

EMILE ZOLA: BLOOD, SEX & MONEY

MONEY

Episode 1: Too Big to Fail

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Adapted from
The Kill
Money
By Émile Zola

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'What is robbing a bank
compared to the crime
of founding one?'
Bertolt Brecht

Characters

Aunt DIDI

FELICITÉ Rougon

ARISTIDE Saccard

CAROLINE Hamelin

VICTOR Rougon

Ms MECHAIN

Tobias GUNDERMANN

Baroness SANDORFF

Brokers

Money

1.

DIDI (with venom) What are you doing here?

FÉLICITÉ Hello, Mummy!

DIDI I'm not your mummy.

FÉLICITÉ Oh come now, we're all one big happy family, aren't we?

DIDI No.

FÉLICITÉ Hello, 'mother-in-law'. Is that better?

DIDI Nurse!

FÉLICITÉ Don't waste your time.

DIDI Nurse!

FÉLICITÉ I gave her the afternoon off.

DIDI Nurse!

Silence.

FÉLICITÉ I'll come straight to the point: it has come to my attention that some in Plassans have been spreading wicked lies about our family.

DIDI Oh dear...

FÉLICITÉ Of course, over the years one has learned not to expect gratitude...

DIDI Hah.

FÉLICITÉ (ignoring her) but things have come to something of a head.

DIDI What happened?

FÉLICITÉ While Pierre and I were in Paris last week, some wretch had the sheer effrontery to paint a daub on the front of our house.

DIDI A daub?

FÉLICITÉ A vulgar slogan.

DIDI What did it say?

FÉLICITÉ I should prefer not to repeat the outrage directly, but the burden of it was that we Rougons have blood on our hands.

DIDI laughs.

I might have known you would find it amusing.

DIDI (subsiding) And what has this to do with me?

FÉLICITÉ Was it you, Mummy?

DIDI Me?

FÉLICITÉ I know it was.

DIDI Félicité, I've been in this asylum for twenty years.

FÉLICITÉ I know that.

DIDI Plus I'm 104 years old; what, you think I sawed through the bars -

FÉLICITÉ No -

DIDI Fashioned a rope out of my bedsheets -

FÉLICITÉ Of course not -

DIDI Painted a slogan on the front of your house and then

FÉLICITÉ Don't be silly -

DIDI Broke back into my cell before bed, is that it?

FÉLICITÉ Not the daub, don't be obtuse. The rumours. I know that you started them and I am here to ask you to stop.

DIDI What makes you think I did anything?

FÉLICITÉ The particular details that are circulating could only come from you.

DIDI What can I do stuck in here?

FÉLICITÉ I know very well you have visitors. You talk to the nurses. You've always been jealous of me –

DIDI Jealous!

FÉLICITÉ ... turning your sad little resentments over and over in your head until they have grown into legends of injustice.

DIDI Why the urgency all of a sudden?

FÉLICITÉ No urgency.

DIDI You've never visited me before.

FÉLICITÉ Not that it's any of your business, Mummy, but your son is in the final stages of a substantial commercial deal.

DIDI (sarcasm) How hugely interesting...

FÉLICITÉ Oh of course, you've never understood business, but let me make it simpler for you. Paradise & Baudu, France's biggest retail corporation, is buying out our family firm and making Pierre the head of the new board.

DIDI Oh. I might have known. This is all about money.

FÉLICITÉ Not at all.

DIDI Oh yes, I forgot. It's so vulgar to discuss money, isn't it?

FÉLICITÉ There will be some appropriate remuneration of course, but far more important is that Pierre – your son, Didi – is likely to be appointed a Chevalier of the Legion d'Honneur.

DIDI Well bully for him.

FÉLICITÉ I think it's sad. You're so bitter and twisted up inside, you can't even be happy for your own son.

DIDI All your so-called achievements are based on theft, murder, betrayal.

FÉLICITÉ What an imagination!

DIDI The thing is, Félicité, I know the truth and that's what you can't bear.

Pause. Change on tone. FÉLICITÉ slowly approaches DIDI. Perhaps DIDI is in a wheelchair and tries to back away until cornered.

FÉLICITÉ Mummy. When I say I am here to ask you to stop spreading these lies, I mean in fact that I am here to tell you to stop.

DIDI Oh really.

FÉLICITÉ Yes really.

DIDI And if I don't?

FÉLICITÉ That wouldn't be a good idea.

DIDI Is that a threat?

FÉLICITÉ Take it as you wish.

DIDI You can't threaten me. While I'm in this place, I'm protected.

FÉLICITÉ We'll see.

DIDI And what is that supposed to mean?

FÉLICITÉ Pierre and I are known for our charitable giving. There is barely a public building in the whole area that hasn't benefited from our kindness. Even here.

DIDI So?

FÉLICITÉ So let's say, I have friends.

DIDI Is that supposed to scare me?

FÉLICITÉ (very close, very soft) Didi. I would do anything to protect my family. Anything at all.

Pause.

DIDI What are you doing?

Pause.

Let go of me!

Hold moment. Then FÉLICITÉ break and
turns to go.

DIDI How dare you touch me.

FÉLICITÉ Touch you? What a vivid imagination you
have.

DIDI Get out.

FÉLICITÉ I'm going.

DIDI You're mad.

FÉLICITÉ You're the one in a madhouse, Mummy.

DIDI Don't call me -

Door closes.

Mummy.

2.

DIDI (VO) Pick up a stone, hold it a moment in your
hand, then throw it high into the air.

We hear a bowed note, played on
strings, rising with a rush.

The stone will rise, up and up.

The note continues to rise but less
steeply.

Until at some point it reaches its highest
point.

The note levels out, the bow holding
the note in tension.

And if the stone could think, it might,
just for a moment, for a long moment,

believe it has found its true place, its resting point.

The note wobbles.

But it has not.

The note starts to drop.

For as surely as it rose -

Drops.

In fact because it rose -

Drops.

The stone will fall.

Down.

So it is with families. So it is with Empires. So it is with money. What goes up...

The music crashes down and explodes into:

3.

The trading floor of the Paris Bourse 1865. A large marble hall. There are dozens of men clamouring for attention, trying to buy and sell shares. News is being shouted from one side of the room to the other. Murmured conversations in corners.

DIDI (VO)

Take my grandson. Here he is, look.

We get closer to him, the sound of the Bourse recedes a little.

His name is Aristide Saccard. He was born Aristide Rougon but when he arrived in Paris he chose to keep his distance from the family by adopting the name Saccard.

Every day, Aristide comes here, to the Bourse and its marble trading floor, among

the share-runners and stockjobbers and brokers.

BROKER (Calling) I have Montsou Mining!

ARISTIDE (Calling) What price Montsou?

BROKER (Calling) 1200!

ARISTIDE (Calling) I'll give you 900!

BROKER (Calling) I am instructed to offer them at 1200.

ARISTIDE (lower) No sir.

A slow build of Bourse activity.
Repeat the rush upwards of the
musical motif.

DIDI (VO) He invests modestly and he does alright but Aristide once had a business that made him rich. He dipped his hand in a river of gold and brought it out shining and bright. But what goes up...

The activity builds then dies down.

For now, sometimes he buys and sometimes he sells but mostly he watches and he waits. And every day, when the bell rings to signal the end of trading –

We hear it.

Aristide counts the hours until he can return to fight again.

4.

Outside the Bourse. Horses, carriages,
chatter.

DIDI (VO) Today he has some more business to conduct before heading home.

A door opens.

MÉCHAIN What do you want?

ARISTIDE Does Sigismond Busch live here?

MÉCHAIN Who wants to know?

ARISTIDE I have a letter that needs translating
from German.

MÉCHAIN So?

ARISTIDE I can pay.

MÉCHAIN Why don't you come inside?

5.

Inside. A cheap room. SIGISMOND is in bed.
He is unwell.

MÉCHAIN Ziggy. You got a visitor.

SIGISMOND Have him come in.

ARISTIDE I was told you translate from the German.
I have a letter here that needs your
services.

MÉCHAIN (hissing) Ziggy.

SIGISMOND Yes of course.

MÉCHAIN (hissing) Ziggy!

SIGISMOND (whispering) What?

MÉCHAIN (whispering) Get the money first.

SIGISMOND What?

MÉCHAIN (whispering more loudly) I said: get the
money first!

SIGISMOND What did she say?

ARISTIDE She said get the money first.

MÉCHAIN (hissing) You need to clear your ears out.

ARISTIDE It's quite alright. I am perfectly happy
to pay.

MÉCHAIN Thank you, sir. The letter is how long,
Ziggy?

SIGISMOND Three pages.

MÉCHAIN This is a contract for services; three pages at 100 centimes a page, plus commission, that will be four francs fifty. If you would just sign here.

ARISTIDE Of course.

Signature.

MÉCHAIN And your address here.

ARISTIDE Indeed.

Writes.

MÉCHAIN And the four francs fifty, if you'd be so good.

ARISTIDE There.

Coins.

MÉCHAIN And two copies will be delivered to you tomorrow evening.

ARISTIDE I'm most gratified.

SIGISMOND is racked with a spasming cough.

Are you alright, sir?

SIGISMOND I'm — I'm —

MÉCHAIN My brother is under the weather at the moment, sir, though his translative faculties are unimpaired.

ARISTIDE I see. Well, thank you, sir, madam. I'll see myself out.

MÉCHAIN Sir.

The door closes behind him.

Well well.

SIGISMOND What is it?

MÉCHAIN Very interesting.

MECHAIN pulls out a large leather bag, full of papers, and starts rummaging through it.

SIGISMOND What is?

MÉCHAIN This signature.

SIGISMOND What about it?

MÉCHAIN I've been looking for the lawful possessor of this signature for some time.

SIGISMOND It's not that Léonie Cron business again?

MÉCHAIN No, this is something different. Something better maybe. There. What do you think?

SIGISMOND ... They're similar I suppose.

MÉCHAIN Similar? They're identical. 'Similar'!

SIGISMOND They're not even the same name.

MÉCHAIN Aristide Rougon, Aristide Saccard, but the hand, Ziggy, the hand!

SIGISMOND If you say so.

MÉCHAIN I do. Mark my words. This is the start of something, Ziggy. Very much the start of something. I think Mr Saccard of Orviedo Mansions is going to be very good to us.

6.

Aristide Saccard walking up some stone stairs in a rich person's mansion, putting a key in a door and entering a private room – all under the following.

DIDI (VO) Orviedo Mansions were built by Prince Orviedo, the most successful investor of the Second Empire whose genius was move money from place to place without feeling the slightest concern for the consequences of his actions, the lives ruined by speculation, the children thrown into poverty. After he died, his widow retreated to three rooms on the second

floor of their palatial mansion and set up a charitable foundation to get rid of all of his disgusting money. Aristide helped her with her paperwork and became one of her tenants. But he is not the only tenant.

A door opens suddenly. A squeal.

CAROLINE I'm so sorry, sir, I thought this was my room.

ARISTIDE Not at all, which room did she say?

CAROLINE Top of the stairs on the right.

ARISTIDE She means turn right I think, there's a room around the corner, I'll show you -

CAROLINE I don't want to trouble you -

ARISTIDE It's no trouble.

We follow him to the door.

I'm Aristide Saccard, by the way.

CAROLINE Caroline Hamelin.

ARISTIDE There you see? Just follow it round and there's your door.

CAROLINE Thank you.

ARISTIDE The left-hand window doesn't close properly, so don't even try.

CAROLINE Oh - good to know!

ARISTIDE Welcome to the Orviedo Mansions, Miss Hamelin.

CAROLINE Thank you, Mr Saccard.

DIDI (VO) Caroline Hamelin had just fled from a marriage to the millionaire beer merchant, Alain Durieu. The merchant controlled his wife the way he controlled his business and after another brutal shake up, Caroline packed a bag and walked out, following a friend's recommendation to seek out Orviedo.

7.

Passing on the stairs.

DIDI (VO) Caroline and Aristide begin as nodding acquaintances.

ARISTIDE Miss Hamelin.

CAROLINE Mr Saccard

DIDI (VO) But with every chance encounter -

8.

Outside the house. Rain.

DIDI (VO) ... their stock begins to rise.

CAROLINE Mr Saccard, I am glad to see you.

ARISTIDE Would you like to shelter under my umbrella?

CAROLINE I would be very grateful. This hat is ruined.

ARISTIDE Filthy weather isn't it?

DIDI (VO) Within a month their stock was paying dividends.

9.

ARISTIDE is halfway downstairs, CAROLINE leans over the bannister and calls down to him.

CAROLINE Oh Mr Saccard?

ARISTIDE Miss Hamelin?

CAROLINE I'm sorry to trouble you. I have a money matter that I need to sort out. Mrs Orviedo thought you might be able to help.

ARISTIDE But of course. Can it wait until this evening? I can give you my full attention then.

CAROLINE That would be very kind, Mr Saccard.

DIDI (VO) And for a while, it looks as though a merger is on the cards.

10.

A respectable café.

CAROLINE You've been so helpful, Mr Saccard.

ARISTIDE Aristide, please.

CAROLINE If you insist.

ARISTIDE May I ask what your brother is doing in the East?

CAROLINE George is an engineer. He's been in Constantinople trying to interest the Turks in a railway.

ARISTIDE Important work.

CAROLINE He's a very good engineer and he has wonderful plans, but the Sultan will not make up his mind.

ARISTIDE What plans?

CAROLINE He has found rich seams of silver at Carmel. He wants to create a mine, with a road to St John of Acre to transport refined silver for sale; that will fund a much larger railway system right across Asia Minor, industries springing up across the Near East...

ARISTIDE He sounds like a remarkable man.

CAROLINE He explains it much better than I can, but it all costs money and the Sultan continues to hesitate.

ARISTIDE What if he were able to find the money somewhere else?

CAROLINE Where?

ARISTIDE If he found an investor, or a group of investors, or, better still, an investment bank that could take on start-up costs and underwrite the first phase of development, he would only need to gain territorial agreements from the Turks and the works could start the next day.

CAROLINE You seem to know a great deal about it.

ARISTIDE Miss Hamelin, all that is needed is to listen.

CAROLINE Oh I am listening, I assure you -

ARISTIDE Not to me. To money.

CAROLINE To -

ARISTIDE Just listen. If you listen hard enough, money will speak to you.

CAROLINE I'm not good with money.

ARISTIDE Not everyone can listen of course.

CAROLINE But you can.

ARISTIDE And let me confide something in you, Miss Hamelin.

CAROLINE Caroline.

ARISTIDE Caroline. I mean to found a bank.

CAROLINE Found a bank?

ARISTIDE An investment bank. I have been building up resources, associates, contacts.

CAROLINE Can someone just set up a bank?

ARISTIDE But of course! All the major banks were founded by somebody.

CAROLINE So when?

ARISTIDE I don't know. That's what's so exciting. I am always watching, always listening, waiting for that opportunity.

CAROLINE Crikey.

ARISTIDE And when I do, I make you this pledge now:
My bank will fund your brother's grand
engineering project in the Near East.

CAROLINE You can't mean that.

ARISTIDE I do mean that.

CAROLINE But you hardly know us.

ARISTIDE I have an instinct for these things.

CAROLINE I can't let you.

ARISTIDE (simply) Miss Hamelin: please allow me to
make you rich.

DIDI (VO) Can you really hear money, Aristide?

ARISTIDE I can.

DIDI (VO) What does it sound like?

ARISTIDE Money speaks in a hundred beautiful
voices.

DIDI (VO) You make it sound like money can sing.

ARISTIDE Of course it can sing!

DIDI (VO) Now I think you're pulling my leg.

ARISTIDE Bonds and shares, notes and coins. They
all sing in their own way. You just need
to hear it. Listen to this.

ARISTIDE taps his pen on the café
table.

BOND (bass note) Bond!

SHARE (3rd) Share!

FRANC (5th) Franc!

CENTIME (octave above, little voice) Centime!

MONEY (barber shop quartet) Money!

ARISTIDE You see?

DIDI (VO) You're a strange man, Aristide.

ARISTIDE (back in the room) I promise you, Miss Hamelin. When the opportunity comes, I'm going to take it. I am going to be richest man in France.

MONEY (barber shop quartet) Aristide!

11.

The Bourse. Agitated selling.

DIDI (VO) Aristide's opportunity comes sooner than he expected. For some weeks the newspapers have been filled with the prospect of war between Germany, Austria and Italy. And when bloodshed is threatened, Paris's first thought is for money and at the Bourse shares are tumbling.

The shouts build and the frantic clanging of the bell is barely able to stop them.

12.

A wood-panelled room.

DIDI (VO) The afternoon of the worst losses, Aristide is keeping a longstanding lunch engagement with his brother Eugène, a minister in the Emperor's government. Eugène does not like to be seen with his brother so they have lunch delivered to his ministerial office. When his brother steps out for a moment, Aristide, always with his eyes and ears open, scans the content of the Minister's desk and his attention is caught by a telegram confirming an armistice to be announced the following morning.

13.

The Bourse. Shouts as frantic as ever.

BROKER I'm selling Luxembourg Steel at two-fifty!

BROKER Combined Zinc at one-seventy five!

BROKER I have Montsou Mining at one-sixty!

BROKER Who's buying? Anybody?

Babble of voices and then:

ARISTIDE (cutting through) I'm buying.

A moment's rest in the hubbub.

BROKER You're buying, Mr Saccard?

ARISTIDE Yes, I'll take 1000 Montsou but at one-fifty. 1200 Zinc at one hundred / - yes, one hundred, sir

BROKER I can't do that -

ARISTIDE I'll take all you have of Luxemburg Steel at one-fifty but not a franc more and put the word out that Aristide Saccard is buying copper and oak.

There is an explosion of activity.

DIDI (VO) Aristide uses all his resources down to the last centime -

CENTIME (octave up) Centime!

DIDI (VO) - spending almost a million francs on shares at rock-bottom prices from grateful brokers - and when the news of the armistice hits the Bourse the next morning, he is able to sell these shares at four or five times their previous day's value.

MONEY (barber shop) Money!

DIDI (VO) In twenty-five minutes, Aristide has made four million francs in clear profit and by the end of the day is being described as the Genius of the Bourse.

The Bourse bell rings.

MONEY (barber shop) Saccard!

14.

The Bourse.

DIDI (VO) This is your moment, isn't it, Aristide?

ARISTIDE A good businessman knows when to strike.

DIDI (VO) He gathers his associates and forms a board and decides on the name of the bank.

BOARD MEMBER The Bank of Paris?

ARISTIDE Too parochial.

BOARD MEMBER The National Bank?

ARISTIDE Too French.

BOARD MEMBER The European Bank?

ARISTIDE Too inward-looking.

BOARD MEMBER The Global Bank?

ARISTIDE I have it. Please take this down: Mr Aristide Saccard and associates are pleased to announce the launch - of The Universal Bank.

Cheers.

DIDI (VO) When the share issue is announced the brokers fly into a fever of anticipation. On the day they go on sale, Aristide has a simple message for The Bourse.

ARISTIDE Gentlemen! Please allow me to make you rich!

The bell of the Bourse rings furiously and a hubbub swirls around them.

BROKER I have Universals at 500! I have Universals!

DIDI (VO) The shares open at 500, and rise to 700 by lunchtime. By close of trading they are at 950 francs.

ARISTIDE is beside himself with excitement.

ARISTIDE (back of an envelope) That's fifty thousand shares at nine-fifty, which makes a market capitalization of ...

DIDI (VO) Forty-seven and a half million francs –

ARISTIDE Thank you, Granny. And my own holdings of eleven thousand, at a pre-sale discount of 450 have netted me a profit of –

DIDI (VO) Five and a half million.

ARISTIDE Now that's what I call a good day's work.

DIDI (VO) But Aristide is not just thinking of himself.

15.

Knocking furiously on a door.

ARISTIDE Caroline! Caroline!

Knocking furiously.

Caroline!

The door opens.

CAROLINE Mr Saccard! What – what's the matter? What's happened?

ARISTIDE The Bank. My Bank. It's up, it's up and running, it's running away with itself. I'm back, Caroline, I'm back!

ARISTIDE grabs Caroline and dances an enthusiastic money jig with her.

CAROLINE (Laughing) Mr Saccard, please!

ARISTIDE It starts tomorrow. When can your brother be here?

CAROLINE In a week, perhaps, why?

ARISTIDE (Taking from his pocket) I have here a bond, which guarantees Hamelin Construction open brackets Asia Minor close brackets the sum of ten million francs to help finance the Carmel Silver Mines, the Saint John roadway and the Constantinople Railway Company.

CAROLINE I don't believe it.

ARISTIDE See for yourself. Stamped, signed and sealed.

CAROLINE But we can't take your money.

ARISTIDE But you must and when – as it will – your brother's projects start to turn a profit, the money will flow back the other way – like the moon and the tides!

CAROLINE Have you been drinking, Mr Saccard?

ARISTIDE A glass or two with my Board but this is it, Caroline. This is where it begins.

CAROLINE I don't know what to say.

ARISTIDE And that's not all. I have a small gift for you.

CAROLINE A gift?

ARISTIDE (Taking an envelope from his other pocket) 100 shares in the Universal Bank. I bought them in your name this morning before trading opened at four-fifty. They are now worth (makes a little drunken fanfare with his mouth) um –

DIDI (VO) Ninety-five thousand / francs

ARISTIDE Ninety-five thousand francs.

CAROLINE Oh but I can't accept these.

ARISTIDE Why not?

CAROLINE It's much too generous. No I'm sorry, I couldn't possibly accept.

ARISTIDE If you really feel that way, just pay me back what they cost. Then they're yours.

CAROLINE Where do you think I can get ninety-five thousand francs...?

ARISTIDE No no, not ninety-five, forty-five, the amount I paid for them.

CAROLINE Even forty five thousand would be quite impossible –

ARISTIDE The shares were worth 45,000 this morning. Now they're worth 95,000. You can use the 50,000 francs profit to pay the original price and you'll still have 5000 left over.

CAROLINE I don't – really? Is that possible?

ARISTIDE Why not?

CAROLINE It just seems – I don't know – like conjuring money out of thin air.

ARISTIDE That's exactly what it is.

He grabs her again and dances her round and round.

That's the beauty of it, Caroline! That's how it works! It's the genius of money!

CAROLINE laughs, despite herself, as they whirl round and round, going nowhere.

16.

A huge empty room, filled with workmen. Hammering, shouts, sawing.

DIDI (VO) A Bank needed premises and Aristide has persuaded the Princess to let him rent and convert the large ballroom on the ground floor of Orviedo Mansion as the home of the Universal Bank. Marble is ordered from Rome, glass from Venice, and a vast Beurdeley clock watches over a room flanked by a pair of enormous trumeau mirrors at either end of the room each reflecting the other. To oversee the work, Aristide employed Caroline.

CAROLINE Sir, the polish on the marble is still not right. Mr Saccard will not pay until the polish is right.

WORKMAN Yes, Miss.

CAROLINE He is very exacting. You understand I'm sure.

WORKMAN Yes, Miss.

ASSISTANT Miss Hamelin. There's a visitor for you?

CAROLINE If it's the rosewood desks, they will / need to come back tomorrow –

ASSISTANT It's not the desks, Miss. It's a personal matter, she said, concerning Mr Saccard.

CAROLINE Send her in.

MÉCHAIN Don't worry I'm already here!

CAROLINE You can go. (ASSISTANT leaves) Good morning...

MÉCHAIN I come for Mr Aristide Saccard, is he about?

CAROLINE I'm afraid he's out of the office at the moment.

MÉCHAIN When's he back?

CAROLINE He won't be back until tomorrow.

MÉCHAIN Oh dear oh dear.

CAROLINE Did you have an appointment?

MÉCHAIN No no, nothing like that.

CAROLINE May I ask what this is concerning?

MÉCHAIN Personal matter. Private matter. Very delicate.

CAROLINE I am Mr Saccard's personal assistant. If you would be prepared to confide in me, I can make sure the matter is brought to his attention.

MÉCHAIN Hmmm. Well it concerns a boy.

CAROLINE A boy?

MÉCHAIN Yeah a boy. Victor's his name. He's only twelve and he's in an orphanage, has been all his life, see? Poor little lamb, deprived of a mother's love.

CAROLINE Forgive me, I don't understand how this concerns –

MÉCHAIN Yeah I'm getting to that. See, his mum, well, her lifestyle ain't conducive to looking after the boy. Too many gentleman visitors, if you follow me.

CAROLINE I think so.

MÉCHAIN The Dad was supposed to pay the bills for his care but he scarpered didn't he? Soon after the kiddy was born.

CAROLINE I still don't see how –

MÉCHAIN Only, before he left, (gets out some documents from her leather bag) he made out these promissory notes. (IOUs to you and me.) Each promissoring to look after the boy's interests to the tune of 50 francs. Recognise the signature?

CAROLINE ...

MÉCHAIN I see you do.

CAROLINE And what, can I ask, does this have to do with you?

MÉCHAIN These promissory notes, you see, they came into my possession. The mum sold them to me for the price of a good dinner and a promise to look after the boy's interests. Well they're no use to her are they? But to me – see, I keep my ears to the ground don't I? I been paying my contribution to the kiddy, waiting for the day when Mr Rougon pops up again and blow me down if one month ago he don't walk right into my establishment.

CAROLINE So what do you want?

MÉCHAIN I want Mr Saccard to face up to his obligations.

CAROLINE You want money? Is that it?

MÉCHAIN Money's another way of putting it, yeah.

CAROLINE How many of these notes do you have?

MÉCHAIN Five in all.

CAROLINE Which makes 250 francs.

MÉCHAIN Oh well, then of course there's inflation. And my inconvenience. My taking the trouble to bring it to Mr Saccard's attention. Privately. Not causing a great stink about it to the distress of all concerned.

CAROLINE Is this blackmail, Mrs ...

MÉCHAIN Méchain. Goodness me no. I'm just calling Mr Saccard to do his duty. And from what I hear, he's just come into a few bob, so what's a 1000 francs to him?

CAROLINE One thousand?

MÉCHAIN Plus sales tax.

Pause.

CAROLINE I can give you two hundred and fifty francs now. I can give you more in a month or two.

MÉCHAIN That's very decent of you.

CAROLINE But on one condition.

MÉCHAIN Whassat?

CAROLINE You deal with me and me alone. You do not bother Mr Saccard with this.

MÉCHAIN If you like. All's the same to me.

DIDI (VO) Why did Caroline resolve, at that moment, to keep the story of Victor from Aristide?

I don't know. I don't think Caroline knew either. It was a story that unsettled her and so she decided to keep it safe by locking it in the bank vault of her heart.

17.

Night. Rain pouring. Dark and drenching. Music.

DIDI (VO)

But on the outskirts of Paris, something is happening the Orviedo Work Foundation for Orphan Children.

We hear a window smashing.

A strong young body is squeezing itself out of a broken bathroom window.

We hear VICTOR grunting and breathing hard as he forces his painful way out.

Victor, Saccard's illegitimate son, is forcing his way towards freedom.

He gets through and he lands on all fours heavily on the wet earth.

By coincidence – but then not really a coincidence at all – the Orphanage's income comes from an investment fund endowed by the Princess Orviedo. But the crash in which Aristide made his millions, lost others a good deal, including the Orphanage. Cutbacks are needed and tough choices must be made. The four nightly patrols are reduced to two and in those gaps Victor sees his chance.

Victor starts to climb the metal perimeter fence.

Not that Victor counts the hours. He is a boy who lives entirely on instinct. Never shown love. Never shown trust. No one has ever heard him speak or seen him smile. He is, in truth, more dog than boy, and if anything, more wolf than dog.

Victor jumps from the fence to freedom. He lands in triumph and howls a wolfish howl.

18.

GUNDERMANN's office. Calm, a ticking clock, no sound from outside, a serene aura. The scratching of a pen on paper. A pause.

ARISTIDE Will you be long –

GUNDERMANN One moment please.

Continues writing. Pause. Concludes. Screws cap onto his pen. Replaces it carefully on his desk.

Now how many I assist you?

ARISTIDE Mr Gundermann, allow me to present my credentials. My name is Aristide Saccard, General Manager of the Universal Bank.

GUNDERMANN I know who you are, sir.

ARISTIDE Then you will know that the Universal is investing in a number of remarkable projects across the Near East. Silver mines, railways, roads and refineries. We do so with the personal authorization of the Sultan.

GUNDERMANN ...

ARISTIDE I tell you in confidence that we are poised to launch a second share issue, to support the construction of a Turkish National Bank.

GUNDERMANN ...

ARISTIDE You are, of course, perhaps the very greatest financier in all of France and it would be a great honour to have you as one of our principle investors.

GUNDERMANN No.

ARISTIDE No?

GUNDERMANN No.

ARISTIDE No it would not be an honour or no you don't want to invest?

GUNDERMANN No I will not be investing in the Universal Bank.

ARISTIDE I see. May I ask why not?

GUNDERMANN You are currently trading at one thousand three-hundred and fifty francs per share. Some rudimentary earthworks in Turkey with no promise of success. Absurd. Your Bank is hopelessly overvalued.

ARISTIDE (put out) The Bourse doesn't seem to think so.

GUNDERMANN The Bourse will correct its error.

ARISTIDE I beg to differ.

GUNDERMANN It's based on nothing. What, thin air.

ARISTIDE You are, of course, a very great financier, but perhaps of the old school. I am, if I may say, of the new school. I understand money. I know what it does.

GUNDERMANN I congratulate you.

ARISTIDE Do you know what it does?

GUNDERMANN I believe I understand how money works.

ARISTIDE See this ten-franc note. Look at it.

GUNDERMANN I see it.

ARISTIDE Now listen to it. Hold it to your ear. Listen hard.

GUNDERMANN I don't understand.

ARISTIDE Listen. Can you hear it?

GUNDERMANN I don't hear anything, Mr Saccard.

We hear a faint paper breath, very faint.

ARISTIDE It's saying, 'money'.

We hear the paper breath whispering 'money'.

GUNDERMANN I think perhaps our business here is concluded.

ARISTIDE You don't get it, do you? I am the future and you are the past, Mr Gundermann.

GUNDERMANN You may show yourself out, Saccard.

DIDI (VO) This was in no sense a good meeting.

ARISTIDE slams the door behind him.

19.

The banking hall of the Universal. A hum of activity, voices, rubber stamps, money being counted, coins being weighed. Marble and glass and mirrors.

CAROLINE Mr Saccard, how was it? Will he invest?

ARISTIDE No, Caroline, he won't.

CAROLINE Why not? Did he say?

ARISTIDE Because I won't let him.

CAROLINE I don't understand.

ARISTIDE Gundermann's history. Universal is the future. We're going to launch these new shares at one thousand five hundred francs each. Another 50,000.

CAROLINE Another 50,000? Are you sure?

ARISTIDE Your brother's doing amazing things in the East. Our reputation has never been better. The price keeps going up and everybody wants the shares but nobody wants to sell.

CAROLINE Still it might be less risky to start with 30,000 and / assess the situation

ARISTIDE No. No and No. Risk is what we do here.
Risk is good. Issue a notice.

CAROLINE Yes, Mr Saccard.

ARISTIDE And we will have to expand. Talk to
Princess Orviedo. We shall need the second
floor too. And we need vaults. What Bank
doesn't have a vault? Talk to her. We need
to dig.

CAROLINE Yes, Mr Saccard.

ARISTIDE We'll bloody show you, Mr Gundermann.

20.

Back at GUNDERMANN's office. GUNDERMANN
tinkles his little bell.

CAMILLE (entering) Mr Gundermann?

GUNDERMANN I think the Universal Bank will be on its
way down fairly soon. Gather my brokers
and see if they can't help it on its way.

CAMILLE Very good, Mr Gundermann.

21.

The Bourse. A frenzy of activity.

DIDI (VO) But Mr Gundermann is wrong. The price
continues to rise. One-four-hundred, one-
four-fifty, fifteen hundred. And when the
second share issues is launched, at a
price of sixteen hundred per share, they
are all sold.

Bourse bell rings. Cheers.

Even Caroline is persuaded to buy more.

ARISTIDE Of course you must.

CAROLINE But the shares are so expensive now.

ARISTIDE But your original shares. Let me see, 100
shares, bought at 450 francs a share and

now worth 1600, that makes a total portfolio of -

DIDI (VO) 160 thousand -

ARISTIDE One hundred and sixty thousand francs!
You're a rich woman, Miss Hamelin.

CAROLINE So you're saying I should sell the shares
and use the profits to / buy new shares?

ARISTIDE Oh no. No no no. You must never sell. Sell
a Universal? Impossible.

CAROLINE But then - how do I - ?

ARISTIDE You can buy the shares on credit, set
against the future value of the shares.

CAROLINE Really? No, that - feels absurd.

ARISTIDE Nothing absurd about it.

CAROLINE Like trying to pick yourself up by your
hair.

ARISTIDE That's a very good description, Miss
Hamelin.

CAROLINE But it can't go on for ever.

ARISTIDE Why not? That's what money does. Money is
a shark. It keeps moving forward.

DIDI (VO) All the shares are sold, but not all to
investors. With thirty minutes to go to
close of trading there are fifteen
thousand still to go so Aristide arranges
for the bank to buy some of them itself.

ARISTIDE Not so loud, Granny!

DIDI (VO) A strictly illegal course of action but,
he reasons:

ARISTIDE Why should the investors get all the
benefit of our hard work?

DIDI (VO) So under the guise of various frontmen,
the bank acquires 8,000 of its own shares.

ARISTIDE When the shares go up further, we can sell them on at a tidy profit. More money for the Holy Land!

DIDI (VO) But of course that does mean on paper the bank seems to be worth -

ARISTIDE 160 million.

DIDI (VO) But in reality, it's worth -

ARISTIDE 147 million.

DIDI (VO) A small discrepancy perhaps, but an important one. And this is only the beginning.

22.

A board room. Cheers.

ARISTIDE And believe me gentlemen, this is only the beginning.

Champagne is popped. More cheers.

The share price is what - one-seven-sixty?

VOICE One-seven-eighty!

ARISTIDE It moves so fast these days! One seven-eighty, but mark my words. By the end of next week, it'll be over 2000. And by the end of the year, I shall be very surprised not to see it hit 3000.

Cheers.

But remember what this is all for. This isn't for money and wealth.

BOARD (variously) No. no.

ARISTIDE We are contributing to the future of the Near East. Of our Turkish friends. Of the Holy Land too. Even now mines are being sunk, roads built, tracks laid that will bring water to the desert, flowers to the sand, and riches to everyone.

Cheers.

(Over it) That's what money does! That's what money does!

DAIGREMONT I presume you have all the paperwork available for inspection.

Groans. Mr DAIGREMONT is a pedant.

ARISTIDE Indeed we do, Mr Daigremont. Plans from the engineer, work dockets, independent reports, a letter from the Sultan himself!

DAIGREMONT And you're not concerned at the rumours that Gundermann is moving against us.

ARISTIDE Gundermann? Hah! Gundermann? I have no doubt he would love to see us go down but let him try to short the Universal; he'll just end up losing his money and his reputation.

DAIGREMONT And the balance sheet. Nothing to worry about on there is there?

ARISTIDE No, why should there be?

DAIGREMONT These projections, Mr Saccard. They are very ambitious.

ARISTIDE I have great ambitions for our Bank, Mr Daigremont. And our plans have been endorsed by the Financial Telegraph, the Bourse's newspaper of record.

DIDI (VO) Aristide has bought the Financial Telegraph.

DAIGREMONT What about the overseas debts?

ARISTIDE What about them?

DAIGREMONT They've been carried over into the next financial year I understand.

ARISTIDE Perfectly standard accounting practice.

DAIGREMONT All the same, I should like it recorded that I —

ARISTIDE Mr Daigremont. Why spoil a perfect set of minutes? Everything is quite in order, you have my word on that.

DAIGREMONT Nonetheless -

ARISTIDE Someone get Mr Daigremont another glass of champagne! My dear sir, please allow me to make you rich. The Universal is here to stay!

Cheers.

DIDI (VO) These are the marvellous mysteries of finance, all the more marvellous for being mysterious.

23.

A street. Night.

DIDI (VO) In a street in the west of Paris, a couple are on their way to a Ball at the Tuileries Palace.

The following starts faintly, under the narration..

MR BOUCHARD Delestang is impossible, quite impossible. Why the Emperor chose him for the Interior is entirely beyond me.

MRS BOUCHARD You should speak to the Emperor, darling. He listens to you.

MR BOUCHARD There are only so many occasions one can -

MRS BOUCHARD Wait.

MR BOUCHARD What is it?

MRS BOUCHARD Look, there. In the shadow.

MR BOUCHARD Good gracious.

MRS BOUCHARD It's a boy.

MR BOUCHARD A boy? What are you talking about? It's a dog or something.

MRS BOUCHARD No no. It's a boy.

MR BOUCHARD Well I don't like it.

MRS BOUCHARD Don't be shy!

VICTOR lets out a howl.

MR BOUCHARD What did I tell you? Let's get away from here.

MRS BOUCHARD My goodness. Lionel. He's naked.

MR BOUCHARD Come away, Adele.

VICTOR approaches, growling and slavering.

MRS BOUCHARD (fear) What's wrong with him?

MR BOUCHARD Run, Adele, run!

But the dog-boy is on them. We hear screams, and a frenzy of canine savagery.

24.

The Tuileries Palace. Fauré's 'Cantique de Jean Racine' (Op. 11) is being played and sung in the background. A hubbub of conversation and laughter. Nothing raucous. The Emperor and Empress are presiding.

DIDI (VO) Inside the Tuileries, the Ball is in full swing. Aristide nearly doesn't show because who to bring? He won't ask Caroline for fear she would turn him down, but then it occurs to him to ask the Baroness Sandorff. The Baroness is well-known as the mistress of the Justice Minister Delcambre, though it is also rumoured that the Emperor himself paid 100,000 for a single night with her. Saccard calls at her home and leaves a visiting card, writing 'one hundred thousand and one, question mark' on the back. And when they make their entrance at the Ball, they cause a sensation. The Emperor notices. And his guest, Count von Bismarck, also notices. Minister Delcambre

certainly notices - white with jealous rage, he vows that evening to destroy Aristide Saccard.

ARISTIDE But how absurd, granny. How could they destroy me? I am money. And money is indestructible.

25.

The Bourse.

DIDI (VO) And he seems to be right. What he predicted to the shareholders comes to pass as the shares burst through the 2000 barrier.

The Bourse bell rings.

Gundermann's brokers are short-selling Universal stock, hoping to drive it down, but nothing can stop the Bank.

DIDI (VO) As the share price grows, so does the Bank itself.

ARISTIDE More floors! Deeper vaults! Build higher! Build into the sky!

26.

The sound fades as we lift up into the dark sky. There is a thin air around the building. It creaks and sways. We can hear the stars.

DIDI (VO) In the new top floor of the Universal Bank, Aristide has his office.

Knock.

ARISTIDE Come!

CAROLINE You wanted to see me, Mr Saccard?

ARISTIDE Have you read this? (throws newspaper down) They say there's a werewolf loose in Paris, prowling the sewers in search of its prey. They'll print anything.

CAROLINE I thought you only read the financial press?

ARISTIDE I did, but now that I own most of it, I know what it's going to say. Bit dull, to be honest with you.

CAROLINE Was there something you wanted to discuss with me?

ARISTIDE Yes. Thinking of launching a third share issue, what do you reckon?

CAROLINE Oh don't ask me. I thought the second was a bad idea. What do I know?

ARISTIDE Your opinion matters to me.

CAROLINE Does it?

ARISTIDE You know it does.

CAROLINE I'm... flattered.

ARISTIDE It's not flattery. I trust you. You've done tremendous work on the building.

CAROLINE They were your architect's designs. I just oversaw the work.

ARISTIDE You mustn't do yourself down. This is an architectural miracle.

CAROLINE How high are we?

ARISTIDE I lose count.

CAROLINE I can't see the ground.

ARISTIDE That's why I like it up here.

CAROLINE Well, I'm pleased you're pleased.

ARISTIDE Not just your work though. I like you very much, Caroline.

CAROLINE I like you too.

ARISTIDE Do you remember a year ago, you'd just moved in and I made my first millions on The Bourse?

CAROLINE You came to my door and told me about it.

ARISTIDE I think I might have had a drop of champagne.

CAROLINE More than a drop I'd say.

ARISTIDE But I took you around the waist and I danced you round and round and round.

CAROLINE I remember, of course.

ARISTIDE I think that was the happiest I've ever been.

CAROLINE Surely not.

ARISTIDE Don't you believe me?

CAROLINE What about the Bank? The share price? being called the Genius of the Bourse?

ARISTIDE I don't deny they're gratifying but that simple moment, sharing that moment of pure joy with you, I sometimes wish I could live in that moment, Caroline.

CAROLINE You shouldn't be talking this way.

ARISTIDE Don't you trust me?

CAROLINE I – I heard you took the Baroness Sandorff to a Ball at the Tuileries.

ARISTIDE So I did. What of it?

CAROLINE Nothing, I...

ARISTIDE I don't understand.

CAROLINE I suppose... I was surprised at my own reaction when I heard about it.

ARISTIDE You were... disappointed in me?

CAROLINE Perhaps. But also ... I was jealous.

ARISTIDE Caroline...

CAROLINE But there's something else.

ARISTIDE What?

CAROLINE Something from your past.

ARISTIDE What thing?

CAROLINE You've done this before.

ARISTIDE Done what?

CAROLINE This, all this, this bank. The money.
You've had it all before – and you lost
it.

ARISTIDE That's a very one-sided version of what
happened...

CAROLINE They said some of the loans were reckless,
that you didn't have money to pay out on
bonds, that people were ruined...

ARISTIDE Mistakes were made, yes. But I have
learned from all that. I will not make
those mistakes again.

CAROLINE I want to trust you.

ARISTIDE Then do.

CAROLINE It's not that easy.

ARISTIDE It is. You just have to believe.

CAROLINE I just wish I knew how it all worked,
Aristide.

ARISTIDE Let me show you.

CAROLINE What?

ARISTIDE Come with me.

27.

A vast echoey underground vault. Brick and
metal.

DIDI (VO) So they go down. Countless floors and
elevators and moving stairways and stone
steps and ramps and ladders until they
arrive in the bowels of the building, the

great vaults of the bank, deep in the heart of the earth.

CAROLINE Where are we?

ARISTIDE You wanted to see how it all worked, what all our wealth is based on.

CAROLINE These are the vaults?

ARISTIDE That's right.

CAROLINE This is where you keep the money?

ARISTIDE Follow me.

He puts a huge key in a huge lock and turns it. This triggers a clockwork mechanism inside the vast metal door and after some whirring and clicking a huge bolt slides open. ARISTIDE opens the huge metal door. They walk in.

There.

CAROLINE But —

ARISTIDE You see?

CAROLINE It's completely empty.

ARISTIDE Exactly.

CAROLINE You mean the Bank has no money?

ARISTIDE It's the opposite. The Bank is worth millions of millions of francs. But it's not down here. It's up here.

CAROLINE In — what? I don't understand.

ARISTIDE In your head.

CAROLINE I was expecting — well I don't know what I was expecting exactly — but maybe gold or something.

ARISTIDE Exactly. That's how banks used to work. Not any more. I write Universal Bank on a piece of paper, what's the piece of paper worth?

CAROLINE Not very much I shouldn't think.

ARISTIDE Wrong. It's worth what someone is willing to pay.

CAROLINE Yes, I suppose, but there has to be something underneath that.

ARISTIDE No, there really doesn't. That's the genius of money. It has nothing to weigh it down, it can go anywhere and it can do anything.

CAROLINE But why would someone buy a piece of paper with Universal Bank on it?

ARISTIDE They do it every day. That what shares are.

CAROLINE But shares in a bank mean something more than just a piece of paper.

ARISTIDE They mean what someone thinks it is worth and will be worth in a week, a month, a year. If you believe in that piece of paper – and if everyone else believes in it too – it can be worth more than all the gold in Paris.

CAROLINE What if people stop believing?

ARISTIDE Why would they?

CAROLINE If they found out that –

ARISTIDE There is nothing to 'find out'. It's not about facts, it's about belief.

CAROLINE It has to be about facts. The bank is either worth something / or it isn't.

ARISTIDE No, really not. Let me give you an example, the bank owns some of its own shares through an intermediary / Mr Sabatani – don't worry it's all taken care of –

CAROLINE The bank's bought its own shares?

ARISTIDE We haven't paid Mr Sabatani to do this, we've given him a bond promising to pay

him at a certain date. Mr Sabatani receives many such bonds, promissory notes, options, and so on: what do you think he does with them?

CAROLINE Locks them in his safe?

ARISTIDE No. Mr Sabatani bundles them together into one big debt and he parcels it out again as a bond issue, Sabatani Futures, something like that. People who know Mr Sabatani can buy his bonds, trusting that he will pay out at the point stipulated on the agreement. And what about his buyers, what do you think they do with his bond?

CAROLINE I'm assuming they don't lock them in their safe?

ARISTIDE No, because they have many other Bonds beside Sabatani's. They bundle their own bonds together and parcel them out again as Consolidated Empire Bonds or whatever you like. And so on and so on. The same debt can be parcelled up and resold a hundred times, a thousand! The same debt splintering into a thousand pieces glittering across France.

CAROLINE But that makes no sense. The same debt being sold again and again and again?

ARISTIDE It only makes no sense if you try to understand it. If you believe in it, the magic will happen. Money isn't stuff and things. It is a work of the imagination.

CAROLINE You make money sound like a poem.

ARISTIDE Why not? Perhaps I am a poet of money.

CAROLINE But it's all debt. It's ultimately nothing.

ARISTIDE As empty as this room and yet: the wealth in this room is greater than that of all the French Kings.

We hear a howling.

CAROLINE What's that?

ARISTIDE We are deep in the earth. The sewers run past this vault. Sometimes animals get in there.

Howling again.

CAROLINE I don't like it. I should go home, Mr Saccard.

Beat.

ARISTIDE As should I, Miss Hamelin. I'll lead the way.

DIDI (VO) Aristide Saccard realised he had fallen in love with Caroline Hamelin. And Caroline realised she had fallen in love with Aristide, although he frightened her as much as he excited her. Aristide felt confident enough in Caroline's affections to cast aside Baroness Sandorff.

28.

A street. SANDORFF is speaking weepily through a carriage window.

SANDORFF You will regret this, Mr Saccard.

29.

The Bourse.

DIDI (VO) He felt that he and Caroline had attained such a level of trust and intimacy that it was only a matter of time before he would take her to his bed.

ARISTIDE I'd put money on it.

DIDI (VO) And meanwhile the shares continued to grow. Gundermann attacked them in vain. Two months later, they were being bought at two-two-fifty and until the third share issue took place at two-four-hundred.

The Bourse bell rings.

But one day when Caroline was not at the Bank, Aristide opened a letter addressed to her from Mrs Méchain demanding:

MÉCHAIN You complete payment of the outstanding debt of honour against Mr Saccard or Rougon or things will get interesting and not in a good way.

DIDI (VO) Intrigued and not a little concerned, Aristide made his way back to the Méchain residence.

30.

SIGISMOND's room. Same as 5.

ARISTIDE Hello Mr Busch. Is your sister in?

SIGISMOND She just popped out, only be a couple of minutes. (Coughs) You're welcome to wait.

ARISTIDE Thank you.

Pause.

What's that you're reading?

SIGISMOND The Bible.

ARISTIDE The Bible? I didn't think that was your sort of thing.

SIGISMOND Not that sort of Bible. A modern Bible. A Bible for now.

ARISTIDE Right. What is that.

SIGISMOND Just come out. In German. I'm working through it. It's called Das Kapital. Which translates as Capital.

ARISTIDE Yes, I sort of worked that out.

SIGISMOND By a fellow called Marx. You heard of him?

ARISTIDE Should I have?

SIGISMOND Very much so.

ARISTIDE Good is it?

SIGISMOND It's about money.

ARISTIDE Sounds right up my street.

SIGISMOND He thinks that the current money system contains contradictions that will lead to its inevitable destruction.

ARISTIDE Hm. Sounds a bit dark.

SIGISMOND Au contraire, mon ami! It's a story with a happy ending. The glorious abolition of money.

ARISTIDE The abolition of money!

SIGISMOND Good isn't it?

ARISTIDE That's a monstrous idea.

SIGISMOND Think about it, my friend. Money is what comes between us; it's what turns friend against friend, son against his father, woman against her husband. Abolish money and we can be ourselves again. We can be truly human.

ARISTIDE Money, Mr Busch, is life itself. You destroy money, you destroy everything!

SIGISMOND Not at all. We'll restore life to itself.

ARISTIDE What nonsense.

SIGISMOND Have you never wanted to look at a flower without asking what it's worth?

ARISTIDE How do you think the flower gets to a bouquet or a vase or a buttonhole? Magic? This is naivety. Sheer naivety.

SIGISMOND It's humanity, Mr Saccard. (Coughing fit)

ARISTIDE You mustn't excite yourself with these dangerous ideas, Mr Busch. They're not good for you —

The door bursts open.

MÉCHAIN It's me Ziggy, I'm back. Oh hello. What you want?

ARISTIDE It's about a letter. Perhaps we could talk
in private.

MÉCHAIN Anything you want to say to me, you can
say in front of my brother.

ARISTIDE I'd – rather –

SIGISMOND Don't you worry about me, Mr Saccard. I've
no interest in my sister's gossip!

ARISTIDE Well. (gathers himself) You have some sort
of financial arrangement with my
assistant, Miss Caroline Hamelin, that
concerns me?

MÉCHAIN That's the way she wanted it, Mr Saccard.

ARISTIDE Well I'm here now, so perhaps you'd care
to tell me what this is all about.

MÉCHAIN Do you remember Miss Rosalie Chavaille?

ARISTIDE The name rings a bell.

MÉCHAIN I bet it does. She obviously rung your
bell alright.

ARISTIDE What of her?

MÉCHAIN One evening, by her own account, she'd
been having a drink in a bar, minding her
own business when a certain gentlemen came
in and joined her in conversation.

ARISTIDE And?

MÉCHAIN At the end of the evening, she accepted
his offer to walk her back home but rather
than leaving her at the door, this
'gentleman' followed her up and forced his
attentions on her.

ARISTIDE It sounds like her word / against his -

MÉCHAIN Few weeks later, she discovers she's in
the family way, don't she? So she goes and
confronts him and he signs a few notes
promising to make good.

ARISTIDE Ah.

MÉCHAIN Notes which I happen to have in my possession but which need not remain in my possession if exchanged for something of equal or greater value, to wit: cash.

ARISTIDE I don't believe it.

MÉCHAIN Don't matter what you believe, Mr Saccard. It's true.

ARISTIDE Produce the child. Then we will see.

MÉCHAIN Produce the child? Why?

ARISTIDE I don't deny that, as a younger man, I was tempted by Miss Chavaille, but I wonder now if there ever was such a child.

MÉCHAIN It's your signature.

ARISTIDE I don't deny it. But I think it quite likely that Miss Chavaille is the guilty one, seeking to acquire money by deception, and that you, Mrs Méchain, are guilty of nothing less than blackmail.

MÉCHAIN Now look here —

ARISTIDE Produce the child, I say!

MÉCHAIN Calm down, Mr Saccard.

ARISTIDE For the last time: where is the child?

MÉCHAIN He's gone, isn't he?

ARISTIDE Gone?

MÉCHAIN Yeah, few months ago. Scarpered. Vamoosed.

ARISTIDE I thought as much. This is a tissue of lies. I am going now, Mrs Méchain, and if you ever contact me or any of my associates again, I shall call the police. Is that understood?

MÉCHAIN But —

ARISTIDE Is that understood?

MÉCHAIN Yes, Mr Saccard.

ARISTIDE Thank you.

SIGISMOND You see, Mr Saccard? Without money, none of this would have happened...

ARISTIDE Goodbye!

Slams door.

31.

GUNDERMANN's office.

GUNDERMANN And how may I assist you, Baroness Sandorff.

SANDORFF It's about the Universal Bank, Mr Gundermann.

GUNDERMANN The Universal Bank does not concern me.

SANDORFF Nor I but I recently had a very interesting conversation with its general manager. Very forthcoming is Mr Saccard when he's had a glass or two in him. Perhaps more forthcoming than he ought to be.

GUNDERMANN Go on...

32.

DIDI (VO) The Universal shows no sign of faltering. In the Near East, railways begin to stretch across the land. Bright silver flows from its mines. The Turkish National Bank opens its doors. The shares hit two-five-thirty.

The Bourse bell rings.

New storeys are added to the Bank and some say that it was so high it affected the weather such that in the autumn of 1867, across Paris it rained fine threads of gold.

Thunder.

And then the day came. The inevitable day.
Because what goes up...

Rain pours down.

33.

The Bourse. The Trading Floor before
trading has opened. It is subdued.

CAROLINE Is everything alright, Mr Saccard?

ARISTIDE Yes, thank you, Miss Hamelin.

CAROLINE You look distracted that's all.

ARISTIDE Do I?

CAROLINE Not your usual self.

ARISTIDE There's a strange atmosphere today, don't
you think?

DAIGREMONT (passing) Saccard.

ARISTIDE Daigremont. (to CAROLINE) Why's Daigremont
here?

CAROLINE Same as everyone else. Buy, sell.

ARISTIDE Might have told me that's all.

CAROLINE He knew he'd see you here, I suppose.

ARISTIDE Seems quieter than usual.

CAROLINE Gathering their thoughts.

There's a commotion.

What's going on?

ARISTIDE Someone's coming in.

CAROLINE Who?

ARISTIDE I can't see. He's surrounded by brokers.

CAROLINE There's certainly a lot of them.

ARISTIDE No. It can't be.

CAROLINE Why? Who is it.

ARISTIDE I don't understand. It's Gundermann.

CAROLINE You said he never came to the Bourse.

ARISTIDE He doesn't. He doesn't.

The Bourse bell rings to start trading.

DAIGREMONT (Loud clear voice) I have Universals at two-four-hundred. I have Universals!

ARISTIDE What? (whispering to DAIGREMONT) What are you doing, Daigremont? Universals closed at two-five-thirty.

DAIGREMONT (Loud clear voice) Two-four-hundred for Universals!

BROKER (Calling) I'll take 200.

CAROLINE What's going on?

ARISTIDE Daigremont's in with Gundermann. This is the attack. They want to bring down the Universal Bank.

CAROLINE What can we do?

ARISTIDE Call all my brokers, tell them to come here now. We're buying Universal. We're going to keep the price up. In fact we're going to drive it further up. I want Universals at 3000!

CAROLINE But the Bank can't buy its / own shares.

ARISTIDE There's no time to argue. Go. GO!

GUNDERMANN (loud voice) I have Universals at two-one-hundred! I have Universals!

ARISTIDE I will pay two-four-hundred.

GUNDERMANN Are you sure, Saccard?

ARISTIDE I said: One thousand at two-four-hundred.

Shouts swell and urgent music rises.
A sawing tension of strings,
maintaining a single held note.

DIDI (VO) This is how money fights. Its armies are belief and disbelief. Its weapons are panic and daring. Its battlefield is everywhere. Gundermann's troops shoot doubt and suspicion into brokers' hearts while Saccard's artillery fire shells exploding with hope and promise. For a while the two forces are deadlocked, Gundermann forcing the price down, Saccard forcing it up. But then it happens.

CAROLINE Mr Saccard, they know.

ARISTIDE Who knows? What do they know? (Loud) I will take 400 Universals at two-two-fifty.

CAROLINE Gundermann. It's all over the Trading Floor. They know the Bank has been buying its own shares.

ARISTIDE Who told them?

CAROLINE I don't know.

ARISTIDE We'll issue a denial.

CAROLINE I don't know, Mr Saccard.

ARISTIDE Yes, we'll issue a categorical statement, threaten legal action / if anyone repeats -

CAROLINE It's too late, Aristide.

DIDI (VO) Saccard looks up. He looks around at the marble halls of the Bourse. Everywhere he sees brokers and jobbers, investors and financiers, and everyone he sees and who sees him, turns and looks away. And at that moment...

GUNDERMANN (loud) I have Universals at one-nine-hundred. I have Universals.

CAROLINE What are you going to do, Aristide?

DIDI (VO) ...with the clarity of a pistol shot -

GUNDERMANN (loud) I have Universals at one-eight-hundred. I have Universals.

Slowed-down pistol shot.

DIDI (VO) ...he knows what must happen now.

The background distorts. It's like the pistol shot has gone off by ARISTIDE's ear. A ringing sound, a slow-motion feel, the background receding.

ARISTIDE I don't know...

DIDI (VO) And over the heads of the brokers, in the corner of the Floor, his eye is caught by a figure, a thin creature, a child perhaps, slouching over, his arms clattering at the floor, looking more animal than boy. And the creature turns its head and looks at him.

CAROLINE (distorted) Aristide? Aristide? What are you going to do?

DIDI (VO) But when he looks back, the creature is gone.

CAROLINE Aristide. Make a decision!

ARISTIDE What can we do? They don't believe.

The background reasserts itself in its full energy and clarity.

GUNDERMANN (loud) I have Universals at one-six-hundred. I have Universals!

DAIGREMONT What's the matter, Saccard? Lost your appetite?

GUNDERMANN (loud) At one-five-fifty. I have Universals!

CAROLINE It's sinking, Mr Saccard. The price is collapsing.

ARISTIDE It's finished. It's all over.

DIDI (VO) But it isn't over. Not yet. For the rest of the afternoon, the Universal shares

tumble and tumble, until, as trading closed, they sits at six hundred and twenty francs.

The Bourse bell rings. It echoes out across the marble floor. It resonates and then becomes:

34.

A bell from a nearby church tolling out across Paris.

DIDI (VO)

Tens of thousands of investors are ruined. From charitable foundations to pensioners with their life savings. One man called Mazaud when he heard the news goes home to his wife and children, locks the door and set fire to his house.

We hear the flames.

There is of course an immediate enquiry which discovers that during that single day, Aristide Saccard bought 59 thousand of the Bank's shares with 210 million francs of the Bank's own money, shares now worth less than a fifth of that. There are calls for Aristide to be arrested and some even demand he face the guillotine.

The flames still crackle. The bell still tolls.

But the Bourse still stands. Dark and impassive against a reddened sky, smoke and sparks billowing around it, it still stands, solid and empty, caring nothing for the ruins around it. While somewhere in the distance there is a kind of groaning, that sounds perhaps like the end of the world.

35.

An empty marble hall. Dead empty. A pair of heels clip clop across it, hesitantly.

CAROLINE

Mr Saccard? Are you there?

36.

Carpeted stairs. Feet climbing.

CAROLINE Aristide?

37.

A high office. A creaking and groaning of wood and stone. The building sways. The stars scintillate around us. A door opens.

CAROLINE You're here.

ARISTIDE Miss Hamelin.

CAROLINE I was worried you might be...

ARISTIDE Arrested?

CAROLINE I – I didn't know what to think.

ARISTIDE No. Not yet anyway.

CAROLINE I'm so sorry, Mr Saccard.

ARISTIDE It comes, it goes.

CAROLINE Even so, I am sorry.

ARISTIDE Thank you.

CAROLINE What are you doing?

ARISTIDE Doing?

CAROLINE On your desk. What are they?

ARISTIDE These? Oh they're just pieces of paper.

CAROLINE Oh, I see.

ARISTIDE At least, that's what they are now.

CAROLINE What do you mean?

ARISTIDE But if you believe in them, they could be anything.

CAROLINE Aristide –

ARISTIDE It's extraordinary isn't it? Most people would look at them and see only blank sheets of paper but to us this piece of paper could be a bond –

BOND (bass note) Bond!

ARISTIDE Or a share –

SHARE (3rd) Share!

ARISTIDE Francs and centimes!

FRANC (5th) Franc!

CENTIME (octave above) Centime!

CAROLINE Aristide please –

ARISTIDE Just by believing, we can turn it all into money –

MONEY (barber shop) Money!

CAROLINE Stop it. Stop it, please.

ARISTIDE (laughing) You don't think this is the end, do you?

CAROLINE Of course it is!

ARISTIDE This is just temporary - oh have you learned nothing?

CAROLINE Mr Saccard. You tried to be money's master and you lost.

ARISTIDE I still can. I can tame it and I will.

CAROLINE Money's not a dog you can tame. It's a wolf.

ARISTIDE What do you know?

CAROLINE What do you think happened today? This is what money does.

ARISTIDE Isn't it wonderful? Look, let's run away. You and me. We can go somewhere. Brussels maybe. Italy. England. Wait for this to die down.

CAROLINE No.

ARISTIDE Why not?

CAROLINE I think I fell in love with you, Aristide. I think maybe I still love you.

ARISTIDE Well then -

CAROLINE But I don't like you. I don't like you at all.

ARISTIDE What?

CAROLINE Goodbye, Aristide.

ARISTIDE Caroline?

The door closes.

Caroline!

DIDI (VO) Aristide wasn't arrested, were you?

ARISTIDE Thank you, brother Eugène.

DIDI (VO) In fact, in the interests of financial stability, the Universal Bank was bailed out by the tax payer.

ARISTIDE I don't believe that any fair-minded person could claim I did anything wrong.

DIDI (VO) Major shareholders were eventually reimbursed at 40 centimes in the franc. Small shareholders are still waiting.

ARISTIDE They knew the risks involved.

DIDI (VO) Even so, the collapse of the Universal Bank is a shockwave that ripples out across Paris, across France, across Europe, a pulse of terrible pain that strips the clothes from men's backs, the leaves from the trees, sucks the heat from a fire, and the food from a child's mouth.

Because we must not forget what money does: how it tears through men's hearts, how hard it burns, the ruins it leaves behind. Me, I am the opposite of

forgetting. Memory is all I have. I am the history. I am the archive. Listen while I tell my last story, the fires started and the lives ended, and the hells my family made.

ARISTIDE Granny.

DIDI (VO) Yes, Aristide?

ARISTIDE Do you have a franc?

DIDI (VO) No, Aristide.

ARISTIDE Granny, please allow me to make you rich.

DIDI (VO) Oh my poor boy. Oh my poor, poor foolish boy.

END

Universal Bank share price 1865-1867

