Tallyrand.

THERESIA: I wouldn't tempt the Devil.

JOSEPHINE: (*SMILES*) Theresia, in order to survive I will even court the Devil and take him to bed.
(*TURNS TO FOOTMAN.*)
Thank you. Now show Madame Tallien out invisibly.
(*SHE EMBRACES THERESIA.*)
My darling, pray for me.

JOSEPHINE EXITS.

THERESIA: (*DRYLY*) Hail Napoleon! Those who are about to die salute you.

LIGHTCHANGE. THE GARDENS OF MALMAISON.

A RAINY DAY.

NAPOLEON STANDS ALONE, DEEP IN THOUGHT. ABOUT BATTLE AND STRATEGY. SUGGEST THIS WITH A SOUNDTRACK. JOSEPHINE ENTERS WITH AN UMBRELLA AGAINST THE RAIN. AS SHE TOUCHES HIM HE COMES BACK TO REALITY AND THE SOUNDTRACK STOPS.

JOSEPHINE: Bonaparte, come indoors. Murat has arrived with new dispatches.

NAPOLEON: Since our new war with England, they even send over their damn rain. I hate rain.

JOSEPHINE: It's good to be alone with you. I see you so seldom. I'm constantly surrounded by pretty young ladies doing Things for me.

NAPOLEON: (*GENTLY*) You look younger, Josephine, younger than I can remember. Do you have a lover?

JOSEPHINE: Yes. An Emperor. I'm happy, Bonaparte, when we can just be ordinary people, with our children and grandchildren and their laughter.

NAPOLEON: Yes, I look forward to growing old with you, my dearest. Sitting in front of the fire with many babies crawling around Grandpa and Grandma, and I'll wear my slippers and you your Crown and we'll be very happy.

JOSEPHINE: Please. When?

NAPOLEON: My power depends on my glory, and my glory on my victories. I have some more wars to win. After that.

JOSEPHINE: Of course, Bonaparte? This talk of divorce

NAPOLEON: Divorce you now?

JOSEPHINE: They say the Coronation would be an opportunity for a new wife.

NAPOLEON: To calmly repeat such malicious gossip, you must feel secure, Josephine.

JOSEPHINE: For the moment, yes. Even the hatred of your sisters

NAPOLEON: They will be taught a lesson.

JOSEPHINE: Don't use me as a revenge against your family, Bonaparte.

NAPOLEON: They will do as they are told! I am the Emperor!

JOSEPHINE: But is it necessary to force the 'Imperial Princesses' Caroline and Eliza to carry the Old Creole's Coronation train in the Notre Dame? Really Bonaparte, you are a troublemaker.

HE HOOTS WITH DELIGHT.

NAPOLEON: I must see Murat. Don't be too long. We must prepare for tonight.

HE EXITS.

JOSEPHINE TURNS TO WHERE TALLYRAND IS GLIDING FROM HIS HIDING PLACE:

JOSEPHINE: Well, Tallyrand?

TALLYRAND: Yes, Madam, I think we can risk a confrontation.
(HE OPENS HIS UMBRELLA – VERY MUCH THE PERSIAN CAT CAUGHT IN A DRIZZLE.)
The Emperor is using this Coronation as a show of strength. He cannot afford to lose face. The remarriage must take place immediately.

JOSEPHINE: But if he refuses?

TALLYRAND: And he could quite easily do so, I'm afraid it will be a matter of time before the validity of your marriage is questioned.

JOSEPHINE: Questioned? I'll be annulled!

TALLYRAND: Yes. I have studied the documents pertaining to your civil marriage ceremony of 1796

JOSEPHINE: I took four years off my age

TALLYRAND: And the Emperor added two to his, a mere reciprocal courtesy.

JOSEPHINE: Oh.

TALLYRAND: The document is a maze of loopholes. I have therefore arranged the secret audience with Pope Pius VII as you demanded of me. An emotional confession to His Holiness would be of great advantage to you.

JOSEPHINE: I intend that. Tallyrand, my husband will never forgive you for helping me in this intrigue.

TALLYRAND: It is my intention to deny any association with you on this count.

JOSEPHINE: *(SMIRKS)* Of course. Forgive me, I must prepare myself for the Opera tonight.

TALLYRAND: I'm sure you'll enjoy it.

JOSEPHINE: Indeed. I too have developed a great interest in sopranos.

SHE EXITS.

NAPOLEON APPEARS FROM HIS HIDINGPLACE.

NAPOLEON: (*AMUSED*) My my, a regular she-devil. So, Tallyrand, you will deny any association with the Empress in this intrigue?

TALLYRAND: (*INNOCENTLY*) What intrigue, Sire?

NAPOLEON: Mmmm, my Josephine shows some intelligence.

TALLYRAND: No, Sire, no one has ever managed so brilliantly as she without it.

NAPOLEON: The audience has been arranged. Good, it will pacify the old priest and also my sweet Empress will enjoy her small victory. You have drawn up the new marriage contract? Incomplete?

TALLYRAND: A small technicality only, but all that will be needed for a quick annulment. There will be no parish priest in attendance.

NAPOLEON: Yes, it has to be so for France. We must pray that the Empress will give me a son. Her menses have been restored. There is still hope, Tallyrand.

TALLYRAND: There is always 'hope', Sire.

NAPOLEON: Yes, were I to have the misfortune to lose my Josephine, reasons of state would compel me to remarry, but I would only be marrying a womb. Josephine alone would have been my choice as life companion.

(THEN HE SUDDENLY LAUGHS.)

Ha! I have had enough theatrical experience of late to present a convincing picture of pique and discontent. When Josephine confronts me with this marriage quibble, Tallyrand, I shall create a most operatic scene. Now, come, to work, Chancellor, we have serious things to discuss.

LIGHTCHANGE. A PASSAGE IN THE TUILERIES PALACE.

CAROLINE, PAULINA AND ELIZA ENTER. IT IS THE DAY OF THE CORONATION.

CAROLINE: We go up the Centre Aisle of Notre Dame, first past the Diplomatic Corps and then through the pews with the members of the Royal Household, then on a cue from Paulina we drop the Train.

ELIZA: You originally said only you drop your side.

CAROLINE: We all drop it together.

PAULINA: Caroline, if we all suddenly drop the Train, the weight of it will break her back.

CAROLINE: Exactly.

PAULINA: We don't want to make a martyr out of Josephine, only a fool. On my nod, only drop your side.

CAROLINE: Why do I always end up doing the dirty work!

ELIZA: Because, dear sister, you're so good at it.

LIGHT CHANGE. A LARGE BED.

NAPOLEON AND JOSEPHINE ARE IN IT. HE STRETCHES AND YAWNS.

NAPOLEON: Ah . . . today's the day, a lot to do before the fun starts.

JOSEPHINE: Bonaparte?

NAPOLEON: Yes, Bonaparte?

JOSEPHINE: (*CASUALLY*) I had a private audience with His Holiness yesterday.

NAPOLEON: (*FROWNS*) I wasn't told.

JOSEPHINE: (*QUIETLY*) I'm telling you.

NAPOLEON: Mmmm. The old man mustn't get too much attention.

JOSEPHINE: He took my confession.

NAPOLEON: You are now absolved of all your terrible sins?

JOSEPHINE: Yes. But.

NAPOLEON'S 'OPERATIC SCENE' IS STARTING.

NAPOLEON: But? 'But!' What did you confess? Josephine, take care!

JOSEPHINE: (*STEADILY*) He won't allow the Coronation.

NAPOLEON: (*ROARS*) What's it got to do with him!

JOSEPHINE: Our marriage, Bonaparte. In the eyes of the Church it's not valid.

NAPOLEON: I think it's valid! It's valid!

JOSEPHINE: No, my dear. Remember that little assistant that married us in '96? The one with the wooden leg?

NAPOLEON: The Mayor of Paris.

JOSEPHINE: Bonaparte, don't start believing your Official Biography! We were married by only an assistant. Also your little aide-de-camp was underage. The civil marriage is therefore also invalid. His Holiness was appalled to hear we'd been living in sin for six years.

NAPOLEON: (*"MUTTERS"*) This is blackmail.

JOSEPHINE: (*STEADILY*) Bonaparte, I'm either a legal wife or a recognised concubine. I will not be crowned a whore!

NAPOLEON: (*"ROARS"*) Blackmail!

JOSEPHINE: Yes. Well, it will only take ten minutes.

NAPOLEON: (*"SNAPS"*) What will take ten minutes!

JOSEPHINE: Our remarriage. It's all prepared in the Chapel. It's a secret, Bonaparte, no one will ever know.

NAPOLEON: Blackmail! He wouldn't dare to refuse going through with the Coronation. I'm in charge here!

JOSEPHINE: He is the Pope, my dear. He has the right to insist on a religious marriage.

NAPOLEON: (*'SARDONICALLY'*) So, Madam, we are not legally married! There need be no divorce!

JOSEPHINE: (*CALMLY*) Yes, Sire.

NAPOLEON: Living in sin . . . ten minutes, you say?

JOSEPHINE: Yes, Sire.

NAPOLEON: This must never become known.

JOSEPHINE: Oh, no, no

NAPOLEON: (*“DARKLY”*) Crafty woman!
(*HE IS TRYING HARD TO CONTROL HIS GIGGLES. SHE
TWINKLES AT HIM.*)
What should I wear?

JOSEPHINE: (*SWEETLY*) Something nice?

THEY EMBRACE AND KISS.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

A LARGE FRAMED MAP OF EUROPE IS HANGING PROMINENTLY.

INTERIOR.

A RECEPTIONROOM AT THE TUILERIES.

AS PAULINA ENTERS, THE FOOTMAN ANNOUNCES HER.

FOOTMAN: Her Imperial Highness, Paulina, Princess Borghese, Grand
Duchess of Guastalla!

PAULINA: *(AMUSED)* Thank you. Very impressive but rather pointless.
(LOOKS AROUND THE EMPTY ROOM.)
Who else is coming for lunch?

FOOTMAN: I wouldn't know, your Highness.

BELLS ARE RINGING.

PAULINA: What are they for? Another victory?

FOOTMAN: Sunday, Your Highness.

PAULINA: Ah.

SHE HOLDS A JEWELCASE. GOES UP TO STUDY THE MAP.

CAROLINE ENTERS.

CAROLINE: *(HAUGHTILY)* Announce me!

FOOTMAN: Her Imperial Majesty, Caroline, Queen of Naples.!

CAROLINE: Didn't expect you here.

PAULINA: Passing through.

CAROLINE: Mmm. Anyone nice coming to lunch?

PAULINA: Has anyone 'nice' ever come to these dreary Sunday luncheons? God, Napoleon's sense of humour infuriates me. I can imagine him chortling with delight at the thought of the Imperial Family obeying his orders down to the last hors d'oeuvres.

CAROLINE: Well, I hope we don't have goose again. I can't stand goose.

PAULINA: I wish those bells would stop.

CAROLINE: They remind the nation of God on Sunday, and Napoleon Monday to Saturday.

PAULINA: Damn it! I was supposed to be going out for the day!

CAROLINE: With your blonde lieutenant?

PAULINA: No, the little captain with the **Huge** moustache!

SHE GIGGLES AND STUDIES THE MAP.

CAROLINE: When will you learn that size is not all, dear sister.

PAULINA: (*PURRS*) Keep reminding me. Oh fart! I can't even find my place.

CAROLINE: (*STERNLY*) Don't use foul language, Paulina. It doesn't become your station.

PAULINA: Guastalla! Where's my Guastalla!

CARLINE: A fingernail or so above Rome.

PAULINA FINDS IT.

PAULINA: God, talk about size! If a fly chose to crap there, Guastalla would be lost forever.

CAROLINE LOOKS AT THE JEWELCASES.

CAROLINE: Did you get these from your blonde lieutenant?

PAULINA: On his salary or loot? No, Napoleon sent them from Poland. I don't care for them. Pins and needles

CAROLINE: Imperial hatpins. If you don't want them, I'll have them.

PAULINA: (*BORED*) Stick them into a Josephine Doll.

THEY LAUGH. CAROLINE STICKS PINS INTO THE MAP INDIVIDUALLY AS SHE NAMES THE MEMBERS OF THE IMPERIAL FAMILY AND THEIR NEW DOMAINS.

CAROLINE: This one for me, Queen of Naples – and Murat, King of Naples.

PAULINA: Really, Caroline.

CAROLINE: Why not? You couldn't even find your little principality. Here, this one for you. One for Joseph and Julie, King and Queen of Spain.

PAULINA: Madrid.

CAROLINE: What?

PAULINA: That's Lisbon.

CAROLINE: They also own that.

PAULINA: Yes, but they live in Madrid.

CAROLINE: What's the difference . . . Louis, King of Holland.

PAULINA: And here's a dull little pin for Queen Hortense.

CAROLINE HOOTS WITH DELIGHT.

CAROLINE: Eliza? Where's hers?

PAULINA: Ehh . . . somewhere here . . Lucca-Piombina.

CAROLINE: (*IMPATIENTLY*) What the hell : Italy!

PAULINA: Napoleon in Poland.

CAROLINE: With you-know-who.

PAULINA: Who?

CAROLINE: Countess Walewska.

PAULINA: He never told me; how come you know everything?

CAROLINE: (*GRANDLY*) Contacts, little princess, queenly contacts.

PAULINA: Well, I do wish someone would tell me these things. Napoleon has a rotten taste in women.

CAROLINE: Which reminds me, the old bitch here in Paris . . .

PAULINA: An old bent pin for her.

CAROLINE: Who else?

PAULINA: My God, isn't that enough?

CAROLINE: (*COYLY*) Your gorgeous Prince Eugene?

PAULINA: No, he's married. No pin for him.

CAROLINE: (*CLUCKS*) oh . . . tsk tsk tsk

ELIZA ENTERS QUICKLY.

FOOTMAN: Eliza, Princess Bacciochi de Lucca-Piombina

ELIZA: Hush, I'm not here!
(*TO CAROLINE AND PAULINA EXCITEDLY.*)
Sisters! Six pounds for ounces; screams like an Emperor and
already tucks his hand into his jacket.

CAROLINE: Are you quite certain?

ELIZA: I witnessed the birth. It will be legitimized by official adoption; I
must see Tallyrand about details. Just thought one of you might
be able to brighten up the Empress's day with this news? Chaio.

SHE EXITS QUICKLY.

PAULINA: My God, do you realize what this means?

CAROLINE: We've won.

FOOTMAN: The Princess de Caraman – Chimay!

THERESIA TALLIEN SWEEPS IN, BEJEWELD. CURTSIES FLIPPANTLY.

THERESIA: Majesty, Highness – or vice versa!

CAROLINE: (*OUTRAGED*) Well!

THERESIA: Yes, bearing up, you know, darling. My, how time flies. The last time I saw you, you were still notching up footmen behind the tapestries in the passage outside.

CAROLINE: How dare you!

PAULINA: (*COLDLY*) Mind your tongue, Theresia Tallien!

THERESIA: Mind if I sit down? Age before Royalty.

SHE HAS FLUSTERED THE SISTERS WITH HER PERFORMANCE.

FOOTMAN: Please rise for her Imperial Majesty, the Empress Josephine.

JOSEPHINE ENTERS.

JOSEPHINE: Sisters, how very nice
(*CAROLINE AND PAULINA ARE FORCED INTO A CURTSY.*
JOSEPHINE WINKS AT THERESIA.)
Ah, we have a guest?

PAULINA: The Emperor will hear of this, make no mistake! I have a headache and better things to do. Good Day Empress.

SHE EXITS.

JOSEPHINE: Caroline dear? Your headache?

CAROLINE: No, Your Majesty, I just want to be sick. I thought however it might interest you to know that a son was last night born to Mlle. Eleanore de la Plaigne. **A Son!** Good day and bon appetite, your Majesty.

CURTSES AND EXITS WITH TRIUMPH.

JOSEPHINE: (*STUNNED*) Eleanore de la Plaigne

THERESIA: (*SOFTLY*) Your Majesty?

JOSEPHINE: Sweet Jesus! A mistress of Napoleon has a son!

SHE STARTS TO PANIC. THERESIA TAKES HER FIRMLY IN HAND.

THERESIA: Josephine! Eleanore Thing was planted in Napoleon's bed by brat sister Queen Caroline.

JOSEPHINE: She has a son.

THERESIA: Yes. And pray, Your Majesty, who wouldn't have sons after a romp with Murat?

JOSEPHINE: (*DAZED*) Murat? Caroline's Murat?

THERESIA: The very same. Your Emperor and her randy King of Naples had equal stakes in Eleanore Thing.

JOSEPHINE: (*GASPS*) What!

THERESIA: It's all over Paris. You could've asked me sooner, silly!

JOSEPHINE EMBRACES HER TEARFULLY.

JOSEPHINE: Thank you, my darling little Theresia. I've been so terrified . . .
so lonely

THERESIA: As they say, the air is always the thinnest on top of the mountain!

JOSEPHINE: It's not the air; it's the thin ice. God, Theresia, what a way to earn a living!

THEY BOTH BURST OUT LAUGHING.

THERESIA: Yes, I'm sure this is all very-thin-ice! You know I'm not exactly an Imperial Favourite.

JOSEPHINE: Bonaparte will have a fit!

THERESIA: Good!

THEY LAUGH AND HOLD HANDS. IT IS A REDISCOVERY OF THEIR AFFECTION FOR ONE ANOTHER.

JOSEPHINE: My dear dear friend.

THERESIA: Darling, I watch you from afar. You're a marvellous Empress. Will you get into trouble?

JOSEPHINE: Sternly ticked-off. By Imperial Decree Sunday lunches are for the Family only.

THERESIA: Very Italian.

JOSEPHINE: It's worth breaking the rules, just once.

THERESIA: We did once; all those bloody rules. The Merry Widow Beauharnais, the Magnificent Theresia Carrabus Tallien. We had fun, didn't we . . . what memories.

JOSEPHINE: (*SADLY*) Bloody memories.

THERESIA: Do you still have 'fun', Empress Bonaparte?

JOSEPHINE: I have Duties, my dear, little time for 'fun'. Oh, I can't complain.

THERESIA: I wouldn't complain. Done very nicely for yourself by the looks of things. (*REFERS TO MAP*) What is all this?

JOSEPHINE: France.

THERESIA: All that belongs to us? Very impressive. Quite greedy, your little Napoleon? Anyway, darling, as far as he is concerned, I'm a truly thoroughbred Royal now.

JOSEPHINE: What's the Prince de Caraman-Chimay like?

THERESIA: Less ambitious than old Tallien and so much richer.

JOSEPHINE: I want to hear everything!

THERESIA: You will. But first, how are the children?

JOSEPHINE: (*DELIGHTED*) My dear, I'm a double grandmother! Eugene has a little daughter called Josephine.

THERESIA: Oh, I've always had a thing about your Eugene. What's his little wife like?

JOSEPHINE: Amalie is an angel.

THERESIA: And Hortense?

JOSEPHINE: (*SIGHS*) Miserable, bitter old

THERESIA: At least she has her two boys. Bit confusing both called Napoleon. Can't thing whose Ego inspired that.
(*THEY GIGGLE NAUGHTILY.*)
And talking of the Devil, when does he return?

TALLYRAND GLIDES OUT FROM BEHIND SOMETHING.

TALLYRAND: The Emperor is fighting for France, Your Highness.

THERESIA: (*STARTLED*) He still creeps about like a cat!

JOSEPHINE: (*FRIGHTENED*) Tallyrand, I . . .

TALLYRAND: Forgive me, Your Majesty, I was not aware that the Princess de Caraman-Chimay had requested an audience?

JOSEPHINE: I invited Theresia to lunch.

TALLYRAND: Most unwise, if you'll forgive me.

JOSEPHINE: Tallyrand, it will do no harm.

TALLYRAND: The Queen of Naples hasn't been gifted with a soft whisper, Your Majesty.

THERESIA: The bloody little Queen of Naples needs a good kick in the . . .

TALLYRAND: Highness!

THERESIA: (*POINTEDLY*) Calm yourself, Chancellor, I can take a hint. I must say it's been another disappointment seeing you again after so many years. Of course, one reads about one's former friends with such pride, one forgives the occasional knife in the back!

JOSEPHINE: *(HORRIFIED)* Theresia!

THERESIA: My darling Josephine, you don't know your knives from your
silver spoons
(THEY EMBRACE.)
There's so much to say be careful

JOSEPHINE: Pray for me. I'm so frightened.

THERESIA: We all love you. Whatever happens, we will always love you.

THERESIA EXITS IN TEARS. JOSEPHINE IS SHAKEN.

TALLYRAND: Most unwise, your Majesty. You are to receive members of the
Diplomatic Corps and their wives in an hour.

JOSEPHINE: Yes . . .

TALLYRAND: And might I add . . .

JOSEPHINE: *(DULLY)* I must talk nothing but rubbish all afternoon.

TALLYRAND: My very words, Your Majesty.

SHE TURNS TO HIM, EVERY INCH AN EMPRESS.

JOSEPHINE: *(COLDY)* Arrange for my lunch to be served in my apartments.

TALLYRAND: I am the Chancellor, Your Majesty, nor a servant!

JOSEPHINE: And **then** you will have those pins removed!

*SHE STARES AT HIM, FORCING HIM TO ACKNOWLEDGE HER RANK. HE BOWS
WITH A FIXED SMILE ON HIS FACE. SHE EXITS.*

*TALLYRAND SNAPS HIS FINGERS AND THE FOOTMAN STEPS FORWARD.
TALLYRAND EXITS.*

LIGHTCHANGE.

*THE FOOTMAN STEPS NEXT TO THE STATUE OF NAPOLEON AND SPEAKS TO
US.*

FOOTMAN: I am a servant to many masters. The Emperor is my official employer and his Imperial Crest on my underwear makes me the envy of everyone, down to my washer-woman, who is also my mother. My brothers enthral us with tales of their ‘major’ involvements in the Battles of Jena, Auerstadt, Austerlitz, Eylau. They produce – wrapped up in bloodstained cloth – their souvenirs of Vienna, Leipzig, Venice and Rome. I only need to tell one of my many anecdotes about the Golden Bees and their bravery takes second place to my knavery.

(LAUGHS)

I am in the pay of Tallyrand, I pass on information to Fouche’s Secret Police, I spy for the Queen of Naples, I procure for the Princess Borghese, I eavesdrop for the Grand Duchess Eliza, I carry notes for the Empress, I steal notes from the Emperor. I have a pension fund, the vote and a vivid imagination. I keep a diary for my future memoirs: “Exclusive Exposé: I was Napoleon’s Favourite Footman!” I sleep with a lady-in-waiting on weekdays and a young hussar on weekends. I am a successful young businessman. That’s what the Revolution was all about, wasn’t it? Anyone can do it? Vive le Bonaparte!

LIGHTCHANGE. JOSEPHINE’S APARTMENTS.

JOSEPHINE AND CLAIRE ENTER.

CLAIRE: I sincerely hope you enjoyed the Opera, Your Majesty?

JOSEPHINE: Oh, it's cold in here. Opera? Oh yes. Pleasantly tuneful. Madam Grazzini is a great singer.

CLAIRE: But, Your Majesty, surely . . .

JOSEPHINE: My dear Claire, **old** rivals only warrant one's deepest sympathy.
(*SHIVERS*)
Will I ever get warm again . . . the Emperor has arranged my life like a plan of campaign, yet I stay cold. I wish I could run down the passages without shoes on, or arrange my own flowers. I can't even walk in the Tuileries Gardens because of the people.

CLAIRE: They love you, Your Majesty.

JOSEPHINE: Yes, the dear People. I sometimes wonder what they think I do : go to parties, and the Opera, and glittering receptions. They're never wrong, our dear people . . .
(*LOOKS AROUND STRAINED.*)
Was Marie Antoinette ever as lonely, I wonder . . .
(*LAUGHS BITTERLY.*)
The Emperor fears I might gossip. What secrets could I possibly give away! Only my age. I want to be with my friends. Claire? Will you be my friend? My husband is away at war with Eugene . . . Hortense is away from Paris. I feel in quarantine. I only have the people and I can't talk to them . . .

CLAIRE: We all love you, Your Majesty.

JOSEPHINE: You said that before.

CLAIRE: Good heavens, Your Majesty . . .

JOSEPHINE: (*SUSPICIOUSLY*) What's wrong?

CLAIRE: Nothing

JOSEPHINE: Tell me, we are alone. Allow me the compliment of privacy.

CLAIRE: (*FORCED CASUAL*) Yes, well, it was only something the Queen of Naples said to the Princess Borghese

JOSEPHINE: About me? Claire, they weren't huddled together discussing the production. The production wasn't particularly funny! They laughed! They looked at me!

CLAIRE: (*WEAKLY*) Everyone looked at you at the Opera, Your Majesty.

JOSEPHINE: Dear God, you're my friend! Why are people laughing at me? I have a right to know!

CLAIRE: The Emperor

JOSEPHINE: The Emperor?

CLAIRE: The Emperor has taken up residence in Poland.

JOSEPHINE: For some time now. (*PAUSE*) A woman?

CLAIRE: Marie Walewska.

JOSEPHINE: Is that all?

CLAIRE: They say he loves her, Your Majesty.

JOSEPHINE: Nonsense, Claire, Bonaparte needs to escort beautiful women when he's at war. He is Ruler of Europe.

CLAIRE: Yes, Your Majesty.

JOSEPHINE: If you heard that from Caroline and Paulina, Bonaparte probably shook an old Polish woman's hand and they blew it up out of proportion as usual. The Queen of Naples and The Princess Borghese should write novels.

CLAIRE: I'm sorry I told you.

JOSEPHINE: No, you did well, Claire.

CLAIRE: I'm glad you're not upset, Your Majesty.

JOSEPHINE: No, I'm not upset. Good heavens, I'm not a child bride.
(*SHARPLY*)
Why? Should I be upset?

CLAIRE: No! No
(*JOSEPHINE FIXES HER WITH STARE.*
THE FOOTMAN ENTERS WITH A NOTE. HANDS IT TO
CLAIRE. SHE READS.)
Your Majesty, the Chancellor requests an audience.

JOSEPHINE: I'm fast asleep. Inform him accordingly.
(*FOOTMAN BOWS AND EXITS.*)
Can't he leave me alone, for one hour?
(*PICKS UP A LETTER AND SQUINTS AT IT.*)
Bother, I still can't read Bonaparte's handwriting.
(*SHE HOLDS OUT THE LETTER TO CLAIRE.*)

CLAIRE: But Your Majesty . . . I . . . it's His Letter!

JOSEPHINE: (*SHARPLY*) **My** letter; **my** room; **my** friend?

CLAIRE STARTS READING.

CLAIRE: “I have received your letter. I don’t understand what you say about women . . . I love only my little Josephine, kindly, sulky and capricious, who can quarrel as gracefully as she does everything else; she is always adorable – except when she’s jealous and suspicious; then she becomes a regular she-devil . . .”

JOSEPHINE: Enough. Anything about Theresia Tallien?

CLAIRE: Eh “I absolutely forbid you to see Madame Tallien under any pretext whatever. I shall accept no excuse. Some renegade, I know, has married her, with her litter of eight bastards, but I find her more despicable than ever. She used to be a nice enough trollop; she has now become a horrible, infamous woman”

JOSEPHINE: (*MURMURS*) Eight children?

CLAIRE: Yes, Your Majesty.

JOSEPHINE: Fetch Tallyrand!

CLAIRE MOVES TO EXIT. TALLYRAND APPEARS BEFORE SHE DOES.

CLAIRE: (*STARTLED*) The Grand Chancellor, Your Majesty.

JOSEPHINE: Thank you, Madame de Remusat.
(*CLAIRE CURTSIES AND EXITS.*)
You seem determined to ruin my evening, Tallyrand?

TALLYRAND: Your Majesty is kind to receive me here. It is vital that I speak to you immediately.

JOSEPHINE: You know it is forbidden for me to receive men in my Inner Salon?

TALLYRAND: Indeed, Your Majesty, I suggested the decree to the Emperor.

JOSEPHINE: How thoughtful of you. (*ANGRILY*) You wrote to Bonaparte about Theresia Tallien!

TALLYRAND: No, Majesty, that afternoon it was noted that the Queen of Naples took to pen and paper with a passion that was, to say the least, alarming.

JOSEPHINE: And the Princess Borghese?

TALLYRAND: Princess Paulina has little affection for the written word.

PAUSE.

JOSEPHINE: Marie Walewska. What is she? Actress? Adventuress?

TALLYRAND: On the contrary, Your Majesty, the Countess Walewska is a modest, devoutly religious and ardently patriotic woman.

JOSEPHINE. Would she make a good Empress, Tallyrand?

TALLYRAND: No, Your Majesty. My choice would lie between the Houses of Romanov and Hapsburg – if the necessity ever arose. Forgive me, Your Majesty, I didn't come here to discuss the Emperor's future plans. I don't have his confidence in these matters.

JOSEPHINE: You are insolent, Tallyrand! Our earlier acquaintance during the days of my friendship with Barras and other Directors of the Government, doesn't give you the right to insult me!

TALLYRAND: Your Majesty, I wouldn't

JOSEPHINE: (*CURTLY*) Thank you, you may go.
 (*PAUSE.*)
 Tallyrand! You may withdraw.
 (*PAUSE*) What is it?

TALLYRAND: Please sit down, I have something to say.
 (*SHE SITS AUTOMATICALLY.*)
 I would be the first to salute your gracious acceptance of the
 stifling Imperial routines with such sympathy and skill – and at
 least, outward pleasure. The Theresia Tallien episode is
 insignificant, but indiscretions like these could prove fatal.

JOSEPHINE: What do you mean?

TALLYRAND: Your position has never been more vulnerable than it is today.

JOSEPHINE: Bonaparte loves me; I adore him!

TALLYRAND: We all love you, Madam. The political facts are these: the
 Emperor has no heir.

JOSEPHINE: Nonsense. He has nominated Hortense's son, Napoleon-Charles
 as heir.

TALLYRAND: No son by his wife, of his own blood! There is the damning
 evidence produced by Eleanore de la Plaigne.

JOSEPHINE: We all know Murat is the father!

TALLYRAND: We all know that is mere speculation! The child already has the
 Emperor's features.

JOSEPHINE: Never!

TALLYRAND: Napoleon and Alexander of Russia have become close friends. The Czar has a nineteen-year old sister. We need to strengthen our alliances with Russia. Or for that matter, with Austria. Through the young Marie Louise!

JOSEPHINE: Tallyrand, you are a vicious, cruel

TALLYRAND: (*SOFTLY*) Josephine, in my job facts matter most. He has no heir.

JOSEPHINE: (*WHISPERS*) But Hortense's boy?

TALLYRAND: My reason for this late visit, Josephine. I have grave news from the Hague. Little Napoleon-Charles died of the croup yesterday. The Heir Designate is no more.

PAUSE. SHE SHOWS NO REACTION.

JOSEPHINE: Prepare our carriage. Immediately! We leave for Holland within the hour.

TALLYRAND: Please accept my deepest

JOSEPHINE: (*SNARLS*) **GO!**

HE EXITS. SHE IS MOTIONLESS. SLOW FADE.

LIGHTCHANGE.

A RECEPTIONROOM IN THE TUILERIES.

MADAME MÈRE ENTERS AND IS MET BY CAROLINE, ELIZA AND LOUIS.

PAULINA IS WITH HER MOTHER.

THE DIALOGUE IN BRACKETS WILL BE SPOKEN IN ITALIAN.

CAROLINE: *(DRAMATICALLY)* Mama, Mama!

ELIZA: Mama!

LOUIS: Mama!

LOUIS STARTS CRYING AGAINST HIS MOTHER'S SHOULDER.

PAULINA: *(ANNOYED)* For God's sake, Louis, can't you keep your petty little marital 'tragedy' for later?

ELIZA: How can you speak like that to him! Poor Louis!

CAROLINE: Poor Louis? The idiot married a Beauharnais – he deserves everything he gets!

LOUIS: *(WEEPS)* Mama

PAULINA: For the sake of appearances, Hortense must be forced to attend Jerome's wedding today. *(SNAPS)* Louis!

LOUIS: I can't force her; she doesn't listen to me – what she did to me, Mama

MADAM MÈRE IS NOT UNDERSTANDING MUCH OF THE CONVERSATION.

ELIZA: You've been beautifully had, Louis. Now we must make finally sure that Napoleon is spared the same fate!

CAROLINE: Tell Mama. Tell Mama!

ALL REVERT BACK TO GRASSROOTS IN GESTURE AND LANGUAGE.

ELIZA: *(Since the baby's death, it's been Josephine)*

PAULINA: (She's even taken poor Hortense away from Louis)

LOUIS: (With her Creole lies, Mama)

CAROLINE: (With her Creole charms)

MADAM MÉRE: Basta! (You sound like a swarm of bees! Sting her if you must;
don't deafen me. My God, did I have to come to Paris to **this?**)
(*IN BROKEN ENGLISH*) You all make me sick!

*STUNNED MOMENT, THEN CAROLINE STARTS CRYING. SHE NUDGES ELIZA
HARD AND ELIZA JOINS HER IN WAILS. THEN LOUIS. PAULINA WATCHES
WITH A SMILE.*

LIGHTCHANGE. NAPOLEON'S APARTMENTS.

*NAPOLEON ENTERS IN HIS IMPERIAL UNIFORM, BEING ASSISTED BY
CONSTANT.*

JOSEPHINE – IN FULL IMPERIAL REGALIA – SITS AND WEEPS.

NAPOLEON: (*IRRITATEDLY*) After ten months of staring death in the face,
must I return to this? You even dampen the atmosphere with your
tears! Pull yourself together, Josephine! (*TO CONSTANT*)
Enough!

CONSTANT: But Sire, you won't be ready for the Ceremony

NAPOLEON: Leave us, Constant!
(*CONSTANT BOWS AND EXITS. NAPOLEON STUDIES
DOCUMENTS IN HAND.*)
And what is this? Row and Rows of names for state pensions?
Who are these people? I don't know them! Are they important?

JOSEPHINE: Friends.

NAPOLEON: Are they important!

JOSEPHINE: Friends are always important

NAPOLEON: What friendsI've never heard of these people what's this? A lump sum of 24,000 francs and a pension of 3,000 francs for the widow of General Dillon née Laura de Longpré? Who is this fortunate widow?

JOSEPHINE: (*DULLY*) Laura de Longpré was my first husband's mistress. She was the reason for my first divorce.

NAPOLEON: Your **first** divorce?

JOSEPHINE: (*CRUMBLES*) Bonaparte, if you want me to go, just say the word. I'll obey your wishes. But at least tell me I'm so frightened

NAPOLEON: (*CASUALLY*) My poor Josephine, I shall never be able to live without you.

REFERS FURTHER TO THE PAPERS.

JOSEPHINE: (*COLDLY*) Sire, calm yourself, make up your mind what you want to do – and let's finally put an end to these devastatingly tiresome scenes.

NAPOLEON: (*STARTLED*) You are hard on me, my dear.
(*SHE DOESN'T SOFTEN.*)
Each day you amaze me more; this woman doesn't deserve your compassion.

JOSEPHINE: She isn't well.

NAPOLEON: I'll send her a personal note. Now, dearest, does that make you feel better?

JOSEPHINE: Tremendously secure, Bonaparte, thank you.
(HER COLDNESS MAKES HIM IRRITATED. HE TUGS AT HIS CLOTHES.)
 Stand up straight, Bonaparte, you'll split the seams
(SHE HELPS HIM).
 It always comes in three's.

NAPOLEON: What!

JOSEPHINE: Death. Always in three's.

NAPOLEON: Enough talk of death! I have seen more than three in the last year. Thousands of my children have died in battle. No more talk of death!

JOSEPHINE: First little Napoleon-Charles, now my poor Mama

NAPOLEON: *(GENTLY)* Yes, I'm sorry about your mother; I regret never having met her. She should've left Martinique and come to us, but I salute her incorruptible will.

JOSEPHINE: Poor Mama

NAPOLEON: Josephine, understand. We must keep the news of her death relatively private. For the court to go into mourning now, would be most inconvenient, what with Jerome's wedding and coronation as King of Westphalia

JOSEPHINE: *(DULLY)* Of course I understand

NAPOLEON: No tears.

JOSEPHINE: No tears.

NAPOLEON: Grace and charm incarnate?

JOSEPHINE: Incarnate.

NAPOLEON: Are you ready, Empress Bonaparte?

JOSEPHINE: Yes, Sire.

THEY START WALKING ARM ON ARM.

LIGHTCHANGE. THEY ARE WALKING DOWN A PASSAGE. HE STOPS.

NAPOLEON: You are aware that my mother has arrived from Rome with Paulina?

JOSEPHINE: (*SHARPLY*) Bonaparte, I received her this morning!

NAPOLEON: Mmm, you don't sound pleased.

JOSEPHINE: I'm delighted. Madame Mére has been absent for too long. Her place is with you.

NAPOLEON: She wouldn't come to Paris, but Paulina insisted that she attend Jerome's wedding. He is her youngest.

THEY START WALKING.

JOSEPHINE: Madame Mére must be very proud of her children. Her Kings and Queens of Europe.

THEY STOP.

NAPOLEON: Josephine! I will not tolerate your contempt of my mother! She has a right to be here with me and the Family!

JOSEPHINE: Of course, I never insinuated

NAPOLEON: You will be civil to her!

JOSEPHINE: (*ANGRILY*) For God's sake, Bonaparte!

NAPOLEON: Mama is very self-conscious of her accent and Corsican background. You epitomize the word Elegance. She will be very uncomfortable.

JOSEPHINE: I can always hold some onions in my hands.

NAPOLEON: What?

JOSEPHINE: (*QUIETLY*) I will be civil to her.

NAPOLEON: Good. Allow her to sit in your chair next to me. She will like that. She is the mother of an Emperor.

THEY START WALKING.

JOSEPHINE: Yes, Sire.

NAPOLEON: You will also arrange to receive the Countess Marie Walewska tomorrow.

(*JOSEPHINE STOPS*)

She arrived in Paris this afternoon. She's the friend of a friend

JOSEPHINE: If it's your command, Sire.

NAPOLEON: (CASUALLY) No no, see how you feel.

HE EXITS. SHE STANDS MOTIONLESS.

BLACKOUT.

LIGHTCHANGE. JOSEPHINE'S APARTMENTS.

STILL IN HER FULL REGALIA, GLITTERING CROWN AND HEAVY CLOAK,

JOSEPHINE IS READING THE TAROT. SHE IS SECRETLY DRINKING.

SHE POURS ANOTHER GLASS.

EUGENE ENTERS AND COMES TO HER. SHE IS WAITING FOR INFORMATION.

JOSEPHINE: I've been waiting for hours

EUGENE: The Emperor's meetings never end at a given hour.

JOSEPHINE: Four hours?

(SHE HOLDS OUT HER GLASS; HE POURS. SHE WATCHES HIM.)

Was it interesting?

(PAUSE)

Was your Amalie at the meeting?

EUGENE: No, she and Hortense spent the time discussing baby rashes and sharing motherly advice.

JOSEPHINE: Why didn't they ask me? I know a lot about babies

EUGENE: Unfortunately the Bonapartes don't leave all the screaming to their children.

JOSEPHINE: Ah . . . Paulina was at the meeting. And Caroline.

EUGENE: And Eliza and Louis and the others, Mama, it isn't often that the Emperor has most of his Family around him.

JOSEPHINE: Oh God he's decided.
(*TAKES THE CARDS IN FRONT OF HER.*)
See, a conspiracy.

EUGENE: Really Mama, you'll make yourself ill with all this speculation.

JOSEPHINE: Why else would they cluster together like bee's round a honey cake!

EUGENE: They are all rulers of Europe; the Emperor is reviewing their progress!

JOSEPHINE: (*SMIRKS*) Poor Bonaparte.

EUGENE: There were some good scenes, like the old days. The King of Naples wants to be the King of Spain, the King of Spain wants to retire, the King of Holland mumbled that the Dutch were all peasants and developed a pain in his knee.

JOSEPHINE: King Louis is a charmingly unpredictable man. And what did all the Queens have to say about **me!**

EUGENE: Paulina flirted with the footman. Her principality is too small for the Emperor to show any alarm.

JOSEPHINE: (*SARCASTIC*) I'm sure; even a molehill is too much for the Princess Borghese to administer.

EUGENE: Eliza was highly commended for her political flair, while Queen Caroline was severely reprimanded for her unsubtle sexual adventures with the Governor of Paris

JOSEPHINE: Enough! My God, a veritable dog kennel!

EUGENE: Your treatment of Madame Mére was masterful, Mama. The Emperor's Family have always demanded that their mother sit at his side.

JOSEPHINE: I need allies.
(SHE HOLDS OUT THE CARDS IN A FAN. AS SHE TALKS, SHE PULLS SOME OUT AND LETS THEM FLUTTER TO THE GROUND.)

Marie Walewska has been brought to Paris. She is pregnant. She has a cold. She can't come to tea tomorrow.

(SHE STARTS LAUGHING.)

The Queen of Hearts giving tea to the King's Tarts!

(SHE DROPS THE CARDS, STARTS LOSING CONTROL AND CLAWS AT EUGENE IN TERROR).

Something terrible will happen to me, Eugene, something terrible!

(WHISPERS)

Claire tastes my food!

EUGENE: Really Mama

JOSEPHINE LOOKS AROUND IN TERROR.

JOSEPHINE: They follow me, they watch me, they're waiting for a mistake. Tallyrand is a snake, the others are a nest of scorpions – a little drop of poison a day and I'll just die and there will be no need for divorce and scandal. Let's see

FEVERISHLY REGATHERS SCATTERED CARDS AND SETS THEM OUT.

EUGENE: *(CONTROLLED)* Mama, put away those ridiculous cards!

JOSEPHINE: Ridiculous cards! (*WITH A STRANGE SMILE*) Have you forgotten what the old mulatto slave predicted for me when I was 16? "Cross the sea, contract an unhappy marriage and wear the Crown of France?"

EUGENE: (*SIGHS*) It came true, it's not ridiculous.

JOSEPHINE: Yes, but there was more. It never sounded good at Theresia's parties, so I left it out. She predicted I wouldn't die a Queen. My fears aren't without grounds, Eugene. Bonaparte is going to divorce me – I know it, I know it! If they don't kill me first!

EUGENE: You'll make yourself ill

JOSEPHINE: (*AT CARDS*) Wars, wars, always wars
(*TO EUGENE DESPERATELY.*)
When he leaves, please my darling, stay with me! I don't want to be alone please . . . please

SHE CLUTCHES ROUND HIS NECK. HE TRIES TO FREE HIMSELF FROM HER MOUNTING HYSTERIA.

EUGENE: I am a soldier. My duties are with the **Emperor!**
(*SHE GASPS AND STARES AT HIM IN HORROR..*
PAUSE.)
Come, we'll find Hortense and Amalie. You'll feel better.

JOSEPHINE TRIES TO PULL HERSELF TOGETHER. SMILES WEAKLY.

JOSEPHINE: You go on, I'll join you. Goodness, I feel as if I've stormed the Bastille single-handed. Please Eugene, I'm fine. Mama just had a little moment – it's old age, darling
(*SHE PUSHES HIM AWAY ROUGHLY.*)
Forget it

*(EUGENE EXITS SLOWLY. JOSEPHINE FEVERISHLY
REVERTS BACK TO HER CARDS.)*

Old age . . . soldier's wife . . . Queen of France . . . Death . . .
something terrible . . . **I know it!**

*SHE COLLAPSES OVER THE CARDS.
BLACKOUT.*

*LIGHTCHANGE. AN APARTMENT IN THE TUILERIES.
EUGENE, HORTENSE AND AMALIE ENTER.*

AMALIE: We thought you'd never get back.

EUGENE: A soldier's life is like that of a travelling salesman, Amalie – on
the road for most of the time.

AMALIE: *(SMILES)* As long as you don't indulge in the amorous
adventures attributed to travelling salesmen.

HE AND AMALIE EMBRACE.

HORTENSE: Wagram. Where is it? The reports were very confusing.

EUGENE: Battlefields all tend to look the same after a while. Didn't you get
my letters?

HORTENSE: No. Mama kept us informed.

EUGENE: How is Mama?

HORTENSE: Eugene, what is this talk of an Austrian Alliance through blood?

AMALIE: Marie-Louise.

EUGENE: Talk.

AMALIE: No, Eugene, it's all over Paris.

NAPOLEON ENTERS IN A FURY, FOLLOWED BY PAULINA.

NAPOLEON: Josephine! Josephine!

HORTENSE: Sire

NAPOLEON: Where is the Empress!

AMALIE: Sire, the Empress Josephine

NAPOLEON: Was she not informed of my return? I have travelled all day; I return to a deserted palace. Where is Josephine!

HORTENSE: Sire, she is at Malmaison.

NAPOLEON: How nice for her! She would've done well to have stayed here, where she belongs. She is my wife!

EUGENE: Sire, I will send word

NAPOLEON: Prepare her! She doesn't have much time!

NAPOLEON EXITS QUICKLY FOLLOWED BY A CONCERNED PAULINA.

EUGENE: Prepare her?

HORTENSE: How can we

EUGENE: We must!

HORTENSE: I can't, I can't!

AMALIE: For God's sake! Isn't there anything we can do?

LIGHTCHANGE.

NAPOLEON'S APARTMENTS. THERE IS A SMALL TABLE SET FOR DINNER.

NAPOLEON PACES THE FLOOR. JOSEPHINE ENTERS OUT OF BREATH.

NAPOLEON: Prepare a place for the Empress.

JOSEPHINE: Bonaparte, I

NAPOLEON: Please, my dear, sit down.

JOSEPHINE: But Malmaison is prepared for you.

NAPOLEON: Not tonight, I'm tired. I've been travelling for days. You should be happy; we have peace with Austria.

JOSEPHINE: But I'm not dressed for dinner.

NAPOLEON: *(EXPLODES)* For the love of God, Josephine!
(SHE SITS FRIGHTENED. CONSTANT OFFERS FOOD ON A TRAY. HE FILLS HER PLATE. SHE STARES AT NAPOLEON. HE TAPS WITH HIS KNIFE AGAINST A GLASS. PAUSE. TAPPING. THEN SUDDENLY)
What's the weather like. . . .
(BEFORE CONSTANT CAN ANSWER).
Leave us, Constant.
(CONSTANT EXITS. NAPOLEON POURS ANOTHER CUP. IT SHAKES ON THE SAUCER SO MUCH HE MUST PUT IT DOWN.)

Josephine? My excellent Josephine. You know how I have loved you. To you – to you alone I owe the only moments of happiness I have enjoyed in this world.

(PAUSE)

Josephine, my destiny overmasters my will. My dearest affections must be silent before the interests of France and

JOSEPHINE IS NOW MOANING AUDIBLY.

JOSEPHINE: I will not survive it . . . I will not survive it . . . I will not survive it!

SHE COLLAPSES ONTO THE FLOOR AGAINST THE CHAIR IN HYSTERIA.

NAPOLEON: Constant! Constant!
(CONSTANT AND PAULINA ENTER QUICKLY.)
Carry her . . . national welfare has caused me to do violence to my heart she should've been prepared for this

HE EXITS EMOTIONALLY WITH PAULINA.

CONSTANT STARTS LIFTING JOSEPHINE OFF THE FLOOR. SHE LOOKS TO SEE IF NAPOLEON HAS GONE, THEN TURNS HER HEAD TO CONSTANT.

JOSEPHINE: Ssst! You are holding me too tight!

BLACKOUT.

LIGHTCHANGE. JOSEPHINE'S APARTMENTS.

AMALIE AND CLAIRE ARE SORTING HATS. EUGENE AND HORTENSE STAND APART FROM THEM. MURAT ENTERS WITH A SMALL POSY OF FLOWERS. HE LOOKS SELFCONCIOUS.

MURAT: Oh . . . I didn't realise . . . how is your mother?

EUGENE: Resting.

MURAT: I . . . eh . . . could you give her this . . . don't say who from.
My wife . . . you understand . . .

AN AWKWARD MOMENT. HE EXITS.

EUGENE: Extraordinary. It's like a funeral.

HORTENSE: Napoleon wants me to go back to Louis. I won't; I told him, I
can't. Then he said: nor can I and wept. Madame de Remusat,
the hats can go separately.

CLAIRE: And the shoes?

AMALIE AND CLAIRE GO INTO A DISCUSSION.

EUGENE: My poor Amalie is to be pitied. She had hoped that our children
would wear crowns. She was brought up to consider that
important.

HORTENSE: You can't really blame her, with our present inflation of crowned
heads. Poor Mama.

JOSEPHINE HAS ENTERED, WEARING A HUGE FURCOAT.

JOSEPHINE: Mama will survive. Careful with the hats, Claire.

EUGENE: From a secret admirer.

HANDS HER THE FLOWERS.

JOSEPHINE: How sweet. Put them with the others. All Paris seems already to
know my fate. The dear people.

HORTENSE: You should be in bed.

JOSEPHINE: No, I expected this, my children, though the blow is none the less mortal. I have the feeling that I am dead, and the only sign of life remaining to me is the nebulous sensation that I no longer exist. I have only his happiness and survival at heart. I have no regrets.

HORTENSE: Oh Mama

JOSEPHINE: I waste time lying in bed. There's too much to be done.

AMALIE: The shoes, Mama?

JOSEPHINE: Amalie my dear, don't worry, there'll be a special carriage for the shoes. The hats have boxes somewhere.

(SITS ON A CHAIR ALREADY COVERED WITH A WHITE DUSTCOVER.)

For once I don't have a headache. Look, no tears. Dry. Dry . . .

NAPOLEON ENTERS.

NAPOLEON: My dear children, I Josephine, surely you should be in bed?

AMALIE JOINS EUGENE.

JOSEPHINE: No, Sire, I have come to terms with my fate. I will not aggravate what must be a terrible time for you with tears of weakness.

NAPOLEON: Can I get you anything?

HORTENSE: *(TENSELY)* There are hatboxes somewhere.

AMALIE: And the little dogs?

JOSEPHINE: I take the little dogs.

NAPOLEON: All of them?

JOSEPHINE: They're too tiny to be separated from their mother.

NAPOLEON: Of course. When they're bigger, I'd like one.

JOSEPHINE: If they survive, you can have your pick, Sire.

NAPOLEON: Yes. Thank you my dear. *(PAUSE)* Eh . . . anything else?

JOSEPHINE: I want to know what is to become of me. I have one plea Sire . . .

NAPOLEON: Josephine, please . . .

JOSEPHINE: . . . I beg of you, Sire, don't exile me from France! I don't mean Europe, I mean the France of 1799

NAPOLEON: You retain your titles, Empress, Malmaison, everything; dearest, I don't intend to change anything. Actually as a surprise, I thought perhaps a principality in Italy with Rome . . .

JOSEPHINE: *(SHRILLY)* Not away from France, Bonaparte!

NAPOLEON: *(QUICKLY)* No, no that was silly of me . . . silly of me.
(HE FIDDLES WITH SOME GARMENTS.)
Ah, the dress you wore at our secret remarriage. Do you keep everything, Josephine?

JOSEPHINE: Memories.

NAPOLEON: Eh . . . yes . . .
(*UNCOMFORTABLE PAUSE.*
CLAIRE RELIEVES HIM OF THE DRESS AND EXITS.)
Well, what can we say to each other.

EUGENE: Naturally Sire, you will allow me to leave your service.

NAPOLEON: What's that?

EUGENE: The son of her who is no longer Empress cannot remain a Viceroy.

AMALIE: (*GENTLY*) We will join the Empress in her seclusion and help to comfort her.

EUGENE PUTS HIS ARM ROUND AMALIE WARMLY.

NAPOLEON: Never! You can't desert me!

HORTENSE: Sire, we'll only take with us the remembrance of your kindness.

NAPOLEON: (*EMOTIONALLY*) What? You are all going to leave me? Abandon me? You're not going to love me anymore? If it were for my own personal happiness, I would sacrifice that, but this means the happiness of France. You should be sorry for me for having to give up what I love best!

JOSEPHINE: (*GENTLY*) But Bonaparte, once we are separated, my children will be forgotten. Make Eugene King of Italy!

EUGENE: Mama! I will not have it said that I wore a crown at such a price!

NAPOLEON: No! No one will leave! Our personal feelings dare not intrude.
(*HE COMPOSES HIMSELF AND BECOMES THE EMPEROR.*)

The world is watching us. We must perform like professionals. We have been well-trained, all of us. Josephine, there is still much to be done before it is made official. The celebrations of our peace with Austria – there's a reception tonight. I demand that you put in an appearance. You will precede the Imperial Family. It must be so.

HE EXITS ABRUPTLY.

PAUSE.

HORTENSE: Well, I suppose we should deem ourselves fortunate. Marie Antoinette left the Tuileries on her way to the guillotine.

JOSEPHINE: (WRYLY) A reception or the guillotine: bloodletting is one of the specific remedies of political medicine.
(SHE HOLDS HER HANDS OUT TO THEM.)
My brave professionals. Mama will try not to let you down.

LIGHTCHANGE.

THE FOOTMAN IS NEXT TO THE STATUE OF NAPOLEON.

FOOTMAN: (ANNOUNCES) Citizens! The Emperor of the French will now ruminate on the matters of Love and Marriage!

NAPOLEON APPEARS. FOOTMAN EXITS.

NAPOLEON SPEAKS TO US.

NAPOLEON: Woman is given to man that she may bear him children and cannot be a wife to him when she no longer gives him children. We treat the women too well, and in this way have spoiled everything. We have done very wrong in raising them to our own level. In fact, nature has made woman our slave. Only through

our distorted views dare they now to maintain that they are rulers.
They demand equality! But that is surely madness!
Woman is our property; we are not hers.
She presents us children; we on the other hand do not present her
with any.
Consequently woman is man's property, just as the fruit tree is the
property of the gardener.
To women belong beauty, grace and the art of seduction; her
obligations are dependence and subjection.
The woman is the complement of man's animal organisation, but
still more necessary to the satisfaction of his feeling. He should
deem her as one with himself, pour out his heart to his other self,
then they will both feel strong against irregular lusts and
experience the charms of life.
The charm of union beautifies the imagination and makes the
joys of life richer and more varied, besides making the field of
sensation more fruitful.
I neither wanted to, nor would I, fall in love. Love is made for
other characters than myself. Political matters claimed me
absolutely.
What is love after all?
A passion which turns aside from everything – the whole world –
just to get a sight of the loved one. And I certainly have not been
so constituted as to give myself up to such one-sidedness.

LIGHTCHANGE.

THE RECEPTION ROOM AT THE TUILERIES.

*A FANFARE. TALLYRAND ENTERS, FOLLOWED BY JOSEPHINE. SHE IS
WEARING HER IMPERIAL CROWN AND JEWELS. DRESSED IN WHITE. SHE
TAKES HER POSITION.*

*TALLYRAND HAS A STAFF OF OFFICE AND RAPS THE FLOOR AS HE
ANNOUNCES THE MEMBERS OF THE IMPERIAL FAMILY. FANFARE
ACCOMPANIES THEIR PARADE.*

AS EACH OF THEM ENTER, THEY CROSS IN FRONT OF JOSEPHINE WITH NO SIGN OF RECOGNITION AND EXIT, UNLESS INDICATED.

(AUTHOR'S NOTE: I HAVE ADDED OTHER MEMBERS OF THE FAMILY FOR THE SAKE OF SPECTACLE. UP TO DISCRETION OF DIRECTOR).

TALLYRAND: Eliza, the Grand Duchess Bacciochi de Lucca-Piombino and Prince Felice!
Her Imperial Highness, Paulina the Princess Borghese, Grand Duchess of Guastalla!
Their Imperial Majesties, King Jerome and Queen Catherine of Westphalia!
Their Imperial Majesties, King Joseph and Queen Julie of Spain!
Their Imperial Majesties, King Louis and Queen Hortense of Holland!
(JOSEPHINE REACTS VISIBLY TO HORTENSE PASSING HER WITH ACKNOWLEDGMENT.)
Their Imperial Majesties, King Joachim and Queen Caroline of Naples!
His Imperial Highness, the Viceroy of Italy, Prince Eugene and the Princess Amalie Augusta!
(EUGENE AND AMALIE PASS JOSEPHINE. THEN HE STOPS, TURNS TO HER AND GRACIOUSLY KISSES HER HAND. AMALIE CURTSIES.)
The Emperor of the French and Madame Mère!

NAPOLEON AND MADAME MÈRE PASS JOSEPHINE WITHOUT RECOGNITION AND EXIT.

TALLYRAND FOLLOWS THEM OFF.

JOSEPHINE IS ALONE.

ON THE SOUNDTRACK: A SURREAL SOUND OF AGONY WHICH REPRESENTS JOSEPHINE'S EMOTIONS. ISOLATE HER WITH A POOL OF LIGHT.

CLAIRE APPEARS AND JOSEPHINE SLOWLY STRIPS HERSELF OF ALL HER IMPERIAL VESTMENTS: THE DIAMOND NECKLACE, THE DIAMOND EARRINGS, THE IMPERIAL CROWN AND LASTLY – HER WEDDING RING.

CLAIRE ACCEPTS THESE AND CURTSIES. EXITS.

*THE FULL FAMILY TAKES THEIR PLACES AROUND JOSEPHINE IN THE DARK.
THE SOUND CARRIES ON.*

*THEN JOSEPHINE SUDDENLY TURNS HER HEAD TO LOOK AT NAPOLEON;
THE SOUND STOPS AND THE LIGHTS TO FULL.SHE FOCUSES ON WHAT I(S
BEING SAID.*

NAPOLEON:God knows how much it has cost my heart to take such a decision. I must add that, far from having reason for complaint, I can on the contrary only congratulate myself on the attachment and tenderness of my much-loved wife. She has embellished fifteen years of my life; the memory will always remain engraved on my heart. She has been crowned by my own hand. It is my desire that she should retain the title Empress-Queen, but above all, that she should never doubt my affection and she should always regard me as her best and dearest friend.

PAUSE.

TALLYRAND GENTLY HANDS JOSEPHINE A SHEET OF PAPER.

JOSEPHINE: With the
(*CLEARs HER THROAT AND HOLDS THE PAPER STEADY
WITH BOTH HANDS.*)
With permission of my august and dear husband, I have to declare that, having no longer any hope of bearing children who would fulfil the needs of his policies and the interest of France, I am pleased to offer him the greatest proof of attachment and devotion that has ever been given by a woman on this earth

SHE IS OVERWHELMED.

TALLYRAND TAKES THE PAPER.

TALLYRAND: “the dissolution of my marriage will alter nothing in the feelings of my heart. The Emperor will always have in me his dearest friend. I know how much this action, dictated by political considerations, has grieved his heart, but we both glory in the sacrifices that we both make for the good of the country.”

*AN EMOTIONAL PAUSE. JOSEPHINE MOTIONLESS AND DRAINED.
MADAME MÈRE AND PAULINA STEP FORWARD TO HER.*

MADAME MÈRE: (HALTINGLY) Senora, they will abandon my son, Napoleon one day; all of them except you. Grazie.

*SHE TOUCHES JOSEPHINE ON THE CHEEK AND THEN MOVES AWAY TO
NAPOLEON.*

JOSEPHINE: (DULLY) You’ll have a new Empress.

PAULINA: Won’t be such fun.

*SHE KISSES JOSEPHINE ON THE CHEEK AND JOINS MADAME MÈRE WITH
NAPOLEON. AMALIE, EUGENE AND HORTENSE STEP FORWARD AND ASSIST
JOSEPHINE OFF.
THEY EXIT.
NAPOLEON MOVES CENTRE AND SURVEYS HIS FAMILY.*

NAPOLEON: So? My kings and Queens? Are you all satisfied? Good! Now get out! **Get out!**

*THE FAMILY EXIT HURRIDLY. NAPOLEON HELPED OFF BY HIS MOTHER AND
PAULINA.*

*LIGHTCHANGE.
THE GARDENS OF MALMAISON.*

JOSEPHINE ENTERS WITH LETTERS IN HER HANDS.

JOSEPHINE: *(READS)* “. . . a thousand kisses. Remember that there has never been a love like mine. It will last as long as my life”
(AND ANOTHER LETTER:)
“. . . the love you have inspired in me robs me of my reason. I shall never regain it. One never recovers from that condition”
(AND ANOTHER LETTER:)
“. . . adieu, my beautiful and good, my utterly incomparable, utterly divine Josephine! A thousand passionate kisses, everywhere. . . everywhere. . . .”

THERESIA TALLIEN HAS ENTERED. WATCHES HER.

THERESIA: What are you thinking?

JOSEPHINE: I’m nearly forty-seven

THERESIA EMBRACES HER GENTLY.

THERESIA: My poor darling. . . .

JOSEPHINE: *(SOBS)* I’ve tried so hard to control myself. I can’t live without him! Why did he leave me?

THERESIA: For France, darling, for bloody France! There now, you’ll start looking like eighty if you keep on howling like that. Bloody men, they’re not worth it!

JOSEPHINE: Look what I’ve left behind – Hortense has left Louis. I arranged that awful marriage. Me, who always promised my children freedom in love. What have I done?

THERESIA: I'll tell you what you've done! You've stayed Napoleon's greatest friend. To hell with marriage; it's friendship that really counts. He'll need you more than ever before.

JOSEPHINE: (*WEEPS*) I'm a failure

THERESIA: (*FIRMLY*) No, Josephine, I'm going home if you think I'm here to applaud melodrama!
 (*JOSEPHINE RECOVERS VERY QUICKLY. THERESIA TWINKLES AT HER.*)
 That's better. You've never been a bloody politician, or a glib statesman, my darling, only the wife of a great bastard! History will thank you for your gentleness. If Napoleon had sons like any other Italian his age, think how many thousands of people would die in new battles!

JOSEPHINE: Bonaparte's no murderer!

THERESIA: He came to power by the sword; he'll fall by the sword!
 (*JOSEPHINE SOBS AFRESH.*)
 (*FLUSTERED*) On hush Josephine! I picked that up from Barras some years ago. It's tatty politics; sour grapes.
 (*SHE SIGHS*)
 Alright, give the little monster some credit. He paid all your unbelievable debts. He's even given you a new title. Duchess of bloody Navarre!

JOSEPHINE: (*SHREWDLY*) Duchess-of-bloody-Navarre! You know why, of course, don't you.

THERESIA: He ran out of sisters.

JOSEPHINE: I'm to be banished out to god-forsaken Navarre when the new Empress arrives.

THERESIA: Over my dead body. He won't dare keep you away from Paris, the little twerp!

JOSEPHINE: (*SADLY*) Oh my wonderful darling, it's so much bigger than both of us.
(*SIGHS*)
Oh God, I still can't believe it happened. Twelve years of waiting and I still can't believe it . . . I won't survive this
(*LOOKS AROUND; SARDONICALLY*)
Here rests Josephine – formerly Madame Bonaparte; formerly Our Lady of Victories; formerly Madame la Vicomtesse de Beauharnais; formerly Mademoiselle Tascher de la Pagerie – now redundant Empress of the French. The Old One.

SHE CRUMBLES. THERESIA SUPPORTS HER.

THERESIA: Oh nonsense! You damn-well do what you like! Travel – visit Eugene in Italy, have Hortense here with her boys, write your autobiography! (*CHUCKLES*) Unexpurgated from the Queen Bee's mouth? That will cause a few wet breeches around town.
(*JOSEPHINE MUST GIGGLE. THERESIA LAUGHS.*)
Just remember, "Old One", here at Malmaison you're quite free. You can start a new life untainted by the horrors still to come. Believe me darling, there's more the world than Napoleon Bonaparte!

NAPOLEON HAS ENTERED.

NAPOLEON: I wish to be alone with my wife, Madame Tallien.

THERESIA STARTLED, TURNS TO HIM.

THERESIA: For God's sake, Bonaparte, can't you leave her alone!

NAPOLEON: (*SNAPS*) Leave us!

THERESIA: (*SPITS*) **Bastard!**

SHE EXITS. JOSEPHINE STARES AT NAPOLEON.

NAPOLEON: (*GENTLY*) You look well.

JOSEPHINE: But I saw you yesterday. And the day before.

NAPOLEON: Twice. I can't stay away from you, Josephine.

JOSEPHINE: It was your decision to cast me aside, Sire.

NAPOLEON: For France.

JOSEPHINE: (*POINTEDLY*) **Your** decision.

PAUSE.

NAPOLEON: Eh . . . how is your garden?

JOSEPHINE: Fine.

NAPOLEON: And the roses?

JOSEPHINE: Fine. Fine

PAUSE.

NAPOLEON: I don't sleep, Josephine, I think of you all the time.

JOSEPHINE: Bonaparte, you need your sleep. Is there no one to read to you?

NAPOLEON: No.

JOSEPHINE: (*SOFTLY*) Mademoiselle Georges?

NAPOLEON: (*LAUGHS*) No.

JOSEPHINE: Oh.

PAUSE.

NAPOLEON: There is no one.

JOSEPHINE: This Marie-Louise

NAPOLEON: They say she is very young.

JOSEPHINE: She will give you a son.

NAPOLEON: For France, Josephine, for France.

PAUSE.

JOSEPHINE: I've been rereading your earlier letters.

NAPOLEON: My dear, you mustn't open old wounds.

JOSEPHINE: They're all I have now – old wounds, old memories.

(*SHE CUDDLES UP TO HIM, SMILES.*)

Do you remember our wedding night?

NAPOLEON: Which one!

JOSEPHINE: Bonaparte!

NAPOLEON: Of course I remember. We quarrelled.

JOSEPHINE: Oh no, we didn't quarrel on our wedding night!

NAPOLEON: We had words about your little dog Fortune. He threatened me with his teeth and went.

JOSEPHINE: He bit you twice and stayed.

NAPOLEON: I don't recall.

JOSEPHINE: Bonaparte, Fortune bit you on your leg and your thigh and stayed in our bed all night!

NAPOLEON: (*GRUFFLY*) Yes, well, it was many years ago.

JOSEPHINE: Fifteen years.

NAPOLEON: That vile little creature was the only enemy I was ever forced into coalition with! Monster!
(*HE LAUGHS. THEN FROWNS.*)
Did you hear what your darling little Theresia called her Emperor?

JOSEPHINE: Am I to be denied her comfort? She is my friend.

NAPOLEON: She called me a bastard!

JOSEPHINE: Yes!
(*THEN GENTLY*)
She didn't really mean it, Bonaparte.

NAPOLEON: Theresia Tallien never lies. Infamous trollop! Don't worry, I have had reports of your slackness in etiquette. You must have the dignity of an Empress at all times. There can be no familiarity with your staff.

JOSEPHINE: Am I commanded thus to become a hermit, Sire? My staff are my friends; the few that dared accompany me into the shadows deserve more than my 'Dignity'.

NAPOLEON: You are still my Empress!

JOSEPHINE: Even though I wear my Imperial Crown to dinner, I have nobody. I need to laugh, to pretend. Don't rob me of my last illusion. At least let me believe that you still love me, in spite of everything.

NAPOLEON: Josephine, can you doubt my affections?

JOSEPHINE: Quite easily, Sire.

PAUSE.

NAPOLEON: Eh . . . those flowers. I haven't seen them before.

JOSEPHINE: No, they arrived here last week from Kew Gardens.

NAPOLEON: *(EXPLODES)* England! My God, Josephine, I spend my days trying to enforce my Continental Blockade against England – from Spain to Russia – and under my very nose **you** break it for your garden! I
*(HE TURNS TO HER AND IS INSTANTLY DEFUSED BY HER INNOCENT SMILE.
SHAKES HIS HEAD AND CHUCKLES.)*
Oh Josephine may I stay for a while?

JOSEPHINE: You are the Emperor, Sire.

NAPOLEON: Josephine a short while?

JOSEPHINE: Yes. Please.

NAPOLEON *(BEAMS)* I'll get the gardening gloves and the shears, and
we'll cut some roses for my room.
(STARTS EXITING, THEN STOPS AND TURNS.
POINTEDLY)
My lonely room in the Tuileries!

HE EXITS.
PAUSE.

JOSEPHINE: *(SIGHS)* Oh dear, oh dear, I shall not survive this.

SHE SMILES AND FREEZES IN HER POSITION.
TALLYRAND APPEARS AND SPEAKS TO US:

TALLYRAND: And there our entertainment ends sweetly.
The real story has only begun to sour.
Josephine did survive this, to die six years later of a chill
contracted while elegantly entertaining the Russian Conqueror of
her Bonaparte's France.
Napoleon paced about on Elba and planned his Waterloo.
Caroline and Murat turned renegade and went over to the
English.
Paulina had a requiem said for the demise of her brother's
Empire, while languishing in her goat-milk bath.
Louis planned to kidnap the Empress Marie-Louise and her son
and hold them to ransom.
Eliza fled to Switzerland.
Madame Mére suffered in silence.

Eugene abdicated with dignity.
Hortense took a young lover and raised the future Emperor
Napoleon III.
Theresia Tallien died.
The footman flourished.
And Charles de Talleyrand?
Needless to say, he went from strength to strength.
For that is what Professionalism is all about.
Not everyone can do it.
Napoleon and Josephine.
It is, after all, a man's world,
but only through the eyes of his woman.

THE END OF THE PLAY