

Flowering Desolation

By

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EXPLANATORY NOTE.

In the writing of this play, I have collated sentences from a myriad of sources of classic literature and stitched them together to form one linear narrative. The words that follow have been authored by others, but the story is my own. In a similar way to the one in which writers use existing words to create new sentences, I have used existing sentences to create new text.

For the sake of structure and clarity I have self-imposed a number of rules upon the work which are outlined hence.

1 - *No proper nouns have been used anywhere.*

2 - *I have not used any more than one sentence from the same work at one time.*

3 - *No sentence has been followed by another by the same author.*

4 - *No words have been altered in any way, nor has the order of words in a sentence been changed.*

5 - *Sentences have occasionally been cut in the middle, and in such cases existing grammar has been changed to make the new composite sentences work.*

6 - *No literature created after 1944 has been used.*

In the way it has been written this play is akin to a Dada poem, but in which I myself have played the role of chance.

The numbers that are interspersed throughout the text are in place to indicate the original source of the words, and they are to be ignored when reading the play. If interested, these correspond to a numbered list at the end of the play.

CHARACTERS

NARRATOR

WOMAN - 19 or 20 years of age

MAN

ACT I

2

Scene 1

2

EARLY SPRINGTIME, 4pm.

WOMAN sitting on a bench in the countryside.

When NARRATOR is speaking, all action by the other cast members is completely silent. In cases where NARRATOR describes what the other members of the cast are doing, they act it out silently.

Throughout the duration of the play, the lights gradually dim to suggest the passage of time.

NARRATOR

A small wind began to blow everywhere (1). It was the beginning of April, when the primroses are in bloom, and a warm wind blows over the flower-beds newly turned, and the gardens, like women, seem to be getting ready for the summer fetes (2)

A decanted springtime, which is reduced to its own essence and expresses the lengthening, the warming, the gradual unfolding of its days (3).

The flat country stretched as far as eye could see, and the tufts of trees round the farms at long intervals seemed like dark violet stains on the vast grey surface, that on the horizon faded into the gloom of the sky (2).

(PAUSE)

She was a beautiful girl of nineteen or twenty, one of those women who, when you pass them on the street, lash you with sudden desire and leave you, until nightfall, in a state of vague disquiet and an upheaval of the senses (4). Her eyes were large and radiant; when one looked into them they had a dark lustre which, because of their impenetrability, gave a hint of their infinite depth; they were pure and innocent, gentle and quiet, full of mischief when she smiled (5).

The girl seemed the very epitome of the virtuous spouse to whom any sensible young man dreams of entrusting his life (6). Her skin was so infinitely delicate that blue veins shimmered through everywhere, even through the muslin covering her arms and bosom (7).

There was a dignity about her (8). She was young, and certainly altogether well-looking, and possessed, in an acute mind and assiduous pleasing manners, infinitely more dangerous attractions than any merely personal might have been (9).

(CONTINUED)

Her innocent expression enhancing her radiant beauty even more than her natural elegance or the freshness of her gown and makeup (10).

Her hair, whose two black folds seemed each of a single piece, so smooth were they, was parted in the middle by a delicate line that curved slightly with the curve of the head; and, just showing the tip of the ear, it was joined behind in a thick chignon, with a wavy movement at the temples (2).

ENTER: MAN

NARRATOR (CONTINUED)

To look at, he might have been a clerk, but of the better sort; for he wore brown boots; his hands were educated; so, too, his profile - his angular, big-nosed, intelligent, sensitive profile; but not his lips altogether, for they were loose; and his eyes (as eyes tend to be), eyes merely; hazel, large; so that he was, on the whole, a border case, neither one thing nor the other (8). His face took a saddened look that made it nearly interesting (2).

Advancing down the path with his eyes upon sky and branches he rapidly endows them with womanhood; sees with amazement how grave they become; how majestically, as the breeze stirs them, they dispense with a dark flutter of the leaves charity, comprehension, absolution, and then, flinging themselves suddenly aloft, confound the piety of their aspect with a wild carouse (8).

MAN (SOLILOQUY)

Whilst strolling along the river just now, in broad daylight, I was assailed by doubts about my sanity: not the vague misgivings I had been experiencing, but precise and concrete doubts (11).

I felt suddenly brush past me a skirt, the violence of the pleasure which I then felt made it impossible for me to believe that the contact was accidental, and I attempted to seize in my arms a terrified stranger (3).

MAN sees WOMAN

You, madame, who are so full of feeling, you who, so perfectly understanding the most rarefied emotions, can cultivate the most fragile sentiment in a man's heart without depleting it, without breaking it on the first day, you who take pity on all heartache (10).

Let but a single real feature - the little that one distinguishes of a woman seen from afar or from behind - enable us to project the form of beauty before our eyes, we imagine that we have seen her

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MAN (SOLILOQUY) (cont'd)

before, our heart beats, we hasten in pursuit, and will always remain half-persuaded that it was she, provided that the woman has vanished: it is only if we manage to overtake her that we realise our mistake (3).

NARRATOR

Her manners, her gestures so full of sadness, melancholy, and despair, all this reawoke the urgent passion in his soul (10).

She was a riddle, who mysteriously possessed her own solution, a secret, and what are all diplomats' secrets compared with this, an enigma, and what in all the world is so beautiful as the word that solves it? (5)

Indeed, she's a most fresh and delicate creature.
(12)

MAN (SOLILOQUY)

Examining her, I saw signs of unspoken thoughts (13). I felt an atmosphere of youth, of home, of feminine softness, of the most refined elegance (14). This girl was the very model of the secret poetry that holds all the arts in one common bond, and which always flees those who strive after it (10).

WOMAN stands and wanders a bit, MAN sits on bench

Waiting upon a bench, I sought refuge in the innermost depths of my own consciousness, strove to migrate to a plane of eternal thoughts - to leave nothing of myself, nothing that lived and felt on the surface of my body, anaesthetised as are those of animals which by inhibition feign death when they are attacked - so as not to suffer too keenly in this place, with which my total unfamiliarity was made all the more evident to me when I saw the familiarity that seemed at the same moment to be enjoyed by a smartly dressed lady. (3)

An icy chill ran through my frame; a sense of insufferable anxiety oppressed me; a consuming curiosity pervaded my soul; and, sinking back upon the chair, I remained for some time breathless and motionless, with my eyes riveted upon her person (15), enchanted by her presence, warmed by the warmth of her (14). It is not a single beauty that captivated me but a totality; a dream image floats past, in which all these feminine natures form their own configurations among one another, and all these movements seek something, seek rest in one picture that is not seen. (5)

This is what comes of the oblivion of love. (16)

NARRATOR

His face remained pensive and ashen (17), staring so intensely at the girl that he could focus on nothing else, and his strength was paralyzed by his overpowering emotions. (4)

MAN (SOLILOQUY)

I was passing through one of those periods of our youth, unprovided with any one definite love, vacant, in which at all times and in all places - as a lover the woman by whose charms he is smitten - we desire, we seek, we see Beauty. (3)

Before me stood an ordinary woman, perhaps neither beautiful nor elegant, but (14) it was like a lightening flash of passion, quick and blinding, in a deadened sky (18). Clearly we two are predestined for each other. (5)

NARRATOR

In the grip of emotion (13) he shook off his fears and told himself not to act like a child; he wanted to be strong, but, despite himself, his body refused. (18)

His heartbeat was so strong, so deep, so resonant that it frightened him (17), but he could think of no way of starting a conversation. (19)

And thus she seemed so virtuous and inaccessible to him that he lost all hope, even the faintest. (2)

MAN (SOLILOQUY)

I didn't know what I was going to say to her, but I felt that I must say some thing very important and necessary. (14) The air was pitilessly raw and already my heart misgave me. (19)

I felt that there was something wrong with me, and was afraid the expression of my eyes or my face might betray me. (14)

I cannot conceal from myself, can scarcely master, the anxiety which grips me at this moment, as I resolve for my own interest to (5) conceal my emotion. (14)

NARRATOR

He was happy when her eyes met his and bravely sustained his gaze (18). Their gaze began with a defiant note but was confused by what seemed a deliberate swoon of the pupil into the iris, revealing for an instant a temperament of great sensibility. (20)

She looked pale, mysterious, like a lily, drowned, under water - he (8) did not know what to do between

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

NARRATOR (cont'd)

his fear of being indiscreet and the desire for an intimacy that seemed almost impossible. (2)

Beginning already to indulge his fantasy of lust as he timorously approached the woman he desired (18), with a face as desperate and determined as though he were exposed to great danger at that actual moment. (21)

She turned round, her chin lowered, her forehead bent forward (2). Her mouth was expressive, her eyes amorous, her skin brilliant white, (10) and she looked like one awaking from a dream. (2)

Before long it became obvious that she was much disposed towards conversation. (22)

On a whim, above all out of a certain desire to flirt with that young man, who must indeed find her very pretty, she started to fix a lingering gaze on him, then looked away, only to gaze at him again. (23)

MAN (SOLILOQUY)

I will never forget that gaze full of thoughts, apprehensions, resignation, and a kind of sorrowful, melancholy grace. (17)

NARRATOR

Suddenly their eyes met and each of them tried to fix in the eyes of the other the thought that they were in love; she remained for a second thus, standing erect. (24)

He understood the situation and did his utmost to please and gain acceptance straight away (18). She's looking at me, he thought, a sudden embarrassment coming over him; But it was delicious (8), and he expanded his nostrils to breathe in the sweet odours of the country which did not reach him. (2)

A light breeze momentarily disturbs their brightly flickering but somber immobility, and the trees tremble slightly, balancing the light on their tops and stirring the shadows at their feet. (24)

MAN (SOLILOQUY)

I felt as though there were already a breath of victory in the air. (14)

A boundless happiness and an invincible certainty overwhelmed me; I felt as if I would faint. (24)

NARRATOR

In that unearthly ambiance they looked vaguely like spectres half wrapped in their shrouds, a monumental image of the famed dance of the dead. (10)

She kept her lithe appearance and calm, indifferent expression, and she remained a child who had been brought up sleeping in an invalid's bed. (18)

They advanced towards each other; he held out his hand; she hesitated (2). His mistress's calm, serious air was strong encouragement to come and taste of a passion so daringly offered (18). She awakens first at the touch of love. (5)

Rather hesitant and embarrassed (25), he seized her hand; she did not withdraw it. (2)

He wondered whether he had gone too far; but he decided that he must advance farther rather than retreat. (22)

A supreme desire made their dry lips tremble, and wearily, without an effort, their fingers intertwined (2). Her compliance had brought back his desires with all their former keenness (18). In any case, it was perhaps a deliberate coquetry. (26)

For a long time the girl remained silent, as if incapable of reply (27). Her thin lips grew white (though her eyes did not change) and her voice when she began to speak came in jerks which obviously surprised even her. (21)

MAN (SOLILOQUY)

Everything seemed to be going in accordance with my desires and intentions; but why did my feeling of uneasiness persist? (14)

NARRATOR

She felt infinite desires for happiness, abrupt tenderness that swept through her, revelations of divine poetry, and a melting of her nerves and her heart - a melting so deep that she wept without knowing why. (4)

Her eyes, dull black, were like two bottomless shafts, and between her half-open lips could be seen the pink highlights of her mouth. (18)

She made a terrible effort at self-control, bracing herself and choking back her sobs like a child; but the tears welled up, shining on the edges of her eyelids, and soon two big drops, leaving her eyes, rolled slowly down her cheeks. (28)

Her cheeks went pale, she stared at her lover with a somber look in her eye, and her lips began to twitch. (18)

MAN (SOLILOQUY)

She loves me, the little darling! (24)

I muttered as in delirium, holding out my hands to her: (14) "To me you are the whole world (17) - I belong to you, do with me what you will." (18) Be patient with my love, forgive me for continuing to love you; I know my love is a burden to you. (5)

She looked intently into my face and believed me, and there was a gleam of uneasiness in her eyes. (14)

NARRATOR

She scarcely spoke in reply, but quivered and resumed her fascinated contemplation (18). Then she threw her arms around him and kissed him wildly (6). She flung herself upon him, went into raptures (8), though she was so apprehensive that her legs were trembling beneath her; (18) above all, she felt very afraid. (23)

She had still not known love. (29)

MAN (SOLILOQUY)

This feeling imbued my happiness with the added charm of a secret pleasure. (24)

NARRATOR

He could dimly feel her crying out and writhing inside him; he belonged to her (18). She felt that she had been given a present, wrapped up, and told just to keep it, not to look at it - a diamond, something infinitely precious, wrapped up, which, as they walked (up and down, up and down), she uncovered, or the radiance burnt through, the revelation, the religious feeling! (8)

Eyes still virgin of earthly experience (30) took on a languid and provocative air beneath his gaze. (18)

MAN (SOLILOQUY)

You love me my darling girl; how could you have been so cruel as to tell me? (24)

NARRATOR

He wildly kissed the ebony curls on her neck, sniffing the tiny space between her frock and her skin inhaling the sweet warmth of her body and all the pleasant smell of her person. (30)

She had never, since the age of fourteen, never since the loss of her dear mother, known the happiness of being listened to, or encouraged by any just appreciation. (9)

She was more preoccupied by him than by all the wittiest and most charming men (23). For him the

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

NARRATOR (cont'd)

universe did not extend beyond the circumference of her petticoat (2). He remarked to himself that she had the most charming nose he had ever seen. (22)

There were storms of passion, horror, and desire raging beneath the surface tranquility of their faces. (18)

MAN (SOLILOQUY)

But here, tranquil now, a little pale, quite close to me and yet distant and already vague, as if in the moonlight, are all my past times of happiness and all my healed sorrows, gazing at me wordlessly. (24)

Stage lights now rather dim to suggest late evening

She is reserved in conversation, her nature has a melancholy grace that no one can resist; she loves me, or at least she lets me think so; she has a certain smile she reveals to no one but myself; and when she speaks to me her voice grows gentler still. (17)

NARRATOR

'If it were now to die, 'twere now to be most happy,' she had said to herself (8), and she kept moving her lips in silent fervent prayer. (31)

She felt virginal again, like a little girl (18). As if that strange creature might be broken by any contact with men. (10)

It would be difficult to say which had seen highest perfection in the other, or which had been the happiest; she, in receiving his declarations and proposals, or he in having them accepted. (9)

MAN (SOLILOQUY)

Her image accompanied me even in places the most hostile to romance (19). She's always quivering and she has a funny expression, quiet but passionate. (18)

I went to the Garden of Love, and saw what I never had seen. (32)

Our shadows, now parallel, now close together and joined, traced an exquisite pattern at our feet. (3)

Actors in background appear to be about to depart

NARRATOR

A downpouring of immense darkness began. (33)

in an abrupt voice, under the pressure of an emotion which caught her heart, made the muscles of her
(MORE)

NARRATOR (cont'd)

throat stiff, and contracted her lips in a spasm as
(8) she said, fixing her large black eyes wide open
upon him, (2) "how vain and dull this common world
must seem to such a one as thou." (34)

She had in her some essence of remorse or
anticipation; her manner bespoke a secret, like that
of the devout women you see in church, rapt in
over-fervent prayer, like the young infanticide with
her child's last shriek still ringing in her ears.
(13)

MAN

There is nothing so bad as a separation. (9)

NARRATOR

Her eyes grew fixed, then her throat contracted and
the corners of her mouth drooped; (21) she wanted to
say not one thing, but everything. (33)

MAN

Say if I shall see you soon, (12) I cannot bear to
have you go away. (9)

My legs can keep no pace with my desires. (35)

NARRATOR

She was holding a handkerchief to her eyes, and her
face was tearful (21). Suddenly she seized his head
between her hands, kissed him hurriedly on the
forehead, crying, "Adieu!" (2)

The young girl looked at him more gravely, but with
eyes that were prettier than ever (22) - no shyness
or reserve; they seemed all to know each other
perfectly, and he was coming the very next morning.
(9)

MAN

I fear we shall outsleep the coming morn. (35)

How gladly we would leap into nothingness if only, by
so doing, we could hasten the longed-for future. (36)

Under the misery of a parting (9) - I shall carry
away with me the remembrance of you. (2)

But you will forget me; I shall pass away like a
shadow (2). I am still yours; love a hundred others,
I am still yours; yes, even in the hour of death I am
yours (5). I have loved none but you (9). If, by
chance, you needed me - whatever might be the purpose
- that I would be yours in life, as in death. (27)

Haste, make no delay. (35)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MAN (cont'd)
I shall expect you. (21)

MAN (SOLILOQUY)
And, on this note of promise, she bade me goodnight.
(37)

WOMAN walks off into the distance

NARRATOR

The adieux were sad (2), and he felt alone,
miserable, like no man who had ever been alone. (38)

This hope that his mistress would return gave him
courage to persevere in the rupture, as the belief
that one will return alive from the battle helps one
to face death. (3)

MAN sits down head in hands, lights slowly fade to black.

ACT 1

3

scene 2

3

After 8 seconds of darkness, lights quickly come on again. WOMAN is illuminated but MAN is in darkness, still head in hands.

WOMAN (SOLILOQUY)

Nature has put man at woman's mercy through his passion, and woman is misguided if she fails to make him her subject, her slave, no, her toy and ultimately fails to laugh and betray him. (7)

Ofttimes sitteth filth on the throne, and oftentimes also the throne on filth. (40)

*Lights out immediately and 25 seconds of something **similar** to the first 14 seconds of Russian Attractions (by Sebastian Tellier plays LOUD) upon closing of 'filth'. Theatre is kept in pitch darkness until 25 seconds of music has finished, and then lights back on immediately at last note. Stage is then empty - curtains open.*

ACT 2

4

scene 1

4

The next day, late evening.

NARRATOR

Across the countryside, the wind deploys a crazed and futile ardour in scattering the flurries of sunlight (24). Again minute followed minute and hour followed hour. (41)

Sounds of light spring rain

This hope that his mistress would return gave him courage to persevere in the rupture, as the belief that one will return alive from the battle helps one to face death (3). He was so impatient that the road seemed twice as long as usual. (42)

PAUSE

Fear no more, says the heart. (8)

PAUSE

He then put his ear to the ground, trying to listen; he believed he could discern a voice, he started running, calling out again, hearing nothing, and sitting down, worn out, desperate. (38)

MAN now sits on same bench as ACT 1

His whole mind was dominated by abstractions (43) ...not weeping, but now and then drenched with tears. (3)

He spent hours in reading or dreaming, drinking his fill of solitude till nightfall (43). A last gleam of the setting sun and, farther on, a first glint of the moon through evening mist in which fountains, steps and foliage mingled in a still confusion, lent mystery to the scene (36). Their separation was becoming intolerable. (8)

ENTER WOMAN IN DISTANCE

NARRATOR (CONTINUED)

The figure of a lady appeared, at a distance, very indistinct in the darkness, and advancing with a slow and wavering movement (22). Her hair drawn back off her ears brushed her shoulders in such a way that the face seemed to have just emerged from it, as if this were the exact moment when she was coming from a wood into clear moonlight. (44)

He encountered her, in that beautiful abode of flowering desolation (22).

He saw her approach him in (45) full evening dress, her fresh young flesh exposed (41)

(CONTINUED)

The young lady paused in front of his bench, near the parapet of the garden, which overlooked the lake (22). Her prettiness was still visible in the darkness (22), but there was also, in her clenched features, in her darkened brow, a sort of foreboding (13). There was a tremor in her voice (22).

She looked with steady and sinister serenity (8), giving a tender, old-world look as of something fading away in a quiet death of exhaustion. (43)

He grabbed her and hugged her wildly, and, without a word, he lifted her up like a feather. (42)

Softly he pressed to his breast the silent woman by his side, clung to her for comfort like a frightened child, never even seeing the sulky looks of the actress forced to play a part, to exercise her craft (43).

WOMAN (SOLILOQUY)

Everything in that face breathed a sensual, stupid and brutal joy (25). There is always some madness in love. (40)

That tranquility was tempting (46).

NARRATOR

Then she affected anxiety (2) and flung her arms around his neck; she had a warm scent of white linen and newly scrubbed flesh (18).

In an abrupt voice, under the pressure of an emotion which caught her heart, made the muscles of her throat stiff, and contracted her lips in a spasm; (8) "Do you still love me?" She asked, her eyes blurring in sweet passion. (7)

Rapt in that first surge of love, as much pleasure as pain, (10) he looked at her exquisite prettiness; and then he said very gently (22).

"I love you more than myself, I'm devoted to you in life and death." (7)

Then kissed her without uttering a word. (18)

WOMAN

I am bound to thee forever. (12)

NARRATOR

Terrified by wild desire, she returned his kiss, hugging him on her bosom, and all her resistance collapsed as if crushed by an overpowering weight. (4)

Trembling with delight at her sudden kiss, at the quaintness of her phrase, put his hands on her hair
(MORE)

NARRATOR (cont'd)

and began smoothing it back, scarcely touching it with his fingers. (47)

The man closed his eyes, reopened them, closed them again, and his satisfied face was entirely filled with his energetic resolution to (48) surrender to happiness. (49)

And so, usually against her will, a dichotomy, a pack of lies and deception comes into her conduct, into her being, and corrupts her character (7).

WOMAN (SOLILOQUY)

Some rise by sin, and some by virtue fall (50). He is a man who has never known what worry is. (51)

We are healed of a suffering only by experiencing it to the full. (3)

NARRATOR

He felt many things, something in particular that excited him and disturbed him for reasons which he could not give. (33)

Her smiling face was noble, her affected gestures exaggerated and meaningless. (26)

That adorable tricksteress exploits all of womankind's little plots with an innocence that forbids any suspicion of guile or premeditation (13). She had been forced into prudence in her youth, she learned romance as she grew older - the natural sequel of an unnatural beginning. (9)

WOMAN (SOLILOQUY)

It is thanks to vice that virtue is able to live (3), it is through sin that one gains a first glimpse of salvation. (52)

Virtue - that is to sit quietly in the swamp. (40)

I know of magnificent deviations, sublime sufferings; they're simply not public knowledge, they lack the celebrity, if you like, that ennobled the missteps of some of our women of old (13). Dangerous tendencies lay dormant in me, and you were the first to arouse them. (7)

Things that immediately made me shudder with remorse and pleasure. (25)

There are people who are quite indifferent and completely devoid of all feeling of sympathy (14), but then, I am accustomed to suffering. (21)

NARRATOR

His companion stared at him with eyes full of pity and fury (48) but the physical well-being he was feeling prevented him from thinking about it at any great length and immediately gave him that supreme consolation, oblivion. (26)

WOMAN (SOLILOQUY)

I used to bite my pillow to stifle my shouts, and hit myself and call myself a coward; my blood was on fire and I could almost have torn my body to pieces in my rage (18). My first steps along the path of vice were thus officially taken. (37)

"When the body escaped mutilation, seldom did the heart go to the grave unscarred." (53)

The impulse or vehemence, arising from sorrow, compassion, indignation (54) knocked repeatedly against the walls of my heart as if to burst through and rush out of me, into life. (25)

In place of death there was light. (41)

NARRATOR

She had no tender memories. (8)

At times she was overcome by the hallucination of being immured deep in a burial vault (18).

She had long since resigned herself to the wickedness of men (29), and had flung herself headlong into adultery (18). There was no lack of immoral young men ready to exploit it. (25)

A brutal, sinister melancholy infused her entire being (7). She distilled, so as to savour it the more, all the intoxicating bitterness that she felt (23), driven by a fateful power, by a supreme, irresistible force, into the alluring perversities of debauch. (43)

She was a clever young woman, who understood the art of pleasing. (9)

In this, she was altogether feminine, obedience to her temperament of a passionate, cruel woman; she was active and alive, more refined and yet more savage, more hateful and yet more exquisite; she was shown awakening more powerfully the sleeping passions of man; bewitching, subjugating more surely his will, with her unholy charm as of a great flower of concupiscence, born of a sacrilegious birth, reared in a hothouse of impiety. (43)

WOMAN (SOLILOQUY)

I began to hunger again for wild sensations, for the escape which those chronicles of disorder alone seemed to offer me (56). I was in love with danger and took nothing seriously - (13) it filled me with fear, and yet I longed to be nearer to it and to look upon its deadly work. (57)

Greatness, knowledge, renown, friendship, pleasure and possessions, all is only wind, only smoke: To say it better, all is nothing. (52)

NARRATOR

She shed sincere tears (26), like all criminals feeling the need to draw close to innocence, hoping to find some ease in its presence (17). She threw her whole soul into it, borne away towards this image with a fresh enthusiasm (2). So great became her pain that she prayed aloud for death as a means of alleviating it. (58)

The verdict of human nature on such a wretch was death. (8)

The lusts of the flesh, the longing for money, and the melancholy of passion all blended themselves into one suffering, and instead of turning her thoughts from it, she clave to it the more, urging herself to pain, and seeking everywhere occasion for it (2). When we are alone for a long time, we fill the emptiness with phantoms. (11)

Pause

The sun had dropped behind the peaks, which were still purpled by the reflections of the sky; however, the depths of the valleys were turning gray. (38)

She dreamed crazy dreams; she would stare defiantly at the rumbling river and imagine that the water was about to leap up and attack her; then she would stiffen into a defensive posture, asking herself furiously how the waters could be tamed. (18)

WOMAN (SOLILOQUY)

All this, though is banal to the point of vulgarity. (14)

NARRATOR

She was very quiet, she sat in a charming tranquil attitude; but her lips and her eyes were constantly moving. (22)

There was grace and mystery in her attitude as if she were a symbol of something (47). He saw her truly eloquent, a mother to the unfortunate, a pitiful father to the oppressed, a stern judge to oppressors and tyrants. (43)

Her soul filled with a new delight (8). It was her pride that yearned for the uncommon (5).

WOMAN (SOLILOQUY)

Oh, the craving to crave! Oh, the violent hunger in satiety!(40)

NARRATOR

He was not sure what idea he wished to express but the thought that a poetic moment had touched him took his life within him like an infant hope (59). He tried desperately to get at her mouth, but, laughing from behind closed lips, she kept eluding his efforts by swiftly turning her head. (42)

WOMAN (SOLILOQUY)

A little poison now and then: that maketh pleasant dreams (40). Thus conscience does make cowards of us all. (60)

NARRATOR

She looked at him from under her brows for a moment quizzically until he smiled (47). She smiled, a moving childish smile that was like all the lost youth in the world. (44)

WOMAN (SOLILOQUY)

The secret that I shared with my satisfied conscience gave me a pleasure altogether sufficient. (25)

Chaos is come again. (12)

NARRATOR

While they talked he tried to fix her permanently in his memory (20). With full-blooded appetites and a pronounced desire for easy and long-lasting pleasures (18), huddled together, the voices were lowered, and the discussion became general. (28)

Without speaking, she led the way. (61)

She was bare-headed; but she balanced in her hand a large parasol, with a deep border of embroidery; and she was strikingly, admirably pretty. (22)

As they strolled along an avenue in the grounds, he told her some extremely improper things, which she had never guessed at (29). They were hand in hand now, and the past, the future, reminiscences and dreams, all were confounded in the sweetness of this ecstasy. (2)

PAUSE

That monstrous coquette (38) breathed heavily as she squeezed her lover in her arms; she was taking her revenge, and her delicate, supple nostrils quivered nervously. (18)

WOMAN (SOLILOQUY)

After the loss of innocence, and before the remorse... (25) my despair grabbed hold of me with a violence that made me a hero, a libertine (7), prone to vice. (25)

No matter what the passion is: Let it be disagreeable, afflicting, melancholy, disordered; it is still better than that insipid languor, which arises from perfect tranquillity and repose (54). I shall beware of virtuousness, for I know now that it can lead only to disaster; in its place I shall pursue vice, for vice is always triumphant (37). For that I have to do violence to myself (5). That is the only way to make life bearable. (51)

Pause

Man desires, woman is desired. (7)

I'll have no lack of men, when the fancy to ruin my life strikes me. (13)

There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so (60), and this conversation has given me a violent headache. (27)

NARRATOR

Enveloped in that endless, almost religious silence of the fields, a tranquil, pervasive silence that reaches the stars. (42)

There above them it hung, that moon (8), its calm light seemed made for the intimacies of passion. (2)

WOMAN (SOLILOQUY)

I know not the happiness of the receiver; and oft have I dreamt that stealing must be more blessed than receiving. (40)

The libertine's desire to take a virgin is still a form of the eternal homage paid by love to innocence. (29)

The crueler and more faithless she is, the more she mistreats him, indeed the more wantonly she plays with him, the less pity she shows him, the more she arouses the man's lascivious yearning to be loved and worshipped by the woman. (7)

It is a trait in the perversity of human nature to reject the obvious and the ready, for the far-distant and equivocal. (62)

NARRATOR

She soon took on all the allurements that our desire lends to women, whatever their situation in life. (13)

There was a gentle, sweet, and docile expression on her face, such as one sees on the faces of people listening to crazy saints or holy men when a peculiar hidden significance is imagined in their vague words and mutterings. (14)

All this conspired to her advantage. (10)

She found herself disappointed in her love - yes, she must be a little in love with him (61). Anything more nauseating she could not conceive. (8)

She was so mysterious and so troubrous to the senses that none could say whether she was craving for depravities of vice so monstrous that, once accomplished they would become irresistible by mankind; or whether she herself was immersed in a dream, an immaculate reverie, where the adoration of the soul should float about her in a love for ever unconfessed, for ever pure. (43)

WOMAN (SOLILOQUY)

How mine eyes do loathe his visage now. (35)

You, who have known neither sorrow nor pleasure; who have trifled your life away (8). It would be better, a thousand times better and wiser to leap into the water and end it all! (27)

NARRATOR

He looked at her exquisite prettiness; and then he said very gently (22) "The futile sweetness of the lilacs is infinitely sad." (24) and seemed lost in some strange contemplation of the future or the past. (17)

The young woman seemed to thrive on her daring and impudent behaviour. (18)

Her eyes seemed to indicate a mind that had foundered once and for all on the sickly waters of regret. (26)

But now, he had for life this beautiful woman whom he adored. (2)

He looked into the hedge, into its intricacy, its darkness. (33)

WOMAN (SOLILOQUY)

It is often hard to bear the tears that we ourselves have caused. (3)

When I look at a landscape I cannot help seeing all its defects. (63)

NARRATOR

With the startled gaze of a suddenly-awakened dreamer (61), this energetic lover of life in every shape and form (26) immediately livened up, was transfigured, waxed eloquent, almost poetic (46), uttered all kinds of caressing pleasantries that came into his head (2) which made him feel close to someone and meant that he could emerge and even escape from his fierce and desperate isolation. (26)

On her face was an expression of perplexity and irony (14), every smile hid a yawn of boredom, every joy a curse, all pleasure satiety (2), and, for a second, she wore a look of extreme dignity. (8)

WOMAN (SOLILOQUY)

A bad conscience is indeed able to make life interesting. (5)

Everything by which you have lived and live now is all a deception, a lie, concealing both life and death from you. (41)

I don't know which I envy him most. (61)

NARRATOR

He was overcome by her generosity - her goodness (8), yet the prospect of a new condition of life frightened as much as it seduced him (2). Could his mind then not trust itself? (45) what he would, an overpowering sense of ennui weighed him down (43). This poison did not weaken but penetrated more and more deeply into his whole being (41). None the less he persisted in allowing himself to be drained dry by her. (43)

Pause

Her eyes sparkled with inanity. (26)

Then, for that moment, she (8) saw life stretching out pointlessly ahead of her, with every evening bringing the same cold bed and every morning the same empty day ahead. (18)

She experienced a very agreeable pleasure at the thought of them, but immediately felt ashamed (29). Why did she suddenly feel, for no reason that she could discover, desperately unhappy? (8)

WOMAN

Now a spark of hope flashes up, then a sea of despair rages, and always pain; always pain, always despair, and always the same. (41)

We don't receive wisdom; we must discover it for ourselves after a journey that no one can take for us or spare us. (3)

I had a bad taste in my mouth, my eyelashes were fluttering on my cheeks. (64)

How little it takes to doom you or save you! (65)

A dream, all a dream, that ends in nothing, and leaves the sleeper where he lay down (66) dying of love and melancholy. (24)

Parting is such sweet sorrow. (67)

NARRATOR

When he bent down and touched her face with his lips, he murmured some words: (66)

"You must allow me to tell you how ardently I admire and love you." (68)

She slowly opened her eyes in which appeared the sombre profundity of death, and said to him in a tone whose sweetness seemed already to proceed from another world (69) "Don't say such things, or I'll stay here and never have the strength to leave you!" (18)

In her look, a dark sky, from whence springs forth the hurricane, there lay but the sweetness that charms, and the joy that destroys. (70)

WOMAN (SOLILOQUY)

The tear that from thine eyelid streams can weep no change in me. (71)

A scandal like this never occurred to you. (51)

WOMAN

It is time I should be off (27). How terrible and frightful a thing separation is. (21)

NARRATOR

I must go, he said softly and benevolently (45). In that same place thou hast appointed me, tomorrow truly will I meet with thee (35). I will follow you wherever you like to go. (51)

'I shan't forget,' she said with a shudder, in a voice hardly louder than a breath. (18)

She longed to run to his arms, to take refuge in his strength, as in the incarnation of love itself, and to say to him, to cry out, "Take me away! (2) every thing considered, she wished to remain (9). Yet they had to part. (2)

Full of subtlety and preciousness, erudite and elaborate (43), determined to hold fast to something of this delicious emotion, this impure rhapsody of
(MORE)

NARRATOR (cont'd)

which he was ashamed, but in which he revelled-he turned abruptly (33), yesterday, I made a proposal to you that we should both depart together, because you are all that is left to me (27). I will not let you go, my dear. (21)

"When shall I see you again?" (2)

WOMAN

On the morrow, actually on the morrow! (9)

The longest way must have its close - the gloomiest night will wear on to a morning (72). I am yours, while life lasts. (27)

WOMAN (SOLILOQUY)

He trusted me, the fool; he had put all his confidence in me: to have honoured that confidence would have been to have performed a virtuous act, and, since I am dedicated wholly to evil, my conscious wouldn't allow it (37). To be direct and honest is not safe. (12)

Is it not true that the greater the crime, the greater the libertine's pleasure? (58)

NARRATOR

His immense self-pity, his demand for sympathy poured and spread itself in pools at ther feet, and all she did, miserable sinner that she was, was to draw her skirts a little closer round her ankles, lest she should get wet. (33)

WOMAN (SOLILOQUY)

Never shall I see you again. (73)

NARRATOR

For her, too, it will be hard to find peace. (5)

*Woman leaves and man sits down, head in hands.
Melancholy music plays quietly. After 8 seconds
the music stops as MAN quickly lifts his head up
and looks confused, hair disheveled.*

NARRATOR

After sitting like this for some time he rose, looking about him with frightened eyes (21). He lingered beside the lake for a quarter of an hour, turning over the mysteries of the young girl's sudden familiarities. (22)

In vain he strove to remember her origin, her name, her business, the explanation of her presence; no recollection would come to him of this inexplicable

(MORE)

NARRATOR (cont'd)

liaison, of which however, there could be no doubt.
(43)

Except from some natural sensation of curiosity, he had no desire of meeting her again. (9)

Pause

Her grief can resume its course - and this is almost an occasion for joy. (23)

Lights fade out slowly and man walks off stage, confused but in no distress - ignorantly content.

Light and calm music is playing, similar to the melancholic music of before, but happier. Birds tweeting.

SOURCE MATERIAL

- 1 - Franz Kafka - *Children On A Country Road*
- 2 - Gustave Flaubert - *Madame Bovary*
- 3 - Marcel Proust - *In Search Of Lost Time*
- 4 - Guy De Maupassant - *A Day In The Country*
- 5 - Soren Kierkegaard - *The Seducer's Diary*
- 6 - Guy De Maupassant - *The Jewels*
- 7 - Leopold Von Sacher-Masoch - *Venus In Furs*
- 8 - Virginia Woolf - *Mrs. Dalloway*
- 9 - Jane Austen - *Persuasion*
- 10 - Honoré De Balzac - *Sarrasine*
- 11 - Guy De Maupassant - *The Entity (The Horla)*
- 12 - William Shakespeare - *Othello*
- 13 - Honoré De Balzac - *Another Study Of Womankind*
- 14 - Anton Chekov - *The Wife And Other Stories*
- 15 - Edgar Allan Poe - *Bernice*
- 16 - D.H. Lawrence - *Sons And Lovers*
- 17 - Honoré De Balzac - *The Red Inn*
- 18 - Émile Zola - *Thérèse Raquin*
- 19 - James Joyce - *Araby*
- 20 - James Joyce - *A Painful Case*
- 21 - Leo Tolstoy - *War And Peace*
- 22 - Henry James - *Daisy Miller*
- 23 - Marcel Proust - *Mme De Breyves's Melancholy Summer Vacation*
- 24 - Marcel Proust - *Nostalgia*
- 25 - Marcel Proust - *The Confessions Of A Young Woman*
- 26 - Marcel Proust - *A Dinner In Town*

- 27 - *Fyodor Dostoyevsky* - *Crime And Punishment*
- 28 - *Guy De Maupassant* - *Butterball*
- 29 - *Marcel Proust* - *Violate, Or High Society*
- 30 - *Guy de Maupassant* - *Mademoiselle Fifi*
- 31 - *James Joyce* - *Eveline*
- 32 - *William Blake* - *The Garden Of Love*
- 33 - *Virginia Woolf* - *To The lighthouse*
- 34 - *Oscar Wilde* - *Selected Poems*
- 35 - *William Shakespeare* - *A Midsummer Night's Dream*
- 36 - *Marcel Proust* - *Jean Santeuil*
- 37 - *Donatien Alphonse Francois De Sade* - *Juliette*
- 38 - *Guy De Maupassant* - *The Inn*
- 40 - *Friedrich Nietzsche* - *Thus Spake Zarathustra*
- 41 - *Leo Tolstoy* - *The Death Of Ivan Ilyich*
- 42 - *Guy de Maupassant* - *The Tellier House*
- 43 - *J. K. Husymans* - *A Rebours*
- 44 - *F Scott Fitzgerald* - *Tender Is The Night*
- 45 - *James Joyce* - *A Portrait Of The Artist As A Young Man*
- 46 - *Guy de Maupassant* - *On The Water*
- 47 - *James Joyce* - *The Dead*
- 48 - *Guy de Maupassant* - *The Mask*
- 49 - *W. Somerset Maugham* - *Of Human Bondage*
- 50 - *William Shakespeare* - *Measure For Measure*
- 51 - *Voltaire* - *Candide*
- 52 - *Soren Kierkegaard* - *Either Or*
- 53 [U+2015] *Virginia Woolf* - *Jacob's Room*
- 54 - *David Hume* - *On Tragedy*

56 - James Joyce - *An Encounter*

57 - James Joyce - *The Sisters*

58 - Donatien Alphonse Francois De Sade - *Justine*

59 - James Joyce - *A Little Cloud*

60 - William Shakespeare - *Hamlet*

61 - George Elliot - *Romola*

62 - Edgar Allan Poe - *Loss Of Breath*

63 - Oscar Wilde - *Intentions*

64 - Franz Kafka - *Unhappiness*

65 - Guy De Maupassant- *The Necklace*

66 - Charles Dickens - *A Tale of Two Cities*

67 - William Shakespeare - *Romeo And Juliet*

68 [U+2015] Jane Austen - *Pride And Prejudice*

69 [U+2015] Victor Hugo - *Les Misérables*

70 - *The Flowers Of Evil* - Charles Baudelaire

71 - George Byron - *On Parting*

72 [U+2015] Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*

73 - Euripides - *Electra*