



THE STORY OF RATS

SCREENPLAY BY JAIME LUTZO
AN ADAPTATION OF GEORGES BATAILLE'S *THE IMPOSSIBLE*



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CHARACTERS:

D., the narrator of Part One of The Impossible, THE STORY OF RATS. Brother of A. He is of an average height that supports a withering stockiness. His features are rounded and slightly asymmetrical, with quietly observant light-hued eyes. A bulbous, slopping nose is positioned above apprehensively pursed or thoughtlessly open lips.

A., a Jesuit priest, who will later narrate Part Two of The Impossible, DIANUS (Notes Drawn from the Notebooks of Monsignor Alpha). He is tall and gaunt, with birdlike, protrusive features: dark eyes that dart to tiredness and become empty, an overly large but thin nose, and a constantly yawning mouth.

B., the woman who D. is consumed by. She has a petite frame that gives the impression of an approaching concaveness. Her facial expressions and airy gestures are relaxed and deliberate; the playfulness visible in her eyes balance the seriousness of her elongated, thin features.

Edron, the gamekeeper of B.'s father's estate. He is small, badly hunched with a walking stick and a face out of a horror film.

The Commander, B.'s father. He is a small, bald man with a wide face and frog-like features.

M., the dead ex-lover of D.

E., the woman who is in love with D. and who is loved by A.

L.N., the foreign husband of E.

BLACKSCREEN TO TITLE:

PREFACE

INTERIOR HIGH-ANGLE MEDIUM SHOT: *A nude woman, extremely pale is navigating her way through different size lucite frames. The space is black and illuminated only by flashes of white light.*

OUT OF FOCUS LONG SHOT INTER-CUT WITH CLOSE-UPS: *An extraordinary wind thrashing scraps of printed images against her body.*

REVERT TO STILL BEING PULLED INTO FOCUS LONG SHOT: *The wind subsides.*

INTERIOR MEDIUM SHOT: *She enters a softly lit room filled with grids of lucite shelving that seem to extend perpetually.*

PANNING EXTREME CLOSE-UP: *Some papers continue being blown in from the darkness behind her. They accumulate onto the shelves in their respective cases.*

INTER-CUT PREVIOUS SHOTS WITH PANNING CLOSE-UP IN SCENE I.

BLACKSCREEN TO TITLE:

PART I

SCENE 1:

INTERIOR, PANNING CLOSE-UP: *Building up to a playful momentum saturated colors move within the frame. Objects slowly become distinguishable: a table overflowing with bottles and debris, hands, feet, mouths. D.'s hand lunges towards B.'s chest, pulls out one of her breasts, and lays it over the deep neckline of her dress.*

INTERIOR, MEDIUM SHOT: *Inside A.'s apartment. Overly warm light is contrasted with the black-blue hues encroaching from the night outside. Antique furniture is positioned facing the fireplace on an oriental rug that is nearly worn-through. The sparse but dramatically curtained room appears always in motion.*

MEDIUM SHOT: *A man in a Jesuit robe (A.) slumps back in his armchair, abruptly breaking the pace of the previous shots.*

MEDIUM SHOT: *A woman (B. but her head is cropped out of the frame) with her dress falling down to her waist stands in front of him.*

REVERSE ZOOM: *A third man (D.) is partially visible kneeling behind her with his hands underneath her dress.*

B. *(speaking to the man behind her, suppressing her laughter):*

I am constantly impressed by the Reverend's eccentricities.

D. (*detached, between open-mouthed caresses to B's backside*):

It was the ten years of deep study. A slow apprenticeship in dissimulation, in mental dislocation.

A.:

It makes a man impassive.

B. (*inquisitively to the man behind her*):

Do you think so?

(*with mock solemnity she kneels, addressing A.*)

You took an oath once...

A. (*head rolling back*):

I promised to have no opinion or will of my own.

D.:

No mental reservation whatsoever.

B. (*kneeling at A's feet*):

You will obey without hesitation.

D. (*kneeling behind B. with his arms wrapped completely around her*):

Even as a corpse.

SCENE 2:

INTERIOR CLOSE-UP: *D. and B. in a dimly lit, tight, undefined space. He clasps his hands around her waist. B. is moving with a whipping fury.*

MEDIUM SHOT: *Pressing her against a vertical surface, he is frantically trying to match her rhythm with his body, and alternately, driving a giant nail into her torso (brutally but without gore).*

INTERIOR CLOSE-UP: *A phone rings, waking the narrator from his nightmarish fantasy.*

MEDIUM SHOT: *He throws back his covers, and walks across his cluttered one-room apartment.*

CLOSE-UP: *He reaches for the receiver through a pile of hand-written pages. Holding the phone to his ear, his expression warms to the voice. He listens for a moment, his face turning cold and confused once more.*

D. *(imploding isolation while putting the receiver down in a CLOSE-UP TILT):*

Good-bye.

SCENE 3:

EXTERIOR, LONG SHOT: *D. is walking awkwardly through a dismally crowded cobblestone street. Weary vendors are exchanging small amounts of produce to shoppers; children are nagging their parents for the items they see being wrapped up; a group of intoxicated soldiers pushes through drably dressed women, who are feigning their disinterest.*

D. (VO):

What joins me to B. is the impossible, like a void in front of her and me; this instead of a secure life together.

INTERIOR, LONG SHOT: *The images of the street become inter-cut with matched shots of the interior of a brothel.*

D. (VO):

The lack of a way out, this threat of death between us like Isolde's sword, the desire that goads us to go further than the heart can bear..

INTERIOR, MEDIUM SHOT: *A bedroom in the brothel. D. is in bed with a prostitute.*

INTERIOR, MEDIUM SHOT: *D. watching A. caress a half-naked B. in A.'s apartment.*

D. (VO):

The need to suffer from an endless laceration.

INTERIOR MEDIUM SHOT: *At the brothel. D. drinking, red-faced, at a table with boisterous and sloppily drunken prostitutes.*

D. (VO):

All this makes every hour a mixture of panic, expectation, audacity, anguish...

CLOSE-UP: *D. slams his glass down on the table in the brothel. The camera tilts up from the table and he is again in A.'s apartment.*

D. (VO):

And more rarely, an exasperating sensuality.

MEDIUM SHOT: *D. gets up, moves across the room, and with one hand, pushes B. by the chest down into the sofa.*

D. (VO):

Which only action can resolve. But action....

INTERIOR MEDIUM SHOT: *D. is seated at his writing desk at night. The dim light from a single lamp shows papers strewn everywhere, some falling off into the darkness of the surrounding floor. He is writing furiously and wiping a sick sweat from his brow with a yellowed piece of cloth.*

INTERIOR WIDE-ANGLE TABLEAU SHOT: *The brothel at night. Garishly made-up women posed around a dingy, yellow-lit, drawing room.*

D. (VO):

It is not the vice that appalls, but the petty figures that surround it, its puppets, stunted, doltish, bored men and women.

EXTERIOR MATCH-CUT. WIDE-ANGLE TABLEAU SHOT: *The street market in gray daylight. Men in aprons and work clothes standing guard around various bins of goods.*

SCENE 4:

INTERIOR ALTERNATING CLOSE-UP AND POINT-OF-VIEW SHOTS: *D. is in his apartment at night, staring at the phone from beneath his covers. He is shivering and sickly in bed. Bombs can be heard in the distance.*

D. (VO):

A. and B. live alone, rather willingly. A. in a religious order,

EXTERIOR BRIEF MONTAGE. LONG SHOT: *A. at the monastery, walking alone in a sun-filled courtyard, meditating.*

CLOSE-UP: *A. shoving his fingers between his neck and his collar as a constant nervous habit.*

INTERIOR MEDIUM SHOTS: *A. reading at a desk lit by candle light; kneeling to pray in a dark chapel. As he darts through the hallways his black robe bellows out behind him.*

D. (VO):

B. with her family now; however insidious their relationships with that order, that family.

INTERIOR MEDIUM SHOT: *B. is at her father's estate. She pulls her thick bedroom curtains apart, revealing the extending whiteness of a snow-covered landscape at night.*

INTERIOR MEDIUM SHOT: *D. looks out the window at the low city skyline; bird flies across the almost full moon. He is contemplating the same night B. is in the country.*

EXTERIOR MEDIUM SHOT: *D. moves through the empty late-night street with difficulty.*

D. (VO):

I love, and, in different ways, I suffer: then I abandon my sorrows and I say that they lie.

INTERIOR MEDIUM SHOT: *D. is in a luxuriously decorated apartment, lit with a dozen standing candelabras. A woman (E.) stands with her back to him, smiling at the narrator though the mirror she is facing. She has long blond hair and is wearing a pink, low-cut period dress. Her husband (L.N.) comes to the side of D. and raises the back of her dress with an umbrella.*

L.N. (in bad french):

Très dix-huitème.

POINT-OF-VIEW SHOT: *D. looks downward and the scene becomes dizzy.*

EXTERIOR MEDIUM SHOT: *D. is back on the street again. He startles a pigeon, whose sudden flight nearly knocks him over.*

D. (VO):

The owl flies over a field where the wounded cry out. I fly in the night over my own misfortune.

INTERIOR MEDIUM SHOT: *In a dimly lit, reddish room at the brothel. The wallpaper is peeling at every seam; close-up: brown tinged water dripping slowly from a corner of the ceiling makes a noticeable trail of residual calcium down its oriental patterning. D. struggles to take off his pants. He crawls towards a disconcerted and still dressed prostitute sitting on the edge of a thin, lumpy bed. He sits on her knees, clasps his hands around her neck, and cries.*

BLACK SCREEN TO TITLE:

PART II

SCENE 5:

EXTERIOR LONG SHOT: *A drearily idealized portrait of a bog. CLOSE-UPS: Muck, patchy grass, half-frozen streams.*

MONTAGE. MEDIUM AND CLOSE-UP SHOTS: *D.'s vision of his ancestors (a man and a woman) working, tirelessly, struggling against nature. They are toothless, dirtied by mud, visibly freezing.*

D. (VO):

I didn't think that night about the memories of my grandparents, whom the marsh mists kept in the mud, their eyes dry and their lips made thinner by anguish. Deriving from the harshness of their circumstances the right to curse others, drawing from their suffering and their bitterness the guiding principle of the world.

INTERIOR. MEDIUM SHOT: *D. enters a cafe theater; he is already intoxicated.*

LONG SHOT INTER-CUT WITH CLOSE-UPS: *Whirls of scantily costumed women moving around the cafe in a flurry of exposed flesh.*

MEDIUM SHOT: *Some of the showgirls are sitting on men's laps laughing.*

MEDIUM SHOT: *D. sits down in front of the stage and orders a bottle of champagne for himself. He drinks it quickly while watching the room fill and shift with half-naked women and jovially frenzied men.*

D. (VO):

I was going to see and I was happy in advance.

LONG SHOT: *From the back of the cafe; the camera's attention becomes focused on the stage and the show starts.*

MEDIUM SHOT: *D.'s head falls to the table.*

CLOSE-UP: *A woman playfully prods his head with the toe of her stained satin high-heeled shoe. It rolls from one side to the other. Or alternately, she lifts up his head with one hand and slaps it from side to side with the other. D. is unconscious.*

INTERIOR QUICK MONTAGE. MEDIUM SHOT: *In his apartment with B. at night. The small room is blazing from the heat of the fire; its amplified sound is the only audible sound. D. sits with his back propped up on the bed and B. is talking animatedly and pouring more alcohol into their glasses. Time passes with the repositioning of their bodies, until they intertwined in sleep.*

INTERIOR MEDIUM SHOT: *D. wakes up groggily in the diffuse morning light. Snow is falling outside the frosted window. In the ringing silence, there is no fire and B. is absent. D. closes his eyes.*

SCENE 6:

INTERIOR PANNING CLOSE-UP: *Back in A.'s apartment. With disheveled and relaxingly open bodies, D. is holding B.'s head near his chest and A. is holding her foot in his hands.*

D.:

The man's been dead twenty years.

B.:

(dryly) Frightening. (assertively) So, tell us.

A. laughs.

D.:

I think he's one of the only writer's of our time to dream of equaling the wealth of the *Thousand and One Nights*...

D. narrates the actions of the story as they are played out in a set-like hotel room with slow-paced, ritualized, theatrical gestures. The camera can see the edges of the "stage"; the windows in the room are curtained with a painted night sky visible through them. All of the objects in the room, except for the bed, are 2D wooden or cardboard props.

D. (VO):

Men dressed in different uniforms would be shown in to his hotel room. A fireman, a sailor, military police, a deliveryman. Hidden underneath a lace cover X. would watch the men walk around and around the room, without saying a word. Last to arrive was a young man, an elevator attendant, loved by X. and dressed in the finest uniform of all. He carried a cage with him, wherein lived a rat. He would set the cage on a pedestal table set up at the foot of the bed. From the jacket of his attendant's uniform, he would slowly pull out a hatpin, with which he was to pierce the rat. At the moment when the pin penetrated its heart, X. would defile the lace cover.

INTERIOR, MEDIUM SHOT: A.'s apartment.

A. (stands up, addressing B.):

What a shame, my dear friend, you are so young.

B.:

I'm sorry too Father.

SCENE 7:

INTERIOR MEDIUM SHOT: *B.'s father's 15th century estate, The Castle. The room is furnished with poorly kept antique furniture. B. closes the window; as she does Edron is visible outside.*

EXTERIOR LONG SHOT: *He marches menacingly through a flock of birds dining on a carcass. They screech loudly as they fly through his batting arms and away.*

MEDIUM SHOT: *Their collective scream becomes the mad howling of B.'s father as he approaches. Her father grabs her by the hair and pulls her to the ground; both of them screaming in unison as he drags her out of the room and into the hallway.*

D. (VO):

As the fall extracts a scream, a flame rises up, but the flame like a scream, is not graspable.

INTERIOR MEDIUM SHOT: *D.'s apartment. He is writing at his desk, with a military-like wool blanket wrapped around his shoulders.*

INTERIOR MEDIUM SHOT: *A. is sitting in a train, inattentively leafing through the pages of a bible and staring out at the passing evening landscape.*

D. (VO):

The worst is no doubt a relative duration, giving the illusion that one grasps, that one will grasp at least.

INTERIOR MEDIUM SHOT: *The Castle. B. crawls away crying from her father as crows scream outside.*

CLOSE-UP: *He unclenches his hand and strands of B.'s long hair float to the stone floor.*

D. (VO):

What remains in our hands is the woman, and either she escapes us, or she falls into the void that is love escapes us.

INTERIOR MONTAGE. CLOSE-UPS: *A.'s apartment. D., A. and B. making love in front of the fire.*

D. (VO):

Reassured in the latter case, like dupes. The best that can happen to us is to have to search for the lost moment.

INTERIOR MEDIUM SHOT: *The Castle. B. heaves on the floor and cries out.*

INTERIOR MEDIUM SHOT: *A. is walking quickly through the train car and disappears through a door.*

D. (VO):

A child's scream, a cry of terror and yet of intense happiness.

INTERIOR MEDIUM SHOT: *A.'s apartment. B. in a similar position, but kissing D. A. grabs her head and turns her body towards his.*

D. (VO):

Those rats that come out of our eyes as if we dwelled in tombs.

EXTERIOR LONG SHOT: *A. is walking down the dimly lit train station platform at night, his quick movement obscured by heavily falling snow.*

INTERIOR MEDIUM SHOT: *The Castle. B. is sitting in a bathtub.*

VERY SLOW PANNING CLOSE-UP: *B.'s salt-swollen eyes down to her toes. Her right hand is bandaged and set out of the water on the side of the tub.*

D. (VO):

The part of a young woman between the mid-leg and waist; it emphatically answers one's expectations, like the elusive transit of the rat. What fascinates us is the vertiginous: sickly smells, recesses, the sewer.

INTERIOR MATCHED PACE PANNING CLOSE-UP: *The intertwined, resting bodies of A., B., and D. in A.'s apartment.*

D. (VO):

Stretched out together, tranquil, debating the most distant political questions.

INTERIOR CLOSE-UP: *D.'s apartment. D. abruptly puts down his pen, slides his chair back and seems to forcefully thrust his body out of his apartment.*

MEDIUM SHOT: *He walks with quick unsteadiness down several flights of winding stairs, into his building's entryway. He opens his mailbox and removes one letter, postmarked Vézelay.*

CLOSE-UP: *He is at his desk, ripping open the letter with his thumb.*

D.:

After six days of silence.

CLOSE-UP: *His eyes read the letter.*

CLOSE-UP: *The strangely scribbled letter, which reads:*

Slightly injured, I'm writing with my left hand.

Scenes from a bad dream.

Adieu.

Hug the Reverend all the same.

B.

MEDIUM SHOT: *D. settles into bed. The sun is just beginning to set outside of his window.*

D. (VO):

What's the point of going on? Continue losing the game?

CLOSE-UP: *He flips his body around and buries his face in his uneven, thin pillow.*

D. (VO):

If like last year the gamekeeper of B.'s estate tries to beat me up in the snow, I know someone who will laugh...

CLOSE-UP: *He begins laughing madly into the pillow.*

D.:

Me.

CLOSE-UP: *He lifts his head and rests it so that we are facing his head at eye level and stares directly past the camera.*

D. (VO):

The old man beats her...

MEDIUM SHOT: *He gets out of bed, takes a few steps while making bizarre noises that sound like laughter and hissing, until he starts spasming.*

D.:

That old lunatic, jabbering on about accounts...

MEDIUM SHOT: *He throws himself to the floor in anguish.*

D.: (VO):

She promised...

SCENE 8:

INTERIOR, MEDIUM SHOT: *D. is riding the train from Paris to Vézelay, through the snow-covered French countryside. He is standing in the anteroom of the compartment with his hands in the pockets of a thick wool coat, his forehead pressed against the windowed section of the door.*

EXTERIOR, LONG SHOT: *The Inn at night, it is adjacent to the train station. Brief montage of D. entering a modest hotel in Vézelay; signing the register, carrying himself up a flight of narrow, twisting stairs, and collapsing on a cold, tiny bed.*

INTERIOR, MEDIUM SHOT: *D. opens his eyes and it is morning and the snow is falling furiously outside. A fire is burning in the room's small iron stove.*

D. (VO):

Half sleeping, I dreamed I was dead: the coldness of the room was my casket, the houses of the town other tombs. I got used to it. I felt a certain pride in being unhappy.

INTERIOR, CLOSE-UP: *D.'s hand trying to write a note. He stops, painfully frustrated by his uncooperative hand, and crumples the paper slowly in his fist.*

D. (VO):

I decided, several times, to send her a note. It's doubtful whether she'd come, or even if she could.

EXTERIOR, MATCHED CLOSE-UP: *Edron opening up a letter. Edron is standing at the end of a long, snow-covered drive, at the end of which sits B's father's expansive home.*

D. (VO):

It's certain that Edron would intercept the note.

INTERIOR, MEDIUM SHOT: *Edron hands the note over to B.'s father.*

D. (VO):

And give it over to her father.

INTERIOR, MEDIUM SHOT: *D. is in bed and (imagines he) hears a knock on the door. He is all expectation as he approaches the door. When he opens it, Edron lunges towards him and beats D. with his walking stick.*

EXTERIOR, LONG SHOT. THE FOLLOWING SHOTS ARE RUNNING BACKWARDS: *At a crossroads in the snow covered countryside of Vézelay.*

CLOSE-UP: *D. has been badly beating, dried blood covers his face; the bright morning sun is blinding him.*

MEDIUM SHOT: *He tries with great difficulty to piss into the snow.*

CLOSE-UP: *D. zips his pants and crouches back onto the ground. He is lying on his stomach in the snow as the light shifts from morning to the previous evening. Edron is beating D. viciously with direct blows to the face. D. becomes more upright, receives the first blow from Edron; covers face; looks unassuming.*

MEDIUM SHOT: *Edron walks out of the shot.*

LONG SHOT: *Edron walks out of the shot of the crossroads.*

MEDIUM SHOT: *D. is waiting for B. in the red light of a warm winter sunset.*

CLOSE-UP: *D. is thumbing a letter that is sticking out from his pocket.*

SCENE 9:

INTERIOR CLOSE-UP: *D. at the Inn. The letter from B. is tucked under the covers with him, rubbing on his chin as pulls them closer, his teeth chattering. He begins laughing.*

D. (VO):

My burning hand shaking the icy hand of the Commander. I imagine him in my hand, changed into a notary's clerk, bald, little,

flat as a piece of paper. But my laugh sticks in my throat: I'm losing my mind, while he's beating his daughter and will kill her.

INTERIOR, MEDIUM SHOT: An empty stage in a small theater, lit by one off center spotlight. D. is standing stage right, addressing an imaginary audience.

D.:

The truth is, the actor didn't care about B. One couldn't even say exactly that he loved her. His so-called love had no meaning apart from the anguish he drew from it. What he loved was the night. He preferred B. to other women, because she evaded him, fled from him, and during her long flights, was under threats of death. He loved the night, truly, like a lover loves the woman of his life.

D. turns away from the camera, walks quickly to the opposite side of the stage and turns to face the audience again.

D.:

Not at all. B. herself is the night, yearns for the night. I will let go of this world one day: then the night will be the night, I will die. But being alive, what I love is the love that life has for the night. It's fitting that my life, since it has the necessary strength, is the anticipation of an object leading it toward the night.

INTERIOR, CLOSE-UP: D. opens an envelope, which has been forwarded from Paris.

D. (VO):

Like the first note, written with the left hand, but less undecided.

INTERIOR, MEDIUM SHOT: *The stage set shifts to reveal B. sitting at a writing desk, penning her letter center stage where D. previously delivered his monologues.*

B.:

My father dragged me across the rooms by the hair. My mother very nearly put her hand over my mouth. He will kill us, and he'll kill you next! He took one of my fingers and forced it back. He broke the bone! I screamed, with the window open, just as a flock of crows was passing; their cries blended with mine.

INTERIOR, CLOSE-UP: *D. is reading the letter at the Hotel.*

INTERIOR, MEDIUM SHOT: *B. has stood up from the desk and is directly addressing the audience.*

B.:

My father goes into the hotels, passing through the dining rooms at mealtime. He's insane: the doctor wants to confine him, but his wife won't hear of it... When he speaks of you he puts out a little red tongue from his frog-like head. At all hours of the day he calls you 'my lord' and 'crocodile.' He says you will marry me, because you want the fortune, the castle. We shall have a funeral wedding!

INTERIOR, MEDIUM SHOT: *D. in his room at the Hotel. There is knock on the door. As D. struggles from bed to ready himself for violence, A. enters.*

A.:

I've heard from B. I've finally received a note asking me to come.

She says there's nothing you can do. But me, my robe...

D.:

Go, immediately! You must go now!

A.:

What's the matter with you? I'll give her your news.

D.:

I'm sick. I haven't been able to let her know. The news that I have is older than yours.

A.:

Don't worry. I've spoken about you in the hotel. A misfortune is quickly made known in a small town...

D.:

Is the castle far from here?

EXTERIOR LONG SHOT: *A. is traversing the town.*

A. (VO, continuation of previous dialogue):

Three kilometers. B. was definitely alive a few hours ago. We never know more than that. Let me rekindle your fire, it's cold as an ice pack in your room.

QUICK SUCCESSION OF CLOSE-UPS: *B. naked (her breasts, her hips, her pubic hair); her father's face looking like a toad's; the crows taking flight as A. walks on.*

SCENE 10:

BLACK SCREEN

D. (VO):

What dawn is breaking in me? What inconceivable light?
Illuminating the snow, the cassock, the crows...

EXTERIOR LONG SHOT: *A. is walking through a landscape that is blown-out by bright sunlight of afternoon and intensified by the still falling snow's reflectivity. The castle gate can be barely seen in the distance, although it is only 20 meters away.*

INTERIOR MEDIUM SHOT: *D. is in bed tossing and turning, agitated.*

D. (VO):

I don't know what is turning in my head, in the clouds.

EXTERIOR MEDIUM SHOT: *A. struggles to open the gate.*

CLOSE-UP: *It's temporarily welded shut with ice and his hands are numb.*

MEDIUM SHOT: *He shakes it with all of his strength, his entire body moves with the force. The tall gate swings open and A. walks through it.*

INTERIOR, MEDIUM SHOT: *B. looks out the window.*

POINT-OF-VIEW SHOT: *She sees a figure approaching.*

MEDIUM SHOT: *She rushes out of the frame.*

EXTERIOR, MEDIUM SHOT: *A., teeth chattering, is about to knock on a secondary door, when it is suddenly thrown open by B. Standing in the threshold. A. grabs her and rips her dress open. They collapse together in the snow.*

D. (VO):

At that moment the father arrives. The weasel-faced little man, beaming like a fool.

The Commander (*softly, from inside the house*):

I knew it, it's a farce.

EXTERIOR, MEDIUM SHOT: *The Commander jumps on the couple and straddles them.*

CLOSE-UP: *The Commander's mad, smiling face, laughing to himself.*

D. (VO):

A patently false, sweet chuckle.

The Commander (*cupping his hands around his mouth*):
Edron! Edron! The shotgun!

BLACK SCREEN.

D. (VO):
In the sleepy silence of the snow, an explosion resounds.

SCENE 11:

INTERIOR, MEDIUM SHOT: *D. wakes up, uneasily gets out of bed and begins the task of lighting his fire.*

D. (VO):
The oblique sides of being reveal themselves only to cold lucidity:
only the cheerful malice of indifference reaches those distant limits
where even the tragic is unpretentious.

CLOSE-UP: *D. watches the flames begin to consume the kindling. The popping and hissing of the wood is amplified.*

CLOSE-UP: *The flickering flames of the fire dissolve into a close-up of a rats tail as it runs through the snow.*

LONG SHOT: *A woman laid out on her deathbed in a small, dark room filled with flowers.*

CLOSE-UP: *Slow pan from feet to face of the dead woman.*

D. (VO):

When M. lay before me in death, lovely like the silence of the snow, I already knew this immense tenderness, which is only the last degree of sorrow. The intimacy of M. was as lovely as the tail of a rat. I knew then, already, that the intimacy of things is death.

INTERIOR MEDIUM SHOT: *D. is writing at a desk that faces the window. The sun is setting outside and its orange hue saturates the small hotel room.*

MEDIUM SHOT: *D. puts his pen down and turns his head to stare at the door.*

POINT-OF-VIEW SHOT: *The unchanged door to his room.*

CLOSE-UP: *D. closes his eyes.*

D. (VO):

Mid-session. The prostitute told me...

INTERIOR EXTREME CLOSE-UP: *A slow pan through a pile of women's black veils and hats.*

D. (VO):

Her employer once boasted of having stockpiled thousands of widows' veils.

SCENE 12:

INTERIOR MEDIUM SHOT: *D. gets out of bed, covers himself in an overcoat, and walks out the room. He walks down the artificially bright stairway of the hotel squinting his eyes at the brightness, as if he is about to burst into tears.*

D. (VO):

The cowardice of a half-bearded man, wandering, ready to weep, through the icy corridors of a station hotel.

INTERIOR MEDIUM SHOT: *D. is in the small lobby of the hotel. He walks over to a telephone booth. Its glass panes are covered in a layer of old, greasy dirt and the paint on the wooden frame is badly chipped. He opens the collapsible door and sits down with the dull thud of exhaustion. He picks up the receiver and mouths something, but his words are silent. A quiet ringing on the other end becomes louder and louder.*

D. (VO):

The ringing of the telephone went on for so long that I imagined the whole chateau already in the grip of death. A women's voice finally answered. I asked for A.

Woman:

He's not here.

D. (shouting):

What?

Woman:

The gentleman is perhaps somewhere else?

D.:

No, no, no.

Woman:

Somewhere else in the house maybe, but the gentleman is not in the office.

(*pause*)

There are things happening in the castle.

D. (*begging*):

Please madame, this gentleman is undoubtedly there. If he is still alive, tell him that someone is calling him.

Woman (*laughing*):

Yes, monsieur. I'll go look for him now.

CLOSE-UP: D. listens as we here the receiver being put down and footsteps receding on the other end. Through his ear, we hear a door being closed loudly, and then, silence. D.'s face becomes more anxious. Noises can be heard on the other end: a voice calling out and dishes breaking. Silence. D. is about to become raving, but he barely has the strength. He slams down the receiver and picks it up again.

D.:

Operator, please.... *(his request trails off into silence as he mouths words)*

INTERIOR CLOSE-UP: *A female telephone operator at a switchboard.*

Operator *(pleasantly)*:

The line is busy.

MEDIUM SHOT: *D. hangs up the receiver, pauses momentarily and picks up the receiver again.*

D. *(impatiently)*:

Operator, I need.... *(sound trailing off but D. mouthing words)*

INTERIOR CLOSE-UP: *The telephone operator.*

Operator *(assertively)*:

The line is busy.

MEDIUM SHOT: *D. hangs up the receiver and looks around the lobby. POINT-OF-VIEW SHOT: A man passes through the lobby, looks strangely at D. and disappears quickly, as if frightened by D.'s state, up the stairs. CLOSE-UP: D. puts the receiver to his ear again. The exchange of shots and dialogue between the narrator and the telephone operator occurs twice more. With each exchange, the shots becoming shorter and are cut to emphasize their escalating impatience with each other.*

INTERIOR, MEDIUM SHOT: *The telephone operator is shaking her head in disbelief. She looks with emphatically open eyes at the girl sitting at the switchboard to her left.*

Operator:

Please don't try again, there's no one on the line.

D. *(shouting into the operator's receiver):*

What?

Operator:

The receiver is off the hook, but nobody is talking. Nothing can be done. They must have forgotten it.

INTERIOR, MEDIUM SHOT: *D. hangs up the phone. He stands up in the booth, defeated.*

D *(groaning):*

Wait all night....

MEDIUM SHOT: *D. slowly climbs the stairs.*

D. *(VO):*

The shadow of hope was gone. I was dominated by the idea of knowing at all costs.

MEDIUM SHOT: *D. throws down the overcoat and begins dressing himself. He is so weak that he begins to weep from the effort.*

D. (VO):

Should I persist in this undertaking, lose myself in the snow?

MEDIUM SHOT: *Walking down the stairs, D. stops and leans against the wall to catch his breath.*

D. (VO): What I absolutely refused to do was wait, and I had chosen.

MEDIUM SHOT: *D. opens the front of the hotel.*

EXTERIOR POINT-OF-VIEW SHOT: *D. surveys the station buildings before him. Everything is covered in snow.*

EXTERIOR MEDIUM SHOT: *He takes the first step outside of the hotel.*

D.:

So, the only thing left for me to do is beyond my strength.

MEDIUM SHOT: *D. walks away from the hotel.*

D. (VO):

I can't succeed.... the caretaker, the dogs....

LONG SHOT: *A wavering man being beaten back by the snow is walking towards the camera. The lights of the station are barely visible in the distance behind him.*

MEDIUM SHOT: *D. looks behind him as his most recent footprints become covered in snow.*

D. (VO):

There was no question of going back.

SCENE 13:

EXTERIOR LONG SHOT: *Moonlight and snow. In the distance, a light from a cafe can be seen.*

EXTERIOR MEDIUM SHOT: *A man comes out of the cafe and disappears into the snow. D. heads towards the light coming from the interior.*

INTERIOR MEDIUM SHOT: *D. enters the cafe and shakes the snow from his hat. He walks over to the stove and warms himself.*

INTERIOR POINT-OF-VIEW SHOT: *D. surveys the scene inside the cafe. Three railroad workers are playing bar billiards.*

MEDIUM SHOT: *D. approaches the bar and orders a grog.*

CLOSE-UP: *The proprietress pours brandy into a small glass.*

MEDIUM SHOT: *She pushes the glass towards him, laughing. D. leans in towards her and tells her a crude joke. She laughs loudly and adds sugar to the hot water.*

MEDIUM SHOT: *D. sits down, drinking the steaming liquid. He starts searching through his pockets and pulls out some tablets.*

CLOSE-UP: *D. pushes the tablets into his mouth and swallows four, one after another.*

POINT-OF-VIEW SHOT: *D. looks around the cafe, his vision glowing.*

D. (VO):

The alcohol and the caffeine... I was unreal, light... I was alive.

MEDIUM SHOT: *D. stands up and approaches the bar again.*

D. (VO):

I asked the proprietress for the address of...

MEDIUM SHOT: *D. puts some money on the bar and walks out.*

EXTERIOR MEDIUM SHOT: *D. walking away from the cafe, into the moonlit night.*

CLOSE-UP: *D.'s teeth chattering, his hands pull the collar of his jacket up and tighter around his neck.*

D. (VO):

I was now taking the step my ancestors had not been able to take. They lived next to the bog where at night the cruelty of the world, the cold, the frost, sustained their bitter character.

MEDIUM SHOT: *D. is walking up a slope. His feet penetrate the snow, which reaches up around his calves.*

D. (VO):

I walked with the energy of delirium. My unhappiness had that empty, electric sweetness which is like fingernails turned back.

CLOSE-UP: *D.'s feet in the snow. Proceeding with great difficulty, moving slower and slower.*

INTERIOR MEDIUM SHOT: *The castle. Accelerated tracking shot through the various scenes being reenacted in the castle. B.'s father bending her finger back. B. screaming in a different location. A. slumped over in a hallway dead. B. laid out on her bed, dead.*

D. (VO):

I rediscovered in that air around me the eternal, senseless reality which I had known only once, in the room of the dead woman... a kind of suspended leap.

INTERIOR MEDIUM SHOT: *A slow panning shot of D.'s memory of M. on her deathbed; several people are gathered to mourn in the dimly lit room.*

D. (VO):

A stony silence was pushing back the limits of the sobs, as if, the sobs no longer having an end, let one glimpse the infinite terror through its opening. Such a silence, it even conjures away the conceivable responses and holds every possibility suspended in the complete absence of tranquility.

EXTERIOR MEDIUM SHOT: *D. is barely stumbling forward through the snow.*

D. (VO):

In the cold my head is bursting.

LONG SHOT: *As D. moves painfully forward, the dark mass of the castle can be seen in the distance.*

D. (VO):

The night swooped down on me like a bird.

BLACK SCREEN.

BLACK SCREEN TO TITLE:

PART III

SCENE 14:

INTERIOR CLOSE-UP: *Dust floats slowly through beams of hazy sunlight.*

POINT-OF-VIEW SHOT: *D. is waking up, his eyes are having difficulty focusing in the bright light. Crows fly distantly outside the window, cawing as they pass.*

MEDIUM SHOT: *D. begins to move his body as if coming out of a deep freeze. Shaking, he gets out of bed and tries to take a step forward. As he does, he uses the table next to the bed for support, but slips and a glass medicine bottle comes crashing to the floor. He steadies himself and looks downward; he is oddly dressed in only a shirt that just reaches his navel.*

MEDIUM SHOT: *B. comes rushing in through the door.*

B. *(shouting):*

Maniac! Get back to bed! Quick!

(rushing to his side) No, wait...

MEDIUM SHOT: *She helps him into bed.*

B. *(timidly):*

Are you better?

D. *(eyes open wide):*

Where am I?

B.:

In the house.... Yes. In the castle.

D.:

But... your father?

B.:

Don't worry about that.

CLOSE-UP: B. glancing from side to side, like a child who's done something wrong.

MEDIUM SHOT: D. looks at B., who is sitting next to him as he lies on the bed.

B. *(quickly, with her head bowed):*

He's dead.

CLOSE-UP: D. looks at B.; she is still looking downward.

D.:

Is he here?

B.:

Yes.

CLOSE-UP: B. looks around furtively, and her eyes meet with his, a smiling spreading from the corners of her mouth.

D.:

How was I found?

MEDIUM SHOT: *B. is taken aback; she is desperately searching for words.*

B.:

I asked the Reverend, 'Why is there a hump in the snow?'

D. (*voice cracking with dehydrated sickness*):

Where exactly?

B.:

On the road, at the entrance to the castle drive.

D.:

You carried me?

B.:

The Reverend and I.

D.:

What were you doing, the Reverend and you?

B.:

Don't be upset anymore, let me talk now, without interrupting...

EXTERIOR MEDIUM SHOT: *The previous night: B. and A. are walking away from the castle at night.*

B. (VO):

We left the house around ten. It was hard to get away. Who could have known how crazy you would become?

INTERIOR MEDIUM SHOT: *B. places her left hand on D.'s forehead.*

CLOSE-UP: *B.'s right hand is in plaster cast that is slung in a scarf.*

MEDIUM SHOT: *D. begins to look nervous, on the verge of comprehending something he didn't want to know. B.'s hand is trembling.*

B.:

We were barely late. If you had only waited for us...

D. (groaning, feebly):

I didn't know anything.

B.:

The letter was rather clear...

CLOSE-UP: *D. looks astonished.*

INTERIOR, MEDIUM SHOT: *B.'s family doctor walks through a door (through which the last colorations of daylight can be seen) and closes it behind him. A. hands him a letter.*

EXTERIOR, MEDIUM SHOT: *The doctor is walking out the front door of the castle.*

B. (VO):

It should have reached the hotel before seven o'clock.

EXTERIOR, MEDIUM SHOT: *The doctor enters the cafe that D. stopped at later the same evening.*

INTERIOR, MEDIUM SHOT: *The doctor stands at the bar and orders a drink.*

B. (VO):

A. wrote to tell you of my father's death. He said he'd return to the hotel late, and that I would accompany him.

INTERIOR, CLOSE-UP: *D. looks at B. overwhelmed, exhausted.*

D. (softly):

No one delivered any letter to the hotel.

INTERIOR, CLOSE-UP: *The doctor greedily takes down the last of his brandy and pushes his glass towards the proprietress. He looks over at the man next to him and pats his shoulder as they continue their jaunty conversation.*

INTERIOR, CLOSE-UP: *B. intertwines her the fingers of her left hand with D.'s.*

B.:

If you didn't know anything you should have waited. Edron would have let you die! And you didn't even make it to the house!

SCENE 15:

EXTERIOR, CLOSE-UP: *Slow panning shot of D.'s fallen body at night covered in a thin layer of glistening snow.*

D. (VO):

Did I hurt you?

INTERIOR, MEDIUM SHOT: *B. takes her right hand out of the scarf, interlocks the tips of her fingers and attempts to stretch them out.*

B.:

I can no longer imagine...

MEDIUM SHOT: *There is a moment of silence as B. plays restlessly with her hands in the lap of her dress.*

B.:

Do you remember where you fell, where the road starts to wind

up the hill? When I was just about to notice the hump, the wind took hold of me. I had to stop myself from crying out. I looked at the house... I remembered that he had...

MEDIUM SHOT: *B. falls silent, absorbed in thought. She bows her head and continues, with difficulty, to slowly twist her hands.*

B. (softly):

As if the wind had the same hostility as he.

CLOSE-UP: *D. looks at B. deeply, grabs her shoulders, and kisses her forehead with a great tenderness.*

B. (looking upwards, smiling):

Do you remember my father?

D.:

Such a little man.

B.:

So comical. He was mad. Everything would tremble in his presence. He would break everything in such an absurd way.

D.:

It makes you tremble?

B.:

Yes...

MEDIUM SHOT: *B. is silent for a moment but still smiling.*

B.:

He's there.

(pointing with her eyes)

Hard to say what he looks like... a toad, that has just swallowed a fly... how ugly he is!

D.:

You're fond of him, still?

B.:

He fascinates.

MEDIUM SHOT: *There is a knock at the door. D. and B. look towards the door. A. enters and swiftly crosses the room. He comes to the foot of the bed, exchanging looks with B. and D. B. smiles.*

A. *(with solemn absurdity):*

Everything works out in the end.

LONG SHOT: *D. lays down in bed. A. is sitting in an armchair near the fire. B. gets up and adds more wood to the stove, slamming its door shut.*

MEDIUM SHOT: *B. sits on A.'s lap in the armchair.*

D. (VO):

On all sides, oblivion.

MEDIUM SHOT: *B. gets up and lets the doctor in. Quickly, blurred montage of the doctor examining D.*

D. (VO):

The doctor called back for me apologized for forgetting the letter the day before. My lungs were filled with fluid.

MEDIUM SHOT: *The doctor leaves and A. and B. are conversing as D. lies in bed, staring towards the stove. We hear bits of their conversation on electric heating as D. narrates his thoughts.*

D. (VO):

A. with his long, birdlike profile, hard, useless.

A.:

... the heat reaches twenty degrees within a few minutes...

D. (VO):

I imagined that little dead man in the state room, with his gleaming cranium.

B.:

... wonderful...

D. (VO):

The excess of the preceding day was useless!

MEDIUM SHOT: *The room is getting darker.*

D. (VO):

I was stupid to give things a value they didn't have.

MEDIUM SHOT: *The room is dark, except for the soft glow of the fire.*

D. (VO):

That share of truth which we unquestionably draw from the games of the intellect. It melts away. What defines man's intelligence is that it escapes him.

CLOSE-UP: *The narrator's face in the dark, his eyes staring blankly upward.*

D. (VO):

His image obsesses B. A corpse separates us. A wax museum dead man!

INTERIOR, CLOSE-UP: *B.'s dead father's face, his stunned expression frozen in the soft moonlight.*

D. (VO):

Jealous of a dead man! Perhaps of death itself!

BLACK SCREEN.

D. (VO):

The idea came to me, sudden and clear... that incest linked the dead man to B.

SCENE 16:

EXTERIOR, LONG SHOT: *The castle at night.*

INTERIOR, POINT-OF-VIEW SHOT. *D. opens his eyes and sees he is alone in the dimly lit room.*

MEDIUM SHOT: *He reaches over and picks up a bell on the table next to his bed. He rings it and waits. After a moment, a man enters the room.*

CLOSE-UP: *D. strains to see who it is.*

POINT-OF-VIEW SHOT: *Wearing a white jacket, Edron slowly approaches the bed.*

INTERIOR, MEDIUM SHOT: *Edron stares at D. from the foot of the bed.*

CLOSE-UP: *D.'s eyes staring at Edron, racking through various thoughts.*

D. (VO):

B. often talked to me about Edron and her father, hinting at the unnatural friendship of the two men.

INTERIOR CLOSE-UP: *B.'s eyes, with a similar expression.* MEDIUM SHOT: *In D.'s apartment, B. and A. engaged in an intimate conversation.*

D. (VO):

Two monsters...

INTERIOR MEDIUM SHOT: *Edron staring at D. uncomfortably, aggressively, as if debating if, and when, to attack.*

D. (VO):

It finally became clear to me.

INTERIOR CLOSE-UPS: *A.'s apartment. A., B., and D. making love.*

D. (VO):

B.'s uncertain boldness, her despondent mirth, her excesses in two contrary directions, licentiousness and submission...

INTERIOR MEDIUM SHOT: *A. enters the doorway and stands in its threshold.*

D. (VO):

B. as a little girl, the victim of two monsters.

CLOSE-UP: *D. stares straight into Edron's eyes.*

D. (VO):

I could see the wavering inside.

MEDIUM SHOT: *D. sits up.*

D. (VO):

Hearing the ringing and seeing Edron walk by... but A. was wrong; it was the forester who gave in.

CLOSE-UP: *The moonlight catches the tip of a long knife hidden under Edron's jacket as he recedes back towards the door.*

D. (VO):

The sweetness of death radiated from me. Far beyond Edron and A. B.'s distress approached the plunge that M. had made into death.

MEDIUM SHOT: *B. sitting next to the corpse of her father, staring at him, wringing her hands.*

D. (VO):

The gaiety, the frivolity of B. was just one more access to nakedness; to the secret that the body abandons with the dress.

MEDIUM SHOT: *B. stands up and takes down the top of her dress.*

D. (VO):

Until then I had never had that clear awareness of my farce; my whole life making an exhibition of itself and the curiosity I had had to reach the point where I was, where the farce is so complete and so true that it says: I am farce.

LONG SHOT: *B. walks down the hallway half-naked, lit only by slits of moonlight passing through the windows.*

D. (VO):

In the end I made all those connections that link each thing to the other; so that each thing is dead, stripped naked.

MEDIUM SHOT: *A. finally completely enters the room and sits in the armchair.*

D. (VO):

That secret that the body abandons.

MEDIUM SHOT: *B. stands in the doorway.*

D. (VO):

Nakedness is only death and the tenderest kisses have an aftertaste of rat.

