



## **EXTRACT**

# *The Luncheon of the Boating Party*

a play  
by  
Alex Broun

Based on the painting  
*“Le déjeuner des canotiers”* (1881)  
by  
Pierre-Auguste Renoir

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## *Characters*

PIERRE-AUGUSTE RENOIR, a painter.

EDMOND RENOIR, his brother, a journalist.

EUGENE MUNIER, a Patisserie owner and novelist

SANDRINE MUNIER, his wife

ALINE CHARIGOT, Renoir's companion.

ALPHONSINE FOURNAISE, daughter of the local hotelier

CHARLES EPHRUSSI, a publisher

ALPHONSE FOURNAISE, son of the local hotelier and brother of Alphonsine

JEANNE SAMARY, a successful actress

PIERRE EUGENE LESTRINGUEZ, a civil servant and patron of Renoir

BARON RAOUL BARBIER, a former cavalry officer and friend of Renoir

RAPHAEL MAGGIOLO, an Italian journalist

ELLEN ANDREE, an actress and model for Renoir

GUSTAVE CAILLEBOTTE, painter and friend of Renoir

PAUL LHOTE, a journalist and aspiring novelist

## *Setting*

Chiard, an Island in the Seine across from Chatou, France.

## *Time*

Several days in summer. June, 1880.

**Act 1****Scene 1. The Water's Edge, morning.**

A grassy slope on the banks of the Seine. The sunlight is dappled through the trees.

RENOIR, in painter's jacket, felt cap and dark trousers, sits at his easel on the bank drawing his brother EDMOND.

EDMOND is sitting in a skiff on the river, dressed in a brown felt hat and brown jacket. In his left arm he steadies the boat with an oar while in his right hand he holds a fishing rod. It is an awkward pose and difficult to maintain.

The sound of water gently lapping against the boat.

EDMOND: I still don't understand.

RENOIR: It's really quite simple.

EDMOND: As you keep saying.

RENOIR: The light.

EDMOND: The light?

RENOIR: He is painting the light.

EDMOND: Not the lilies.

RENOIR: The light.

EDMOND: But surely he paints the lilies. The light is merely a by product.

RENOIR: No, he paints the light.

EDMOND: The way the lilies reflect the light?

RENOIR: The way the light reflects the lilies. He is in love with the sun and its reflections in the water.

EDMOND: My head is swimming.

RENOIR: I don't like to confuse you brother.

EDMOND: You are confusing me brother.

RENOIR: We will go up to visit him next week in Argenteuil and you will see.

EDMOND: If you can see light. (PAUSE) I can not hold this forever brother.

RENOIR: Just a little longer brother.

PAUSE.

EDMOND: Well, there is one good thing.

RENOIR: What's that?

EDMOND: At least *you're* not painting light.

RENOIR: Me, I am a painter of figures. Like Ingres and Delacroix. The rest is  
just background.

EDMOND: And light.

RENOIR: And light. And colours. Just look at the light on the willow trees ... It glitters like a diamond. Pink, blue ... And the sky coming through them. It's enough to drive you crazy. And those mountains over there which change with the clouds ... They're like the background in a Watteau. I wish Claude was here to paint it with me.

EDMOND: I am here brother.

RENOIR: And for that I am grateful.

PAUSE. EDMOND LOWERS HIS HAND HOLDING THE ROD.  
RENOIR TAPS ON THE EASEL. HE HOLDS IT UP AGAIN.

RENOIR: Tell me about something else.

EDMOND: What?

RENOIR: Something you like to talk about.

EDMOND: I like to talk about fish.

RENOIR: Well, tell me about fish then.

EDMOND: Well fish are great. They swim in the ocean.

RENOIR: (LAUGHING) Is that so?

EDMOND: But not just at the edge like us. They swim right down at the bottom. Right down where swimming would kill a man.

RENOIR: How so?

EDMOND: The pressure would crush his skull. Or her skull, if it was a woman.

RENOIR: Either way both of them would be in trouble.

EDMOND: Completely.

RENOIR: Tell me more.

EDMOND: What would you like to know? I am writing a book on them you know.

RENOIR: As you have told me. How many types of fish are there?

EDMOND: Well, quite a lot.

RENOIR: Over a thousand?

EDMOND: Ten times as many and they're still discovering more. Fish life is far more varied than life on the ground. Far more varied and mysterious.

RENOIR: There is mystery in the depths of the ocean.

EDMOND: And in the matters of men.

EDMOND MOVES AGAIN. RENOIR TAPS THE EASEL, ANNOYED.

RENOIR: Brother.

EDMOND: Oh very well.

EDMOND RESUMES HIS POSITION.

RENOIR: I don't know why I let you paint me. I remember what happened last time. At the theatre, in the box.

RENOIR: You weren't happy.

EDMOND: How could I have been? You made my nose look like a sausage. A giant sausage with nostrils the size of oranges. Huge cave like features from which no light emits. They said Renoir's brother appears in the painting. They should have said "his nose". "Renoir's brother's nose appears in the painting."

RENOIR: You should've stopped gawking at the other women in the boxes with those opera glasses.

EDMOND: I was merely searching for an acquaintance.

RENOIR: I don't know why. The one you wanted was sitting right on front of you.

EDMOND: Yes, well that is all behind me now.

RENOIR: Why do you care so much what people think?

EDMOND: Because that's what I thought too. A sausage - a gigantic sausage with fruit attached. And then in the painting with Ellen, you painted my hair grey.

RENOIR: Well you do have a few grey hairs.

EDMOND: Not as many as you. And you painted me smoking. You are never painting me again.

RENOIR: I am painting you now.

EDMOND: You are sketching me. And this is the last time. If I have to be in another painting - have to! - it will be with my back towards you. Imagine - old fish face.

RENOIR: What about her?

EDMOND: You made her look like a Goddess. An Athenian Princess, but me - a ploughman's lunch. Never again! Never!

RENOIR: I need to work.

EDMOND: You are working.

RENOIR: I need you to be quiet while I work.

EDMOND: I need you to leave me alone while I fish.

RENOIR LOOKS AT HIS BROTHER.

EDMOND: Oh alright.

EDMOND CLAMPS HIS MOUTH SHUT. RENOIR SKETCHES FOR AWHILE. SUDDENLY HE BEGINS TO FLINCH. HE TRIES TO CONTROL IT BUT CAN'T. EDMOND WATCHES CONCERNED.

RENOIR THROWS DOWN THE PAINT BRUSH. HE RUBS HIS HAND. EDMOND PULLS THE BOAT TO THE SHORE. HE GETS OUT OF THE BOAT AND GOES TO HIS BROTHER.

EDMOND: Pierre-Auguste.

RENOIR: My fingers. I can't hold the pencil. The pain is excruciating.

EDMOND: You must rest.

RENOIR: I must work.

EDMOND: Even the great Renoir cannot paint twenty four hours a day.

RENOIR: Why not? I have precious little time on this earth. Why can't I spend every available second painting?

EDMOND: Calm down now.

RENOIR: Don't tell me what to do!

EDMOND LOOKS AT HIM.

EDMOND: Brother, sweet brother, why do you strike out at those who love you so much?

RENOIR IS SILENT. PAUSE. HE GRABS FOR A CIGARETTE BUTT PLACED ON THE EASEL. HE STRUGGLES TO LIGHT IT.

EDMOND: And must you continually smoke those infernal things?

RENOIR IGNORES HIM AND STRUGGLES AGAIN TO LIGHT THE CIGARETTE.

EDMOND: Give it to me. (HE GRABS THE MATCH AND LIGHTS THE CIGARETTE.) Not only do I have to watch you smoke yourself to death but I have to assist you in the pursuit as well.

RENOIR: Fetch Aline. Have her bring the string.

EDMOND: Pierre. You must stop now.

RENOIR: Please brother. I need to paint. Fetch Aline.

PAUSE. EDMOND NODS.

EDMOND: As you wish.



HE EXITS. RENOIR TRIES TO PICK UP THE PENCIL. HE GRIPS IT IN HIS HAND BUT CANNOT HOLD IT. IT SLIPS ONCE MORE. HE TRIES TO PICK IT UP AGAIN.

EUGENE MEUNIER ENTERS, WELL DRESSED, STRAW BOATER IN HAND, WHITE BOX IN THE OTHER. BEHIND HIM IS HIS WIFE, SANDRINE, ALSO DRESSED UP FOR HER DAY OUT.

EUGENE WATCHES RENOIR STRUGGLE TO REACH THE PENCIL. HE CRIES OUT IN FRUSTRATION.

EUGENE GOES OVER TO HIM AND PICKS UP THE PENCIL. RENOIR LOOKS AT HIM. HE SITS BACK ON HIS CHAIR. EUGENE PUTS THE PENCIL IN HIS HAND.

RENOIR PUSHES IT ON TO HIS LAP. SANDRINE GESTURES EUGENE TO GO FORWARD. EUGENE DOESN'T RESPOND. SHE GESTURES MORE URGENTLY, EVENTUALLY:

EUGENE: (SUDDENLY) Master.

RENOIR DOES NOT LOOK AT HIM. SANDRINE GESTURES AGAIN.

EUGENE: Master I am Eugene Meunier. Although you may know me by my alias - Eugene Murer, the novelist.

RENOIR DOES NOT.

EUGENE: This is my wife Sandrine.

SANDRINE CURTSIES.

EUGENE: We were introduced by Armand Guillaumin at Madame Charpentier's salon. You painted my portrait several years ago. I have also purchased several of your works from Monsieur Durand Ruel.

SANDRINE: We own your Arbour

RENOIR: (NOT LOOKING UP) I thank you for your patronage Monsieur.

EUGENE: I introduced you to Dr. Gachet. Remember you asked him to treat Mademoiselle Leboeuf last winter.

AT THE MENTION OF THIS NAME RENOIR LOOKS UP AT EUGENE. EUGENE LOOKS DOWN.

EUGENE: Unfortunately he was unsuccessful. (CHANGING THE SUBJECT) We have just arrived ... on the train ... from Paris.

RENOIR LOOKS AWAY. EUGENE GESTURES TO SANDRINE.  
SANDRINE BRINGS THE BOX TO HIM.

EUGENE: Apart from being a novelist

SANDRINE: Of some note

EUGENE: I also run a Patisserie.

SANDRINE: The best in Paris.

EUGENE: (EMBARRASSED) Or so some say. I have brought you a selection of pastries and croissants

SANDRINE: Freshly baked.

EUGENE: (MORE EMBARRASSMENT) to give you sustenance while you work. And whenever you are in Paris I would like to offer you,

SANDRINE: And your family.

EUGENE: the freedom of my establishment.

SANDRINE: Eat all you want. No charge.

PAUSE.

RENOIR: I am not married.

EUGENE: Oh.

AN UNCOMFORTABLE SILENCE.

SANDRINE: (WHISPERS) Tell him about the raffle.

EUGENE: I have also organised a raffle of one of Camille Pissarro's work. I could do the same for you if you felt it was appropriate.

RENOIR: I have no works fit for raffling.

EUGENE: Oh.

ANOTHER SILENCE. SANDRINE WAVES HER ARMS. EUGENE STARES AT HER. SANDRINE WAVES HER ARMS WITH GREATER AGITATION.

EUGENE: (DYING OF EMBARRASSMENT) And all we ask - all we offer - in return is that you, master, might consider, that my wife ...

SANDRINE CAN'T WAIT.

SANDRINE: I want you to paint me like you painted Genie.

EUGENE IS BRIGHT RED.

RENOIR LOOKS AT HIM. PAUSE. WITH SOME CONSIDERABLE EFFORT RENOIR STANDS. HE TUCKS THE DRAWING UNDER HIS ARM AND BEGINS TO SHUFFLE OFF STAGE.

SANDRINE AND EUGENE WATCH HIM GO. AS HE NEARS THE EXIT ALINE, CARRYING A BALL OF WHITE STRING, AND EDMOND ENTER. THEY STOP AND WATCH HIM SHUFFLE PAST.

RENOIR EXITS. PAUSE. ALINE GOES TO COLLECT THE CHAIR AND EASEL.

SANDRINE: (MORTIFIED) Where did he go?

ALINE: He has finished working. He will sleep till supper.

SANDRINE: (OUTRAGED) Well excuse me.

EUGENE: Pardon Madame.

ALINE: Mademoiselle.

EUGENE: Pardon, Mademoiselle. I am Eugene Murer, the novelist, and this is my wife Sandrine.

SANDRINE SCOWLS AT HER. EDMOND NOTICES THE PASTRIES. HE GOES OVER TO HAVE A CLOSER LOOK.

EUGENE: We have come from Paris to pay homage to the master. And to bring some humble fare from my Patisserie.

HE GESTURES TO THE PASTRIES. EDMOND HAS SELECTED A CROISSANT AND IS JUST ABOUT TO TAKE A BITE. SANDRINE SLAPS IT FROM HIS HAND.

EDMOND: Ow!

SANDRINE: They are for Renoir.

EDMOND: I am Renoir.

ALINE: This is the master's brother, Edmond Renoir.

SANDRINE SMILES SWEETLY.

SANDRINE: Oh ... Merci Monsieur.

EUGENE NODS TO EDMOND.

ALINE: And I am Aline Charigot. Would you like to dine with us this evening?

SANDRINE: Will Renoir be there? The other Renoir.

ALINE NODS.

SANDRINE: We'd be delighted. Genie - help the nice Mademoiselle.

SANDRINE SNATCHES THE PASTRIES FROM EDMOND AND EXITS.

EUGENE: Excuse my wife. She is just so excited to meet the master.

EDMOND: Aren't we all.

EDMOND PICKS UP THE EASEL, EUGENE GRABS THE FOLDING CHAIR WHILE ALINE GATHERS THE PALETTE AND BRUSH.

THEY EXIT AS THE LIGHTS CHANGE TO:

## **Scene 2. A skiff on the lake, shortly afterwards.**

Once more the sound of waves, gently lapping against wood.

ELLEN ANDREE AND MAGGIOLO RECLINE AT THE BACK.  
CAILLEBOTTE IS ROWING.

MAGGIOLO: When I saw the painting for the first time, it was like time stood still. Like I was seeing the face of my one true love. There was just that moment. Nothing before and nothing after - just that split second, for eternity. Everything suddenly made sense. Previously there was confusion and chaos. But now - just calm. My search had ended. In that instant I experienced magic, light, colour as if for the first time. Afterwards my life would continue but I would never see with the same eyes again. I had what we call an Epiphany. A spiritual awakening.

ELLEN: How magical you make it sound. It must be an extraordinary painting.

MAGGIOLO: It's more than that. "Dancing at the Moulin de la Galette", as the Master's biographer Georges Riviere himself has said, was executed entirely on the spot. A masterpiece *en plein air*. And so ambitious. So many figures, so much movement, so full of life. I knew I had found the true Master. Only Renoir could have executed it. It's a page out of history, except far more vivid, a precious monument of Parisian life, a rigorous realism.

ELLEN: Realism?

MAGGIOLO: But a new kind of realism. Not the cold, classical style. But vibrant, fresh. Like life itself. What distinguishes the Impressionists from other painters is that they treat the subject for its tonal value, not its content. A single moment, an impression. Not a hard, barren, historical document. That is why Renoir is so vital. That is why I must tell his story. Capture this time.

ELLEN: And after him? Which other stories will you tell?

MAGGIOLO: Great men. Leaders. Julius Caesar, Napoleon, Alexander the Great.

ELLEN SMILES AT MAGGIOLO. PAUSE.

CAILLEBOTTE: Senor Maggiolo?

MAGGIOLO: At last our friend speaks.

CAILLEBOTTE: I am merely a humble marine engineer.

ELLEN: You are a painter as well Gustave.

CAILLEBOTTE: But I am not Renoir.

MAGGIOLO: Your paintings are a little dry and lifeless but you show great ... promise.

CAILLEBOTTE: (SMILING) You however are a great writer.

MAGGIOLO: Well not quite. Not yet.

CAILLEBOTTE: The books you will write about Julius Caesar, Napoleon and Alexander.

MAGGIOLO: *Pronto?*

CAILLEBOTTE: Why will you write only about men who fought wars? There are other great men. Men who did not need to shed blood. Marco Polo, Christopher Columbus, Sir Francis Drake.

ELLEN: Why them?

CAILLEBOTTE: Because they were explorers. They went before others, to places men had only dreamed existed. To places one day I should hope to go.

MAGGIOLO: (TO HIMSELF) Sooner rather than later.

ELLEN: Gustave has a point. And where would you like to go? Which far off lands would you visit?

CAILLEBOTTE: If I could I would just keep rowing now. Right out to sea. And not stop till I reached the furthest point on earth.

MAGGIOLO: Hopefully you would stop to let us off first.

ELLEN: I would go with you. I would love to travel. To see exotic worlds.

MAGGIOLO: Of course. One day I will take you to Venice with me. But not in a row boat.

ELLEN: Why not? The simplest mode of travel is best.

MAGGIOLO: But Monsieur Caillebotte, tell us. Why are you so desperate to travel? Are you running from your past?

CAILLEBOTTE: I can't explain it. It's difficult to put into words.

MAGGIOLO: Try.

ELLEN: Yes, try Gustave.

PAUSE. HE STOPS ROWING.

CAILLEBOTTE: Here, in my heart, I have this strange feeling. This tremor. I can never feel completely at ease.

MAGGIOLO: That is how I felt before I saw "Dancing at the Moulin -

ELLEN: Quiet Senor. Continue Gustave.

CAILLEBOTTE: I know the only way to still my heart is to visit these far off lands. These worlds of my heart that I visit every night in my dreams.

ELLEN: How beautiful.

PAUSE.

MAGGIOLO: I think I should like to get off now. Row towards the shore.

ELLEN: No Senor. Let us stay out a little longer. You have been to many places. You can tell Gustave of your travels. Still his restless heart.

CAILLEBOTTE: I should enjoy that very much Senor.

MAGGIOLO: But the sun is going down. I must see Renoir.

ELLEN: Please. For me.

MAGGIOLO IS SILENT. HE SMILES.

MAGGIOLO: Row back to the boathouse Gustave. I will tell you what I can along the way.

ELLEN: (TO CAILLEBOTTE) And then perhaps you will join us for an aperitif. And Senor Maggiolo can tell you more.

CAILLEBOTTE: I would be honoured.

MAGGIOLO: As would I.

CAILLEBOTTE SMILES AND BEGINS TO TURN THE BOAT.

MAGGIOLO: (SETTLING BACK) Where should I start?

ELLEN: Start with your homeland.

GUSTAVE: I have long dreamed of Italian summers.

MAGGIOLO: Well last summer I did a pilgrimage to Assissi.

CAILLEBOTTE: Where is that?

MAGGIOLO: In the middle of Italy, in a region known as Tuscany. A rich and fertile plain full of green leaves and red brown earth. At night you can stand on the plain and see the firelight flickering in the villages on the hillside above.

LIGHTS CHANGE TO:

**Scene 3. The balcony of the Maison Fournaise, dusk.**

A wooden deck surrounded by a balustrade. In the distance we can see boats on the lake.

ALPHONSINE FOURNAISE SITS AT A TABLE WITH CHARLES EPHRUSSI. THEY SIP ABSINTHE FROM SMALL GLASSES.

ALPHONSINE: The Baron hasn't sent me a letter in six months.

EPHRUSSI: I'm not surprised after the way you treated him.

ALPHONSINE: I was polite.

EPHRUSSI You tolerated him. Barely. There is nothing worse for a man than to be tolerated. Remember last summer. We were here for the recital. Afterwards there was only we three in the drawing room and I wanted to leave? You came after me and begged me to return so you wouldn't have to be alone with him. You think he didn't know you dragged me back.

ALPHONSINE: He didn't know.

EPHRUSSI: He's hardly an idiot. The embarrassment he must have felt. His poor heart must have shuddered in his chest. And now your angry he hasn't written to you in six months? I'll be surprised if he writes to you in six years.

ALPHONSINE: I miss him.

EPHRUSSI: Inconsistency - thy name is woman.

ALPHONSINE: I miss his funny ... ways. His lost expression.

EPHRUSSI: The attention was flattering.

ALPHONSINE: It was more than that.

EPHRUSSI: When you come to Paris next we must organise you to visit Dr. De Bellio for a consultation.

ALPHONSINE: The Rumanian witch doctor? He'll put a spell on me.

EPHRUSSI: He is a homeopathic physician. And a gentlemen. Perhaps he can discover a cure for your delusional behaviour.



ALPHONSINE: Monsieur Ephrussi - you are too cruel.

PAUSE.

EPHRUSSI: Well you will have your chance to set it right. The Baron is here.

ALPHONSINE: Barbier. Here?

EPHRUSSI: Do you not know who lodges in your father's establishment? He is organising the sitting for Renoir. Don't tell me that's why you didn't come back?

ALPHONSINE: I thought he was still in China.

EPHRUSSI: Saigon is in the Republic of Indo-China.

ALPHONSINE: Wherever it is - he must go back there. Barbier - here. How will I avoid him?

EPHRUSSI: What now?

ALPHONSINE: I can not see him.

EPHRUSSI: You have sat here for half an hour saying how much you've missed him and cursing the fact he hasn't written.

ALPHONSINE: But I can't see him. What would I say?

EPHRUSSI: I'm sure you'll think of something.

ALPHONSINE: No. I must not see him. At all costs.

EPHRUSSI: (WITH FEELING) Then don't.

ALPHONSINE: (SIGHS) Perhaps De Bellio could cast a spell on me to cure me of my confused ways.

EPHRUSSI: I fear that may be beyond even his considerable skills.

ALPHONSINE: He could give me a potion to make my heart true.

EPHRUSSI: They are called tinctures, not potions, and they are respected herbal remedies that have been around a lot longer than the chemical concoctions of today.

ALPHONSE FOURNAISE ENTERS WITH A BOTTLE.

ALPHONSE: More Absinthe sister.

ALPHONSINE: I think that is a magical potion I shall need.

HE FILLS HER SMALL GLASS.

ALPHONSE: And for Monsieur.

EPHRUSSI (TAKING OUT VIAL) I have my own potion, mixed by De Bellio himself. To improve awareness and increase mental faculty.

ALPHONSINE: (SMELLING THE VIAL) But it smells awful.

EPHRUSSI: Sometimes one must suffer small inconveniences for the greater good.

HE POURS THE TINCTURE INTO HIS GLASS.

JEANNE SAMARY ENTERS, ESCORTED BY PIERRE-EUGENE LESTRINGUEZ. ALPHONSE SEES HER AND IS ENTRANCED. ALPHONSINE NOTICES THIS.

ALPHONSINE: Brother, you are staring.

ALPHONSE: Pardon.

EPHRUSSI: Do not chastise him. His glance merely betrays his good taste.

ALPHONSINE: Who is she?

EPHRUSSI: She is Jeanne Samary. The most wonderful and famous actress in Paris. Every man in France is in love with her.

ALPHONSINE: I can not imagine why.

JEANNE LEAVES LESTRINGUEZ AND APPROACHES THE TRIO. LESTRINGUEZ SITS AT A NEARBY TABLE.

ALPHONSE GOES AROUND THE BACK TO ATTEND TO LESTRINGUEZ. JEANNE REACHES EPHRUSSI AND ALPHONSINE. SHE CURTSIES FORMALLY. EPHRUSSI AND ALPHONSINE STAND.

EPHRUSSI: Mademoiselle. Or is it Madame this week?

JEANNE: Ah Charles, I see you haven't lost your wit.

EPHRUSSI: Merci, but you do not answer my question.

JEANNE: Nor do I intend to. And who is this vision of beauty?

EPHRUSSI: Appearances may be deceptive. This vision is Alphonsine Fournaise. We sit in her father's establishment.

JEANNE: Then I am honoured to be your guest.

ALPHONSINE: It is you who honour us.

EPHRUSSI: Alphonsine is also an accomplished violinist.

ALPHONSINE: You do flatter me Charles.

EPHRUSSI: You are worthy of flattery – sometimes.

JEANNE: I do hope you will play for us.

ALPHONSINE: I would not be so bold to play before such a great performer.

JEANNE: Then we shall embolden you. And this is my companion Pierre-Eugene Lestringuez who serves our country at the Ministry of the Interior.

LESTRINGUEZ STANDS AND BOWS.

LESTRINGUEZ: Merely a humble civil servant.

ALPHONSINE AND EPHRUSSI RETURN THE BOW.

EPHRUSSI: Charles Ephrussi

ALPHONSINE: Owner of the Gazette des Beaux Arts.

LESTRINGUEZ: Then I am an admirer.

EPHRUSSI: Merely a humble art historian.

JEANNE: (TO EPHRUSSI) Has Renoir arrived?

ALPHONSINE: Renoir? Is coming here?

EPHRUSSI: I await him also. I take it you received a letter.

JEANNE: (TAKING A LETTER FROM HER PURSE) From the Baron Barbier.

ALPHONSINE: Is he an admirer?

JEANNE: Renoir?

ALPHONSINE: (EMBARRASSED) The Baron.

JEANNE: I am yet to make his acquaintance.

ALPHONSINE: It seems it is only I who have not received a letter.

JEANNE: May I enquire as to the substance of your correspondence?

EPHRUSSI: The letter demanded I travel to Chatou at once. Renoir seeks to use us as models for what I gather is to be a large scale painting, similar to "Dancing at the Moulin de la Galette." (READS) "Dear Monsieur, I'm at Chatou and I'm doing a painting of oarsmen that I have been longing to do for ages. I'm getting somewhat older" - all of forty and he calls himself old - "and I don't want to delay this little feast which I won't be able to afford later on." I think he is referring to energy rather than finance. "I'm doing the right thing even if the enormous expenditures I'm making prevent me from finishing my painting." Now he is referring to paint. Good colours are so expensive these days. "Will you not come to Chatou to pose for the painting. Barbier will inform you of the details. You do so inspire me. And I require inspiration now. Your friend, Auguste.

ALPHONSINE: And your letter Mademoiselle.

JEANNE: Very similar. (SHE READS) "I must have another go at this .... (SHE PAUSES AND SMILES) painting because" ... Let us say he has had some problems. (READS AGAIN) "I no longer know where I am with it, just that I am becoming more and more upset. However it's all a step forward. One must try things beyond one's reach from time to time."

LESTRINGUEZ: Very admirable.

JEANNE: "That is why I need you to come ... and bring Lestringuez too. If the Ministry can excuse him. I need your help to take this step."

ALPHONSINE: So you three are to be the subject of a masterpiece.

JEANNE: We are here simply to assist a friend in his work.

EPHRUSSI: Well said Jeanne. (TO ALPHONSINE) And I am sure your presence will also be requested, Little Alfie.