

# *The Scarlet Pimpernel*



Based on the novel by Baroness Orczy and the 1934 film starring Leslie Howard

Adapted by Christian Leithart

# ACT I

## SCENE 1

*Pieces of junk and slovenly guards form the West Barricade of Paris. Two soldiers stand either side of SERGEANT BIBOT, a grubby officer of the French Republic, who is seated on an upturned barrel. Two shabby CITIZENS enter.*

CITIZEN 1. Oh, what a fine show Madame Guillotine performed for us today. Those cursed aristocrats have trodden on us for two hundred years with their dainty buckled shoes. About time someone cut them down to size.

CITIZEN 2. The fun isn't over, Citizen. Someone must bring Madame Guillotine her meals. The aristos do their best to slip away, disguising themselves as merchants, beggars, farmers, whatever they can. No one sniffs them out better than Sergeant Bibot. He has a knack for it. Sometimes he even lets them believe they've gotten away, out through the gates, before he sends soldiers out to bring them back.

CITIZEN 1. And has he never been fooled?

CITIZEN 2. Never. If he were to let even one aristo slip away...

CITIZEN 1. ...he would himself be handed over to the Committee for Public Safety.

CITIZEN 2. And the Republic would be short one sergeant.

*He slides a hand across his throat.*

CITIZEN 1. Short! Haha!

*They fall to laughing as two more CITIZENS join them. The four approach Sergeant Bibot.*

CITIZEN 3. Citizen Bibot! Has the cat caught any rats today?

BIBOT. *(spits)* The rats are still crouched in their holes, Citizen. But you'll be entertained soon enough. The market is closing and soon this gate will be crowded with merchants. The rats will be among them, but none will escape.

CITIZEN 4. But what of the Scarlet Pimpernel, Citizen?

BIBOT. Ha! That meddlesome Englishman. His silly costumes are no match for keen French eyes.

CITIZEN 1. What is the Scarlet Pimpernel?

CITIZEN 2. An impudent Englishman who loves to deprive Madame Guillotine of her fodder. He rescues aristocrats right out from under the edge of her knife and spirits them away from Paris without a trace.

CITIZEN 3. A rogue.

CITIZEN 4. A devil.

BIBOT. An enemy of France! But no, he'll not make it through this barricade.

CITIZEN 4. (*prompting Bibot*) I hear he tricked Citizen GrosPierre last week.

CITIZEN 2. (*to Citizen 1*) GrosPierre was sent to the Tribunal.

BIBOT. GrosPierre was a fool! Here's how it happened: The market carts were going through the gates. There was one laden with casks, and driven by an old man, with a boy beside him. GrosPierre was a bit drunk, but he thought himself very clever. He looked into the casks—most of them, anyway—and saw they were empty, and let the cart go through. Half an hour later, up comes a captain of the guard with a squad of some dozen soldiers with him. 'Has a cart gone through?' he asks. 'Yes,' says GrosPierre, 'not half an hour ago.' 'And you have let them escape,' shouts the captain furiously. 'You'll go to the guillotine for this. That cart held the former Duc de Chalis and all his family!' 'What!' thunders GrosPierre, aghast. 'Aye! and the driver was none other than that cursed Englishman, the Scarlet Pimpernel.' 'After them, my men,' shouts the captain, 'remember the reward; after them, they cannot have gone far!' And with that he rushes through the gate, followed by his dozen soldiers.

CITIZEN 4. But it was too late.

CITIZEN 2. They never got them!

CITIZEN 3. Curse GrosPierre for his folly! He deserved his fate.

CITIZEN 4. Fancy not examining those casks properly.

BIBOT. *(laughing)* No, no, the aristos weren't in the cart. The driver was not the Scarlet Pimpernel.

CITIZEN 3. What?

BIBOT. No, the captain of the guard was the Scarlet Pimpernel in disguise, and every one of his soldiers aristocrats!

*The CITIZENS roar with indignation while BIBOT laughs and slaps his knee.*

SOLDIER 1. *(tapping Bibot's shoulder)* Citizen, time to let the carts through.

BIBOT. Examine them closely.

*The soldiers exit.*

BIBOT. *(rising and hitching his belt)* I'm not going to be tricked like that fool GrosPierre.

*The SOLDIERS enter, dragging an old HAG by the arm. She wears a filthy cloak and her bedraggled hair covers most of her face. She carries a whip made of locks of hair.*

SOLDIER 1. Citizen, this old woman refused to let us examine her cart.

BIBOT. So, Granny! What have you there?

HAG. *(holding up her whip)* Madame Guillotine and I are close friends. She cut these locks of hair for me as the heads rolled down. See, this one belonged to a former duchess.

BIBOT. Ah, I've seen you watching the executions, Granny, and the smiles on your face when the blood spatters your knitting. *(taking her arm)* I know you love the Republic, but we must examine every cart.

HAG. I wouldn't if I were you.

BIBOT. Yet I am me, not you, and I will.

HAG. My grandson's in there, and he has the plague.

*Everyone jumps back in horror. Bibot and the soldiers wipe their hands on their jackets.*

BIBOT. The plague! Why didn't you mention it before?

HAG. I thought you wanted to see my whip. This lock is from the beard of a count.

BIBOT. Take her away!

*The SOLDIERS force the HAG out at the points of their bayonets. The CITIZENS mutter about the plague.*

BIBOT. Those imbeciles! They should have questioned her before bringing her to me.

CITIZEN 2. About the plague?

CITIZEN 1. Do you ask every merchant whether his grandson is ill?

*CAPTAIN DESGAS rushes in. He is dressed well, unlike the shabby guards of the barricade. He looks around impatiently, then strides up to BIBOT.*

DESGAS. A cart! Driven by an old hag!

BIBOT. Yes, she's been here and gone.

DESGAS. Did you search the cart?

BIBOT. No, it was empty except for her plague-ridden grandson.

DESGAS. You fool! That cart contained the former Countess de Tournay and her daughter, both of them traitors and condemned to death.

BIBOT. It's impossible! I know that hag myself. I've seen her a hundred times. She would never...

DESGAS. That hag, Citizen, was none other than that cursed Englishman himself—the Scarlet Pimpernel! *(to the soldiers)* Take this idiot to the Tribunal.

*The SOLDIERS seize BIBOT and march him out. DESGAS follows.*

CITIZEN 2. One sergeant short. Ha ha!

*All CITIZENS mime chopping their throats and laugh.*

## SCENE 2

*LORD ANTHONY DEWHURST and SIR ANDREW FFOULKES (pronounced “fooks”) wait by the side of the road near the ashes of a fire. Anthony sits on a tree stump, idly smoking a pipe, while Andrew paces nervously. Both are Englishmen, dressed in traveling clothes of high quality.*

ANDREW. Where the devil are they? You don't suppose...?

DEWHURST. All in good time, Sir Andrew. Our leader has never yet evaded the clutches of those French rascals.

*The old HAG enters, followed by the COUNTESS DE TOURNEY and her daughter SUZANNE. The Countess is a haughty middle-aged woman, used to being bowed to and obeyed. Suzanne is bright-eyed and full of life. Both are wrapped in traveling cloaks, but underneath they wear the expensive clothes of the French aristocracy.*

ANDREW. At last! Madame Countess de Tourney, I am Sir Andrew Ffoulkes and I am at your service. This is my friend, Lord Anthony Dewhurst.

COUNTESS. Are we safe at last? I can hardly believe it.

DEWHURST. Not quite, Madame Countess, but soon we'll be on board ship and on our way across the Channel to merry England. There you will be quite safe. Make haste.

COUNTESS. Might we have a moment to catch our breath?

*DEWHURST and ANDREW exchange glances.*

DEWHURST. A moment then.

*He offers the COUNTESS his seat on the stump.*

SUZANNE. *(to ANDREW)* Oh, how can we ever thank you! In your company, I've already half-forgotten our sufferings.

COUNTESS. This is my daughter, Lady Suzanne de Tourney.

ANDREW. You flatter me, Mademoiselle. We are but humble tools in the hands of our great leader, who organized and effected your escape.

COUNTESS. Please take us to him at once. I would do everything in my power to repay him for his service to us.

DEWHURST. Impossible, m'lady.

COUNTESS. Why?

DEWHURST. The Scarlet Pimpernel works in the dark, and his identity is only known under a solemn oath of secrecy to his immediate followers.

SUZANNE. The Scarlet Pimpernel? What is the Scarlet Pimpernel, Monsieur?

ANDREW. It is a humble English wayside flower, Mademoiselle, but it is also the name chosen to hide the identity of the best and bravest man in all the world.

DEWHURST. Every time an aristocrat vanishes from under the noses of the French soldiers, all they find in his place is a note imprinted with the sign of a small red flower. Oh, it drives them mad, I tell you.

*SUZANNE laughs and claps her hands.*

COUNTESS. But why should you Englishmen risk your lives for us French men and women, who mean nothing to you?

DEWHURST. *(bowing)* Sport, Madame Countess, sport. It's jolly good fun to pull the hare from between the hound's teeth. The devil's own risk—then tally ho, away we go!

ANDREW. *(much more seriously)* For myself, I cannot bear it that a government that claims to celebrate the ideals of liberty, equality, and brotherhood, should dare to strike off the head of anyone who dares rise above it. The people of France have merely exchanged a king for a tyrant, and above all else, I detest a tyrant.

DEWHURST. *(looking up and down the road)* A tyrant with a long arm, to be sure. It's time you continued your journey.

COUNTESS. *(standing)* You are not coming with us?

DEWHURST. Sir Andrew will see you across the channel, Madame. I must wait here for my orders.

COUNTESS. May God protect you and your companions.

DEWHURST. (*tipping his hat*) He has done that so far, Madame.

COUNTESS. (to the HAG) I wish I could reward you for your service. Goodbye, and thank you.

*She exits with ANDREW and SUZANNE.*

*The HAG shuffles forward, straightens up, and removes her cloak and wig to reveal... SIR PERCY BLAKENEY, a.k.a. The Scarlet Pimpernel. DEWHURST helps him remove the disguise.*

PERCY. Ghastly hot under those robes. Thank you, Dewhurst.

DEWHURST. A narrow escape, Sir Percy?

PERCY. Narrow, but worth it. We shan't be seeing any more of that prying Bibot.

DEWHURST. I'd give ten guineas to have seen the look on his face. Letting slip the Countess de Tourney and her daughter. What a lark!

PERCY. A lark with a sad song. Do you know how many aristocrats we did not rescue today? Fifty-three. I watched them die before I had my chance to save these two. I wish we could do more.

DEWHURST. Percy, if we had a hundred men in the League...

PERCY. No.

DEWHURST. A thousand would join us in a moment.

PERCY. No! Our secrecy is our only power. If Robespierre or any of his spies discovers our identities, we lose everything. Now, where are the horses? It's time for another disguise.

### SCENE 3

*The chambers of Maximilien François Marie Isidore de Robespierre, chief statesman of the French Revolution, member of the Committee of Public Safety, and leader of the Revolutionary Tribunal. The room is lavishly furnished, but dominated by a huge desk and high-backed chair.*



*ROBESPIERRE himself stands looking out a window, wearing dark clothes and his signature green spectacles.*

*CHAUVELIN enters, followed by DESGAS.*

CHAUVELIN. Citizen Robespierre.

ROBESPIERRE. Ah, Citizen Chauvelin. Come here a moment. *(points out the window)* Do you see those people down there, riding in the tumbrils on their way to the guillotine?

CHAUVELIN. The cursed aristocrats, Citizen. I see them.

ROBESPIERRE. I have been watching them these last few weeks and I have noticed a change. In the early days of the Revolution, all of them—count, duke, and duchess—rode with their heads hanging down, like whipped dogs. Now, they ride with chins lifted high.

CHAUVELIN. I, too, have noticed this.

ROBESPIERRE. Why do they hold their heads high? Do you know, Citizen Desgas?

DESGAS. No, Citizen, why?

ROBESPIERRE. Hope. In spite of their sentencing and imminent deaths, in spite of the executioner and the blade of the guillotine, something has given those people hope.

CHAUVELIN. The Scarlet Pimpernel.

ROBESPIERRE. You are observant, Chauvelin. That is why I like you. I know that if anyone can catch this upstart Englishman, it is you.

CHAUVELIN. You flatter me, Citizen.

ROBESPIERRE. I hope not. I am relying on you to provide me with information. *(goes to his desk)* Who is this man?

CHAUVELIN. An English aristocrat. Who else would bother to save French aristocrats condemned to die?

ROBESPIERRE. That much is obvious. Which English aristocrat? We cannot very well kill them all in their beds.

CHAUVELIN. I will go to England as the ambassador of the Republic of France. I have friends there. I will uncover his identity in time.

ROBESPIERRE. What friends?

CHAUVELIN. Do you remember Marguerite St. Just?

DESGAS. The actress?

CHAUVELIN. Yes. She married an Englishman named Blakeney—a rich fool, apparently—and has a high place in English society.

ROBESPIERRE. What makes you think she will help our cause?

CHAUVELIN. Before she married Blakeney, she denounced the Marquis de St. Cyr and all his family to the Tribunal. They were plotting with Austria to overthrow the Republic. Thanks to Marguerite St. Just, we found documents proving their treachery. She might as well have sent them to the guillotine herself.

ROBESPIERRE. You think she is still loyal to the Republic?

CHAUVELIN. Maybe, maybe not. But everyone can be persuaded.

ROBESPIERRE. Do what you have to. But I warn you, if you fail to catch the Scarlet Pimpernel, I will have to find other food for Madame Guillotine. Do you understand, Citizen?

CHAUVELIN. Perfectly, Citizen.

*He exits with DESGAS.*

## SCENE 4

*An opulent sitting room in the manor house at Richmond, the Blakeney estate. PERCY stands at the sideboard, while DEWHURST sits on the sofa with ARMAND ST. JUST, a young, eager Frenchman.*

PERCY. *(pouring a drink)* A warm welcome to you, Armand. It's an honor to have my brother-in-law join the league. Brandy?

ARMAND. *(taking it)* *Merci*. All my life I have been a Republican, but this government... It's madness! I'm ready to storm Paris if it will advance your cause. Where do we begin?

PERCY. *(toying with a fencing sword from the sideboard)* We begin at home, Armand, doing what Englishmen in high society do best.

ARMAND. What is that?

DEWHURST. Nothing! Eat, drink, hunt, fish, gad about.

PERCY. Buy new shirts.

DEWHURST. Curl our hair.

ARMAND. I don't understand.

PERCY. You see, Armand, to all outward appearances, we must be unthreatening fops, dandies, buffoons who wouldn't know a cannon ball from a boiled egg.

ARMAND. *Morbleu!* I didn't know I would have to play the fool.

PERCY. *(writing on a piece of paper)* Not you, Armand. You must continue playing the part of a loyal Republican. Your part will be to relay information from here to Paris and back again. *(signs the paper with his signet ring)* Here, take this note. *(hands it ARMAND)* In a few days...

MARGUERITE. *(off-stage)* Armand! Where is my dear brother?

*Percy instantly transforms from the dashing leader of a band of daring rascals to an effeminate fop, adopting a lazy, non-threatening stance and speaking in an affected drawl. He holds the sword like a cane.*

PERCY. Sink me! Armand, how you can stand to leave the house in those shoes, I'll never understand. Why, they're practically relics.

*MARGUERITE enters.*

MARGUERITE. *(embracing Armand)* *Mon frère bien-aimé!* You've come at last!

PERCY. Darling, can you please make your brother see sense? He can't wear these shoes in public. They're spattered with mud.

ARMAND. They are my riding boots, Sir Percy.

PERCY. Exactly so. Riding boots for riding. Not sitting boots for sitting.

MARGUERITE. Percy, please...

PERCY. Say no more, dear! Say no more. I know when I'm not wanted. (*puts sword aside*)  
'Odd's blood, I'll go where taste is appreciated. Come, Dewhurst.

DEWHURST. (*bowing*) Lady Blakeney.

*Percy and Dewhurst exit.*

MARGUERITE. Armand, I am so glad to see you. Life has been such a bore, and this frigid climate...

ARMAND. Marguerite.

MARGUERITE. What is it?

ARMAND. (*taking her hands*) I'm very sorry, but I must return to France.

MARGUERITE. What do you mean? You've only just arrived.

ARMAND. I know, but... You love your country as well as I do. You know that when France is in peril, it is not for her sons to turn their backs to her.

MARGUERITE. Armand, I sometimes wish you had not so many lofty virtues. I assure you little sins are far less dangerous and uncomfortable. Is it really necessary that you go?

ARMAND. It is, I assure you. But I am sorry to leave you so soon.

MARGUERITE. (*sighing*) I'm so lonely, Armand. In this strange country, with foreigners all around.

ARMAND. Percy cares for you.

MARGUERITE. Percy? Ha!

ARMAND. He still does, surely.

MARGUERITE. Don't distress yourself on account of my marriage, Armand. Percy is very good to me. He buys me whatever I like.

ARMAND. Marguerite, before I go, I must ask you one question. I have not spoken of these things to you before. Something always seemed to stop me. But I feel I must ask it now.

MARGUERITE. What is it?

ARMAND. Does Sir Percy Blakeney know the part you played in the arrest of the Marquis de St. Cyr?

MARGUERITE. *(with a touch of fire)* That I denounced the Marquis de St. Cyr to the tribunal that sent him and all his family to the guillotine? *(cools)* Yes, he does know. I told him after I married him.

ARMAND. You told him all the circumstances?

MARGUERITE. It was too late. He had heard the story from others and my confession came too late, it seems. I could no longer plead extenuating circumstances. I could not demean myself by trying to explain.

ARMAND. And?

MARGUERITE. *(drily)* And now I have the satisfaction, Armand, of knowing that the biggest fool in England has the most complete contempt for his wife.

ARMAND. Sir Percy loves you, Margot.

MARGUERITE. I believe that he did once. No more. We're simply companions, and hardly that. He decorates himself, and I decorate him.

ARMAND. Sir Percy is the truest man that ever lived, Margot. I wish I could say more, but I must leave you now.

MARGUERITE. Please don't be away too long.

ARMAND. I will only be on the other side of the Channel, and that for a few days. *Au revoir.*

*He bows and exits. LOUISE, Marguerite's maid, enters.*

LOUISE. (*curtsying*) The Countess de Tourney and the Lady Suzanne have arrived, ma'am.

MARGUERITE. Send them in immediately!

*The COUNTESS and SUZANNE enter.*

MARGUERITE. Suzanne! Oh, my beloved Suzanne!

SUZANNE. (*embracing her*) Margot! Oh, it's been years.

MARGUERITE. (*curtsying*) Madame Countess de Tourney, please sit down. I trust you had a pleasant trip.

COUNTESS. (*coldly*) We are relieved to be safe, and grateful to you for extending your hospitality. But I feel the need to inform you, Madame Blakeney, that I considered my friends the St. Cyr's patriots of France.

SUZANNE. *Maman!* We are Madame Blakeney's guests.

COUNTESS. I do not relish being in your debt, Madame, and I intend to repay it as quickly as possible.

MARGUERITE. (*with just as much coldness*) No need, Madame Countess. Your passage to England was not arranged by me. I merely welcome you to my house as the mother of my dear friend from school.

COUNTESS. No, you're right. Thank you for reminding me of how little I owe to you. (*sits*) Our safety here is thanks to that secretive mastermind, the Blue Pimpernel.

SUZANNE. Scarlet Pimpernel, *maman*.

MARGUERITE. (*sitting on sofa with Suzanne*) What was he like?

SUZANNE. Oh, we didn't meet him. He keeps himself secret—in France, at least. I hoped you might know more.

*SIR ANDREW enters while they are talking.*

MARGUERITE. Here in England he is an object of utter fascination, but no one knows a thing about him, other than that he's a man. I imagine him being tall and dashing with piercing blue eyes. Handsome, of course.

SUZANNE. *(with a glance at SIR ANDREW)* Though not so handsome as some of his followers.

COUNTESS. What did you say, Suzanne?

*PERCY enters.*

PERCY. La! What companionable companions we have here! M'dear, do introduce me.

MARGUERITE. Madame Countess de Tourney, this is my husband, Sir Percival Blakeney.

PERCY. *(with a deep bow)* Baronet.

MARGUERITE. Sir Percy, this is the Lady Suzanne de Tourney.

PERCY. Charmed, Mademsey. What a stroke of luck your being here! I'm bursting to tell someone. I've just written a masterpiece.

COUNTESS. Oh?

PERCY. Oh, yes. There I was, hard at work tying my cravat, taxing all my brains, when suddenly, there it was. "The Scarlet Pimpernel," by Sir Percy Blakeney, Baronet. That's the title.

COUNTESS. Of what?

PERCY. Of my masterpiece. It only wants an audience. Would you like to hear it?

MARGUERITE. Percy, I don't think...

SUZANNE. Oh, yes, please! Sir Andrew, do sit and listen. I think it will be quite a performance.

*ANDREW sits on a chair in the background.*

PERCY. Quite right. Ahem... "They seek him here. They seek him there. Those Frenchies seek him everywhere. Is he in heaven? Or is he in hell...?"

MARGUERITE. *(shocked)* Percy!

PERCY. Sink me! I do beg pardon. Excoozy me, as you French say. Now what was the last line? Ah, yes. "That dashed elusive Pimpernel!" Rather good, isn't it? I had better write it down before I forget. Have you a pen, Ffoulkes?

SUZANNE. I think it's marvelous.

PERCY. I'll make you a copy.

*LOUISE enters.*

LOUISE. Madame, you have another visitor. He is anxious to speak to you alone. Shall I tell him you're busy?

MARGUERITE. No, no, it's all right. Percy, would you mind showing the Countess the gallery?

PERCY. Delighted, m'dear! *(to the COUNTESS)* Dashed good collection we have. Of course, stab me if I couldn't tell one stroke of paint from another. But all the same, I have a keen eye for good art, don't you see? It's easy. Good art is... Well, good! And bad art is, as you might say, bad...

*On this speech, PERCY exits, followed by the bemused COUNTESS.*

MARGUERITE. Sir Andrew, I think Suzanne might enjoy taking a stroll with you in the garden while I entertain my visitors.

ANDREW. Would you like that, Mademoiselle de Tournay?

SUZANNE. Very much, Sir Andrew.

*They exit. LOUISE enters with CHAUVELIN.*

LOUISE. Madame, may I present...

MARGUERITE. Chauvelin!

CHAUVELIN. *(bowing)* Himself, Citizen, at your service.

MARGUERITE. *(kissing him on the cheek)* Well, this *is* a day for old friends. I am so glad to see you. But tell me, what in the world are you doing in England?



CHAUVELIN. Officially, I am here as the ambassador of the Republic of France, though I may indulge in some of the amusements of English country life while I'm here. They say the fox-hunting is excellent. You must never lack for diversion, Lady Blakeney.

MARGUERITE. Please, Chauvelin, call me Marguerite.

CHAUVELIN. (*bowing again*) Very well. How have you liked your time in England, Marguerite?

MARGUERITE. Well, England has liked me. "The most fashionable woman in Europe," they call me. And I play the part.

CHAUVELIN. Ever the actress.

MARGUERITE. The boredom! It is stifling. You'll hardly believe me when I say it, but I often pass a whole day—a whole day—without encountering a single temptation.

CHAUVELIN. (*with a not unpleasant laugh*) Perhaps I can be of assistance, then. Are you willing to perform a small service for France, Citizen? May I sit?

MARGUERITE. Of course. (*she sits opposite him*) It depends on the kind of service she—or you—wants.

CHAUVELIN. Have you heard of the Scarlet Pimpernel?

MARGUERITE. We talk of nothing else. At the Prince of Wales' supper party the other night we had a 'souffle a la Scarlet Pimpernel.' Dwelling on the identity of that man is the closest I come to temptation.

CHAUVELIN. Officially, as I said, I am an ambassador. In reality, I am here to find out everything I can about this League of the Scarlet Pimpernel, which has become a standing menace to France. Of one thing I am sure: He moves freely in English high society. I'm confident that you have crossed his path, perhaps dined at the same table. Help me find him, Citizen. Find him for France.

MARGUERITE. (*laughing*) La, man! You are astonishing. Even if I could discover his identity, what could you do? He is an Englishman in England, safe as a fox in his den.

CHAUVELIN. The knowledge could be useful. (*musingly*) I could keep track of him, and when he does set foot in France, he might find himself facing the guillotine. “An honest misunderstanding, mistaking an English aristocrat for a French one...” So the apology to the British government might run.

MARGUERITE. You are serious? But that would be pure villainy.

CHAUVELIN. (*stands and examines the room casually*) I know the former Countess de Tourney is here with her daughter. You know, do you not, that the de Tourneys have abused and insulted French citizens for generations? It’s practically in her blood to despise those below her station. Still, I’m sure, as a guest, she is... polite.

MARGUERITE. She has reason to hate me.

CHAUVELIN. She hates you because you dared to love your country.

MARGUERITE. I never intended to harm the St. Cyr.

CHAUVELIN. I suspect you felt less horror at their deaths than you will admit, even to yourself. You are no friend to aristos, Marguerite. Do not tie yourself to this Englishman, this Scarlet Pimpernel.

PERCY. (*entering*) Gadzooks! That Pimpernel fellow is everywhere, follows me around all day. Beg pardon, m’dear. Am I intruding?

MARGUERITE. No, this is an old friend—that is, someone I knew in France—Monsieur Chauvelin.

PERCY. (*kissing Chauvelin’s hand*) Charmed, delighted, enchanted. Any acquaintance of my wife is an acquaintance of mine. (*taps Chauvelin’s forehead*) Devilish clever race, the French. How you speak that unspeakable language of yours defeats me.

CHAUVELIN. You flatter us, Sir Percy.

PERCY. No, no, you’ve got the cleverest heads in the world. Take my wife, for instance... Sink me!

CHAUVELIN. What?

PERCY. Your neck, sir. It’s positively mutilated.

CHAUVELIN. I beg your pardon?

PERCY. Your cravat. It's a public menace. I know the fashion in Paree is said to be unimpeachable, but I hereby impeach it. I do! We must repair the damage.

*He reaches for CHAUVELIN's cravat.*

CHAUVELIN. *(backing away)* No, thank you, sir. I'll see to my own neck.

PERCY. *(confidingly)* You had better, over there in France. I hear necks are in high demand. Ha ha!

MARGUERITE. Percy, can you please leave us alone for a moment?

PERCY. But, m'dear, I want Mr. Chaubertin to hear my verse about the Scarlet Pimpernel. *(to CHAUVELIN)* You'll love it. "They seek him here. They seek him there. Those Frenchies seek him everywhere. Is he in heaven or is he in hell? That dashed elusive Pimpernel!" Rather good, don't you think?

CHAUVELIN. *(with a cold smile)* Marvelous. Especially that line, "Those Frenchies seek him everywhere."

PERCY. Yes, I like that too. Because, you see, I hear that they do. And that gives the line a sort of something... That sort of gives it, ah... A something, uh... If I make myself clear.

CHAUVELIN. Monsieur, you have a rare wit.

PERCY. So they tell me. I really must jot it down, but I can never seem to find a pen, this house is so enormous. *(picking up the sword)* I like you, Cabernet. I hope we will see more of you.

CHAUVELIN. Perhaps I will see you both at Lord Grenville's ball tomorrow night?

PERCY. You shall! *(leaning in again)* Oh, and Cabernet, do watch your neck. The judgments of the English are severe and their comments can be cutting. *(waves the sword in the air)* I speak of fashion, of course. But, 'Odds fish, sir, I know you have the backbone for it. Till tomorrow night, "Misu."

CHAUVELIN. Till tomorrow night, Sir Percy. *(bowing)* Lady Blakeney.

*He exits.*

PERCY. *(dropping into a chair)* What did you think of my verse, m'dear? Clever, wasn't it? I think I shall have it engraved on my tombstone. *(toys with sword)* So, an old friend, was he? Dashed serious fellow. Must've been the very life of the party.

MARGUERITE. I want to ask you something, Percy, and I want you to answer me honestly. Will you do that?

PERCY. As far as is in my power, yes.

MARGUERITE. Is Sir Andrew Ffoulkes the Scarlet Pimpernel?

PERCY. Ffoulkes? Not a chance! He's mild as a sheep, Andrew is. Why do you ask?

MARGUERITE. Everyone is wondering who he is.

PERCY. Is that why your friend Chauvelin is here? To hunt the fox?

MARGUERITE. Yes.

PERCY. Ah, then the Pimpernel has nothing to worry about. The fellow may be as sober as a fish, but if he can't even tie his own cravat...

MARGUERITE. Really, Percy, can you never rise above trivialities?

PERCY. Can't rise above anything with more than three syllables, m'dear. I never could.

MARGUERITE. Nonsense. You used to be a man a woman could look up to and turn to in trouble. Now all you care about is feathers and lace. You strut about, admiring yourself like a peacock.

PERCY. Lud, darling, please! You do me an injustice. I haven't worn feathers in over a year.

MARGUERITE. *(on the verge of tears)* Impossible! You can't be serious for a moment.

*She exits. PERCY sits alone for a moment, toying with the sword. Then he makes a lightning-quick slash at a candle on the sideboard. He steps toward the candle, picks it up, and reveals that it has been sliced cleanly in two.*

## SCENE 5

*The ballroom at the home of LORD and LADY GRENVILLE. Fashionably dressed lords and ladies crowd the stage, waiting for their host to welcome them to the ball. On stage left stand a few chairs and a sideboard bearing a bowl of punch. On stage right is a small sitting area. CHAUVELIN stands at the edge of the crowd, adjusting his cravat. DESGAS enters behind him.*

DESGAS. Citizen Chauvelin.

CHAUVELIN. Desgas! What are you doing here? I can't have you following me everywhere like a trained poodle.

DESGAS. I have news I think you will want to hear.

CHAUVELIN. What?

DESGAS. I intercepted a message last night, a series of instructions from the Scarlet Pimpernel to his followers in France.

CHAUVELIN. *(lowering his voice)* Are you sure?

DESGAS. *(shows paper)* Undoubtedly. Look, it bears the same signet as the rest—the red flower.

CHAUVELIN. *(pocketing the paper)* Excellent work, Desgas.

DESGAS. That is not all. The man carrying the message was none other than Armand St. Just, Lady Blakeney's brother.

CHAUVELIN. Armand St. Just, a traitor! I might have known. Where is he now?

DESGAS. In a prison in Calais. I suspect he will face the guillotine.

CHAUVELIN. No, he remains alive. Otherwise he's useless to us. Now, go, I must make my entrance.

*He approaches LORD and LADY GRENVILLE, who are greeting the COUNTESS DE TOURNEY and SUZANNE.*

COUNTESS. Lord Grenville, Lady Grenville, allow me to present my daughter, the Lady Suzanne.

*SUZANNE bows while LORD and LADY GRENVILLE incline their heads to welcome her.*

SUZANNE. Is there news from Paris, Lord Grenville?

GRENVILLE. *(shaking his head)* Alas, the very worst. The massacres continue. Paris literally reeks with blood. The guillotine claims a hundred victims a day.

*LADY GRENVILLE hits his arm to make him stop.*

COUNTESS. Ah, Monsieur, how terrible it is for me to be here at a glorious ball while my people are in such deadly peril.

LADY GRENVILLE. Lud, Madame, hiding under your hat won't do anything for the French peasantry. You may as well wear it gallantly.

SUZANNE. The English seem to value gallantry above all else. I hear one of your own risks his life to rescue aristocrats from the bloodthirsty mob.

GRENVILLE. The Scarlet Pimpernel, you mean? It's true, Mademoiselle, and there's not a soul in England but throbs with pride when we hear of his exploits.

LADY GRENVILLE. Nor a heart but throbs with passion.

*GRENVILLE eyes his wife suspiciously. CHAUVELIN steps forward.*

CHAUVELIN. *(bowing)* Lord Grenville. Lady Grenville. Countess. Lady Suzanne.

GRENVILLE. *(coldly)* Monsieur, we will try to forget the government that sent you, and look upon you merely as our guest, a private gentleman from France. As such you are welcome, Monsieur.

CHAUVELIN. I'm honored to be so welcomed, Lord Grenville. *(to the COUNTESS)* Madame Countess, I must confess I am surprised to see you here in England. I thought you had an appointment in Paris that would prevent your attending.

GRENVILLE. Is that a threat, sir?

CHAUVELIN. I am merely curious.

COUNTESS. My whereabouts are no business of private gentlemen, Monsieur Chauvelin.

SUZANNE. *(forcing her way in)* You seek information about the Pimpernel, is that it?

CHAUVELIN. It would satiate my curiosity.

SUZANNE. I will tell you all I know, gladly. *(with passion)* The Scarlet Pimpernel is clever, cunning, and courageous. He is the bravest gentleman in all the world, and he will outplay your every move because he has what you lack: moral conviction.

*CHAUVELIN laughs. PERCY enters with MARGUERITE on his arm.*

PERCY. *(laughing)* What a lively party! And sink me! Monsieur Chaubertin at the center of it all. *(to CHAUVELIN)* Monsieur, I misjudged you. Your cravat is perfect.

*CHAUVELIN, annoyed, bows.*

GRENVILLE. What, ho! Sir Percy. I need your counsel on a very sensitive matter. Bend an ear. *(draws him aside)* What do you think of my new coat? Everything I wear sits ill on me until it meets your approval.

PERCY. *(examining the coat critically)* Hm. The back is admirable. The front's fair. The collar is, uh, possible. But the sleeve is a horror. That cuff, M'lord!

GRENVILLE. But this is the last word in cuffs!

PERCY. Oh, gad, I should hope so, for there should never be another like it!

GRENVILLE. Oh, come now, it's not so bad.

PERCY. Nothing in the world is so bad as something which is "not so bad." It's a crime, that cuff. Worse, a blunder. *(louder, to gather an audience)* And quite, quite fatal to my reputation.

GRENVILLE. Why to your reputation?

*The CROWD is now listening.*

PERCY. Because all the world knows that you, Lord Grenville, are guided by my taste.

LADY GRENVILLE. *(to another lady)* Yes, Percy is an expert on coats.

LADY 1. And stockings.

PERCY. I'm a very wonder with the inexpressibles.

*The LADIES titter.*

PERCY. Look at that puny sleeve, that miserable dishrag of lace. Odd's fish! Looks like the lining hanging down. Open up your sleeves, man. Let your ruffles take the air. Let them flow, let them ripple, so that when you take your snuff, it'll be a swallow's flight.

GRENVILLE. That's it! A swallow's flight! Why, Percy, you're brainless, spineless, useless, but you do know clothes.

LADY 2. *(flirtatiously)* And poetry, too, I hear?

GRENVILLE. Have you written a poem, Percy?

LADY 2. All about the Scarlet Pimpernel.

LADY 3. Do tell us!

PERCY. *(with mock apologies to Marguerite)* Oh, gads, there's no escape. Forgive me, my dear. Take our friend round and tell him who everybody is... If anybody is anybody. *(turns to ladies)* Now, now, attention please. The thing rhymes, you see, in four places, and if you can get a rhyme to rhyme, that makes it a poem, you see?

LADY 1. Yes, but what is it?

PERCY. *(striking a pose)* "The Scarlet Pimpernel" by Sir Percy Blakeney, Baronet.

*All laugh.*

PERCY. Really, that's only the name!

LADY 2. Well, go on!

PERCY. "They seek him here, They seek him there. Those Frenchies seek him everywhere. Is he in heaven? Is he in... *(chuckles)* That dashed elusive Pimpernel."



LADY 3. That's marvelous!

LADY 1. It rhymes!

PERCY. Oh yes! It's a poem!

LADIES. *(together)* "They seek him here, they seek him there. Those Frenchies seek him everywhere. Is he in heaven? Is he in... *(titter)* That dashed elusive Pimpernel!"

LADY 3. Oh, extraordinary.

LADY 1. Marvelous!

PERCY. You liked that? Well, I could tell another one.

GRENVILLE. Ah, Sir Percy, life without you would be a dreary desert.

*Their conversation quiets as the focus shifts to CHAUVELIN and MARGUERITE standing near the sideboard.*

CHAUVELIN. *(to Marguerite)* These Englishmen are quite something, aren't they?

MARGUERITE. I would rather not talk about Englishmen just now.

CHAUVELIN. Frenchmen, then? Perhaps your brother, Armand St. Just?

MARGUERITE. What of my brother?

CHAUVELIN. *(casually)* He is in danger.

MARGUERITE. You're imagining things.

CHAUVELIN. The other day, Citizen, I asked for your help. France needed it, and I thought I could rely on you, but you gave me your answer. Since then, many things have happened...

*He pauses, waiting.*

MARGUERITE. To the point, I pray you. I'm beginning to tire of this conversation.

CHAUVELIN. *(in a low, threatening voice)* One of my men came into possession of certain papers outlining the escape of another bunch of French aristocrats organized by the Scarlet Pimpernel.

MARGUERITE. Well?

CHAUVELIN. The man carrying the papers was your brother Armand.

MARGUERITE. Impossible! My brother is a Republican. He despises aristos.

CHAUVELIN. *(shows paper)* I must assure you, Citizen, that St. Just is compromised beyond the slightest hope of pardon.

MARGUERITE. You villain.

CHAUVELIN. I work in the service of France.

MARGUERITE. And now you would force me to do some spying work for you in exchange for my brother Armand's safety? Is that it?

CHAUVELIN. *(feigning offense)* Two very ugly words, fair lady. There can be no question of force, and the favor which I would ask of you could never be called by the shocking name of spying.

MARGUERITE. At any rate, that is its name. If I do this thing for you, will you give me that letter?

CHAUVELIN. Uncover the identity of the Pimpernel and I give you my word Armand will be set free. The one for the other. You see how simple it is?

MARGUERITE. It does seem simple, doesn't it? When you want to kill a chicken, you take hold of it and you wring its neck. It's only the chicken who does not find it quite so simple.

*CHAUVELIN laughs and moves away from her. MARGUERITE begins to observe the crowd closely as they converse. DEWHURST and SIR ANDREW enter and are greeted by LORD and LADY GRENVILLE.*

DEWHURST. Splendid party, Lady Grenville. This certainly is the most unmissable event of the year.

LADY GRENVILLE. Thank you, Lord Anthony.

DEWHURST. May I have this dance, Madame?

*The couples begin to dance. SIR ANDREW steps nervously towards SUZANNE. MARGUERITE watches.*

ANDREW. Mademoiselle de Tourney, Do they have dances in your home country?

SUZANNE. Such dances! At least, there were once... But let's not dwell on that. I'd rather not cast a shadow on this glorious ball.

ANDREW. I wish there was something I could do to help you.

SUZANNE. But, Sir Andrew, you already did. You saved us from certain death.

ANDREW. If only I could do it again!

SUZANNE. You wish us back in danger, Monsieur?

ANDREW. No, I mean...

SUZANNE. Would you like to dance, Sir Andrew? It may be forward of me to ask, but *excusez moi*, I am French.

ANDREW. *(bowing)* *Tout le plaisir était pour moi.*

SUZANNE. *(delighted)* Your French is very good.

ANDREW. I've been fortunate to spend quite a lot of time in your country.

*They join the dance while MARGUERITE watches. The dance ends. DEWHURST approaches SIR ANDREW and claps him on the back.*

DEWHURST. Andrew, you're a devilishly fine dancer, but you are too selfish. You must allow me to have the next dance with Mademoiselle de Tourney.

*DEWHURST slips a piece of paper into ANDREW's hand, then escorts SUZANNE to the other side of the room. ANDREW walks to the sideboard to read the note while MARGUERITE peers over his shoulder.*

MARGUERITE. *(putting a hand to her head)* Oh, the heat in this room. I feel faint... Ah!

ANDREW. *(jumping in surprise)* Lady Blakeney, you are ill? Sit here. *(pulls up a chair)* Shall I fetch Sir Percy?

MARGUERITE. *(closing her eyes)* No, I'll be all right.

*ANDREW hurriedly folds the paper and sticks it into the lamp on the sideboard. MARGUERITE stands and takes it from him, then returns to her seat and holds it under her nose.*

MARGUERITE. How thoughtful of you, Sir Andrew. How did you know that the smell of burnt paper was a sovereign remedy against giddiness?

ANDREW. *(staggered)* But, Lady Blakeney...

MARGUERITE. I feel much better already. Would you bring me a glass of punch?

*As he does, she glances quickly at the note in her hand, then folds it again.*

MARGUERITE. *(taking the glass of punch)* Thank you. Oh, I feel horrible!

ANDREW. *(concerned)* Another fainting spell?

MARGUERITE. No, I just realized what this scrap of paper must be. *(handing it back)* A love letter, and from Suzanne, no doubt? I'm sorry you spoiled it on my account. I'll ask her to write you another.

ANDREW. *(relieved)* Thank you, Lady Blakeney. Will you be all right here?

MARGUERITE. Yes, thank you. You may rescue your lady from the hands of Lord Dewhurst.

GRENVILLE. *(announcing from the center of the room)* Distinguished guests, I pray that you will join us in the dining room. Supper will be served in a moment.

*The guests exit, including SIR ANDREW. CHAUVELIN, who has hung back from the crowd, approaches MARGUERITE.*

CHAUVELIN. Well, Citizen? You have something for me?

MARGUERITE. (*emotionless*) A small thing, but it might prove a clue. I happened to see Sir Andrew Ffoulkes receive a note from Lord Dewhurst, which he tried to burn. Before he did so, I was able to glance at it for ten seconds.

CHAUVELIN. And?

MARGUERITE. In the corner of the paper was the symbol of a small star-shaped flower. Above it I read two lines. The rest was too scorched to make out.

CHAUVELIN. (*eagerly*) And what were the two lines?

MARGUERITE *hesitates*.

CHAUVELIN. It is lucky that the whole paper was not burned, for it might have fared ill with Armand St. Just. What were the two lines, Citizen?

MARGUERITE. (*as though the words pain her*) The first was "I go tomorrow alone." The other, "If you wish to speak to me, I shall be in the sitting room at midnight."

CHAUVELIN. Excellent.

MARGUERITE. What are you going to do?

CHAUVELIN. Oh, nothing for the present. After that, it will depend.

MARGUERITE. On what?

CHAUVELIN. On whom I shall see in the sitting room at midnight.

MARGUERITE. There may be more than one person there.

CHAUVELIN. No matter. Whoever is there will be shadowed by my men. One of them will be the Pimpernel.

MARGUERITE. What then?

CHAUVELIN. The documents your brother carried spoke of an inn on the coast called the Gray Cat, where he would meet more fugitives who were to be brought to England. But now it seems to me that the Pimpernel has decided that he will go alone. I'm certain that one of those whom I shall see in the sitting room will leave for Calais—perhaps even tonight—and I shall follow him

until I have tracked him to the Gray Cat. For that man, fair lady, will be the one I have sought for nearly a year.

MARGUERITE. And Armand?

CHAUVELIN. I promise you that as soon as I know the identity of the Scarlet Pimpernel, I will send you every document I possess that could condemn your brother. More than that, I will pledge you the word of France, that the day I catch that meddlesome Englishman, St. Just will be here in England, safe in the arms of his charming sister.

MARGUERITE. And a brave man's blood will be on my hands.

CHAUVELIN. His blood or that of your brother. Surely you hope, as I do, that the Pimpernel will start for Calais and I will be able to follow him.

MARGUERITE. I am only conscious of one hope, Citizen.

CHAUVELIN. And that is?

MARGUERITE. That Satan, your master, will have need of you elsewhere before the sun rises today.

CHAUVELIN. *(smiling)* You flatter me, Citizen.

*MARGUERITE exits. CHAUVELIN crosses the stage to the "sitting room," where a few items of furniture are arranged. He stands in the corner to wait. After a moment, snores begin to rise from a blanketed figure sprawled on the sofa. CHAUVELIN carefully draws back the blanket to reveal the face of PERCY, fast asleep.*

*CHAUVELIN laughs silently to himself and resumes his watch. When nothing happens, he frowns and glances again at PERCY. He stares for a long moment, then slowly stands up. As the clock strikes midnight, Chauvelin turns on his heel and sweeps out of the room.*

## ACT II

### SCENE 1

*The sitting room at Richmond, the Blakeney estate. LOUISE sits, reading. She springs to her feet and hides the book when MARGUERITE enters with SUZANNE.*

LOUISE. *(pretending to clean)* How was the ball, Madame?

SUZANNE. A dream! I feel like Cinderella after dancing all night with the prince.

LOUISE. Did you meet the Prince, Mademoiselle?

SUZANNE. A man like a prince.

LOUISE. Ah, that'll be Sir Andrew.

SUZANNE. How did you know?

LOUISE. He's a fine man, Mademoiselle. Straight and true.

SUZANNE. And a wonderful dancer.

*She exits, dancing all the way.*

MARGUERITE. Louise, did any message arrive for me while I was away?

LOUISE. In the middle of the night, Madame?

MARGUERITE. Or did anyone call for me? Anyone at all?

LOUISE. Were you expecting someone, Madame?

MARGUERITE. The French gentleman who visited me yesterday. You haven't seen him?

LOUISE. Not since then, Madame. Is everything all right?

*MARGUERITE collapses into a chair with her head in her hands.*

MARGUERITE. I don't know what to do, Louise. I don't know where to turn.

LOUISE. Shall I fetch Sir Percy?

MARGUERITE. *(instinctively)* No. *(changes her mind)* Yes, please ask him if he will join me in here. If nothing else, he has influence.

*LOUISE makes as though to exit, but PERCY enters first.*

PERCY. *(stopping short in surprise)* Begad, m'dear, are you all right?

MARGUERITE. Percy, stay with me a while. Louise, you may go.

*LOUISE exits.*

PERCY. *(stifling a yawn)* If you insist, m'lady, but I'm afraid you'll find my company distinctly tedious.

MARGUERITE. *(standing and going to him)* It was four years ago we first met. You saw me for one hour in Paris before you had to continue your travels, yet when you came back two years later, you had not forgotten me.

PERCY. Faith, Madame, you will have to pardon me, for my dull wits cannot accompany you to the past. Sir Percy Blakeney lives for the present, and...

MARGUERITE. Is it possible that love can die? You felt for me once. Can we not recover our love?

PERCY. To what purpose?

MARGUERITE. *(turning away, frustrated)* Oh, Percy! My brother Armand is in terrible danger. He has been arrested in Calais.

PERCY. How do you know this?

MARGUERITE. Chauvelin told me yesterday.

PERCY. And you believe him, do you?



MARGUERITE. He showed me a letter Armand was carrying with instructions from...  
(*hesitates*) the Scarlet Pimpernel. The Tribunal will not pardon him for that.

PERCY. What about Chauvelin? Did you ask him for help?

MARGUERITE. He promised me Armand would be freed if...

PERCY. Well?

MARGUERITE. Will you not help me? Two years ago you would have done without a moment's thought.

PERCY. (*icily*) Two years ago the Marquis de St. Cyr and all his family perished at the guillotine and I learned that it was my wife of twenty-four hours who had sent them there.

MARGUERITE. I told you the truth about that horrible tale.

PERCY. Not until it had been recounted to me by strangers. And you never explained why. Why did you denounce them, Marguerite?

MARGUERITE. Why bring up the past?

PERCY. Pardon me, Madame, but I thought it was your desire to dwell in it. I'll wager your history has much to do with your present distress. Why did you denounce the St. Cyr?

MARGUERITE. My brother Armand... dared to love the Marquis' daughter, the daughter of an aristocrat. The Marquis was outraged. He sent men to catch Armand in the street and beat him within an inch of his life, all because he tried to rise above his station. When the opportunity came for me to take revenge, I took it. I learned that the Marquis was plotting with Austria against his own country, and a casual word to a friend... I never meant to send him to the guillotine.

PERCY. Who was this friend? Was it Chauvelin? Do you not see that man is a snake?

MARGUERITE. Forgive me, Percy. I did it out of love for my brother. And now the Scarlet Pimpernel will perish, too, unless, somehow, I could warn him of the danger.

PERCY. You exchanged your brother's life for the life of the Scarlet Pimpernel, is that it?

MARGUERITE *nods*.

PERCY. And now Chauvelin has played you false. La! The Pimpernel doesn't seem the sort of fellow who cares much about danger, and certainly not about that fool Chauvelin. As for Armand, I give you my word that he shall be safe.

MARGUERITE. If you can do that, I would love you all my life.

PERCY. Can a woman love two men at once?

MARGUERITE. What do you mean?

PERCY. I do believe you've fallen for this Pimpernel fellow.

MARGUERITE. I'm not in love with him.

PERCY. But you are. I didn't realize it until a moment ago. Dangerous game, falling in love with a phantom. For all you know, he may be a married man who's deeply in love with his wife.

MARGUERITE. Never.

PERCY. Why not?

MARGUERITE. Would any man who was in love with his wife leave her continually to face death? Would you?

PERCY. Me? I'm much more romantic than you think.

MARGUERITE. Can you warn the Pimpernel?

PERCY. Consider him warned, m'dear. Now, I must be off if I'm to accomplish anything tonight.

*He writes a note on a slip of paper and signs it with his signet ring.*

PERCY. Before I go, I must ask you to deliver this to Sir Andrew Ffoulkes, first thing in the morning, if possible.

MARGUERITE. It shall be done.

PERCY. Thank you, m'dear. I believe I can trust you. Goodbye.

*He exits.*

MARGUERITE. Goodbye, Percy. And God be with you.

*LOUISE enters, carrying a letter.*

LOUISE. A fearsome gentleman just delivered this, Madame.

MARGUERITE. Monsieur Chauvelin?

LOUISE. No, Madame, a much harder man than him. He insisted I bring it to you without delay.

*MARGUERITE opens the letter and reads. She utters a cry of astonishment.*

LOUISE. What is it, Madame?

MARGUERITE. Monsieur Chauvelin has kept his word. My brother is safe.

LOUISE. Oh, Madame, I'm so delighted for you! Was Monsieur St. Just in trouble?

MARGUERITE. But if Chauvelin was willing to part with these documents, that must mean...

LOUISE. Yes?

MARGUERITE. Call Lady Suzanne at once!

*LOUISE hurriedly exits and re-enters with SUZANNE.*

SUZANNE. What is it, darling? I was about to go to bed.

MARGUERITE. Suzanne! I must speak to you urgently. Louise, you may go.

*LOUISE exits.*

MARGUERITE. You were with Sir Andrew for most of the night.

SUZANNE. *(blushing)* I spent a few moments with him.

MARGUERITE. Now's no time for shyness. You never left his side all night. Was he in the sitting room at midnight?

SUZANNE. What?

MARGUERITE. At midnight! Was he in the sitting room?

SUZANNE. No, I... We were on the terrace outside. I heard the clock strike the hour.

MARGUERITE. *(thinking)* Then who...? *(to SUZANNE)* Did Sir Andrew speak to anyone?

SUZANNE. Many people. What is it, darling? You're frightening me.

MARGUERITE. Did he speak to anyone confidentially? That you could not overhear?

SUZANNE. No one. Oh, except... Just after the dancing ended, he had a whispered conversation with your husband, Sir Percy.

MARGUERITE. Percy?

*She tears open the letter Percy left with her and utters another cry of astonishment.*

SUZANNE. Margot, what on earth is it?

MARGUERITE. *(handing the letter to SUZANNE)* Look!

SUZANNE. *(reading)* "I go to Calais for St. Just. Be at the Gray Cat tomorrow night." But who is this? It is not signed.

MARGUERITE. What symbol do you see in the corner?

SUZANNE. A five-pointed flower. The Scarlet Pimpernel!

MARGUERITE. Suzanne, Percy wrote and signed that letter. I watched him do it myself.

SUZANNE. But how did your husband come into possession of the Pimpernel's signet ring?

MARGUERITE. Don't you see? Sir Percy *is* the Scarlet Pimpernel!

SUZANNE. Sir Percy? The mastermind behind our escape? It's unbelievable.

MARGUERITE. That's what makes it brilliant. But he has gone to Calais and there is a French agent following him who will not rest until he is caught. Quick, Suzanne, we must pay a visit to Sir Andrew Ffoulkes.

SUZANNE. Sir Andrew? But...

MARGUERITE. Surely you're not shy about meeting your love again so soon?

SUZANNE. Not at all. In fact...

MARGUERITE. What?

SUZANNE. *(with extreme reluctance)* Sir Andrew is waiting in the garden for me right now.

MARGUERITE. Suzanne!

SUZANNE. I love him, Marguerite!

MARGUERITE. La! No matter. It's all to the good now. Please invite him to step inside.

*SUZANNE exits and returns with SIR ANDREW, who looks very sheepish.*

ANDREW. *(clears throat)* Lady Blakeney.

MARGUERITE. I'll spare you a lecture, Sir Andrew, because I have no time to waste. Your comrade and leader, the Scarlet Pimpernel... my husband, Sir Percy Blakeney, is in deadly peril.

*ANDREW is stunned, unable to reply.*

SUZANNE. She is in earnest, Sir Andrew.

MARGUERITE. Never mind how I know this, but thank God I do. Perhaps it is not too late to save him. Unfortunately, I cannot do it alone.

ANDREW. *(still feigning ignorance)* Lady Blakeney, I...

MARGUERITE. This is how the matter stands. Chauvelin has discovered where and how the members of the League rescue aristocrats from France. The Scarlet Pimpernel has gone there today—to the Gray Cat. Chauvelin knows that the Scarlet Pimpernel and Percy Blakeney are one

and the same person. He will follow him to Calais and there will lay hands on him. You know as well as I do what fate awaits him at the hands of the Republic of France.

ANDREW. (*stalling for time*) I do not understand.

SUZANNE. You must know she is speaking the truth!

MARGUERITE. Listen to me! The Scarlet Pimpernel is walking into a trap. Do you think the guillotine will have mercy on your leader?

ANDREW. Lady Blakeney, I beg your pardon, but I must ask. Whose hand guided Monsieur Chauvelin to the knowledge you say he possesses?

MARGUERITE. (*after long hesitation*) Mine. I will not lie to you, for I wish you to trust me absolutely. But I had no idea of the identity of the Scarlet Pimpernel. And... my brother's safety was to be my prize if I succeeded. Armand is more than a brother to me, and... and... How could I guess? But we waste time, Sir Andrew. Every second is precious. In the name of God! My husband is in peril—your friend!—your comrade!—Help me to save him.

ANDREW. Lady Blakeney, I will help you if I can. What do you wish me to do?

MARGUERITE. I must know where to find him when I get to Calais. Where is the Gray Cat?

ANDREW. It would be better if I guided you myself. You cannot possibly journey to Calais alone. You would be running the greatest possible risks to yourself.

MARGUERITE. Oh, I hope there are risks! I have so much to atone for. But Chauvelin's eyes are fixed upon Percy, and he will scarce notice me. Quick, Sir Andrew! The coach is ready, and there is not a moment to be lost.

ANDREW. Faith, Madame, you must permit me to accompany you.

MARGUERITE. Then let it be so. Order the grooms to ready the coach. You will have to disguise yourself as my servant so as to arouse as little suspicion as possible.

SUZANNE. (*stepping forward*) And what disguise must I wear?

ANDREW. Lady Suzanne!

MARGUERITE. No, you must not come with us. You would be risking your life to go back to France.

SUZANNE. As the Pimpernel risked his to bring me here.

ANDREW. Please, Suzanne, here you are safe and well cared for. A schooner in the middle of the Channel at night is no place for a lady.

SUZANNE. But Margot...

MARGUERITE. I go to save my husband.

SUZANNE. And I go to save mine!

MARGUERITE. What do you mean?

SUZANNE. Last night after the ball Sir Andrew proposed marriage to me, and I accepted.

MARGUERITE. (*in disbelief*) You have known each other barely a week.

ANDREW. (*with eyes only for SUZANNE*) A week that opened my eyes wider than they have ever been before.

MARGUERITE. You have spent too much time in France, Sir Andrew.

SUZANNE. May I come, my darling?

ANDREW. It will be very dangerous.

SUZANNE. I shall be less afraid there with you than I would be here alone.

ANDREW. Very well. But you must wear a disguise. Two ladies crossing the Channel alone—and one of them the most beautiful woman in the world...

SUZANNE. (*flattered*) Sir Andrew...

ANDREW. It is sure to excite comment.

MARGUERITE. Then let us make haste! We are now in a race against Chauvelin, and the prize—the life of the Scarlet Pimpernel.

## SCENE 2

*Robespierre's chambers. ROBESPIERRE sits at his desk, writing. CHAUVELIN enters, followed by DESGAS.*

CHAUVELIN. Citizen Robespierre.

ROBESPIERRE. (*standing*) Chauvelin, you crafty hound. You have outdone yourself. So, the Scarlet Pimpernel haunts France once again.

CHAUVELIN. He is in Calais. We followed him across the Channel before he donned another disguise and disappeared.

ROBESPIERRE. How can you be sure he is still in Calais?

CHAUVELIN. My men watch every street and lane. Now that we know him to be a tall, strongly built Englishman, we shall have no trouble preventing his escape.

ROBESPIERRE. Somehow I am less confident of your success than you are. More aristos are rescued by the day. Do you know where he plans to go?

CHAUVELIN. Desgas?

DESGAS. Yes, Citizen. We know that he and his men use an inn called the Gray Cat as a base of operations.

ROBESPIERRE. Excellent. And where is this inn?

DESGAS. We have not been able to discover it, Citizen.

ROBESPIERRE. You fools! The Scarlet Pimpernel will evade you once again. I warn you, if I do not see his headless body in this square within a week, it will be the two of you down there being sliced in half.

CHAUVELIN. We must proceed carefully, Citizen Robespierre. If we draw the net too quickly, he will escape.

ROBESPIERRE. Not if you bait the trap. What of Armand St. Just?



CHAUVELIN. He will be set free presently, as there are no charges against him. The evidence that would have sentenced him to death has been returned to his sister, as I promised.

ROBESPIERRE. The evidence does not matter. Keep him in prison.

CHAUVELIN. Citizen?

ROBESPIERRE. He will provide convenient bait for the Pimpernel.

CHAUVELIN. I gave my word to his sister...

ROBESPIERRE. A traitor to her country. May I ask which way your loyalties lie, Citizen?

CHAUVELIN. *(stiffly)* *Vive le France*, Citizen.

ROBESPIERRE. Very good.

*A SOLDIER enters.*

SOLDIER 1. Citizen Robespierre, we have caught the Scarlet Pimpernel.

CHAUVELIN. Impossible!

ROBESPIERRE. Now that is more like it. Well done, Citizen. Bring him.

*Another SOLDIER enters, dragging an OLD MAN by the arm. The man walks with a stoop and is heavily bearded.*

OLD MAN. An outrage! This is an outrage!

ROBESPIERRE. So, the famous Scarlet Pimpernel. This is the disguise that so easily fools you, Chauvelin? You are an embarrassment to your country.

*He yanks the beard. The OLD MAN howls in pain.*

ROBESPIERRE. This man isn't in disguise! Guard, get him out of here.

*The SOLDIERS haul the OLD MAN out.*

CHAUVELIN. With respect, Citizen, it takes a well-practiced eye.

*The SOLDIERS return, leading an OLD WOMAN by the arm.*

SOLDIER 1. Citizen Robespierre, this old woman was caught passing a message to the prisoners.

OLD WOMAN. It was only a bit of bread wrapped in paper.

*CHAUVELIN steps forward and examines the OLD WOMAN closely. He walks all the way around her; then gives her dress a tug. She slaps him.*

OLD WOMAN. You dirty-minded scoundrel! Have you no respect for a decent Citizen? I ought to report you.

*ROBESPIERRE laughs as the SOLDIERS lead the WOMAN out.*

ROBESPIERRE. It seems a little more practice might be in order, eh, Chauvelin?

*A SOLDIER enters.*

SOLDIER 1. Citizen, a boy is here to see you.

ROBESPIERRE. A boy? Send him in.

*The SOLDIER exits.*

DESGAS. Another escape?

ROBESPIERRE. I hope not, for your sake.

*The SOLDIER re-enters, leading a BOY.*

ROBESPIERRE. What is it?

BOY. There has been another escape at the prison. A dozen aristos...

ROBESPIERRE. The prison guards will lose their heads for this!

BOY. But, Citizen, I know where to find the Scarlet Pimpernel.

CHAUVELIN. How did you come by this information?

BOY. A priest bribed the guards to let the prisoners go. Then he approached me—I don't know why—and tried to recruit me into the League of the Scarlet Pimpernel.

DESGAS. He must have seen pity for those aristos in your eye.

BOY. I spit on aristocrats. But I agreed. He told me to meet him in Calais at an inn called the Silver Leopard. There I would receive further instructions.

CHAUVELIN. "The Gray Cat." Of course!

ROBESPIERRE. Well done, young Citizen. France is in your debt.

BOY. A debt that could be settled now, if it please you, Citizen.

*ROBESPIERRE hands the BOY a coin. The BOY bites it to make sure it's real, pockets it, bows, and exits.*

CHAUVELIN. Quickly, Desgas, take a troop of soldiers to the Silver Leopard—do you know it?

DESGAS. Yes, Citizen.

*He exits.*

CHAUVELIN. I will travel there myself immediately and wait for the Scarlet Pimpernel. Citizen Robespierre, before the night is over, the head of that troublesome Englishman will be in a basket at the foot of the guillotine.

ROBESPIERRE. As will the heads of his followers—and Armand St. Just.

CHAUVELIN. *(after a pause)* Of course, Citizen.

*He exits.*

### SCENE 3

*The dining room of the Silver Leopard is a rough, squalid place. A rough table and chairs occupy the center of the room, while a battered old wardrobe stands in the corner. MARGUERITE, SIR ANDREW, and SUZANNE enter, wrinkling their noses at the disgusting surroundings. ANDREW*

*has exchanged his fine clothes for a simple servant's outfit and SUZANNE is dressed as a lady's maid.*

SUZANNE. What a horrid place!

MARGUERITE. Is this really the League's headquarters?

ANDREW. It is indeed. Its squalor makes a better defense than walls or moats. And wait till you see the innkeeper. Annette!

ANNETTE. *(off stage)* Be off with you! The inn's full.

SUZANNE. How rude! And false. The place is a graveyard.

*ANNETTE enters. She is an imposing woman wearing a dirty apron and a scowl.*

ANNETTE. *Sacres Anglais!* What do you want? The inn is full to bursting and there's not a scrap in the larder.

ANDREW. *(bowing)* It's me, Annette. Sir Andrew Ffoulkes.

ANNETTE. *(looking him up and down)* You Englishmen all look the same: haughty, sleek, and fat.

SUZANNE. He does not!

ANDREW. You flatter me, Citizen. Now if we might have some soup and wine. The voyage across the Channel was not pleasant.

ANNETTE. "Do this, do that." Nothing but commands and kicks for Annette. Spoiled English aristos.

*She exits.*

SUZANNE. What an unpleasant creature. Is she not loyal to our cause?

ANDREW. She cares for nothing but money, and so she can be trusted, for Percy has deep pockets. And, despite the appearance of the dining room, the food is excellent.

MARGUERITE. I could not think of supper.

SUZANNE. Well, I'm starving.

*ANNETTE enters with cups and bowls, which she places on the table. She exits. SUZANNE immediately sits and begins to eat.*

ANDREW. You must eat, Lady Blakeney. We don't know what may happen tonight, and you will need your strength.

MARGUERITE. Do you think Percy has been caught?

ANDREW. Percy, caught? Never! He has more tricks than a sorcerer. While you eat, allow me to introduce you to some of the identities of the Scarlet Pimpernel.

*He goes to the wardrobe in the corner and begins pulling out items, describing their use.*

ANDREW. He was once a French captain astride a horse. Once an old Russian prince with the gout. A hag—one of his favorites. A priest, with his nose in a holy book. A blind beggar. A pig farmer with a broken leg. A fencing instructor from Spain. He never lacked for stories and could entertain soldiers of the Republic for hours. You know, I think some of them enjoyed trying to capture him. It was like a game.

SUZANNE. Did he ever play an actor?

MARGUERITE. Every day of his life.

SUZANNE. He must be the cleverest man I know. Without offense to you, Sir Andrew.

ANDREW. None taken, m'lady, for it is true. He is the cleverest man in the world, but he is also the bravest and least selfish. When he learns Armand is safe, he will not waste an opportunity to save aristocrats. Quite likely, he's in Paris now, helping some escape. When he does, he will bring them here. We must pray Chauvelin hasn't tracked him down yet.

MARGUERITE. I wish there was something we could do now.

*ANNETTE enters to clear away some dishes. They fall silent until she exits.*

ANDREW. I will try to find news of Percy. I may be able to warn him and buy valuable time. You should both be safe here.

SUZANNE. But Andrew, you will be in danger!

ANDREW. It is the risk I take for the chance to free the innocent, Lady Suzanne. It is what Percy would do in my place.

SUZANNE. Please come back to me.

ANDREW. I swear. As long as I draw breath, I will not stop thinking of you.

*He exits. ANNETTE enters.*

ANNETTE. I hope he wasn't the one with the purse.

MARGUERITE. No, Citizen, I have money. Some of it will be yours if you will give my friend here a place to rest.

ANNETTE. She can have the room at the top of the stairs. Fifty francs.

SUZANNE. That's highway robbery.

ANNETTE. Welcome to the Republic of France.

*Marguerite hands over the money and ANNETTE exits without another word.*

SUZANNE. I had no idea the aristocracy was so hated here.

MARGUERITE. It is easy to hate those whom you envy, especially when they mistreat you. Come, let us see this room. I can't imagine it being worse than where we are now.

SUZANNE. Someone's coming!

MARGUERITE. Quick! Up the stairs.

*SUZANNE ascends, but MARGUERITE hangs back to see the visitor.*

CHAUVELIN. *(off stage)* Innkeeper!

*MARGUERITE jumps into the wardrobe just as CHAUVELIN enters with DESGAS.*

CHAUVELIN. Innkeeper!

ANNETTE. *(entering)* What?

CHAUVELIN. Supper and a room, Citizen.

ANNETTE. The inn is full and the larder's empty. Try *Le Poisson Rouge* down the street.

*She turns to go. DESGAS draws a knife and steps into her path.*

ANNETTE. Then again, the spare room is empty. Fifty francs.

*DESGAS brandishes the knife.*

ANNETTE. Ten francs for an agent of the Republic, of course.

CHAUVELIN. Thank you. Now, food. The table already set?

ANNETTE. For myself, Citizen.

CHAUVELIN. With candles?

ANNETTE. I like a bit of atmosphere.

CHAUVELIN. I see.

ANNETTE. I'll get your soup.

*ANNETTE exits. CHAUVELIN motions for DESGAS to follow her. CHAUVELIN begins to search the room. MARGUERITE tries to slip out behind his back, but he spots her.*

CHAUVELIN. Lady Blakeney, please join me for supper.

*She sits at the table with as much dignity as she can muster.*

CHAUVELIN. I would be lying if I said I was surprised to see you here. Once I knew your husband was the Scarlet Pimpernel, I guessed you would try to warn him.

MARGUERITE. Chauvelin, I... I must thank you for keeping your promise regarding my brother's life. I did not expect such honesty from you.

CHAUVELIN. You are grateful that I would trade your brother's life for your husband's?

MARGUERITE. I am grateful to see that you are not wholly a monster. Can you not see the evil of the government you serve? Slaughtering innocent people!

CHAUVELIN. (*passionately*) How can you call innocent those who exult in inequalities? The aristocrats are the bitterest enemy of France. I wish they had but one head between them, so that it might be cut off with a single stroke of the guillotine. The Pimpernel meddles in other nation's affairs for his own sport and cheats us of our due.

MARGUERITE. Wrong, he gives his life for the sake of justice.

CHAUVELIN. Do you think this is anything more than a game for him? Look at these costumes. Clothes, wigs, paint. He's a jester, a charlatan. What character will he play tonight, I wonder? What performance will he put on for his own entertainment?

MARGUERITE. Perhaps he is already here in disguise.

CHAUVELIN. (*laughing*) Oh, that would be fun. I think I'll don a little disguise of my own.

*He dresses as a priest. DESGAS enters from the kitchen.*

DESGAS. There is no one there besides the matron, Citizen. I've tied her up.

CHAUVELIN. Good. And the soldiers?

DESGAS. Outside, well hidden.

CHAUVELIN. Good. Desgas, now you shall have the privilege of guarding the Republic's most charming prisoner. Take her away.

*DESGAS takes MARGUERITE to the kitchen. CHAUVELIN, dressed as a priest, sits at the table.*

PERCY. (off stage)

*God save our gracious King!*

*Long live our noble King!*

*God save the King!*

*Send him victorious,*

*Happy and glorious,*

*Long to reign over us:*



*God save the King!*

*PERCY enters and saunters over to the table.*

PERCY. Odd's fish! Monsieur Chaubertin, fancy meeting you here.

*CHAUVELIN jumps, surprised that Percy saw through his disguise so easily. He recovers himself quickly.*

CHAUVELIN. You can drop the charade, Sir Percy.

PERCY. Oh? I thought you wanted to play along. Or have actually become a man of the cloth?

CHAUVELIN. Only an innocent masquerade, like so many of your own.

PERCY. Ah, but mine were successful.

CHAUVELIN. Mine may prove successful yet. You walked in here quite freely, but you won't walk out a free man. By now my men have surrounded this inn. A single word from me and you will be in chains.

PERCY. In chains? I hope not. They'd ruin my coat. But are you sure your trap is quite foolproof? I've slipped away before, you know.

CHAUVELIN. But this one is so simple. You came to Calais to free Armand St. Just, never suspecting a trap. Your guard is down. You are not even in disguise. I have a score of men outside and one in the kitchen. You are caught, Monsieur Pimpernel.

PERCY. And if I surrender? What then?

CHAUVELIN. The guillotine.

PERCY. Ah, so it must end here. Pity. I rather enjoyed playing the fool.

CHAUVELIN. You were never a fool at heart, Sir Percy.

PERCY. Oh, I meant you.

CHAUVELIN. Fool, am I?

PERCY. How long have you been searching for me? A year? And able to catch me only by sheer luck.

CHAUVELIN. Is that what you think? *(laughs)* Then I have the great pleasure of informing you that your own beloved wife Marguerite St. Just gave me all I needed to set this trap.

PERCY. But that's exactly what I mean. How lucky you happened to pick the bravest woman in the world to do your work for you. If she had been any less, she would have gone to pieces and all your plans would have come to naught.

CHAUVELIN. You underestimate me, Sir Percy. Like any man, I know how to play on a woman's heart.

PERCY. If you were a man, Monsieur, you would have challenged me to a duel, not slinked behind me like a rat.

CHAUVELIN. By all means, let us duel, Monsieur. The two of us, here, now.

*He seizes two fencing foils from the wardrobe and tosses one at PERCY, who catches it easily.*

PERCY. How do I know one of your soldiers won't shoot me from behind?

CHAUVELIN. I give you my word as a Frenchman.

PERCY. And the prize?

CHAUVELIN. If you win, your freedom. The Pimpernel will be dead, of course, but Sir Percy Blakeney may continue to prance and preen among the ladies of English society.

PERCY. Very well, then. *En garde*, Monsieur.

*They commence the duel. CHAUVELIN fights like a snake, tense, with quick strikes, while PERCY is languid, almost bored, blocking CHAUVELIN's thrusts while barely seeming to move his wrist. They circle one another. CHAUVELIN closes, but PERCY slashes and CHAUVELIN reels back.*

CHAUVELIN. You show your true colors, Sir Percy.

PERCY. Shall we continue?

*CHAUVELIN is more careful now. He feints and draws PERCY to the side, then thrusts forward. PERCY barely ducks away.*

PERCY. Odd's fish! Good hit.

*CHAUVELIN is no longer playing. He leaps forward, pressing PERCY back against the table. PERCY dashes a cup of wine into his eyes.*

PERCY. Oh, pardon me. You looked thirsty.

CHAUVELIN. Afraid to use your sword, coward?

*PERCY pauses for a moment, then lunges forward, twists CHAUVELIN's blade, and disarms him.*

PERCY. *Au contraire*, I was afraid you'd lose yours. *(holding his sword point at Chauvelin's throat)* Now, Monsieur Chauvelin, I think it's time I left. I have a boat to catch.

CHAUVELIN. You may go because I know you'll come back of your own free will.

PERCY. You overestimate the charm of your society.

CHAUVELIN. Desgas!

*DESGAS enters.*

CHAUVELIN. Bring out the woman.

PERCY. What woman?

*DESGAS goes and returns with MARGUERITE. He has a pistol pointed at her head.*

MARGUERITE. Percy!

*PERCY takes in the situation at a glance. With barely a pause, he puts both swords on the table and steps back.*

PERCY. I give up, Chauvelin. What next?

CHAUVELIN. I should take you to the guillotine, but I will waste no more time. My men shall form a firing squad and shoot you here, in the street outside.

PERCY. And my wife?

CHAUVELIN. She's free the moment you die.

PERCY. I accept.

MARGUERITE. Percy, no!

CHAUVELIN. It's all right, Desgas. Let her go.

*MARGUERITE runs into PERCY's arms.*

MARGUERITE. Oh, Percy, I would have given my life to save you. Forgive me.

PERCY. It's nothing, m'dear. We'll find a way out of this. We must. We have so much to do together, you and I.

CHAUVELIN. It's time, Sir Percy. Guards!

*MARGUERITE seizes a sword from the table and brandishes it at the two Frenchmen.*

PERCY. My dear!

CHAUVELIN. Lady Blakeney, enough of this foolishness.

MARGUERITE. I have not yet surrendered. Whichever of you touches him will die.

*DESGAS calmly steps forward and aims his pistol. SUZANNE appears from the stairs and hits him over the head with a flower pot. He crumples to the ground. She picks up his pistol.*

CHAUVELIN. *(still calm)* This is all mere playacting. The soldiers are here. You will not escape.

MARGUERITE. We can kill you first.

CHAUVELIN. Gladly would I give my life for the Republic. Alas, it is too late, however.

*The SOLDIERS begin to enter.*

PERCY. Marguerite, Suzanne, lay down your weapons.

SUZANNE. But Sir Percy...

PERCY. The League of the Scarlet Pimpernel was created to save lives, not to take them. In that, I think we have succeeded. I will not end my career as the Pimpernel with bloodshed.

CHAUVELIN. A noble sentiment, Sir Percy, which I will reward by keeping my word regarding your wife.

PERCY. And the Lady Suzanne.

CHAUVELIN. *(with a snarl of contempt for all aristocrats)* So be it. Guards, lead the women to the dock and take Sir Percy Blakeney to the firing squad.

*The SOLDIERS lead everyone out. CHAUVELIN sits. DESGAS groans and staggers to his feet.*

DESGAS. He escaped again?

CHAUVELIN. No.

SOLDIER 1. *(off stage)* Present arms! Ready, aim...

CHAUVELIN. *(whispers)* Fire.

*Silence.*

CHAUVELIN. *(louder)* Fire. Why don't they fire?

*PERCY enters.*

PERCY. Dash it all, I forgot my hat. It's a cursed good hat. Couldn't do without it. Now, now, don't look at me like that. Sink me, if you don't think I'm my own ghost!

CHAUVELIN. Guards!

*The SOLDIERS rush in.*

CHAUVELIN. Seize this man!

*The SOLDIERS start to laugh.*

PERCY. Monsieur Chauvelin, allow me to introduce my firing squad. Sir Andrew Ffoulkes, Lord Anthony Dewhurst, and the rest. (*SUZANNE enters*) The Lady Suzanne you already know.

SUZANNE. Andrew!

ANDREW. Suzanne!

*They embrace.*

PERCY. And Marguerite St. Just, of course, with her brother Armand.

MARGUERITE. Armand! You are safe.

*They embrace.*

PERCY. You look rather sick, Chauvelin. Everything all right? (*to DEWHURST*) What do you think, Dewhurst? Let's find somewhere nice and quiet for our dear friend to lie down.

DEWHURST. That wardrobe ought to do the trick.

PERCY. Excellent. Truss him and his friend up and throw them in there. Someone go in the kitchen and untie Annette, there's a good chap.

*The members of the League cheerfully tie up CHAUVELIN and DESGAS and place them side by side in the wardrobe.*

MARGUERITE. How fitting, Chauvelin, that you will be found among the disguises that fooled you for so long. Wait, Percy...

PERCY. Yes, m'dear?

*MARGUERITE plucks PERCY's signet ring off his finger and slips it on CHAUVELIN's.*

MARGUERITE. A little clue for Citizen Robespierre as to the identity of the long-sought Pimperl.

*They shut the wardrobe door.*

PERCY. Dewhurst, make ready the ship. Let's sail for home.

*The SOLDIERS cheer and exit. PERCY and MARGUERITE stay behind.*

MARGUERITE. Are we really free, Percy?

PERCY. Not you, darling. Chauvelin said you'd be free the moment I died, not a moment sooner. I'm afraid you're stuck with me for many years to come.

*Finis*