

ANATOMY OF A FALL

A film by Justine Triet



SYNOPSIS

Sandra, a German writer, lives with her husband Samuel and their visually-impaired son Daniel in a remote mountain chalet in the French Alps. When Samuel falls to his death in mysterious circumstances, the investigation cannot determine whether it's suicide or foul play.

Sandra is ultimately arrested for murder and the trial puts their tumultuous relationship and her ambiguous personality under the microscope. As her young son takes to the stand, doubt starts creeping in between them.

In this Hitchcockian procedural thriller, Justine Triet (*Sibyl*, Cannes 2019 Competition) creates a complex and fascinating heroine, questioning common beliefs about relationships and truth.

CAST



SANDRA HÜLLER - Sandra
(Toni Erdmann, I'm Your Man)



SWANN ARLAUD – Vincent
(By the Grace of God)

Spoken language key:

French dialogue = 0 asterisks

English dialogue = 1 asterisk *

German dialogue = 2 asterisks **

[Alt:] alternate possibility

1-CHALET, Sandra's Bathroom + Daniel's bedroom (A)/Sandra's living room (B)/Ext (the entrance) (C)-INT/DAY

(A)

Successive shots pre-credits

(B)

... two women face one another at a table in a big room.

A mess of papers and piled up books. The youngest of the two, **ZOÉ**, sips a glass of wine. She is facing **SANDRA** (40). It's 1:45pm. A cell phone is recording their conversation in English.

ZOE* (*in English*)

To be honest, the way you describe the son's accident is disturbing. It's so raw and vivid. You go into such detail, like in a documentary. It's troubling to the reader, probably because it's your life. Do you think we can only write from experience?

SANDRA* (*in fluent English*)

Umm... no. Is that what *you* think?

ZOE*

I think the emotion comes partly from knowing you experienced it.

SANDRA*

What if you didn't know?

ZOE*

That's beside the point, we do know.

SANDRA*

I wasn't there when the accident happened.

ZOE*

Ah, ok! But it was real, it happened in your life. Your stories never come purely from your imagination.

SANDRA*

Look: We meet. I don't know you, and we only see each other once.

Something about you intrigues me, I don't know, a song that you mention, whatever. I think, oh, she's unusual, we could be friends. For one reason or another, we never see each other again.

But I start imagining your personality, or maybe how you came across that song you mentioned... and that leads me to an interesting story. I decide to put you in the book I'm writing. That's it, you're in my book, and yet I don't know you. What I *do* know about, is my interest in you. I can be honest about that.

ZOE*

Yes but still, you had to meet me. I'm real, in front of you, now.

SANDRA*

That you are.

ZOE*

Ha ha! So, for you to start inventing, you need something real first. You say your books always mix truth and fiction, and that makes us want to figure out which is which. Is that your goal?

Sandra takes the time to think before answering. She pours Zoé some more wine.

(A) cont'd

We hear the rest of the conversation from a distance. We are upstairs in the bathroom doorway (in Sandra's Bedroom) where DANIEL (11 years old) is washing his dog in the basin filled with water.

SANDRA* (OFF)

What's interesting is not that you're real, it's that you're sitting across from me and I don't know you. You're unknown to me.

ZOE* (OFF)

Yes but you write about things and people that you know...

SANDRA* (OFF)

My life is not interesting. As soon as I start writing I destroy what I know, it becomes unknown. I write adventure books, and what is an adventure? It's living something you know nothing about.

Daniel finishes washing the docile dog, rinses him. Then, he takes him out of the basin, rubs him down with a towel.

Through the child's body language, we understand he is visually impaired. He finishes rubbing the dog dry and goes to his room.

ZOE* (OFF)

But the adventures that you write are based on--

Suddenly, we hear violent hammering sounds or drilling coming from the attic. Renovation work.

SANDRA* (OFF)

What would you write about, that you've experienced?

(B)

Back with the women: Zoé has stopped talking; she looks up towards the ceiling. The sound of heavy steps above, then the pounding resumes.

SANDRA*

That's Samuel working upstairs...my husband.

ZOE * *(very surprised)*

Oh!

SANDRA*

So, what interests you? What makes you so mad you want to explore it?

ZOE*

I don't want to be a writer.

SANDRA*

You don't have to write it, just talk! Like we're talking now.

ZOE*

You don't want to continue my questions?

SANDRA*

Sure I do, but we can chat too. Maybe we could ask one question each? That way no one's frustrated.

ZOE* (amused)

Are you really interested...?

SANDRA*

...in what interests you? Sure! I never see anybody. I work here all day long. You come to see me...you interest me!

We can sense Sandra is a little tipsy, she pours herself some more wine.

ZOE* (thinking)

I run. It's one of my favorite things to do. It makes me feel high, like I'm on drugs.

Suddenly, “JOLENE” by Dolly Parton starts blasting, on top of the loud banging noise. Sandra looks at the ceiling. The music reverberates throughout the entire house. A suspended moment.

SANDRA* *(raising her voice)*
I told you we should've done this in Grenoble.

ZOE* *(She stops recording the conversation)*
I'll write your answers down. *(she checks the time)* But I have many questions, maybe you don't have time—

SANDRA*
I have time, don't worry. Time is not the problem.

ZOE*
Cool. I'd like to discuss storytelling as investigation...

SANDRA* *(interrupting)*
I don't like sports. Walking, yes; running, no.
(Alternative: I hate sports. Walking is fine. Running sucks).

Zoé can't help but laugh. The song finishes...but it starts playing again, straightaway from the beginning: it's on a loop. The volume is turned up. Sandra closes her eyes; forcing herself to calm down. Zoe looks at her, disconcerted.

SANDRA* *(raising her voice to be heard)*
Ok, Zoé, we're gonna have to stop. You know what, I'm coming to Grenoble soon, I'll give you a call. We must continue this conversation.

ZOE*
Ok...

With the music filling the entire space, the atmosphere has drastically shifted. Zoé packs her things. Sandra walks her to the door.

SANDRA*
Sorry about this. Bye... see you soon!

Zoé leaves, takes the outside staircase down to ground level...

(C)
... and walks towards her car parked about ten meters away from the house. We discover that it is a massive run-down chalet, partially under renovation, isolated and surrounded by snow-covered mountains. We are somewhere in the Alps.

Zoé gets into her car and turns the engine on while looking at the chalet: she sees Daniel (black glasses perched on his nose) leaving the chalet while putting on his coat and walking down the stairs with his dog to ground level. Two floors above, Sandra steps out onto the balcony (from her bedroom) and waves at Zoé. Zoé waves back in return and starts driving away on the snowy road.

The sun's rays start to dart through the clouds.

2- FOREST (near the chalet) – EXT/DAY

Ellipse. Daniel and the dog, whose name is **SNOOP** (on a leash), walk in the snow in a small, wooded area a short distance from the chalet.

Cautious, the child has his habits – specific landmarks, like certain trees that he touches and recognizes. Then he sits for a little while with his back against a tree. The light changes, we watch the elements transform as the sun warms them up (branches, leaves, moss, earth, grass, insects). The snow starts melting in the forest.

3- CHALET, Exterior (Entrance) – FOREST (near the chalet) – EXT/DAY

Daniel comes back from his walk; the song is still blasting. When they reach the chalet, Snoop starts sniffing as if alerted to something: he lets out an abrupt, nervous growl while pulling Daniel towards the house. Near the front door, the child trips over something on the ground; he freezes, lowers himself down slowly. His hands hesitantly reaching out in front of him, he touches someone's clothes... it's a body lying on the ground. We see blood in the melted snow. Daniel gropes about, touches the black hair, the face... he's suddenly overcome with panic and screams:

DANIEL
MUMMY!

His screams are half muffled by the music, there's blood on his gloves. Sandra arrives running and stops next to the body, in shock. She tries to check the man's pulse, starts shaking, (difficulty in breathing) pulls Daniel away from the body, then dials a number on her phone.

SANDRA (*panicked, in approximate French*)

Hello? My husband fell from the roof, come quickly!! 264 route du Prieuré by the Exil pass, he's not moving, there's a lot of blood. YOU MUST COME VERY QUICKLY!! Send an ambulance!! (..) I don't know, he's... on his back, his face looking up... (..)

NO I didn't move him... He's not breathing!!! (..) I don't know what happened I just got here, just came down, I didn't hear anything... I think he fell from the third floor!! Somebody needs to come right now!!!

She hangs up in complete shock and wraps her arms around Daniel. The dog is barking non-stop. They wait for the ambulance. A long silence. Daniel's stunned silence. We get closer to his dark glasses until we "enter them" – the screen turns black: we are in his sphere of perception.

ANATOMY OF A FALL

The title appears on the black screen. We finally hear something: steps going up the stairs and coming closer; a hand pressing a key on a computer: the music stops at last. All we hear now is the dog, whining and panting.

4 – CHALET, Entrance EXT/Livingroom-kitchen – EXT+INT/DAY

The panting continues, we're now seeing things from Snoop's POV, just above the ground. The corpse is zipped into a body bag, then hoisted onto an ambulance stretcher. On the spot where the body landed, a large amount of blood mixed with melted snow. A clicking sound: someone is taking photos of the crime scene.

Snoop climbs up the outside staircase, enters the chalet, wandering through the legs of the policemen and first responders; we're lost. Snoop walks past framed photos of Samuel with Daniel and Sandra, depicting different moments of their lives.

Further along, Daniel is with a woman in her sixties whose eyes are like slits; she is comforting him. It's **MONICA**. In another corner of the room, Sandra, devastated, an empty look in her eyes, is being questioned by two officers.

5 - GRENOBLE TEACHING HOSPITAL – INT/DAY

An autopsy. Voices around a body, forensic specimens are collected from the hematoma on the skull/multiple photos, comments being made as the autopsy progresses. There are 5 people. (2 experts, a police officer or a gendarme + a TIC (Criminal identification technician) + a medical intern. A close study is made of the deep gash on the forehead: the skull is smashed in. We only see the lower part of the forehead just above the nasal cavity, the camera doesn't explore the area in detail. However, we can clearly see Samuel's face.

FORENSIC PATHOLOGIST (OFF)

The injury to the forehead which resulted in a lethal hemorrhage corresponds to a violent impact, either with the sharp edge of a hard surface (such as a structural element or a step...) or the result of the forehead being violently struck with a hard object, in other words a deliberately dealt blow. The injury is located high on the frontal part of the skull, which wasn't in contact with the ground where the victim landed: it therefore couldn't have been caused by the fall, but necessarily preceded it. Conclusion: it is for the moment impossible to determine whether this blunt force trauma is the result of an impact with a surface or a direct assault.

6- UNIVERSITY AMPHITHEATER (A)/CAFETERIA(B)/UNIVERSITY PARKING LOT (C)/CAR (D)/CITY STREETS (E)/MOUNTAIN ROADS (F) – INT+EXT/NIGHT

(A)

A university amphitheater, the professor (40) finishes his criminal law class. Slicked-back greasy hair, heavy-set body, charisma past its prime.

The professor takes leave of his students and walks out of the room, turning his cell phone back on. He stops in the cafeteria on the way out to buy a can of beer (B).

(C)

He pops the can open while walking to his car on the campus parking lot, and listens to his messages as he sits behind the wheel (D). We recognize Sandra's voice. She sounds fragile:

SANDRA* (OFF, message, in English)

Vincent, it's Sandra... I know this is strange but, uh... Samuel, my husband, is dead... he fell from the roof... I think I need a lawyer; they told me I'm a "témoin assisté... I thought of you, I know this is strange, but I don't know anyone else. The university gave me your number. Call me back quickly if you can...

Stunned, **VINCENT** goes onto Google and types in SANDRA VOYTER. First hit: "*Literature professor Samuel Maleski found dead at his residence in the Maurienne Valley, AN INQUEST INTO HIS DEATH HAS BEEN OPENED. His wife, German novelist Sandra Voyter, has been placed under the status of assisted witness (...)*"

He puts his cell phone on loudspeaker and calls Sandra back as he starts the engine.

VINCENT* (in English)

Sandra, I got your message, tell me where you are right now, I'm driving down. I'll be there in... 5 hours or so.

Most important, don't speak to anyone until I get there. Appoint me as your lawyer. See you soon.

He types "Maurienne Valley" into his GPS while driving off. The car leaves the parking lot in the dark of the night.

(E)

Vincent googles on his cell: SAMUEL MALESKI.

A few links and photos: Vincent taps on a filmed masterclass: *RL Stevenson, "The Child and Evil"*. The camera zooms in on the phone screen until it entirely fills the frame: Samuel has longish hair, a spark in his eye, and a voice bordering on feminine. Facing a numerous audience, he is funny, sharp, passionate about what he's saying, and keen on involving his students. He is one of those teachers who makes everything interesting and crystal clear. The video ends on uncontrollable laughter in the crowd upon an absurd verbal sparring session with a student.

(F)

In the early morning light, the car drives on mountain roads (Several shots of the car in the mountains).

**7- CHALET, Entrance EXT (A) /Livingroom-kitchen (B)/Daniel's room (C) –
EXT+INT/DAY**

(A)

Vincent's car parks in front of the chalet. Sandra has come out to welcome him, dressed in an old sweater and a worn pair of sweatpants. They exchange a look that speaks of their bond, even if they haven't seen each other for a very long time. Her face red and swollen, Sandra appears overcome with grief.

SANDRA* (*in English*)
Thank you for coming...

They hug for a long time.

SANDRA*
This is so weird... seeing you again, like this.

VINCENT*
I didn't realize it was so isolated...

SANDRA*
Yeah...

(B)

She shows him in. We sense a certain shyness. She brings him into the kitchen (opening onto the living room). She makes some coffee. On the wall, he notices a photo of Samuel and Sandra laughing on a street in front of a bar.

VINCENT*

Have you been living here long?

SANDRA*

No, less than two years. It's Samuel who... he grew up here.

She serves him coffee. A beat.

She fights to keep herself together, then starts speaking again, confused.

SANDRA*

How do we do this? You want to ask me some questions? I'm sorry, my French isn't any better than when we met...

VINCENT*

English is fine. How many times have you been questioned?

SANDRA*

Once here by the policemen, and once by the investigative judge.

VINCENT*

Tell me exactly what you told them about the day he died.

(C)

The camera leaves the living room/kitchen, goes up the stairs and reaches the floor.

The door to Daniel's bedroom is open.

Daniel can hear the conversation; we see a heap of blankets thrown over chairs making a sort of protective fort. His dog is with him.

SANDRA*(OFF)

I told them what happened from the moment I was with the student until the ambulance got here. I was in the middle of a meeting with this girl and Samuel started blasting a song on repeat to piss me off and make her leave.

(B)

Back in the kitchen.

VINCENT*

Is that what you told them, that he'd played the song to piss you off and make her leave?

SANDRA*

No, I just said he'd played the song super loud, and we had to stop; she was recording the interview and so it wasn't possible anymore.

VINCENT*

Good. Try to tell me *exactly* what you told them.

SANDRA*

I said that I put an end to the interview and that she left. I went upstairs to my bedroom. That's when I saw Daniel go out for a walk...

VINCENT*

He wasn't at school?

SANDRA*

He only goes two days a week, it's in Grenoble. (*Vincent nods*) Just after the girl left, Samuel came down to see me in my bedroom. We spoke a little about what we were going to do that day, nothing special. He went back upstairs to work in the attic. I worked a little in bed.

VINCENT*

You wrote? On your computer?

SANDRA*

I finished a translation, I translate for several German weeklies, for extra money. I heard him working and his music playing for about 10 minutes. Then I put some earplugs in to take a nap. I fell asleep.

An hour later, I heard Daniel scream. One of the earplugs must have fallen out because it woke me up, the music was still on, I ran downstairs... that's it. I called emergency services and they arrived 30 minutes later.

VINCENT*

Can I take a look around the house?

8- CHALET, Exterior (Entrance) (A) Sandra's Office (B)/Attic (C) – EXT+INT/DAY

(A)

A moment later: Vincent takes a few steps and looks in the direction of the small forest where Davy took his walk. He looks at the ground where Samuel landed (there's a wide perimeter of heavily trodden earth), then he looks up towards the balcony and the French windows on the 2nd floor (Sandra's bedroom) and further up at the attic window.



(B)

He goes up to the 2nd floor (Sandra silently follows him). He opens the French windows, walks out onto the balcony, and looks down at the ground. Then he looks up towards the attic.

VINCENT*

He was working up there?

SANDRA*

Yes, he was insulating the attic.

They leave the room, Vincent stops at the landing: in front of them (just after Daniel's room) a large part of the floor is still a wide open space under construction, floor beams reach across a gaping hole that will support a hardwood floor, which still needs to be laid. The sky can be seen through parts of the uninsulated roof.

VINCENT*

And over there? He was working on that as well?

SANDRA*

Not yet. He was supposed to get to that next... we wanted to make rooms for a B&B.

Vincent climbs up a little ladder leading to the attic just above Sandra's room. Vincent, stopped at the last rung, realizes something:

VINCENT*

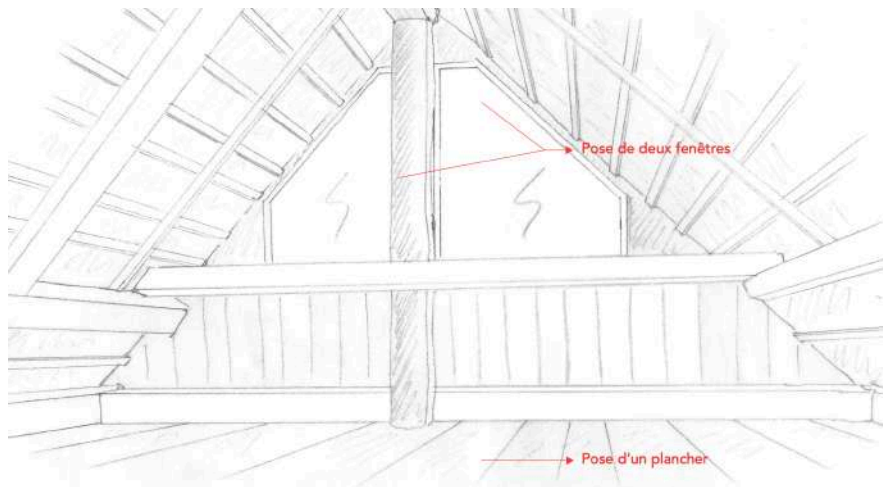
Ok, so he was right above you.

SANDRA*

Yes.

(C)

The space is cramped, the roof is partially insulated, fiberglass insulation batts lay haphazardly on the floor. In the middle of the equipment and the scattered trash, is a big audio speaker. At the far end, a window with a high guardrail.



Vincent goes to the window and opens it, he bends over the guardrail: just below, Sandra's bedroom balcony. Then further down, to the left, a lean-to shed built against the wall, and finally, on the ground, the perimeter of trodden earth where Samuel fell. Vincent examines the solidity of the guardrail, which reaches up to his waist.

He turns around and stares at the ceiling: the area that hasn't been insulated yet is far from the window.

VINCENT*

You said he was insulating the attic? (*She nods in agreement*)
So he was working over there?

SANDRA*

These days, yes.

VINCENT*

Do you know if the window was open when the ambulance arrived?

SANDRA*

Yes it was.

VINCENT*

Do you know if he used to keep it open?

SANDRA* (*taking the time to think*)

...I'm not sure, but he would air it out.

VINCENT*

Was he reckless? Did he ever take risks when he was working?

SANDRA*

No. He was very cautious and meticulous; he worked slowly.

VINCENT*

Do you see any reason why he would have leaned over the *rambarde* (*alt* : guardrail), for instance to call out to you or Daniel?

SANDRA*

... No. When he worked, especially when he was playing his music, he shut himself off from the rest of the world. He never called for me or Daniel from up here.

VINCENT*

Ok, well anyway, with the height of the *rambarde* ... had he been drinking? ...

SANDRA*

No, he never drank during the day, especially when he was working.

9 – CHALET, Exterior (table) EXT/LATE MORNING

Snuggly wrapped in a thick parka, Vincent sits at a table, smoking a cigarette on the deck in front of the kitchen. On his computer screen: the autopsy report, photos of the corpse and of other details of the chalet on the fateful day. Then, photos of a dark bruise on Sandra's forearm. At the same time, he's making a phone call.

VINCENT (*in French*)

Hey Nour, is this a good time? Are you still in Grenoble?

NOUR (*OFF in French*)

Unfortunately, yes.

VINCENT

Listen, do you happen to know Judge Janvier?

NOUR (OFF)

Why are you interested?

VINCENT

A favor for a friend.

NOUR (OFF)

Janvier...an ambitious kiss-ass and flirt. But he's nice; young (Vincent smiles). He is very... close to the district attorney, to put it nicely. Who's the friend?

A car arrives and parks by the chalet. A woman steps out; we recognize Monica (seen comforting Daniel in scene 2). She nods to Vincent and walks into the house.

10 – CHALET, Daniel's room/Staircase/Living room-kitchen – NOON – INT/DAY

Monica arrives at the floor landing and walks over to Daniel's room, stopping in the doorway she exchanges a look with Sandra, who is sitting next to Daniel.

We can't see him as he is covered by a ginormous heap of blankets. She gently rubs his back through the blankets, then tries to brush aside a tuft of hair that is sticking out.

SANDRA* (gentle)

You should wash up and get dressed. It's daytime, you need to get up.

Daniel doesn't move. He has no desire.

DANIEL

I don't want to. Leave me alone.

SANDRA*

Honey, I know it's hard... It's hard for me too, it's going to be hard for a while... but we have to try and do the things we did before, otherwise—

(She stops momentarily, sensing that he doesn't want to hear it.)

...Did you have a nightmare? Do you want to talk about it?

Monica has come to see you. She made tiramisu.

DANIEL

I'm not hungry. Let me sleep.

SANDRA*

Oh love, you can't spend whole days like this without going outside. It's beautiful out. Snoop needs to go out too.

Monica kneels down near Sandra and signals that she'll take over now. Sandra gets out of her way. Monica speaks cheerfully.

MONICA *(softly)*

Hey, my Daniel. Will you come eat with us?

DANIEL

I just want to sleep.

MONICA

Ok, I'll let you sleep if you come downstairs and eat with me first, ok?... *(no answer, so she whispers through the blankets)*
Hey sweetie, will you talk to me?

DANIEL

GO AWAY!!!

A long silence. Daniel doesn't say a word. Monica tries to lift up the blanket and force him out of bed. He resists, his head under the covers. Sandra comes to help Monica, they struggle. He sticks an arm out from beneath the covers and waves it in the air as if violently striking something. Monica signals Sandra to leave her alone with him. Confused and at a loss Sandra hesitates, then walks out of the room.

Sandra walks down the stairs and goes to the kitchen where she puts a helping of tiramisu on a plate. In passing, she turns down the stove under the pot where spaghetti is cooking and then goes back upstairs.

Sandra comes back into the bedroom: Daniel is talking to Monica, only his head is sticking out from under the blankets.

DANIEL

I don't understand how he fell.

MONICA

No one knows yet.

DANIEL

How... did it happen... I want to know what happened. We can't just stay this way, with this emptiness.

Sandra is in the doorway holding the tiramisu in her hands. She watches them.

MONICA *(to Daniel)*

Do you remember when I told you about the medium I saw after Alain died?

DANIEL

Yes?

MONICA

He's a very good person and –

SANDRA *(arriving suddenly in the room)*

Monica, I'm not sure you should be bringing up these things –

MONICA *(softly)*

He really helped me.

SANDRA

He's a child, this is completely different.

MONICA

I don't think so. He's already helped other children.

DANIEL

Yes I want to.

SANDRA

Monica and I will talk about it; I don't know if it's a good idea...

11 – CHALET, staircase/Living room-kitchen-NOON-INT/DAY

A moment later, they go back downstairs.

SANDRA *(her voice low)*

Why did you bring that up without talking to me first?

MONICA

I just think it can help him.

SANDRA

He's going to hang on to that now.

MONICA

Please Sandra, try to be more open-minded. This child needs someone to talk to him and I know this man. He's a normal person, he just has a gift for sensing things that we can't. And even if you don't believe in it, it could do Daniel a whole world of good.

She notices Vincent watching them from the kitchen while straining the spaghetti. They join him in the kitchen. Monica grabs her coat.

VINCENT

It's overcooked, I think. *(to Monica)* Hello.

SANDRA *(overwhelmed)*

Ah, shoot. *(Introducing them in French)* Vincent, an old friend, and a lawyer. Monica, she's Daniel's godmother... *(to Monica)* Okay, I'll call you later.

MONICA

You'll let me know if he's eaten anything?

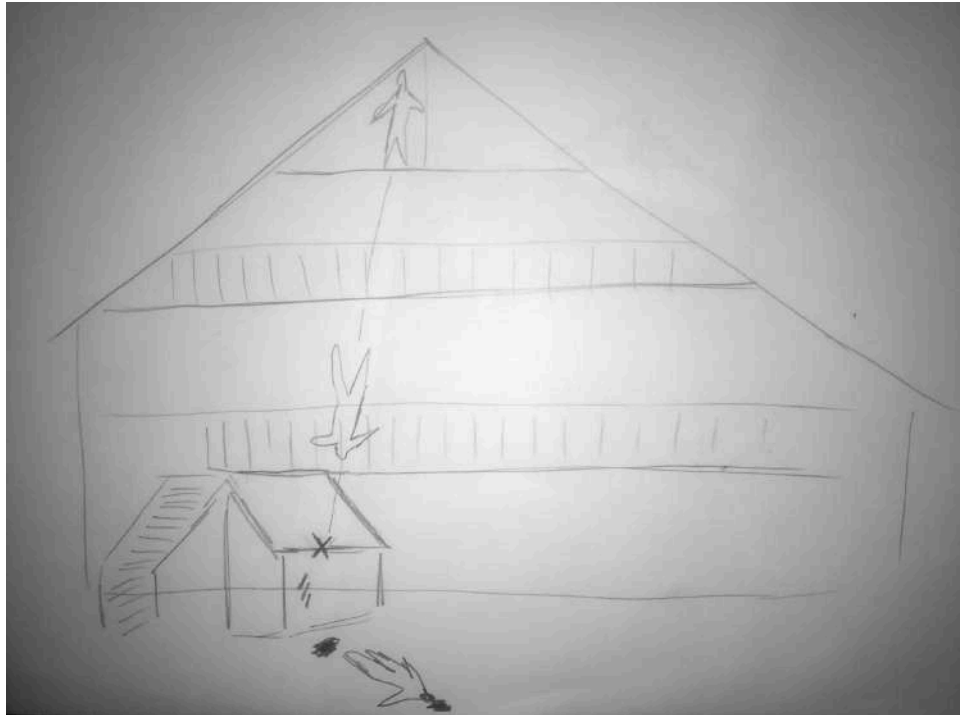
Sandra nods and gives her a hug. Monica leaves. Sandra opens the fridge, she's crying.

12 – CHALET, Living room- Kitchen – NOON – INT/DAY

They are eating in the kitchen. Vincent draws a sketch to illustrate his explanations.

VINCENT*

The autopsy report is inconclusive about the cause of death. The forensic pathologist didn't have enough concrete elements. But when you look at everything, what we can defend is a fall from the attic window, with him "bouncing" off the shed's roof. The investigation shows that his head may have hit the edge of the roof, somewhere around here, you see? *(he shows her on the sketch)* And then he lands in this position.



VINCENT* (*cont'd*)

But there are several problems. First, they found nothing on the shed roof – no DNA, nothing.

Second, there's blood near his feet. Look, his head is here, and the blood is there: we need to explain how it got there.



And then, there's these three blood spatters, here. It seems its pattern doesn't really match with a head impact on the roof. The judge asked an expert to clarify this.



SANDRA* (*tense*)

But... when you see this, what do *you* think?

VINCENT*

I don't know, I'm not a spatter analyst, but I know a good one. I want to have her opinion... And there's one last problem for us: that bruise on your arm. It might look like the result of a struggle. When did they examine you?

SANDRA*

That same night. My sleeve was rolled up and they saw it.

VINCENT*

Did you explain it to them right away?

SANDRA* (*she stands up*)

Yes, I knew exactly how it happened (*pointing to a kitchen shelf*). I bang my arm on this all the time. It had happened several times that week. I told them my skin marks easily, and that they could ask Daniel: he hears me bumping into it all the time.

They remain silent a moment, finishing their pasta.

VINCENT*

So, as you can see, an accidental fall is gonna be hard to defend/prove, given the height of the *rambarde*/guardrail. That leaves 2 options: either he jumped or he was pushed, possibly after receiving a blow.

Looking for a stranger who killed him while you were sleeping and Daniel was out on a walk is a shitty strategy, it makes no sense: Samuel had no enemies; there's nothing to back that up- You're a *témoin assisté* because you were the only person there; you are his wife... and there's testimony about your strained relationship and your (*alleged*) "violence," even if it's only indirect. See where we stand?

SANDRA*

Yes. (*A beat*) First of all, I didn't kill him.

VINCENT*

You don't need to tell me that. The question is this: Was there anything in Samuel's personality, or in what he was going through lately, that would seem consistent with a suicide?

SANDRA*

I've thought about it, and I just can't imagine him... jumping with Daniel so close by... I just can't imagine that. He had his problems, but he was working on them... We were laughing so hard just the day before, talking about our projects... He had so much energy. I mean, for me he was so alive. I'm not comfortable with this.

VINCENT*

Ok, let me put it another way: If they indict you, it's probably our best defense.

SANDRA*

I thought he could have fallen.

VINCENT*

It's hard to make it credible.
(alt : It's really hard to believe)

The truth of what he says registers on Sandra's face. They look at each other in silence.

13 – CHALET, Entrance/Living room- Kitchen – Samuel's bedroom – INT/DAY

Monica shows a tall, hulking man of about 40 into the living room. He plants himself in the middle of the room and studies everything. Sandra holds Daniel close to her; we sense his apprehension. Snoop follows them.

MONICA (*in French*)

We think perhaps he deliberately jumped, but we're not sure...
It's very upsetting for all of us.

DANIEL (*in French*)

We want to know why he fell.

MEDIUM (*in French*)

So, I can't answer specific questions. I have visions that come to me, but I can't tell you if it's the past, the present or the future. I can only share the things that come to me and that's something I can't control.

He starts running his large, thick hands over the walls, particularly over a slightly indented, damaged spot. Monica whispers to Daniel, describing what the man is doing. Daniel is awed.

MEDIUM *(to Monica)*

Do you have the item of clothing?

Monica, who has been clutching a scarf to her chest, hands it to him reluctantly. The medium takes it.

MEDIUM

You haven't washed it?

MONICA

No.

MEDIUM

Where is the room where he spent most of his time? Take me there.

They open a door at the far end of the living room. A tiny room with a simple bed and a little desk.

MEDIUM

Whose bedroom is this? I sense many presences here.

SANDRA

It was his bedroom...

MEDIUM

Just his?

SANDRA

Yes, he slept and worked there.

The dog follows them closely. The man twists the scarf more intensely, he touches the walls, some objects. Suddenly he seems very perturbed. He sits down cross-legged on the floor, and touches a dirty rug.

MEDIUM

I sense many presences here.

The dog... is very present. He's sick. It's bad. He throws up. I sense a time when the dog is sick. Someone is inert, motionless. I don't know if he's sleeping... Over a period of several days.

He's agitated, the dog's physical presence is disturbing him. The dog stares at him, immobile.

MEDIUM

I'm sorry, the dog is taking up a lot of space, a lot of energy.

He is creating a lot of interference, both in the visions and right now, in the room. I sense an inert body. I don't know if... Does the dog sleep here too?

SANDRA

Yes, sometimes.

MEDIUM

He sleeps here, yes. The dog is definitely creating interference. Because I'm seeing something, I don't know if it's the dog who's inert or the man... It could be the man who's inert... he could be sleeping, or if he's not sleeping, he's dead... I don't know...

The dog is really messing with my energy, I'm sorry. Could you take the dog out, please?

Davy is petrified. Monica lets Snoop out of the room and closes the door. The dog starts barking in a crazed way. The medium, sweating heavily, touches Samuel's desk.

MEDIUM

He needs to be put outside. (*Monica leaves to take the dog outside*) I sense that he has soiled... Something about this room is soiled, dirty... Have you cleaned it? Have you cleaned the room?

SANDRA

What do you mean? Yes, we clean it. Listen, I think that's enough.

MEDIUM

I think you need to clean.

The man is physically affected, drained, by what he's sensing. Monica comes back into the room.

SANDRA

That's enough now. I appreciate your help, but it's not working. We'll... I'll show you out. We'll pay for your time.

She motions to show him out, but he doesn't budge. An awkward moment. The medium stares into space, then vomits in the middle of the room. Sandra is utterly stunned. Daniel, paralyzed with fear. The medium looks haggard.

SANDRA

Ok, enough.

She grabs Daniel by the arm and quickly leads him outside (onto the terrace of the living room). The child hugs his dog (which stayed outside) and Sandra kneels down and hugs Davy, whispering to reassure him:

SANDRA

It's all right honey, I'm here, shush, shush... I'm here.

(+Sandra curtly asks Monica to take care of the medium who is still in the room?)

14A – STREETS IN GRENOBLE – TOBACCONIST (A)/ CAR (B) – EXT/DAY

(A)

A woman in her thirties comes out of a building and walks straight over to Vincent who's been waiting for her. It's **NOUR**, the lawyer who answered his questions about Judge Janvier. They walk briskly as they talk.

NOUR (*talking fast, in French*)

I just spoke to the cop... I didn't learn much, except that Janvier does appear to be focusing on Maleski's USB key.

VINCENT

And did he tell you what was on it?

NOUR

Apparently, there would seem to be ONE important document that is being authenticated.

They enter a tobacco shop; she waits her turn.

NOUR

I managed to get out of him that it's not a photo or anything written – Hello, a pack of Benson please... thanks – anyway, in between the lines, I think I got that it's a video file... and something pretty intimate. That's not how he put it, but I think it's not great for you; he said something like “it can weigh heavily on the case.”

They walk out, retracing their steps as she lights a cigarette.

VINCENT (*worried*)

Something intimate... like what, a sexual thing?

NOUR

That's all I know. I can try and call him again in three or four days, but I don't think he'll give up any more than that. (*They reach the front of a building*)

VINCENT

Ok, thank you Nour!

The door closes. Vincent, tense, grabs his phone as he walks back in the opposite direction.

(B)

Once back in his car, Vincent calls Sandra.

VINCENT* (*in English*)

Hey, Sandra, do you remember Samuel filming anything private or intimate? Does that ring a bell?

SANDRA* (*OFF*)

Intimate? Why, what's going on?

VINCENT* (*cutting her off*)

I'll explain but first tell me if it rings a bell. Could he have filmed something like that?

SANDRA* (*OFF*)

No, he never filmed anything. *And if he did, I'd have known.* Why, did they find something?

VINCENT*

It's hearsay but yes, there's something on the USB key. Listen, if you can't remember never mind, we'll just have to wait. Try not to freak out, ok?

Long silence.

SANDRA* (*OFF*)

... There's something I wanted to tell you about, something I remembered... it's odd that I could have forgotten it, but it came back to me last night: it's something that happened a while back and well... About 6 months ago, I wonder if Samuel didn't swallow some pills...I found him passed out drunk on the floor; he'd vomited, it was very early in the morning, I don't know how I forgot this. There were white spots in the vomit. I remember wondering if they were pills...

VINCENT* (*stopping short on the sidewalk*)

Really? Well... ok. Did you talk to him about it?

SANDRA* (OFF)
He didn't want to talk about it.

VINCENT*
Did Daniel see this?

SANDRA* (OFF)
No.

VINCENT*
And you didn't...

SANDRA* (OFF)
I didn't really face it then. But now when I think about what it looked like, it might be a suicide attempt, no ?
(Alt: I didn't really face it then. but now it seems like it might have been a suicide attempt, no?)

VINCENT* (*prudent*)
I'm not sure, I'd need to know exactly what you saw. Did you talk to anyone about it at the time?

SANDRA* (OFF)
No.

15 – CHALET – EXT entrance or kitchen balcony – DAY

Sandra is standing in front of the chalet, wrapped in a sweater, shaking with cold.

SANDRA*
Ok... Bye.

She hangs up and looks inside the chalet: seated at the piano, Daniel is tirelessly repeating the same bars of music, playing with just his right hand, attempting to replicate by ear the beginning of *Asturias* by Albeniz that is playing on YouTube. He's managing, laboriously, but it'll take a lot of practice on his part to get it right.

16 – CRIMINAL COURTROOM, Judge Janvier's Office – INT/DAY

In a judge's chamber, Daniel, wearing his dark glasses, is facing a man in his late thirties: **JUDGE JANVIER**. A long silence – the judge seems to be waiting for an answer.

JUDGE (*gently, in French*)

Would you mind taking your glasses off?

DANIEL (*in French*)

I'd rather not.

JUDGE

Is there too much light? I can lower the blinds if you like?

DANIEL

No thank you, it's kind of you but I prefer keeping them on.

JUDGE (*walking on eggshells*)

I understand. So let's start again. You didn't answer me when I asked you what was it like when your parents fought?

DANIEL

I don't really know what to answer because I can't remember much fighting. When they get upset at each other for something, I usually just walk away.

JUDGE

Ok. And when it happened, can you tell me who was the most irritable of the two? (*Daniel shakes his head no*) When you say you usually walk away, is that what happened on the day your father died?

DANIEL

No, I just wanted to go for a walk.

JUDGE

You said you heard your parents when you left the house. Do you remember what type of conversation they were having?

DANIEL

It wasn't a fight. I heard snatches of conversation and voices but not words, really.

JUDGE

But if you couldn't hear words, then you couldn't hear whether they were fighting or not.

DANIEL

You could hear it wasn't a fight.

JUDGE

Yet, Daniel, we can agree on this: there was music, the country song playing really loudly? You were outside, they were in your mother's bedroom, two floors above. How could you hear the tone of their voices? That is, considering you could hear them.

DANIEL

I was just below the open window, I heard... I know what I heard.

JUDGE

How can you be so sure of where you were?

DANIEL

I know that because I remember touching the gaffer tape of the shed at that moment.

JUDGE

The gaffer tape ?

DANIEL

My dad put different types of masking tape in different places around the house when we moved in so that I could spot where I was. I was a bit lost at first. I always touch them, it's a habit. And each piece of tape is special to the touch, it's impossible for me to be mistaken.

The judge slowly nods his head, watching Daniel. A long silence.

17 – CHALET – Sandra's bedroom (A) / Attic (B) / Exterior (entrance) (C) – INT-EXT/DAY

(A)

Sandra, Daniel, Vincent and Nour (now associated with Vincent) are gathered around Judge Janvier. They're preparing a re-enactment of the couple's last conversation before Samuel's death to check Daniel's testimony: could he have heard his parent's "calm" conversation given the volume of the music playing?

They're split into two groups: one in Sandra's bedroom on the 2nd floor and the other outside. The Judge (on the 2nd floor) issues instructions. Everything is filmed. Sandra discovers a sheet of dialogue the judge has printed out for her.

(A)

SANDRA *(in French)*

You're asking me to say something that I didn't say in a language I didn't use.

JUDGE JANVIER

I transposed what you told me into direct dialogue. At any rate, what's important is the sound level, as for the French, it makes things easier for everyone. *(Peremptory)* Let's get started.

(B) An assistant starts the music, which fills the entire space : *Jolene, Jolene, Jolene*
JOLEEEEEEEEEENE, I'm beggin' you please don't take my maaan...

(A)

POLICE OFFICER/SAMUEL

How did it go?

SANDRA *(Calm and with a flat tone)*

Fine, nothing special.

POLICE OFFICER/SAMUEL

What are your plans this afternoon?

SANDRA

I don't know, I'm tired. I have some work to do and then I'd like to get some rest.

POLICE OFFICER/SAMUEL

You're not going to ask me what I'm going to do?

SANDRA

I imagine you're going to keep working on the attic, aren't you?

(C)

Daniel is outside, under the balcony : we can only hear the music, louder than inside as it's coming directly from the attic's window. An assistant leans over the 2nd-floor balcony.

ASSISTANT 1 *(yelling)*

SO ?

ASSISTANT 2 *(down below)*

Daniel ?

DANIEL

I didn't hear anything.

(A)

JUDGE JANVIER

We'll do it again, try a notch louder.

SANDRA

Louder? You want me to shout over the music? I'm not going to shout; I didn't shout.

JUDGE JANVIER

The purpose of this re-enactment is to establish which voice level is credible—

SANDRA *(to Vincent)*

Vincent, j'ai jamais hurlé, je hurle jamais, je ferai pas ça devant mon fils.

VINCENT *(to the judge)*

She didn't speak any louder than this, and her son has clearly stated that the voices were calm.

JUDGE JANVIER

Yes, but you can very well see that his story doesn't hold: the music drowns out everything. We're not going to be satisfied with this discrepancy... Mr. Renzi?

VINCENT *(unwavering)*

My client maintains she didn't shout, she won't shout.

JUDGE JANVIER *(to a female police officer)*

Miss, you're going to step in for Mrs. Voyter.

(C)

Downstairs, Daniel waits nervously for the re-enactment to start again.

18 – CHALET – LIVING ROOM – INT/NIGHT

Nightfall. Sandra and Daniel are alone. She is sipping a glass of vodka. At the piano, Daniel starts playing the same theme of *Asturias* by ALBENIZ, which he is trying to learn well enough to play smoothly. He stumbles, and starts again, relentless. We can sense he's not doing well. Sandra comes closer and leans over the piano. With her right hand, she starts playing a slow, simple piece of Chopin (Prélude op28n4en mi mineur, version Gainsbourg), and then sits down next to him on the piano bench. Daniel, with his left hand, starts accompanying her in harmony: they're used to playing together.

SANDRA* (*once the song is over*)
This afternoon was hard, wasn't it?

He doesn't answer. She hugs him against her side.

DANIEL (*breaking down, in French*)
I'm mad at myself, I feel like I didn't do it right, I don't know what happened...

SANDRA*
You didn't lie, did you? (*He shakes his head no*). I don't want you to change your memories. You need to tell them the way you remember it. That will never hurt me.

DANIEL (*confused*)
I didn't lie, but I don't understand, I thought I was sure... I'm so mad at myself for not remembering better...

SANDRA*
Daniel, you did exactly the right thing. You tried your best to dig up what happened. (*Swallowing back her tears*) ... I know you miss him terribly, honey... I miss him too... I'm so sorry, angel, you shouldn't have to go through all this.

DANIEL (*wrapping his arms around her and squeezing tight*)
Don't be sad, Mom, I love you! There's no other mom like you. I love you!

+ a very wide exterior night shot

19 – CHALET, Exterior (A: morning and B: later) – EXT/DAY

A string of scenes following one another at a fast pace, often in split screen.
(*Split screen: on the left, TV news segment(A) /on the right Vincent and Daniel (B)*)

(19A)

TUESDAY 8 A.M.

Sandra is being arrested by the police in front of the chalet.

JOURNALIST (local radio)(OFF)
The novelist Sandra Voyter was arrested this morning at her residence and taken into custody. Judge Janvier's decision further confirms suspicions with respect to her role in her husband's death. We expect she'll be indicted at some point today.

(19B) Vincent walks out of the chalet a suitcase in hand.
Vincent helps Daniel into his car and starts the engine in a rush.

20 – (A) POLICE CAR/ (B) VINCENT'S CAR- 8H40 – EXT/DAY

Split screen (cont'd) : on the left (A), Sandra's face while in the car with the police / on the right (B), Daniel's face in Vincent's car.

(20B)
Vincent drives while talking to Nour on his cell phone with his headset on. Daniel is sitting in the back, petrified.

NOUR (OFF, her usual fast-talking pace)
I have the file in front of me. They received their expert's report and it's not good. (She reads): "the analysis leads to the conclusion that the shape of the blood spatter corresponds to a point of origin that is above and to the side, following an angle that is between blah blah blah... The blood spatter thus originated at least 3 meters above said traces (...) The force of the impact causing the splatter definitely happened in the vicinity of the 2nd floor's balcony, confirming the hypothesis of a violent blow to Samuel M.'s head as he was standing on the balcony of said floor."

VINCENT
Shit. All right. Hold on, I'll call you right back...

End of the split screen. Vincent hangs up and parks in front of Monica's house, where she stands, waiting. Vincent gets out of the car, opens the back door and takes Davy's hands in his own; the child is tense with anxiety.

VINCENT
Are you going to be all right? I know it's scary, but we're here to help your mum, we'll take care of everything. You can ask Monica to call me, no matter when or where for any questions you may want to ask or anything you want to talk about, ok? (Daniel nods in agreement). Is there something you'd like to know? Ask me if there's anything you don't understand.

DANIEL

I don't understand anything.

VINCENT

She's just in a meeting with the judge, for the moment he's asking her some questions.

DANIEL

You promise I can see her soon?

Vincent straightens up. Daniel gets out of the car. Monica takes both the child and the suitcase.

**21 – (A) CRIMINAL COURTHOUSE, Stairs/ (B) MONICA'S PLACE, Livingroom-
EXT/NIGHT
TUESDAY 10 P.M.**

Split screen : on the left, Vincent being interviewed (by the press) on the courthouse's front steps / On the right, Daniel listens to Vincent, his ear nearly glued to the TV at Monica's house.

(21A)

VINCENT (*exhausted*)

All we know is that they're keeping her in custody. It's going to last well into the night.

JOURNALIST

What's her frame of mind at the moment? She's been in questioning for at least 4 hours, is she encountering any difficulties?

VINCENT

Sandra Voyter isn't encountering any difficulties, she maintains she's innocent, there'll be no confession as there's no guilt.

JOURNALIST

You are very sure of yourself, and yet people are talking about new elements, some recordings, do you know if they're incriminating?

VINCENT

Didn't you hear what I just said? There are still no charges brought against Sandra. There is NO incriminating evidence at this point, and this alleged video file is somewhat of a myth for

the moment as no one's had access to it. In any case, we haven't.

JOURNALIST (*excited*)

Are you confirming it's a video file?

VINCENT (*embarrassed for having said too much*)

I'm not confirming anything. I just clearly told you the contrary.

JOURNALIST

If there are no new elements, how do you explain the decision to take her into custody?

VINCENT

As far as I'm concerned, this decision is irresponsible.

22 – (A) CRIMINAL COURTHOUSE, Press room / (B) Stairs / (C) Cell – INT/DAY

WEDNESDAY 9:10 A.M.

Split screen: on the left (A), the prosecutor has gathered the press in one of the courthouse's press rooms / on the right (B) journalists outside the courthouse.

(22A)

(sound of camera flashes + journalists, off)

PROSECUTOR

Charges were brought against Sandra Voyter at approximately 8:30 a.m. The investigation has revealed a convergence of elements justifying this decision – three elements in particular: a report with regard to M. Maleski's blood spatter at the couple's residence and whose pattern seems to indicate blunt force trauma to the head while he was standing on the 2nd-floor balcony. Secondly, the re-enactment conducted three days ago highlighted a number of discrepancies, and lastly a document found on a USB key belonging to the deceased, about which the only thing we can tell you at this point is that it is an audio recording of the couple dating from the day before M. Maleski died.

(22B)

6 journalists are getting ready for the live feed in front of the Courthouse stairs. Hair/Make Up/Exchanges with the cameraman/jokes/laughter...

JOURNALIST (*warming up*)

(...) it will therefore be up to the family court judge to decide, once Sandra Voyter's placement in custody is confirmed by the liberty and custody judge (...) (*warning the cameraman*) Ok, we're good... (*practicing his enunciation*) "Young Daniel Voyter, Young Daniel Voyter..."

(22C) CUT to Sandra being led into a police custody cell, the camera zooming in on her face... She looks at the white walls, the bed, the sink, the floor, anxiety showing in her eyes.

23 – TERASSE CAFE – EXT/DAY
9H30

Vincent eats standing up, his phone glued to his ear. Nour nervously paces the sidewalk in circles while making a phone call a slight distance away, her untouched plate on the table.

VINCENT

...That's what I've been explaining to you. She won't be able to come and sign herself because she's currently in police custody. She gave me power of attorney and so it's me, her lawyer, who will come pick up the documents to bring them to her... Well, no, 4 p.m. isn't going to work, the only timeslot I have is now, in 30 minutes? ... Ah, perfect, thank you.

Nour's hangs up and starts eating while he finishes.

NOUR (*extra fast pace*)

Ok, there's a slight-almost-good news in this shitshow: seems the sitting judge this afternoon isn't Da Silva but Bollène. She's a 55-year-old woman, ultra-independent, somewhat a feminist, but best of all she hates Janvier and Mallet's guts. They had some kind of clash when she was appointed, and it's been the cold war ever since.

Nour looks at Vincent. He appears pretty distressed.

NOUR

I'll do the talking, ok? If it really is Bollène, I know how to tackle this thing. You can talk about guarantees, bail, and mortgaging the chalet, and you let me handle the rest. By the way, tell me, how is the mortgage going?

VINCENT

It's less than we hoped for, they have several outstanding loans. As a result, the bank is good for 50,000, and they're being lenient. (*He looks at the time*). I have to go.

NOUR

I think bail's going to be more than 50,000...

24 – CRIMINAL COURTHOUSE, Inside Courthouse - INT/DAY

3:02 P.M.

Facing **JUDGE BOLLENE** are the prosecutor, Mallet, as well as Vincent, Nour and Sandra, who looks drawn.

PROSECUTOR

Your honor, I am requesting that the defendant Mrs. Voyter not be released on bail. There are many elements that meet the conditions set forth in article 144 of the penal code. First of all, the possibility of deterioration of material evidence and proof. In this case there are a certain number of ongoing investigations, we're conducting a forensic analysis of his cell phone –

JLC

Yes, yes, get to the point...

PROSECUTOR

Furthermore, this is an investigation of a German citizen with relations in Germany as well as London where she resided for ten years. There is an obvious flight risk that must be considered. Finally, her son is a witness who will testify at the trial. There's obviously the matter of the pressure she could exert on him. For all these reasons, a release on bail isn't possible, and so I'm asking for the defendant to be placed in detention.

JLC (to Nour)

Counsel for the defense?

NOUR (determined)

Actually, it's indeed BECAUSE she is in charge of her son that it's pure fantasy to imagine she's a flight risk. With a visually-impaired child, it's simply inconceivable, not to mention that her face is all over the media.

Also, making the decision to separate the child from his mother means taking the risk of exposing the child to additional trauma: he was in a severe accident when he was 4, in which he became this way – this has made him quite psychologically and emotionally fragile.

Furthermore, he is indeed a key witness in this case.

Which brings me to my second point: Daniel's testimony has never varied as far as the content is concerned, there are no grounds for concern with regard to undue pressure since his testimony isn't for the prosecution.

All the prosecution's allegedly incriminating elements are hearsay.

LIBERTY AND CUSTODY JUDGE (*cutting her off*)
Madam, we are not here to debate the content of this case, but the requirements for article 144 –

25 – (A,C,D) CRIMINAL COURTHOUSE, Stairs / (B) Court clerk's office – EXT/DAY
5:17 P.M.

Split screen: on the left(A), Nour walks out of the courthouse / on the right (B), Sandra and Vincent with the court clerk.

(25A)

NOUR (*answering the solicitations of the press*)

This decision is sufficiently rare to deserve praise. A magistrate – a female magistrate to be specific – not giving in to repressive knee-jerk reactions demonstrates sound decision-making, especially in a case like ours. As far as we're concerned, the decision to release on bail underscores the weaknesses in the prosecution's case.

(25C)

Left: Across the street from the courthouse, a radio reporter is commenting on the decision.

Radio reporter

This is a decision rarely ever made when facing homicide charges, and it appears to be a disavowal of Investigative Judge Janvier. Earlier this afternoon, behind-the-scenes in the courthouse, I heard very strong reactions: someone from the prosecutor's circle told us about sensing unhealthy rivalries which could possibly raise concerns about justice being able to properly run its course. I quote: "The liberty and custody judge made a dangerous decision, as the defendant will be reunited with a witness who plays a key role

(25B)

Sandra faces the court clerk, she's handed a document, which she signs and on which we can read "Bail," with the amount to be paid: 68,000 euros, due in 4 installments. Sandra writes out a check for 17,000 euros. Vincent is standing by her side. They walk down corridors and hallways to the exit.

(25D)

Right: Sandra and Vincent walk out of the courthouse. Sandra looks exhausted. Some journalists film her coming out of the courthouse.

JOURNALIST (to Sandra)

What is your frame of mind? Did they play you the recordings?

VINCENT

Please. She just spent 30 hours in police custody.

SANDRA (*broken French*)

I am innocent. I'm thinking of my son... and trying to deal with my grief.

Vincent and Sandra get in Vincent's car. He starts the engine and drives off.

in this case; how can one not be concerned for the rest of the proceedings?"

26 - MOUNTAIN ROAD, At the side of the road (A) / Car (B) /CHALET (C) - INT/DAY

(A)

Stopped in the middle of nowhere in the mountains, they smoke a cigarette. (They are in front of a huge ravine/snow.)

VINCENT*

How could you not tell me about it?

SANDRA*

I had no idea he recorded it.

VINCENT*

Even if he hadn't recorded it: you had a fight the day before he died. A nasty fight. You should have told me. And also about your affairs with women. I don't give a shit about your sexuality! But Samuel knew you were cheating on him, and he blamed you for a lot of things... I should've known all of that. *(beat)* Is there any chance Daniel witnessed or heard any of that fight? Before, during or after?

SANDRA*

No, he was at school all day.

(She avoids his gaze; he turns to face her) I am innocent.

VINCENT*

But you're less innocent today than you were 3 days ago, because this came out and you said nothing.

People don't believe you because you're innocent; they believe you when you don't behave like a guilty person!!

SANDRA*

That recording is not reality. If you take an extreme moment in life, an emotional peak, and focus on it, it crushes reality. It may seem like irrefutable proof, but it actually warps everything. That is not reality It's our voices, but it's not who we are.

VINCENT*

You need to start seeing yourself the way others are going to perceive you.

It's very hard to do, but you can't just say: "You don't understand, I know I'm innocent." A trial is not about "The Truth," it's about who's the most convincing.

SANDRA*

I didn't know there would be a trial.

VINCENT*

One thing that'll carry a lot of weight is who you have around you.

SANDRA*

There's nobody around me.

VINCENT*

Daniel will be important. Your father... did you ever get back in touch with him?

SANDRA*

No. Never.

VINCENT*

Didn't you and Samuel have any friends, anyone who could...?

SANDRA* (*shaking her head*)

We should never have come here. I didn't want to; I was happy in London. He insisted so much. He told me there'd be no distractions from work, it would solve our money problems... (*beat*) I left my shithole in Germany and ended up stuck here... in his shithole. How fucking absurd.

Long silence. They look at each other.

VINCENT*

You're going to have to work on your French.

SANDRA (*in French*)

I know.

VINCENT*

And we have to make things official with Nour and me. I can't keep working for free. Things are mixed up as it is: the trial, our friendship...

SANDRA*

How much will it cost?

VINCENT*

A flat fee. It's the only way to make it work for us without breaking your back. 40,000 euros, whether it takes a year or two years. (it won't change.)

SANDRA* (*nodding limply in agreement*)

This may be the only time in my life that I get released from jail and you couldn't just let me enjoy it.

Vincent smiles.

VINCENT*

We don't expect you to pay it all upfront.

SANDRA*

You're *too* kind! (*They both burst out laughing, from nerves*).

(B)

They get back in the car. And drive to the chalet, chatting all the while.

VINCENT*

How will you manage?

SANDRA*

I don't know... I just mortgaged a house we already couldn't pay off ... I'll find a solution.

(Alt : I don't know... I just took out a second mortgage on a house we already couldn't afford... I'll find a way.)

VINCENT* (*embarrassed*)

... And there's the salary for the woman from child protection services. 450 euros a month. Remember the judge said that's your responsibility. As for bail... well, you'll get that back if you're acquitted, right? So the pressure's on me - ha-ha!

SANDRA* (*wracking her brains*)

...I'll take on some more translating in addition to my magazine work... and maybe I can sign with a second publisher... I'll figure something out... I can't think straight anymore...

(C) The car arrives at the chalet.

27 – CHALET, Entrance – INT /DAY

They arrive at the chalet. Sandra hugs Daniel tightly in her arms and kisses him. Nour is also there with a woman, Marge Berger.

NOUR (*introducing her to Sandra and Vincent*)

So, this is Mrs. Berger, who's been appointed by child protective services. She'll come and spend a day here once a week, with Daniel and you (*addressing Sandra*) to make sure that everything goes smoothly, that no one is asking him to say things he doesn't feel like saying during the trial.

You'll have to always speak French when she's here, the judge was very clear about that. (*Addressing Marge*) I believe you wanted to speak with Daniel in private?

Vincent, Nour and Monica walk away. Sandra stands to the side. Daniel stays planted where he is, Marge comes closer to him.

MARGE

Your mother will do some things on her own while you and I get to know each other and then you can go back to be with her. Is that ok with you?

Daniel nods in agreement. Snoop is a little restless next to him. Marge seems a little uncomfortable with the dog.

MARGE

All right, so my name's Marge and we'll be seeing each other a lot. Do you understand why I'll be coming here?

DANIEL

Yes.

MARGE

And you're okay with that? You can think of me as a friend, or not, you don't have to. What do you think?

DANIEL

It's fine, I don't need us to be friends.

MARGE

You're right, I'm here to protect you. I've been sent by the law and the law can't decide to be friends with some people and not with others. That wouldn't be fair: The law must be exactly the same for everybody.

So, in fact, you're right, I can't be your friend; I just need you to tell me if something seems weird to you or if things aren't going well with your mother, with respect to the trial.

DANIEL

All right, but usually when something's not going well, I go and talk to my friends.

MARGE

Yes, I see, so let's say you don't really have the choice. It's ok if you don't like me, but what's really important is that you trust me. That's essential. We have no other option. Do you think you can do that?

DANIEL

Maybe. But trusting someone you don't like is weird.

Marge doesn't know what to say to that.

At a distance, in the living room, Sandra is watching them (smoking a cigarette nearby the open window).

28 – CHALET, Sandra's bedroom - INT/DAY

Sandra's faces the camera as she's speaking. We don't know where she is.

SANDRA (*looking for her words, in French*)

... If I try to remember how... What I felt when I met him... It's hard to recall how a feeling... flourishes—

NOUR

Don't say it's hard, don't comment on what you're doing, just find a simple way to say that you loved him and take it as your starting point.

SANDRA

I remember one of the first times I saw him; he walked into the room, and it was as though the atmosphere had changed... Sorry, let me say this again I've lost the thought, it's because of the French... He had a charm that got to me... Like signals you pick up on, I'd pick up what he was sending me... (*interrupting herself*) Is that too abstract?

VINCENT

See this through to the end, don't censor yourself.

SANDRA*

I need to do it once in English.

VINCENT

One of the challenges is doing it in French—

SANDRA (*cutting her off, tense*)

I know but I'll start in English.

(*A beat, before continuing in English*)

...He's one of the only people I knew... when he walked into a room, something shifted. The atmosphere changed. I suppose that's charm. I fell in love with his charm.

I'd spent my whole life not understanding my family and friends, and then he came along... I felt like I understood what he was saying, the signals he was sending me. We didn't necessarily agree, but we got along. We had things to tell each another. That's rare. I realized that later... when it was gone.

VINCENT *

Don't say it's gone.

NOUR

Go back to how you met, his personality.

SANDRA* (*still in English*)

Ok. Uh... When we met, he'd just gotten a job at the university in London, so we moved there together. He was a great teacher; he had a way of making everything sound alive... But deep down, what he really wanted was to write. He worked on a novel for years. I watched him struggle. It was hard. I came to realize that his relationship with time, with work, was complicated, unlike for me...

VINCENT

(*in French*) You're placing yourself above him. (*in English*)

Stop comparing yourself to him. (*in French*) Go back to your relationship.

SANDRA*

We regularly read each other's writing. Our relationship always revolved around intellectual stimulation, even if it meant neglecting everything else.

NOUR

Everything else being Daniel?

Feeling attacked by this comment, Sandra doesn't answer, pulling herself together.

VINCENT

I think we need to talk about Daniel early on.

SANDRA (*in French*)

But Samuel's problems already existed before...

NOUR

We have to simplify a little. We need to follow a simple storyline, have everything converge at the same point.

Sandra takes a moment, looking as though she is searching and sorting within herself which elements to use. Close-up on her face.

SANDRA* (*continuing in English*)

...Everything changed after the accident. Daniel was 4. That day, Samuel was supposed to pick him up from school. But he was on a roll writing his book, so he called a babysitter at the last minute. The babysitter showed up late. As they were crossing the street, a motorcycle hit Daniel. His optic nerve was permanently damaged. After that, Samuel became obsessive, he blamed himself on a loop: If only he'd gone to pick him up on time... He was overcome with guilt and... perhaps he never truly escaped that feeling. We spent that whole year at the hospital with Daniel. We began having financial problems...

(*beat*)

And Samuel started taking antidepressants.

Nour nods, satisfied. Vincent looks at Sandra: she has stopped, on the brink of tears, upset, almost angry.

SANDRA*:-

Please Vincent, let's keep it clean - I want to protect his image... and spare Daniel.

VINCENT *

As clean as we can

(alt : we'll try)

29 – CHALET, Living room + in front of the house + FOREST near the chalet – INT+EXT/DAY

(A)

(4 or 5 different situations to take pictures)

A series of still images – photos of Sandra, Davy, and Snoop posing: sitting at the dinner table in the living room preparing breakfast, Daniel at the piano, Sandra looking at her son lovingly... the two of them taking a walk outside in the snow, Sandra leaning toward Daniel, whispering into his ear.

(B)

We join them on the edge of the woods. They're facing a photographer.

Perfect framing: the mother and her child by the forest, standing out against the snowy landscape, with the chalet in the background. The photographer is directing the photo shoot in German (**), repositioning Sandra's arm on Daniel's shoulder, asking to have Snoop sit at their feet.

Monica is standing to the side. She seems particularly irritated by what is taking place.

MONICA *(to Sandra, pointing to Daniel)*

Perhaps we're done with him. It's enough don't you think?

PHOTOGRAPHER**

Yes, we can take solo shots now.

MONICA *(to Sandra)*

I don't understand. I thought his being photographed was out of the question.

SANDRA *(in French)*

I told you we were doing a photo shoot–

MONICA

No, you told me that *you* were doing a photo shoot, not that you were selling photos of Daniel.

SANDRA *(feeling judged)*

They will only come out in Germany. *(tense)*

-

PHOTOGRAPHER**

Perhaps it would be interesting to take some of the babysitter with Daniel?

SANDRA**

(in German) No, it's not a good idea. We said we were done with Daniel. *(In French, to Monica)* See you later? I really need to finish up.

MONICA

Can I just speak to you for a moment? Alone?

They walk about ten meters away. Daniel stays near the photographer. He's a bit lost.

MONICA

Actually, I'm not comfortable with any of this; Daniel shouldn't be—

SANDRA (*cutting her off*)

Nobody is comfortable, I'm no comfortable with anything. If every time I ask for your help with Daniel it becomes a problem for you –

MONICA

I don't have any problem taking care of your son, but really, having him photographed... it's unhealthy. I'm sorry I'm not going to pretend that this is a normal thing to do.

SANDRA

Please stop; this is hard enough. And I don't appreciate you speaking to me that way in front of Daniel. If you have something to say, you wait for him to be somewhere else, because this is not protecting him.

MONICA (*pointing to the photographer*)

And this is what you call protecting him?

SANDRA

DON'T YOU DARE JUDGE ME. I'm running out of money; I'm doing what I can. I need support. If you're not, as you say, comfortable with this, nobody's forcing you. Just make your intentions clear.

Monica is shocked. She goes back to her car. She gets in and drives off. Sandra hurries after the car and starts screaming at her:

SANDRA

DON'T YOU DARE WALK AWAY FROM DANIEL LIKE THAT!! SAY SOMETHING TO HIM!!

30 – CHALET, Exterior (entrance) - EXT/DAY

In front of the chalet, Vincent, Nour and the crew working with the expert **MRS. BOGAERT** have taken over the place and installed their equipment.

They look relaxed and joke around. They film the tests being conducted. We notice a polyurethane dummy. Scaffolding has been set against the shed. An assistant is scooping snow from a large cooler, applying it on the shed's roof on top of a layer of hard ice. Bogaert prepares a mixture of raw meat, blood, and hair, climbs up the scaffolding and puts the mix down on the snow. Then, with a hammer, she violently hits the mix to embed it into the ice. After, they direct an enormous spotlight on the meat-snow-ice mixture to warm it up.

31 – MOUNTAIN PATH (A) / CHALET, Exterior (B) - EXT/DAY

(A)

Daniel, Sandra, and Marge are walking up a snow-covered hill. Snoop is a little ahead of them. Daniel is helping his mother practice her French, having her repeat: "I would like a vanilla millefeuille, please, with whipped cream and raspberry and chocolate chips. I know it doesn't exist but that's what I would like."

(B)

The chalet is visible from where they are, the silhouettes of the lawyers and experts look like small ants busily moving about in the silence. Sandra stops and sees them take the dummy out through the attic window.

(A)

DANIEL

Why are you stopping?

SANDRA

I'm looking at the landscape.

DANIEL

Is it beautiful?

SANDRA

Very.

DANIEL

Describe it to me.

SANDRA (*with great care*)

Over there, to the far right, there's the road coming out of the woods...

(B)

With her description, the camera zooms in and pans slowly over the landscape going past the dummy, which the experts drop from the attic window.

(A)

Sandra doesn't describe it. Marge, a few steps behind them, looks at her. They continue their walk.

DANIEL

How long is it going to last? How long are you going to be coming like this?

MARGE

Until the trial takes place in a year or more... we don't know exactly.

Daniel is pensive.

DANIEL

And will *I* be allowed to go to the trial?

MARGE

You want to attend the trial? Ok.

SANDRA

The two of us will take the time to think about it, together.

MARGE

I think it's something the three of us need to talk about, together. As you are a witness, you can only come once you have testified. But it is an important decision because you are a minor.

DANIEL

I think I'd really like to come to the trial.

FADE TO BLACK

32- BOOKSHOP - INT/DAY

A local TV station is shooting a news segment in front of a bookshop. The journalist speaks to a young man who walks out of the shop with a book in his hand: « The Eclipse » by Sandra Voyer.

JOURNALIST

You're familiar with this novelist?

CLIENT

Well, like most people, I've never read any of her books but with everything that's been going on... it makes you want to know... you know, what she writes about.

The camera goes into the bookshop, up to the bookseller who is adding a copy of *The Eclipse* to the top of a pile.

JOURNALIST

Do you get the impression that something is happening?

BOOKSELLER (*excited by the situation*)

Well it's not just an impression! Until recently, she was known as "that challenging German author"... Now, we've placed a pile of her books, which was out two years ago, by the cash register as people are asking for it all the time.

JOURNALIST

Why are people interested in her?

BOOKSELLER

Because she lives here! And the trial's this week.

CUT. New situation: a client approaches the bookseller.

CLIENT/ VS JOURNALIST

But is the book about her life?

BOOKSELLER (*gradually getting carried away by his own eloquence*)

There are certainly things that echo her life.

It's the story of a mother who accidentally causes her daughter's death and is haunted by it. One day, she gets drunk and dreams that the accident never happened. And when she wakes, from that moment on, this version of her life in which her daughter isn't dead starts unfolding like a parallel reality. First, it's every other chapter and then it permeates everything... And the further you get into the story, the more afraid the mother is to face her daughter in the version where she's alive, because she knows that in the *other* reality, she's dead! And the last part is really nuts; she starts avoiding her daughter and tries to seek refuge in the version where she's no longer there.

CLIENT

Wow, it sounds really twisted, it's just the kind of thing I love to read before going to bed. All right, I'll take it.

33 – CHALET – SANDRA’S BEDROOM – INT/DAY

In his bedroom, Daniel puts his clothes on next to Marge: a shirt, a pair of jeans, a suit jacket. Some time has elapsed, Daniel has changed: he’s 12, less edgy and sensitive. Sandra, whose hair has grown, comes to give him a kiss. She stares right into his eyes. They’ve prepared for this day; the tension is palpable. She adjusts his shirt, which annoys Daniel, reacting like a typical preteen.

Marge hands him his glasses. She seems more comfortable with Snoop, who restlessly circles them.

34 – CRIMINAL TRIAL COURTROOM – INT/DAY

NOTE: During the trial, Sandra does her best to speak mostly in French. When she’s stuck or when her emotions overwhelm her, she switches back to English. An interpreter is there, and the jurors are wearing an earpiece (for the simultaneous translation).

Zoé (the student from seq 1) has been called in as a witness. The recording of her interview with Sandra is being played, we hear the end of their conversation (the renovation work noise can clearly be heard in the background).

ZOE* (*amused*)
Are you really interested...?

SANDRA*
...in what interests you? Sure! I never see anybody. I work here all day long. You come to see me...you interest me!

ZOE* (*thinking*)
I run. It's one of my favorite things to do. It makes me feel high, like I'm on drugs.

Suddenly, the Dolly Parton song JOLENE starts blasting. A beat...

SANDRA* (*raising her voice*)
I told you, we should have done this in Grenoble.

The recording stops.

ATTORNEY GENERAL (*in French*)
Do you recognize this recording as being your interview with Mrs. Voyter?

ZOÉ (*in French*)
Yes.

AG

Had she informed you that Mr. Maleski was there?

ZOÉ

No.

AG

Didn't it seem strange that you only found out he was there belatedly, and only because of the noise coming from the attic?

ZOÉ

A little but, well, she's somewhat of a... free spirit, so in the end, for her not to behave exactly as you'd expect or not to take the time to make introductions or to talk about her private life isn't such a surprise.

AG

Precisely. We clearly have the impression that she doesn't want to talk about herself when it's the very reason why you were there in the first place.

ZOÉ

I didn't come to talk about her, but about her work, her novels.

AG

Yet, by deflecting the conversation from what you were attempting to address, what was she seeking to achieve, do you think?

ZOÉ

Uh, you heard it: she asked me questions about myself. I think she enjoyed talking about me more than about herself, that it was...refreshing for her. (*Laughter in the audience*)

AG

Did you get the impression she was prompting you to talk about yourself?

ZOÉ

Prompting... No, I wouldn't say that; she wasn't manipulating me, she was giving in to the moment. It was natural, she seemed to enjoy the conversation.

AG

You say she was giving in to the moment: we hear her pour you some wine at the beginning of the interview. Had she already started drinking before you arrived?

ZOÉ

Yes, I believe so.

AG

Would you say, to sum things up, that everything was being done to make you feel comfortable, to put you at ease, perhaps more than you would have expected from a novelist whom you'd come to interview about her work?

ZOÉ

That's not how I would have described things. I rather had the impression that Sandra – that Mrs. Voyter needed a break, to let off some steam, and that I, as a young person from outside her circle, was bringing her a breath of fresh air.

AG

Yes, some “refreshment.” Did you know that Sandra Voyter was bisexual?

ZOÉ

No.

AG

Did you perceive it during your interview?

ZOÉ

... no.

AG

After hearing the conversation again, would you say, retrospectively, that there was a game of seduction going on, on her part?

ZOÉ

The fact is, it's not uncommon with people who... have strong egos; there's probably a game of seduction in the general meaning of the term. It's practically impossible otherwise... I felt, and in fact she said so herself, that she didn't really have an interesting social life at the time, or even opportunities to meet new people and exchange this way, so it contributed to the game of seduction, if that's what you want to call it.

AG

But the question that interests the court is, would you call it that?

ZOÉ

Seduction can connote many different things...

AG

Yet, to use the word, there has to be something in the atmosphere of a... seductive nature?

Laughter in the courtroom. Vincent stands up.

VINCENT

The way the witness answered seems quite clear as to her will to distinguish seduction from seductive.

AG (*disregarding the remark*)

She said several times that she was interested in you. She also said she would have preferred seeing you in Grenoble, you didn't perceive any—?

VINCENT (*cutting him off*)

This is quickly turning into harassment; she already answered this point—

PRESIDING JUDGE (*holding him off*)

Not very clearly. Please answer, miss...

ZOÉ

I'd prefer being referred to as Ms. I dislike being reduced to a marital status.

PRESIDING JUDGE (*after a surprised pause*)

Very well... that wasn't my intention.

ZOÉ (*to the AG*)

I did not have the feeling that I was being seduced at the time.

AG

"At the time," do you mean to say that afterwards you may have asked yourself the question?

ZOÉ

I just thought that it was a rather atypical moment, nothing more. There were no signals, no games being played.

AG

What was your interpretation of Mr. Maleski's playing the country song?

ZOÉ

I could feel a tense subtext, given the sound level, and also because of Mr. Maleski's presence manifesting itself all of a sudden like that, without seeing him. And the way Sandra reacted... That wasn't neutral.

AG

Could you be more specific as to the nature of this reaction?

ZOÉ

She was a little annoyed.

AG

How did you interpret the fact that the song started again right after it ended?

ZOÉ

Well, that he had it on repeat! (*laughter in the courtroom*).

AG

Indeed, it's the obvious conclusion. But what I wanted to know is how you interpreted that...

ZOÉ

It was part of the overall strangeness, especially since this is when Sandra cut the interview short. I felt that my being there was becoming less... that the atmosphere was less relaxed.

AG

So you clearly felt tension?

NOUR

You are playing with words!

AG

No, I'm clarifying a statement. Did you feel a tension?

ZOÉ

Yes.

AG

Did you interpret this as a deliberate move on Mr. Maleski's part to disrupt, indeed even interrupt your interview?

ZOÉ

That's the thought that came to me, yes, but it's rather hard to interpret the intention of someone you haven't even seen.

AG

I can corroborate, it's precisely what I'm paid for. (*laughter*) Mrs. Voyter, you were seeking to create a form of a bond that shifts the purpose of the interview, you don't deny that?

NOUR

That's a leading question!

SANDRA*

There was no seduction.

AG

I asked you about creating a bond: in the recording, we sense that you are offering a way of getting closer, that you are trying to make a connection. You are drinking wine, laughing... Did you need to break away from a difficult daily rut by creating this pleasant interlude with a beautiful young—?

NOUR (*cutting him off*)

Once again, the question entails speculation. I'd like to remind everyone that my client isn't the one who initiated the meeting.

PRESIDING JUDGE

Please answer.

SANDRA

I found her surprising, I hadn't seen anyone new in a while, and yeah, I needed a drink and this person was intelligent and nice to talk to. Nothing more.

AG

You have to admit that the content of your exchange can hardly provide anyone with material to write a dissertation.

NOUR (*curt*)

For goodness' sake, she has the right to laugh with a student whose questions she may have not found particularly captivating!

AG

May I continue? ... Would you say that your husband's attitude, in choosing to play a song in such an aggressive way, could attest to a certain jealousy towards you or Miss Solidor? I beg your pardon *Ms.* Solidor.

(he reads:) “Jolene, I’m begging of you please, don’t take my man / Your beauty is beyond compare / I cannot compete with you.” It’s undeniable that the lyrics resonate—

NOUR

Three quarters of pop music talks about jealousy and cheating, you could have used the same argument for any Michael Jackson or Jacques Brel song.

AG *(with a knowing smile)*

A very beautiful woman, the context of infidelity, a classic song whose words are rich with meaning...

NOUR *(cutting him off)*

“Jolene” is a woman addressing another woman!

AG

You understand the point of my argument well enough.

SANDRA

He played that song a lot. There was nothing intentional about it. He loved country music, it relaxed him. He had purposely installed an especially powerful speaker simply because he spent so much time working on the renovation. He found it arduous, the work I mean, and he tried to make it more enjoyable by listening to music. And the song on repeat is also something he’d do. Oddly, I think the repetition also relaxed him.

AG

Yet Ms. Solidor stated that you put an end to the interview because of him. That’s what actually happened, isn’t it?

NOUR

She never stated that!

PRESIDING JUDGE

Let me be clear regarding the defense counsel: your way of objecting to each and every question is soon going to irritate me. I want peaceful hearings. Mrs. Voyter, please answer.

SANDRA *(starting in French, then in English)*

The music was just... (excuse me, can you translate please...) The music was just extremely loud, and when it started again from the beginning I felt it wasn’t going to stop... which made the interview complicated, so I preferred to cut it short. Also I was tired, I felt a bit dizzy from the wine.

AG (*putting on a headset*)

And after Ms. Solidor left, you didn't try to find out why he had put the music on so loud?

SANDRA*

As I told you, that was a habit of his...

AG

Yet, you were receiving a young woman, a young and attractive—

NOUR

This is insufferable!

AG (*unfazed*)

-- woman, serving her some nice wine while he was working hard upstairs, which wasn't so usual or neutral, since he knew that you were attracted to women, and you had already been unfaithful to him.

VINCENT

This is judging on mere intent, not to mention grossly sexist.

AG

I would have said the exact same thing if she'd received a young man! What we're interested in here is the couple's conflictual relationship! (*to Sandra*) I'm sorry but there is all the same something a little strange with this situation: after your guest left, you said you went upstairs to your bedroom to work and take a nap. In your bedroom *which is just underneath* the attic, where the music was blasting. Of all the places you could have been in that great big house, you chose that one.

SANDRA*

That's where I work. I always work in bed.

AG

And when your husband came down to speak with you, you didn't complain about the music? Didn't it bother you? The deafening level, which was no more than a meter above you isn't innocent, all things considered.

SANDRA*

I'm used to it; it doesn't bother me. I wanted to work, and I had my earplugs. I can work in pretty much any environment.

AG

You wanted to get work done even though you were “tired and dizzy because of the wine”?

SANDRA*

Yes, and I did work, but not for long. I had a translation to send. I wanted to finish it before getting some rest. I can work in any environment and in any state.

AG

So all was well in the best of all possible worlds.

35 – (A et B) CRIMINAL COURTHOUSE, STEPS EXT/DAY

Split screen: In front of the courthouse, 2 journalists (A). One from a local TV station (B), the other from a national 24-hour news channel.

(35A)

LOCAL TV STATION JOURNALIST

The fact is that the language barrier isn't working in the defendant's favor. Although she makes the effort to mostly speak in French, this makes her appear cold and unnatural(...)

This morning, the defendant's son arrived alongside a woman appointed by Child Protective Services to make sure that no pressure is exerted on the young witness. It seems that for the duration of the trial, she will not

(35B)

**NATIONAL NEWS CHANNEL
JOURNALIST**

leave his side, which means they'll be sleeping under the same roof (...)

36 – (A) CRIMINAL TRIAL COURTROOM / (V-VIDEO) CHALET, Sandra's office /Entrance – INT/DAY

(A)

The filmed images of the re-enactment conducted at the Chalet are being projected onto the courtroom screen. We pick up the scene where we left off (sequence 17), when a policewoman steps in for Sandra and reads her last exchanges with Samuel.

(B - VIDEO)

On the second floor, the two police officers raise their voices but outside, at the foot of the stairs that leads to the living room/kitchen level, Daniel still don't hear anything. New attempts: the police officers are now shouting their lines of dialogue to be heard over the rap song. Daniel hears the screaming, which is both frightening and ridiculous given the dialogue.

ASSISTANT 2 (shouting towards the balcony)
HE HEARD.

DANIEL

But it wasn't like that, the voices were calm.

(Someone turns off the music everybody comes downstairs from the bedroom level (judges, assistants, lawyers, Sandra). Daniel walks up the outside staircase joining everyone at the front entrance.)

JUDGE JANVIER (to Daniel)

Something's not working here, what do you think? You can very well see that you couldn't hear them when they were speaking calmly.

Daniel is very uncomfortable; he feels everyone's eyes on him.

DANIEL

Can we do it one last time, but with me starting from inside the house? With calm voices, like at the beginning.

JUDGE

Yes, we can do that.

Everybody stands in the entrance and looks at Daniel: he takes off his coat and hangs it on a hook in the entranceway. He then positions himself with Snoop at the foot of the stairs. The judge asks for the music to be turned on. Daniel, followed by Snoop, walks towards the front entrance his hand feeling the wall. When he is in the front entrance he puts his coat on, reaches to open the front door and suddenly stops, paralyzed, with his hand resting on a piece of gaffer tape that is stuck to the wall.

From where he is standing, we can vaguely hear voices talking to each other but without being able to make out the words. Close-up on Daniel's hand on the gaffer tape. Everyone stares at him. The music stops.

DANIEL

Maybe I made a mistake about where I was... I think I was still inside the house, right here... It must have been this piece of tape that I was touching, not the piece outside. I think I confused the two.

The judge signals his assistant to stop the music.

JUDGE

All right, Daniel, this isn't at all what you'd told us earlier.

And above all, it doesn't match Zoé Solidor's story, as she saw you walk out of the house; nor does it match your mother's, as she says she only spoke with your father after Zoé had gone.

(A)

The projection stops. In the audience, Marge follows the hearing.

THE ATTORNEYGENERAL *(to Daniel)*

Indeed, there's a discrepancy: you couldn't have been in two places at once.

DANIEL

Actually, I think I came back inside the house.

AG

What has us wondering is your absolute certainty before this re-enactment – you said in your deposition that “each piece of tape is different to the touch, it's impossible for me to be wrong” and also “I was just below the open window, I know what I heard.” And now this turnaround...

DANIEL

I thought I remembered where I was, but I think it's... it must be the shock of what happened afterwards that got things a little mixed up in my head.

VINCENT

A psychiatrist saw Daniel and conformed the possible effects of this type of shock on certain details in his memory. The report is included in the case file.

AG

Of course. Do you remember now what you'd come back to the house to do?

DANIEL

I think I'd forgotten my gloves, or my telephone...

AG

But you're not sure?

DANIEL

I don't remember exactly.

AG

So you've shifted from absolute certainty to uncertainty regarding what you remember from that day.

Vincent takes over, addressing the jury and the presiding judge.

VINCENT

All right, what bothers me here isn't so much the attorney general saying: "his memory is uncertain..." What bothers me very much, however, is his clinging to ONE detail to tell us that HIS ENTIRE MEMORY is questionable.

It appears the prosecution would have us believe that the shock could also have transformed shouting into calm voices in Daniel's mind. In fact, what's being implied here is that he is lying to cover his mother.

AG

No, I simply underscored the witness's uncertainty. And besides, yes, we have reasons to wonder: Daniel Voyter has said that whenever his parents started arguing he'd leave but apparently, that day he JUST HAPPENED to go out at the exact moment when all the conditions were converging toward a fight... yet he didn't hear a thing!

DANIEL

I didn't happen to go out, I went out because of the music.

VINCENT

And he didn't say he didn't hear a thing; in fact, on the contrary, he is very specific about what he heard and has never budged on that point. Both the psychiatrist, whose report I referred to, as well as a low vision specialist observed that Daniel's aural memory is excellent.

DANIEL

Sometimes, I can precisely remember conversations I've had with my friends for a long time afterwards.

VINCENT *(after a slight hesitation)*

I don't know that you'd qualify the attorney general as being one of your friends, but do you remember the first, no let's say the *second* question he asked you, for instance?

Daniel focuses, his lips moving as if he was replaying the entire AG's questioning in his head. He suddenly looks up.

DANIEL *(raising his voice)*

He said: *You were questioned once by the police and twice by the investigative judge. Is that right?*

Vincent turns to the court clerk, who checks the record, and confirms.

37 – CRIMINAL COURTHOUSE, Hallway / Steps – INT + EXT/DAY

Marge accompanies Daniel and Snoop. They walk down a courthouse corridor, leading them outside.

We can tell that Daniel is still tense due to what just happened.

MARGE

Do you want something to eat, or drink?

DANIEL *(as if he hadn't heard her)*

I thought it'd be harder...

It's strange that it's already over.

A beat. They walk, the adrenaline subsides.

MARGE

You didn't rehearse the last question, the memory trick, did you?

DANIEL

Huh? No, not at all. Did it look like it was rehearsed?

MARGE

Ok... no, not at all.

Marge notices that people are looking at them (they recognize Daniel).

38 – (A) CRIMINAL COURTHOUSE, Courtroom / (B) CHALET, Exterior (entrance) + interior (living room + staircase + Sandra's bedroom) – INT/DAY

(A)

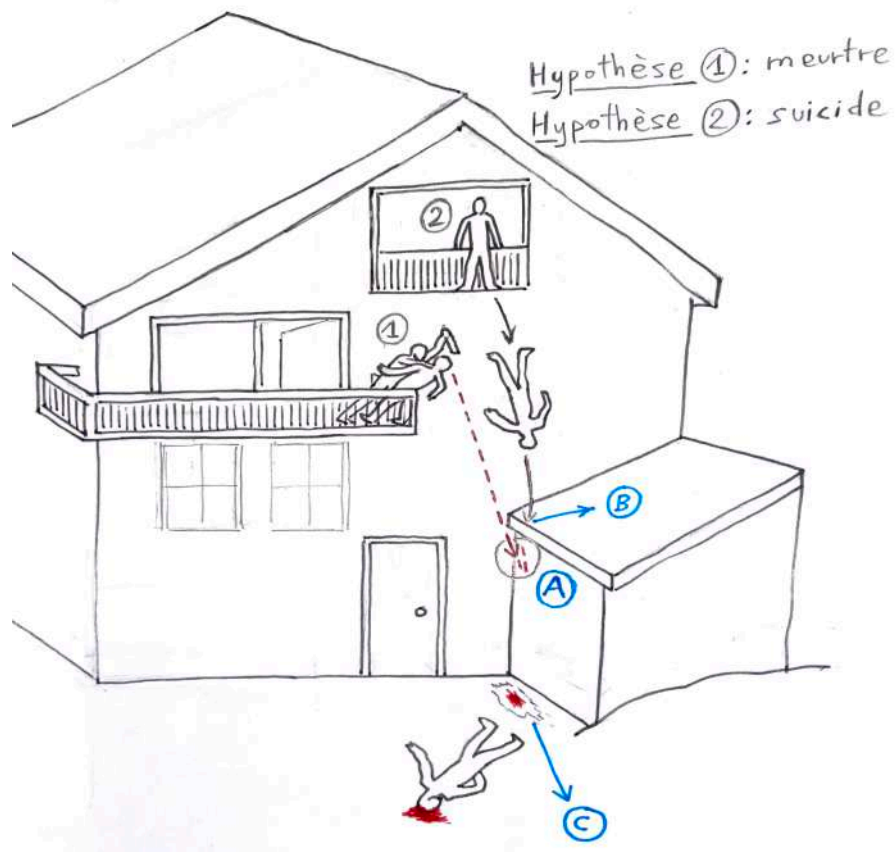
Daniel is now sitting in the audience, next to Marge. Everyone's eyes are on him.

EXPERT WITNESS BALARD, who drafted the report for the prosecution, is on the stand.

Behind him, 2 symmetrical screens show the photos and videos of the test he conducted.

Hypothesis ①: Homicide

Hypothesis ②: Suicide



EXPERT WITNESS BALARD

The key element is found on the shed's façade: the three traces of blood spattered here, here, and here (A).

The camera moves closer to Daniel's face, until he's in close-up. He listens, focused.

(B)

***VISION:** we're suddenly at the chalet, expert witness Balard, as though transported from the courtroom, is standing in front of the shed, pointing to the three traces of blood, talking to the camera.*

EXPERT WITNESS BALARD

Their slim and elongated shape, the longest is nearly 4 centimeters, is typical of spatter coming from much higher above. According to the tests we conducted, such spatter can only have been caused by blunt force trauma from a blow dealt to Mr. Maleski's skull as he was on the 2nd-floor balcony.

His hand points upwards, the camera follows the movement and films from below: on the 2nd floor balcony, we see Samuel and Sandra physically fighting.

The camera, on its own, speeds up the outdoor staircase and goes into the house and up to the second floor, straight across Sandra's bedroom and out onto the balcony: Sandra, seen at a ¾ angle from the back is holding a hammer in her hand, threatening Samuel. She looks like she is consumed with rage, we can't hear what they are saying.

EXPERT WITNESS BALARD *(from downstairs)*

To explain the presence of spatter in this spot (1), he must have been pushed back flush against the balcony's guardrail this way (A), with his head hanging back over the rail when he was hit. There's no other satisfactory explanation.

We're back downstairs: low-angle shot on Samuel's upper body backed up against the guardrail, his head hanging over the void below. Sandra is threatening him, holding the hammer above her head which she now swings down towards his skull. Before seeing the shock, quick pan to the shed: the expert witness is pointing to three drops of blood.

AG (OFF)

Based on your analyses, it's the blow received on the balcony which also explains the presence of the victim's blood on the ground in the puddle of water next to the shed (C)?

Quick pan to the ground: the blood in the snow by Samuel's feet.

End of the vision:

(A)

We're back in the courtroom. Daniel is listening intently to the expert witness.

EXPERT WITNESS BALARD

Yes, the blow or blows caused a certain amount of blood to spatter. A few drops landed on the shed's wall, but most of it is on the ground. It's probable that blood spattered onto the roof as well, but it was covered in snow, and when the snow melted, the traces melted away with it.

AG

Was it the violence of the blow or blows which made Mr. Maleski topple over the guardrail?

EXPERT WITNESS BALARD

Yes, it isn't impossible that the attacker also helped the body topple over. There is no material evidence enabling us to establish the way in which it actually happened, but I would say that the most probable cause is a combination of a violent blow and a thrust whose purpose was to make the victim fall.

AG

In either case, would you agree that the attacker was probably in a state of extreme anger? To deal such violent blows and cause such a fall...

EXPERT WITNESS BALARD

Yes, I would say a state of rage. It's hard to imagine otherwise. This kind of state can multiply a person's strength tenfold.

The attorney general has no further questions. Vincent stands up.

VINCENT

The guardrail's height is about 1.20 m. Samuel Maleski was about 1.78m tall and weighed about 80 kilos. To make his body topple over the guardrail, the thrust you are talking about necessarily had to be quite deliberate, right?

EXPERT WITNESS BALARD

Yes, the entire sequence of actions is at any rate quite deliberate, you don't hit someone with such violence unintentionally.

VINCENT

By "quite deliberate," I meant coordinated, methodical. One could even surmise that given his weight, you'd have had to also lift Mr. Maleski's legs. One would have to be rather far from a state of rage to do so, don't you think?

EXPERT WITNESS BALARD

Not necessarily, rage doesn't exclude willpower. Also, Mr. Maleski was probably off balance, hanging over the void, and could have toppled over because of this unstable position and the violence of the blows he received. All of this must have been a precipitated movement, as I said, we lack material evidence to—

VINCENT (cutting him off)

Yes, the only thing we have are these 3 drops of blood. All the rest must be hypothesized in order to explain these drops. Is that correct?

EXPERT WITNESS BALARD

But there's only one way to explain them, which is what I just... explained.

VINCENT

You've explained one hypothesis – well, TWO in fact, with and without movement to make him topple over.

Based on these assumptions, which type of object would have been used as a weapon?

EXPERT WITNESS BALARD

It's difficult to be unequivocal, as there's no residue in the wound. The only thing for certain is that it's a heavy object, made out of metal or perhaps a very dense type of wood, certainly with a sharp edge or angle.

VINCENT

Have you examined one or several objects of that kind found on the scene—

AG (*cutting him off*)

You know very well that the weapon wasn't found, which does not mean that it doesn't exist!

VINCENT

No, what it means is that there's nothing concrete to confirm this hypothesis.

39 – (A) CRIMINAL COURTHOUSE Courtroom / (B) CHALET, Exterior (entrance) – INT/DAY

(A)

Expert witness Bogaert is now taking the stand. She stands in front of an architectural model of the chalet's façade.

EXPERT WITNESS BOGAERT

There are two possible explanations for the 3 drops..... either they came from this area (she points to the 2nd-floor balcony) and thus necessarily from a violent blow dealt to Mr. Maleski's head, or they are the consequence of the victim's skull smashing against the roof ledge...

(B)

VISION: we're back at the chalet. Bogaert, as she appears in court, pursues her demonstration right in front of the blood spatter on the shed's wall.

EXPERT WITNESS BOGAERT

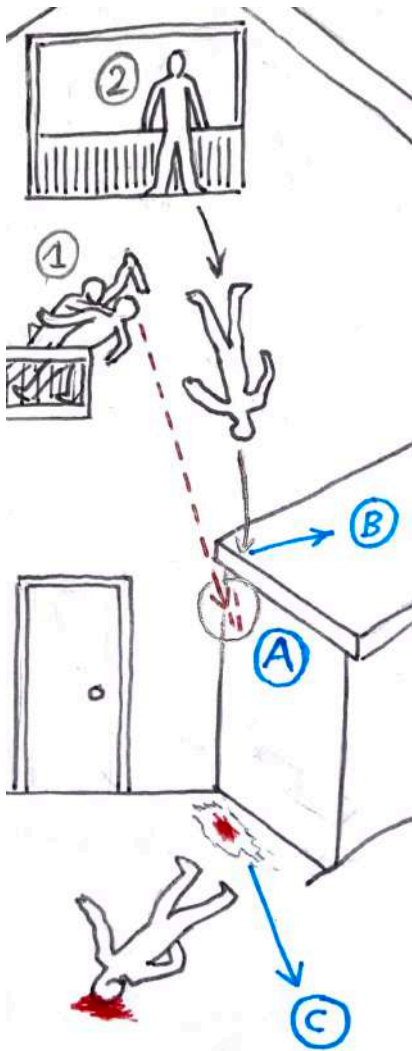
...here.(B)

Close-up of the camera framing the ledge on the shed's roof.

EXPERT WITNESS BOGAERT

Upon close examination, the shape and dynamics of the three drops are more consistent with the second theory than the first, which seems improbable.

The camera pans upwards: ...all the way up right under the roof, Samuel's figure finishes stepping over the attic window's guardrail. He's facing the emptiness below.



EXPERT WITNESS BOGAERT

The obvious theory is that Mr. Maleski fell from the attic window; it's the only explanation for his "bouncing" off the roof and having such an injury to the head.

The camera is now above Samuel, filming from a vertiginously high-angle shot.

Down below, Bogaert looks up at him.

Samuel jumps: The vision stops just before his skull hits the shed's roof.

(A)
CUT to Daniel's face in the courtroom.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

You just described the other hypothesis, which involves a violent blow to the head, as improbable. Would you say that it describes something impossible?

EXPERT WITNESS BOGAERT

It is not absolutely impossible but highly improbable.

ATTORNEY GENERAL

So, if it's not impossible, it is possible.

EXPERT WITNESS BOGAERT

Yes, just as it's also possible for me to one day become the President of the Republic.

AG

Thank you, I do know the definition of a possibility.

EXPERT WITNESS BOGAERT

When I say improbable, this is not solely related to the inspection of the spatter.

In ambiguous cases such as this one, it is necessary to take a broader approach, adding up and cross-checking all the elements. To explain the spatter angle for the 3 drops, we must envision Mr. Maleski's head hanging approximately 80 cm out and over the guardrail, here (1). Which means that the attacker had to force him to lean back against the guardrail with his upper body leaning far back and out over the rail. This implies that the attacker himself would have to be leaning forward in the same direction, this way (*she gestures the position*). Yet, he would also at the same time have had to hold a heavy object and hit the victim violently, with a great deal of momentum. All these elements, especially given the defendant's body mass, make this theory highly improbable.

AG

But not impossible. In your report, you wrote that the direction of the blood spatter "can be interpreted as consistent" with an impact of the skull on the shed's roof. "*Can be interpreted as consistent,*" we regularly find this phrasing in criminal investigation reports, right?

EXPERT WITNESS BOGAERT

Yes.

AG

Do you confirm this wording is used to express great caution in the conclusions drawn by the expert?

EXPERT WITNESS BOGAERT

I wouldn't say great caution but a certain caution. We can determine with certainty where the spatter originated only when there's a full set of traces.

In a case such as this one, we need to weigh our words as there are only three drops, and no cluster.

In my opinion, after studying all the elements at my disposal, the conclusion is that the skull hit the roof of the shed.

AG

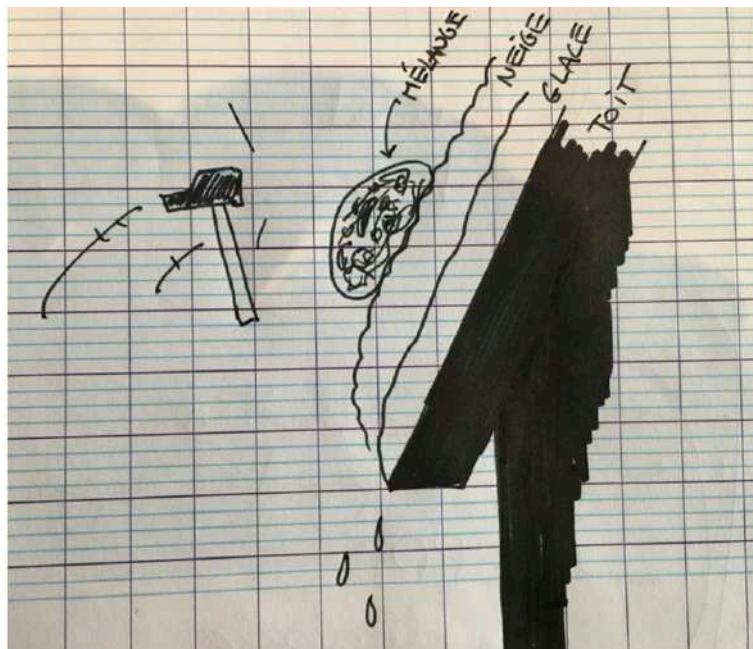
I notice that you just said: “In my opinion,” another cautious language choice.

VINCENT (*taking the line of questioning over*)

How do you explain that there is no trace of DNA, or tissue residue on the impact point, or the “bouncing” point as you referred to it?

EXPERT WITNESS BOGAERT

We were able to determine that at the moment the events occurred, there was a 1-cm thick layer of ice on the roof of the shed that had formed over the preceding days. The temperatures had dropped to -4 °C the night before. We also know that it had snowed for several hours the day before and in the morning when the event occurred. (*A video showing the tests conducted at the chalet is shown.*) We conducted an experiment replicating the conditions of that day, with the layer of snow on the roof on top of a 1-cm thick coat of highly dense ice. It was established, through cross-checking with data from the local weather stations, that the snow had melted within a few hours, as the sun came out at around 2:40 p.m. Our test replicated the effect of the sun’s heat. Here we can see the snow warm up and then melt, and after fifty minutes or so, we can observe that the water draining along the entire slope of the roof washes away the residue that we’d embedded in the coat of ice on the point of impact.

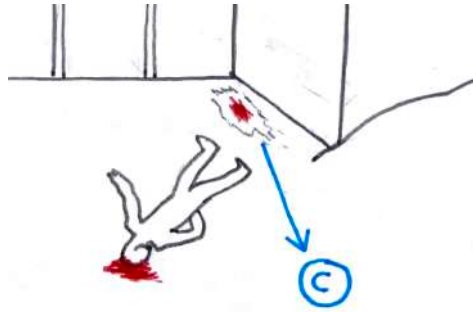


VINCENT

And where did the residue end up?

EXPERT WITNESS BOGAERT

In the puddle of water and blood found on the ground near the shed (C).



Shot of the puddle of blood filmed during the tests, then of the photo of the actual puddle next to Samuel's body. Sandra looks at Daniel who is frozen, focused.

40 –CHALET, Daniel's bedroom/WC/Kitchen-Livingroom – INT/NIGHT

Daniel is lying in his bed in the dark, his eyes open. He tosses and turns, unable to calm down. He gets up (followed by Snoop) and goes down the stairs to the bathroom, but he can't pee. (We glimpse Sandra sleeping in a sofa bed in the living room.)

Restless, he noiselessly walks into the kitchen and opens the fridge, rummages through, and finds some cold leftovers which he tastes: his face immediately grimacing, he ends up opting for a few gulps of apple juice. The sound of a wind gust outside makes him shiver, he quickly closes the fridge and goes back upstairs.

He turns to go back upstairs, the chalet is plunged in darkness and hardly anything is visible.

SANDRA (*sortant de la chambre de Samuel*)
Are you ok?

Daniel jumps, he hadn't seen her.

MARGE (OFF)
Daniel ?

She comes down the stairs, half awake, and joins them.

DANIEL (*calming down*)
I can't sleep...

SANDRA
Did you have a nightmare?

DANIEL

No... Can somebody sleep with me?

(alt: No...I don't think I'll be able to get to sleep all by myself.)

Silence, Sandra looks at Marge.

SANDRA

That's what we usually do... (*Marge thinks*)

Maybe we could make an exception, just this once, if I go in his room? You'd be right next door...

MARGE

You know it's not possible.

(*to Daniel*) Do you want me to sleep in your room? I can put my mattress next to your bed.

Faced with the two women, Daniel doesn't dare answer.

MARGE

We'll do that, alright ?

DANIEL

And you, is that ok with you, mum?

SANDRA

Yes, if you think it can work. What do you think?

Daniel ends up nodding in agreement. Sandra accompanies him back to his room, sets up a 2nd mattress, which she pulls out from under Daniel's bed. Marge (who has been sleeping in Sandra's room) brings her blanket. Sandra kisses Daniel and leaves, going back downstairs. From the staircase, she hears Daniel and Marge's voices as they whisper.

She goes back down to the living room and collapses onto the convertible with all of the weight of the moment.

41- (A) CRIMINAL COURTHOUSE, COURTROOM / (B) CHALET, Samuel's bedroom + kitchen – INT/DAY

(A)

ATTORNEY GENERAL (*to Sandra*)

You claim you witnessed your husband's attempted suicide 6 months before he died. Describe for us precisely this episode which you belatedly "recalled."

Uneasy, Sandra looks at Daniel, who's straightened up in the audience. Marge notices.

SANDRA*

It happened a few weeks after he abruptly stopped taking his medication. I found him at dawn, in his room, on the floor...

Close-up of Daniel listening intently.

(B)

***VISION:** we're suddenly in Samuel's bedroom in the chalet, at dawn. Samuel is sprawled on the floor (we can't see his face, he's an indistinct mass). Sandra kneels down next to him. Another Sandra is there with them, as though transported from the courtroom. She continues:*

The camera travels to the ground: vomit and white tablets...

SANDRA (in the vision)*

He'd had a lot to drink and passed out. He'd thrown up, and I saw lots of aspirin in the vomit.

The camera moves quickly through the living room all the way to the kitchen garbage bin: we see the empty aspirin blister packs. We're back just as quickly in the bedroom, where Sandra gently props Samuel up.

SANDRA*

The pills were partially dissolved, I think. At first I didn't understand what it was, but later I saw the empty blister packs in the kitchen garbage.

SANDRA*

I cleaned everything up and put him to bed. Afterwards, once he'd recovered, he didn't want to talk about it. He just said he shouldn't have stopped his treatment cold turkey.

***End of the vision,** back in the courtroom.*

(A)

AG

You slept in separate bedrooms?

SANDRA*

It was his office, and he slept there most of the time.

AG

And what made you go to his room at dawn?

SANDRA*

I wake up very early. Sometimes he did too. These were moments we had to ourselves, to talk.

AG

At 6 a.m.?

SANDRA*

Yes, if I saw his light was on. We no longer slept in the same bed, but we were very close... I would often finish the night with him in the office bed... I came down to make myself a coffee, and I saw the door was left ajar. I saw him lying on the floor...

AG

And no one else witnessed this?

SANDRA

No.

Marge leans over to whisper in Daniel's ear.

MARGE

Did you know about this?

Daniel shakes his head "no," upset. The attorney general turns to the witness on the stand: a 45-year-old, calm and thin man, **Dr JAMMAL**.

AG

What type of antidepressant did you prescribe for him?

JAMMAL

Escitalopram, 20 mg per day.

AG

How long had he been following this treatment?

JAMMAL

Since he started his psychoanalysis, in 2015.

AG

And he's the one who asked to stop?

JAMMAL

Yes, about 7 months before he died, he wanted to be taken off the drug. I recommended a gradual withdrawal protocol, which he followed. And we'd check in with each other on a weekly basis.

AG

Had he ever shown signs of suicidal impulses?

JAMMAL

Absolutely not. Samuel wasn't clinically depressed. I prescribed Escitalopram as an emotional shield. He was facing a tragic situation with his son's accident and was prone to bouts of anxiety.

AG

Can a suicide attempt be triggered by sudden weaning?

JAMMAL

In theory, yes, it can happen, but it doesn't make sense: why would he have asked me to help him taper off the medication just to stop suddenly behind my back? And he would have said nothing even though we spoke every week?... And supposing that he did lie to me, which I don't think is the case, I would have recognized the signs of a suicide attempt.

The attorney general sits down. Nour stands up.

NOUR

Have you ever been confronted with a patient who committed suicide or attempted to commit suicide?

JAMMAL

Semantically speaking, no distinction is made between the two: "commit suicide" means both trying as well as succeeding, it refers to the action.

NOUR

Thank you for this etymological aside, and so?

JAMMAL

None of my patients have ever committed suicide.

NOUR

You mean to say except for Mr. Maleski, because if the question was settled, we wouldn't be here. In any case, to summarize, you aren't, strictly speaking, a suicide expert, whether successful or failed.

(to Sandra) You said that Samuel refused to discuss this suicide attempt and apparently, he hadn't mentioned it to anyone else. Why is that, according to you?

SANDRA*

Because he was ashamed. Samuel had a lot of issues with shame. It's complicated, there were a number of things:. He was frustrated with teaching, it had become a burden. He wanted to write. He'd spent years working on a novel, before and after the accident. I read everything he wrote and I thought it was really good and I told him so... but after a while, he couldn't do it anymore. It made him feel like a coward, he would belittle himself. He ended up convincing himself that he couldn't write because of his dependency on the medication, and he wanted to free himself of that.

He couldn't talk about this suicide attempt because his feelings of failure were too painful. It was all about the pills in his mind—

JAMMAL (*cutting her off*)

Excuse me, but this has nothing to do with what he discussed with me.

SANDRA*

He blamed you for getting him hooked on the pills from the very first session, and it drove him mad...

JAMMAL

He never brought this up to me; it was a decision we'd made together. You remove yourself from the equation, but you were at the very center of it! Samuel came to see me because after the accident, he felt tremendously guilty and because you resented him terribly. I'm only repeating what he said to me: he described castrating behavior on your part; you made him pay for his responsibility for the accident by imposing the sacrifice of what in fact counted the most for him: writing. All the material and psychological difficulties that resulted from the accident were on his shoulders and it's just as though you'd said to him: "Feel guilty, deal with it, it's your fault, *I* want to be freed from this burden to continue writing."

NOUR

What you are saying about the material burden is false: Mrs. Voyter "dealt with it" just as much as Mr. Maleski; we have all the couple's bank records, hospital bills, school bills proving that she's always covered half of the household's expenses.

JAMMAL

But it's not just about money, I'm talking about mental load, anxiety, life choices, renunciation. This is where Samuel felt there was an unbearable imbalance—

NOUR

And you take at face value everything your patients tell you? You didn't even ask yourself if Samuel needed to imagine this "unbearable imbalance" as an excuse for not being able to write?

JAMMAL

You are asking me if I'm practicing my profession well. After a number of years, you end up having a rather clear notion of what is real or not.

SANDRA* (*calmly*)

I don't know you, and you come here with your notes and explain to me who Samuel was, and what we were going through... But what you say is not reality. There are times when a couple is a kind of chaos, when everybody is lost. Sometimes we fight together, sometimes we fight alone or against one another. Perhaps Samuel needed to see things the way you describe them. If I'd been seeing a shrink, he could sit here too and repeat very ugly things about Samuel. Would those things have been real?

AG

Mrs. Voyter, did you resent your husband after your son's accident?

SANDRA* (*she takes a deep breath*)

We were both dealing with many different emotions.

AG

Yes or no?

SANDRA*

Yes, for a few days. Daniel was on his watch--

AG

You resented him only for a few days?

Growing increasingly pale, Sandra takes her time, as though looking for the best way to tackle the answer.

SANDRA*

About his responsibility for the accident, yes. Then perhaps... Earlier, the doctor called it a tragic situation. I very quickly refused to see it that way. I never saw Daniel as handicapped. I wanted to protect him from that perception. As soon as you pigeonhole a child that way, you condemn him to not imagining his life as his own; whereas in fact he should feel it's the best life because it's his own. He reads books, goes on social media like any other kid, he dreams, he plays, he cries, he laughs... He's a lively kid. Maybe I resented Samuel for projecting his own pain onto Daniel.

Sandra looks as though she's about to faint.

42 – COURTHOUSE, Presiding judge's office – INT/DAY

The presiding judge has asked Daniel to his chamber to talk to him, Marge is present.

PRESIDING JUDGE

Listen, I've asked you to come to my chambers because I'm aware of the fact that this trial concerns you directly. I have authorized your presence in the courtroom up until now, but tomorrow will be more difficult, because we are going to address things that will be even more disturbing for you. So I've decided that you shouldn't come tomorrow.

DANIEL

I think I'm ready to hear everything. Really. I've prepared myself. Everything I've heard up until now is already disturbing, but I can deal with it.

LA PRÉSIDENTE

You can hear everything. But the question is can you handle everything after the fact? And then we also need to be serene to do our work –

DANIEL

But I never disrupt the proceedings–

LA PRÉSIDENTE

Disrupting the proceedings isn't really the problem. You have to understand two things: the fact that you have to be protected, and then also: are we free to do our jobs correctly? We must be able to evoke the raw uncensored facts. You do understand that this is a violent matter, don't you? We need to be able to address everything without worrying about upsetting you.

DANIEL

I've already been upset. It's done. And hearing everything will help me to move beyond it.

PRESIDENT

But the point of this trial isn't for you to hear everything. The point is to establish the truth without having to censor ourselves.

DANIEL

Up until now no one has censored themselves, you've seen it for yourself. Who has censored themselves? When the AG questioned me, he wasn't being "nice." And the same goes for the scientific experts. Everyone forgets I'm there, so it changes nothing. Even you – have you been censoring yourself? I know you never forget I'm there, but I swear to you it will be worse if I'm not there. I'll search on television, the internet, it's going to obsess me and that will be worse.

The presiding judge looks at him in silence, then turns to Marge.

43 – IN A CAR ON THE ROAD – INT/END OF THE DAY

A car drives Daniel and Marge back. The child is absorbed in his thoughts. He leans over to Snoop's muzzle and sniffs his breath. Marge looks at him, puzzled.

44 – CHALET, Living room-kitchen, Daniel's room, bathroom – EXT/INT END OF THE DAY

The car reaches the chalet as the sun begins to set, they go in.

DANIEL (*going upstairs*)
I'm going to rest in my room.

MARGE
No problem. Call me if you need me.

He goes up to his bedroom, strains his ears: once he's certain he'll be left alone, he whispers to the dog to stay obediently in the bedroom. He discreetly opens the door and... goes through his mother's bedroom to reach the bathroom. He rummages through the cabinets, stiffens for a short while when he thinks he hears a noise, and then starts rummaging again, in vain.

He stealthily goes back to his room, opens the window ajar and listens: he hears Marge talking on the phone outside (she's asking questions to her sister/ or deals with some administration things with a bank...). He walks out of his bedroom, down the stairs, and slips swiftly into the kitchen without being seen, finding his way around by listening and checking his pieces of masking tape. He opens a cupboard filled with medication and searches through it, reading the Braille on the packs with his fingertips, and ends up finding what he's been looking for. He goes to another cupboard, grabs a can of dog food, and then goes back upstairs unnoticed.

Back in his bedroom, he's welcomed by Snoop, excited, wagging his tail. Daniel takes 6 tablets out of the blister pack (we can't see the medication's name), roughly grinds them into Snoop's bowl, crushing them with a stone that normally serves as a paper weight. He hesitates, crushes two more and mixes it all with the dog food. He places the bowl in front of Snoop and pats his head.

DANIEL (*whispering*)
Go ahead, eat!

The dog obeys. Daniel waits until he's done, focused, almost excited. When Snoop has finished, Daniel checks the time on his watch (looking at it from very close) : it's 6 p.m. He lays down on his bed. Snoop is still eating, Daniel waits.

45 –IN FRONT OF THE CHALET OFF TO THE SIDE – EXT/NIGHT

Vincent drives Sandra back to the chalet at night. He turns his headlights off, and they drink a beer in the car to unwind, out of sight, so as not to be seen from the chalet. They're a little out of the way, in the snow. They clink bottles.

SANDRA* (*tipsy and exhausted*)
What are we celebrating?

VINCENT*
Our reunion.

SANDRA*
I'm happy to be going through this with you.

VINCENT*
Seriously ?

Overcome with sheer fatigue, she starts laughing uncontrollably.

SANDRA*
No, I'm not happy to be going through it, I'm just glad it's you. I'm lucky. You're the only lawyer I know, PLUS I like you.

VINCENT*
Not great reasons for placing your life in someone's hands.
(Alt : Not great reasons for handing your life over to someone.)

SANDRA*
But you're good too, right?

He bursts out laughing. A beat. He stares pensively at her.

VINCENT*
You look like a dog. A beautiful dog.
A beautiful... basset.

SANDRA*
Funny you say that - I have a theory: I can't trust someone if I can't put an animal's head on them.

VINCENT*
So, what am I?

She looks at him with a wide, tipsy smile.

SANDRA*
I'm not sure yet...

VINCENT
What? After all this time?!

A beat.

SANDRA*
Do you remember me from before? When we first met?

VINCENT*
Yes.

SANDRA*
I don't. What was I like?

VINCENT*
You were lost... (very) lonely ...ambitious.
And I was hopelessly in love.

SANDRA*
I don't remember a thing.

VINCENT*
Thanks. (*laughter*)
You really drove me nuts sometimes.

Vincent looks at her without speaking. A long silence, they stare at each other.

SANDRA*
I'm innocent. You know that?

VINCENT* (*neutral*)
Yes.

SANDRA*
I mean, really!

VINCENT*
Yes.

SANDRA*
But in your head you're thinking... aren't you? When you look at me sometimes, like right now, it feels like you're judging me. I don't know what you're thinking.

VINCENT*
I think a lot of things I don't tell you. If I did, you'd fire me -
tout de suite!

SANDRA*

Then you're fired, for hiding things from me.

VINCENT*

If you want to fire me, you'll have to pay me first!

SANDRA* (*bursting out in laughter, joking*)

Seriously? I'm handing you celebrity on a fucking platter!
You'll be set up for life.

VINCENT*

Set up for what?

SANDRA*

(I don't know.) Give me a minute, I'll come up with something.

They burst out laughing.

SANDRA*

What are you thinking now?

VINCENT*

That this is nice.

Another fit of uncontrollable laughter.

SANDRA*

Happy to oblige. (*they burst out laughing*) ... I want to drink all night. I can't feel the cold anymore. Feels great.

VINCENT*

Same.

SANDRA*

My brain is numb. I can't feel a thing. It's so nice.
Today's lesson: Cold is good.

They look at each other with a half-smile, and kiss. It's a mix of a friendship forged between former lovers and comfort. They stay in each other's arms for a long while. She goes into the chalet; he drives off.

She watches him drive away, and goes inside.

46 – CHALET, Living room-kitchen (A), Daniel's bedroom (B) – INT/NIGHT

(A)

Sandra continues drinking on her own in the kitchen; she's moved on to vodka.

(B)

A while later, now quite drunk, she tiptoes past the bedroom where Marge is sleeping and goes to see Daniel in his bedroom. She looks at Snoop, curled up by her sleeping son's feet. She runs her hand through Daniel's hair, he wakes up and doesn't quite know how to react to her weird outburst of drunken affection.

SANDRA*

My love... I'm innocent. You know that, right?... I'm your mother, I'm innocent and I love you... Don't ever forget that.

...I need you to know, I am not that... I'm not that monster... Everything that's being said in the trial... it's warped. It wasn't like that. He was... my soul mate, my best friend... We chose each other, I loved him... But how do you prove that? There isn't any proof...

I wish you could be shielded from all this... I wish you could still do kid's stuff. That you could still be a kid, a bit longer.

She hugs him a tad too tightly then clumsily tucks him in and leaves. She walks past Marge, who is standing in the corridor. Sandra stops a moment, facing her, then staggers away.

SANDRA (*in French*)

... There's no pressure... NO pressure!

Daniel is alert for the slightest noise then gets out of bed and shakes his dog: Snoop is sleeping heavily, weighed down by sleepiness. Daniel checks the time: it's past midnight.

47 – CHALET – DANIEL'S BEDROOM/Kitchen– INT/DAY

Morning: through the uncurtained window, we see Sandra and climb into a car, which starts and drives off.

Daniel crouches down next to Snoop: lethargic, he doesn't move, and has no reaction when Daniel lifts his eyelid or his chops which are oozing a frothy slobber. Daniel sniffs the dog's muzzle to identify the smell and recoils in disgust. He tries to help him up, but Snoop is passed out. Daniel panics and bolts out of the room.

DANIEL

Marge!! Can you come here? Please??

MARGE (*OFF*)

What's going on? We're running late as it is—

DANIEL (*cutting her off*)

There's a problem!!

Marge comes upstairs.

DANIEL

I did something stupid.

He takes her to his bedroom; she instantly sees the dog's state.

DANIEL

I gave him some aspirin... a lot...

MARGE

How many?

DANIEL

10! 8, I don't know...

She tries to wake the dog, shakes him.

DANIEL

We have to make him vomit!

Marge asks Google out loud: "How do you make a dog vomit." The answer takes time. Daniel is increasingly panicked. He keeps repeating over and over "we have to make him vomit."

Marge: "Salt water, ok, we need salt."

She rushes down the steps to the kitchen, grabs salt from a cupboard, a jug, and a bottle of water, and runs back upstairs. She hurriedly mixes some salt and water in the jug and mixes it with a spatula.

MARGE

Help me, open his mouth... roll him onto his side!

Daniel gropes around a little and gets the dog's mouth open. Marge pours a large quantity of salted water down his throat. She takes some salt and pours more of it directly into the dog's mouth. They wait... After a while, a long spasm seizes his midriff then moves like a wave along his body up to his throat and mouth; he regurgitates in big retches.

MARGE

Look, he's breathing, he's looking at us.

Daniel leans over towards Snoop, listens to his breathing, and sniffs the smell on his breath again. A beat. The tension subsides. Silence, they're worn out.

MARGE

Can you tell me why you did that?

DANIEL

No, I can't... I need to talk to the presiding judge.

Marge looks at him, baffled.

48 - COURTHOUSE, Presiding Judge's chambers, hallway – INT/DAY

Under the bewildered eyes of court clerks and the police, Marge and Daniel drag Snoop, who is slow and sluggish, into the presiding judge's chamber. She knocks on the door.

THE PRESIDING JUDGE (*to Marge*)

Can you wait outside?

MARGE

Yes, of course.

Daniel enters the room alone. Marge goes to wait on a bench. A little further along, we see Monica's slumped outline as she's being called over to another camera (she's just leaving the criminal courtroom):

MONICA (*embarrassed*)

I didn't come to testify against Sandra, I'm very fond of her... I just did my duty... to honor Samuel's memory...
(*she breaks down, crying*) I feel like it's my own son who's been taken away from me... I'm sorry.

Nearby, a journalist is talking facing a camera:

JOURNALIST

...Monica Ferraro was very close to Samuel Maleski, as she was his caretaker when he was a child. We saw a shaken, quivering woman, eyes brimming with tears on the witness stand this morning, evoking "Sammy," this "endearing" man who had such a "good sense of humor." She concluded by recounting how, on the day before the tragic event, she'd found him alone at home, in the living room, distraught and disheveled, his face red, broken glass everywhere, pieces of furniture turned over, allegedly uttering the words: "I just can't anymore, it's too violent, she's destroying me..."

49 – CRIMINAL COURTHOUSE, Courtroom – INT/DAY

In the criminal courtroom, a suspended silence. Everybody is there: the attorney general, Vincent, Nour, Sandra, the audience. Only the presiding judge's seat is empty. Then the sound of doors being opened and closed: on one side of the room the presiding judge arrives and goes to the bench, while on the opposite side, Marge and Daniel enter and take their seats. Sandra looks at her son without understanding where he's just come from.

Daniel's tense face.

ELLIPSE

SANDRA* (*OFF in English*)

You can't ask me to cancel out of the blue. You have to give me more notice.

50 – CHALET, Livingroom-Kitchen – INT/DAY

We're at the chalet. This is the first time we see Samuel and Sandra together. They're engrossed in a conversation (in English). She's sitting at the table in the living room, he's in the kitchen. His back to Sandra, he puts his phone on a shelf and finishes preparing pasta with Bolognese sauce, while replying to Sandra's last remark. The tension slowly escalates.

SAMUEL*

... I'm not just asking for these three days, it's bigger than that. I'm talking about the overall organization. It's not working for me anymore; I've told you this.

SANDRA*

What do you expect me to do? I'm not going to cancel, it's part of the job, you'll have to organize yourself differently.

SAMUEL*

How am I supposed to get organized differently on my own? You know we have to plan things together. I'm not just going to leave Daniel alone because you're off doing your own thing.

SANDRA*

Leave him with Monica, what's the big deal?

He brings two plates to the table; they start eating as they continue their conversation.

SAMUEL*

3 days a week? She's not at our disposal; we'd have to pay her for that! We can't afford it! I need time, not just a few hours, I'm talking about blocking out time for myself for the whole year. This isn't working for me anymore.

SANDRA*

So organize your time differently if you want to; it's up to you... (*referring to the pasta*) Mmm, it's delicious.

SAMUEL*

Sandra, when's the last time you helped him with his homework? When did you replace his gaffer tape? When have you ever taken Snoop to the vet? There's a ton of things you don't give a shit about, and that's the time I'm talking about.

SANDRA* (*gentle*)

Darling, the book just came out, you know very well that it's just this time –

SAMUEL*

It's ALWAYS “just this time”! Whether you have a book out, or you're writing, or you need space to figure out what to write... or when you're invited who knows where... I've been following your lead for years and I'm not okay with it anymore. I can't do anything with MY time, do you understand? It's not my time, it's yours.

SANDRA*

Do I force you to teach? Do I force you to homeschool Daniel? No one's forcing you. If you want to make time for yourself you I've never stopped you!

SAMUEL*

Are you fucking serious? I cut my course load in half this year to gain time, and it's still not enough. I have to finish the renovation, PLUS I'm dealing with EVERYTHING else. Why do you refuse to talk about it? Why can't you just admit that it has to do with how things are divided between us?

SANDRA*

Because you're wrong, I don't owe you any time, I do my part. C'mon, let's not start taking inventory. Let's relax. We love each other.

They each pull themselves together. The silence lasts. She pours herself some wine and offers him some, but he declines.

SANDRA*

When you decided to homeschool Daniel 3 days a week, I told you: “ be careful,” it's a beautiful and generous choice but you don't have to; I told you that you'd end up...
(alt : I told you it would force you)

SAMUEL* (*cutting her off*)

What? Having to spend more time with my son? Well I'm glad I didn't listen to you.
(alt: Force me to spend time with my son? Well, I'm glad I did.)
I wouldn't have the relationship I have with him today if I had (alt : hadn't).

SANDRA*

The relationship I DON'T HAVE with him, you're saying?

SAMUEL*

I didn't say that. I'm saying maybe, just maybe, things are little out of balance between us, and I'd like you to take a look at that. Why is this so hard to discuss?

SANDRA*

First of all, I don't believe in the notion of reciprocity in a couple. It's naive and frankly depressing. And yes I think discussing it is a waste of time considering the state you're in, seriously. All this blah blah blah and more time is gone; all this time spent chitchatting could be spent in silence, doing whatever you want, if only you *knew* what it is that you want.

SAMUEL*

I want find time to write, just the same as you.

SANDRA*

Then DO IT. I don't know a single writer who's not writing just because he's got a son and a house and groceries to buy. Stop whining about your scheduling bullshit. Drop this logic which comes down to casting blame on me for what you did or didn't do.

SAMUEL*

I live with you; I plan my life around you. If I imposed on you what you're imposing on me, neither of us would be able to write.

SANDRA*

Oh, don't you worry about me, I'll always manage to write.

SAMUEL*

Great, if you're so sure of yourself, adapt – that's all I'm asking!

SANDRA*

I do adapt. I take Daniel to school.

SAMUEL*

Once a week.

SANDRA*

Yes, and we have Monica on Tuesdays.

SAMUEL*

No, Sandra, you're being dishonest.

SANDRA*

No I'm not, you're the one nitpicking!

SAMUEL*

I've given you too much – too much time, too many concessions. I want this time back and you owe it to me, be FAIR!

SANDRA*

Are you insane? I don't owe you anything. It's because of YOUR relationship with your son and to protect YOURSELF and YOUR comfort and because YOU got scared that you put yourself in this position. And it was YOUR choice to come here and start this renovation; it's YOUR OWN trap, I'm not the one who's taken time from you; you've wasted it all on YOUR OWN, you can't blame this on—

SAMUEL*

Ok, now you're talking about the past, and I could respond to that point by point, but fuck that. I want things to change NOW. I want time to start writing again.

SANDRA*

Great, go for it! And if you want my advice, go back to the one you ditched.

SAMUEL*

That's your advice? Go back to a book that you plundered?

SANDRA*

Oh, so now it's plundering? We discussed it; you'd given up.

SAMUEL*

You took the book's best idea, how am I supposed to just "go back to it"? Do you realize how cynical that is? Ok.

SANDRA*

Publish your version and say it inspired me, I'll admit to that! When something demands to be written, SOMEONE has to write it. It's almost Darwinian. Then again, it's an idea that is so like me, I could have had it myself.

SAMUEL*

That's so your vision of things! You have animal vision. You pretend to be obliging but your logic is savage.

SANDRA* (*wearily*)

Look at you, even your bullshit moralizing is a way for you to waste time. You should be flattered that I was inspired by you! That's life, things circulate. Frankly, I hope you'll be inspired to "plunder" me someday.

SAMUEL*

Each in our own territory, we take what we need. EXCEPT YOU ARE NOT ALONE IN YOUR JUNGLE, I LIVE WITH YOU AND YOU IMPOSE EVERYTHING.

You impose your rhythm, your use of time, you even impose the LANGUAGE! Even when it comes to language, I'm the one meeting you on your turf: We speak English at home when Daniel should only hear French.

SANDRA*

We hardly ever speak.

SAMUEL*

You've never wanted to learn French, just like you've never sacrificed a second of your time. Everyone always has to meet you on your turf.

SANDRA*

Bullshit, I'm not on my turf. I don't speak my mother tongue.

SAMUEL*

Yes, but you don't speak mine either! Even though we live *here!*

SANDRA*

Well, yes, it's a middle ground, in fact. I'm not French and you're not German, but we don't have to meet the other on their turf, we create a middle ground. That's what English is for, it's our meeting point, you can't blame me for that.

SAMUEL*

BUT WE LIVE IN FRANCE!!! THAT is our reality! Stop being evasive! Daniel hears you speak in a language that has nothing to do with his life. And you imposed this on him, like everything else. We're on your turf, all the time, and I just have to follow.

SANDRA*

But we're in YOUR country. Every single day I have to accept living in your hometown. The people you grew up with look down on me whenever I don't make the effort to smile. You don't think me living here counts as meeting you on your turf?

SAMUEL*

You never smile at anyone.

SANDRA*

And that's why you love me, right? If you wanted some dumbass bitch who grins at your friends on the ski slopes, you'd have picked someone else!

A beat. Sandra goes to the other side of the room to light a cigarette. Samuel looks at her.

SAMUEL*

You really have no shame. That's your super-power, it allows you to see no one but yourself.

SANDRA*

I see you very clearly. I just don't see you as a victim.

SAMUEL*

You impose your way of living, eating, speaking and even fucking! I could never get you to fuck any other way! You just expect me to follow your lead. That's your notion of what a couple is.

SANDRA*

I don't give a fuck about couples; I don't have a "notion." So I'm stopping you from fucking the way you want? Seriously?! Be honest: who's been refusing to fuck since the accident?

SAMUEL*

You know damn well I meant before.

SANDRA*

What did I ever refuse to do sexually?

SAMUEL*

Everything. Plus I have to accept that you fuck other people.

SANDRA*

I do not fuck other people!!

SAMUEL*

Don't deny it.

SANDRA*

ONCE! And you cling to it in order to suffer. You do this all the time, you make yourself the victim.

SAMUEL*

I'm telling it like it is: you have fucked other people, SEVERAL TIMES, and imposed it on me! I'm not a victim, I am a man scorned! Plundered, and scorned!

SANDRA*

I can live without sex, but not forever.

SAMUEL*

You're blaming me? I'm the one frustrating you?

SANDRA*

It doesn't matter who's frustrating who. The frustration is there and we're both dealing with it. Personally, I refuse to rot inside, so I find solutions. At this point, sex is just a question of personal hygiene.

SAMUEL*

You IMPOSE your solutions, which are solutions for YOU only. You don't give a shit if it hurts me and Daniel.

SANDRA*

I'm not imposing anything on Daniel. Don't you talk about Daniel. YOU made us live here among the goats! You complain about a life that YOU chose! You're not a victim! Your generosity conceals something dirtier and meaner. You're incapable of facing your ambitions, and you resent me for it. But I'm not the one who put you where you are. I have nothing to do with it. You aren't sacrificing yourself; you CHOOSE to sit on the sidelines because you're afraid! (You're afraid because) your pride makes your head explode before you can even come up with a germ/an embryo of an idea! And now you wake up and you're forty, and you need someone to blame. Well, YOU are to blame. you're petrified by your own standards and your fear of failure. And THAT is the truth!! You're smart, and I know you know I'm right. And Daniel has nothing to do with it.

51 – COURTOOM – INT/DAY

Cut to Daniel's strained face – We're in the criminal trial courtroom in which the voices ring out. On the computer screen playing the recorded fight, the amplitude of the sine wave is at its maximum. The jury follows the translation into French on a large screen for that purpose (or on two screens).

SAMUEL (fight, cont'd)*

You're a monster. Even Daniel says so, in his own words.

SANDRA*

Take back what you just said, you piece of shit!!

SAMUEL*

He's told me countless times you're too hard, did you know that?

SANDRA*

TAKE THAT BACK! Kids want to please their parents. Daniel's telling you what you want to hear!!

He can feel your guilt, and he wants to reassure you. You've never stopped feeling guilty about him.

SAMUEL*

You're a cold-hearted, selfish MONSTER. You're shameless, callous, you have no pity.

SANDRA*

And you have way too much for yourself!

SAMUEL* *(screaming)*

YOU'RE SO COLD! I CAN'T TAKE ANY MORE OF YOUR FUCKING ICE, IT'S BRUTAL! VIOLENT! YOU'RE VIOLENT! DO YOU HEAR ME?

SANDRA* *(screaming even more loudly, and frighteningly)*

I'M VIOLENT BECAUSE YOU'VE BECOME INSUBSTANTIAL !!!! DROP DEAD! I CAN'T TAKE ANY MORE OF YOUR MEDIOCRITY!! JUST DIE !! DISAPPEAR !

We hear the sound of shattering glass, sudden movement and then a violent thud. Afterwards, everything is muddled: a physical struggle, objects smashing on the floor, a body falling to the ground? Thuds, unidentifiable muffled shouts. After a few seconds, steps walking away and someone out of breath, panting. These undecipherable sounds create a distressing atmosphere, as if being present in the room. It's almost bestial and yet it's impossible to establish what is going on, or who is doing what to whom.

The recording stops.

Daniel is dazed, he's crushing Marge's hand in his without realizing it. Most people's eyes are on him. Sandra is trying to keep her composure but is sweating profusely. On the witness stand, a police officer.

PRESIDING JUDGE

Can you explain to us where this recording was found?

CHIEF INVESTIGATOR

On a USB key that belonged to the victim and on which there were several dozen recordings coming from his iPhone. During the last 6 months of his life he had been recording moments from his life. Apparently this was part of a literary project: the USB key also contained transcriptions of the audio files and texts that had been rewritten based on said transcriptions. Concerning the exhibit in question, it was recorded the day before he died, apparently unbeknownst to his wife. Then he deleted the file from his phone after transferring it onto the key.

PRESIDING JUDGE

Had he transcribed all the recordings?

CHIEF INVESTIGATOR

Yes, except for this last fight.

ATTORNEY GENERAL (*standing up to question him*)

In the course of the investigation, did this lead you to connect this fight to Mr. Malaski's death?

CHIEF INVESTIGATOR

Given that there are less than 20 hours between the two events, yes indeed. We can see this fight as a rehearsal of what might have happened the next day. There are similar themes: the day before, he reproached her infidelities and the next day she received a beautiful young woman; likewise for the literary side of it, as the latter is a literature student who came to interview Sandra Voyter about her books. There necessarily was tension in the air: the atmosphere between the two women is light and pleasant whereas Maleski is working hard upstairs... and he ends up disrupting the interview somewhat aggressively without even showing himself.

Lastly, we have the bruises on the defendant's forearm. It's impossible not to assume there was a fight and things got out of hand. We can imagine several sequences of events. Mr. Maleski could have revealed to his wife that he had recordings in which she acknowledged plagiarizing his work and cheating on him.

In conflictual relationships, this kind of threat often ends up emerging when tensions run too high and blow up. Here, specifically, at the end of the recorded fight we hear an outburst of verbal and physical violence.

AG

In your opinion, what are we hearing in this outburst of violence?

CHIEF INVESTIGATOR

A physical struggle between the two, and finally, blows dealt by the defendant to her husband.

AG

What leads you to this conclusion?

CHIEF INVESTIGATOR

She is manifestly in a state of rage far more exacerbated than his, the last sentences she screams are clearly the final straw before the violence becomes physical.

The confusion that ensued is difficult to analyze but there are blows, certainly dealt to the body or the face. The muffled shouts have been analyzed as being Mr. Maleski's.

AG

You mentioned bruises found on Sandra Voyter – as we can see here on the photos taken on the day of her husband's death –how did she justify these bruises?

CHIEF INVESTIGATOR

First, she said she'd bumped into a shelf in the kitchen; we pointed out to her that the bruise ran around her wrist and looked a lot like it came from a struggle.

Afterwards, while she was in custody, and when we confronted her with the recording of the fight, she said she and her husband had been locked in a short struggle.

AG (to Sandra)

You acknowledge that you lied?

SANDRA*

Yes. I was afraid that if I mentioned that... well I knew it would make me a suspect... I got scared.

AG

And you had no inkling that your husband had recorded the fight? So you lied twice in fact: about the bruises and by not disclosing this fight.

SANDRA*

It was just one lie... If I'd told the truth about the bruises, I'd have mentioned the argument. I was afraid of being seen as guilty.

AG

A culprit would not have acted any differently than you have. *(to the police officer)* Is there a way to tell exactly on which date these bruises were caused?

CHIEF INVESTIGATOR

Usually, yes, as they change from one hour to the next. But in this specific case it's impossible.

The doctor examined Mrs. Voyter the day after the death, and it was already too late to put an exact date on the bruise. These photos, taken on the day of Mr. Maleski's death *(he points to the screen)* aren't of a high enough quality to draw a satisfactory conclusion.

AG

So, we can't rule out the possibility that these bruises did come from a struggle on the very day that Samuel Maleski died.

Vincent takes over, cross-examining Sandra.

VINCENT

What do we actually hear, and please be precise, at the end of the fight?

SANDRA* (*precisely, despite the emotion*)

The first sound of breaking glass is me throwing a glass against the wall - a wine glass that was on the table. Then I went over to my husband and slapped him. That's when he grabbed my wrist quite violently, that's the struggling we can hear. Right after, I tried to stop him from hurling picture frames to the floor. But I couldn't - we hear them shattering.

VINCENT

Aside from the slap, did you hit your husband?

SANDRA*

No. What we hear next is Samuel repeatedly hitting himself in the face and the head, then punching the wall. You can still see the dent. It's quite deep, there are a few of them around the house. It wasn't the first time he'd done that. Years ago, he already broke a finger punching the wall during an episode.

VINCENT (*pointing to the screen*)

The photos of the marks on the chalet's walls are included in the case file, as well as the x-rays of Mr. Maleski's broken finger, taken in June 2017 at the Grenoble teaching hospital.

(*to the police officer*)

Now that we've heard Mrs. Voyter's explanation, would you agree that your understanding of the violent thud at the end of the fight is mostly speculation rather than an objective conclusion?

CHIEF INVESTIGATOR

She lied several times during the investigation. I don't think we can believe Mrs. Voyter.

VINCENT

I agree, it is a matter of whether to believe or not: hence your analysis is an opinion based on an ambiguous document. Now, let's go over the connection you draw between the fight and the day Mr. Maleski died.

You spoke of a “rehearsal”: the sequence of events that you are asking us to imagine – the words are yours – have you found any direct proof thereof?

CHIEF INVESTIGATOR

The recording is proof there was a violent fight...

VINCENT

I am speaking of the *day* of the death.

CHIEF INVESTIGATOR

In the absence of witnesses and a confession, we have no choice but to interpret the elements at our disposal.

VINCENT

This violent fight that supposedly took place the day Mr. Maleski died is phantomatic, which means it is unreal – it only exists as a fantasy. The Attorney general would gladly have it hover somewhere over or besides the *actual* facts, as well as in this courtroom, with the purpose of gradually making it omnipresent, probable, inexorable.

I would like to caution the jurors against the temptation to make this fantasy a reality, through acknowledging the simple fact that there was indeed A fight the day before Mr. Maleski died. Yet this said, DO NOT SUBSTITUTE WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT THE DAY BEFORE FOR WHAT WE DO NOT KNOW ABOUT THE DAY THIS TRAGIC EVENT HAPPENED.

In the absence of concrete facts, we cannot fill this gap simply because “it is possible to *imagine*” what happened. Or simply because we have SOUNDS on the one hand, and NOTHING on the other hand. Our justice system relies on evidence. Here, we’re spending our time looking for said evidence but all that’s been brought forth are assumptions.

The presiding judge thanks the chief investigator, and asks him to sit down. The judge asks Sandra to come back to the witness stand.

PRESIDING JUDGE (*to Sandra*)

Did you know about the existence of this recording before you were taken into custody?

SANDRA*

No. But I knew he often recorded moments of our lives.

PRESIDING JUDGE

He didn’t warn you each time? What were these recordings exactly?

SANDRA*

At first he would mention it, then after a while he did it without us really knowing. He recorded conversations, Daniel's piano lessons... sometimes even just himself, talking to himself. It was meant to help him start writing again. He wanted to gather material and see if it could get his creative juices flowing. Now, with hindsight, it actually seems possible he could have provoked this fight just to record it.

AG

So, what you're explaining to us is that *you* are the victim of a man with a twisted mind?

NOUR (*instantly reacting*)

Excuse me: he's secretly recording them without her consent; it makes you wonder. You are disregarding the perversity of the situation itself; try recording someone without their knowledge as an experiment.

You'll find yourself in a duplicitous position where it is very easy to make yourself look good.

AG

Here we go, now we're putting the deceased on trial.

NOUR

Not at all, but my client's remark is relevant.

AG (*to Sandra*)

What is the infidelity your husband is referring to, and how did he find out about it?

SANDRA*

He went through my phone and discovered messages from a woman I'd met... at the beginning of that year.

AG

What exactly do you mean by "met"?

SANDRA*

It was sexual. We slept together twice.

AG

Twice? In the recording you claim you only cheated on him "once."

SANDRA*

It meant with just one person.

AG

Yet Samuel refers to other, numerous infidelities in the past. Hearing him, it would seem you were constantly unfaithful to him.

SANDRA*

That's not true. I had a few flings the year of Daniel's accident. And it wasn't cheating, because Samuel knew.

AG

You mean to say he found out about them each time?

SANDRA*

No, I told him. It was a tricky year.

AG

And you'd have us believe that he was fine with that?

SANDRA*

I'm not saying that; I'm just saying I was honest about it.

AG

That's an interesting conception of honesty. In any case, you weren't honest about the girl you cheated on him with the year he died.

SANDRA

...No.

AG

Why?

SANDRA*

Things were different... I felt it would hurt him too much, at that time.

AG

Because you had feelings for that woman?

NOUR (*whispering in Vincent's ear*)

Who should step in; me or you?

Vincent shakes his head no.

SANDRA*

I thought it would hurt him too much because he was fragile. As I told you, with her it was just sexual. The person I had feelings for was Samuel.

AG

Here again, an interesting conception of feelings. So let me try to understand: at the beginning of your relationship, you'd agreed to be in an open relationship but that was no longer the understanding afterwards?

SANDRA*

I don't know what that even means. No, we never had that kind of agreement. After the accident we were both trying to feel better. I needed that to keep it together, and I was honest about it.

AG

However, the year he died, you no longer were. And he found out, and it hurt his feelings, and he held you accountable. On this recording, he's not showing any signs of fragility. Would you say he was jealous?

SANDRA

Yes.

AG

Would you say it had become an obsession for him? For it's the impression we can have when we listen to this fight.

SANDRA*

I don't know, no, he was hurt and when we fought he often brought it up, but he didn't think about it every day. According to your logic, all Samuel's problems were my fault, but it wasn't like that. His pain came from a deeper place/ His pain went further back.

AG

Excuse me but it's according to HIS logic that his problems came from you, I think it's plain enough in what we heard. Can you explain what he was referring to when he talks about the pilfering of his book?

SANDRA*

There was never any plundering. In the novel he abandoned, there was a very interesting passage...

AG

How many pages exactly?

SANDRA*

About twenty.

AG

27.

SANDRA*

...It was just a rough outline, but I thought the idea was brilliant.

AG

Can you summarize it for us?

NOUR

Is that really necessary? We're not doing a literary review—

AG

This contention was at the heart of their disputes, it's not a literary discussion, it's a concrete grievance. I don't see how we can address this without clarifying the content in question for the jurors.

PESIDING JUDGE

I don't see how we can either. (*To Sandra*) Go ahead.

SANDRA*

This passage was about a guy imagining how his life would've been without the accident that killed his brother. One day he wakes up and finds himself in two parallel realities: One where the accident is the center of his life, and the other where the accident never happened.

I told Samuel I loved it. He had me read everything he wrote back then. Soon afterwards, he abandoned the whole book. I told him I'd like to use the idea and he said yes.

AG

No, he visibly didn't say yes, as he talked about pilfering.

SANDRA*

It's an argument... people exaggerate and alter facts when they argue.

AG

What's not been exaggerated is saying that his book became yours. *The Eclipse*.

SANDRA*

All I took was the idea. My characters are a woman and her daughter, and I developed the story over 300 pages. He agreed to it, and when he read my book, he admitted I'd done something different with it. Sometimes when we argued it would come out because he was upset that he couldn't write.

AG

What is certain, it that it “came up” as you say. Did you have yet another fight with him between that fight and the moment of his death? The house must have been thick with tension that day.

SANDRA*

No. We were both shaken... both keeping to ourselves. Samuel... something was gone, he was depleted. His energy was gone.

AG

What *I* hear in this fight is Samuel Maleski arguing relentlessly. I hear in his voice the strength of a man who has decided to take his destiny back in hand. Anything but someone who has decided to give up. Yesterday, his psychiatrist told us that Samuel was very combative in their last conversations. After defending body and soul, your “time” to regain a little bit of self-esteem do you go and kill yourself? Do you kill yourself when you claim with such vigor your right to a better life balance, more fairness within the marriage?

Herein lies the major inconsistency in the suicide theory. (*He goes to fetch something from his table*) You just said: “there was something gone, he was depleted; he no longer had any energy .” (*He gives Sandra a long hard look, then turns towards the presiding judge*) I would like to read an excerpt from one of the defendant’s novels, the one before last *The Dark House*—

NOUR (*cutting him off*)

No! We’re not here to judge fiction. This is not a jury for a literary prize! We’re judging based on facts! Your honor, if we go down that road, everything will be warped.

AG

In 2016, Mrs. Voyter declared, I quote: “ALL my books are closely related to my life and that of the people I know.”

NOUR

I object to this; she’s always claimed she’s written works of FICTION.

AG (*sharp and fast*)

In her first book, she recounts her mother’s death, in the second, the falling-out with her father, in the third her son’s accident: I’m going to stop here as the list could just go on. Obviously, Mrs. Voyter’s books are part of this trial since she infuses them with her life, her reality, her marriage.

PRESIDING JUDGE (*to the Attorney General*)

Go ahead, but be brief...

AG (*the annotated book in hand*)

Let me specify that this is a woman talking about her husband. (*he reads*) *"He had stopped complaining. He had given up. She observed him and she found his resignation revolting. Then an idea came to her, like a glimmering possibility of freedom: the possibility of his disappearing."*

NOUR (*interrupting him*)

You are taking this out of context!

AG (*just raising his voice*)

FURTHER ALONG: *"HOW TO KILL HIM? What to do with the body? The weight of his body: she looked at him and could think of nothing else. She already saw it dead; this body lost to her desire was no more than a weighty object—"*

VINCENT

You are ranting based on a detail!!!

AG (*shouting*)

"THIS BODY THAT SHE HAD LOVED AND WHICH HAD BECOME SO BURDENSOME HAD TO DISAPPEAR."

NOUR

I am going to give some context as you are not: this excerpt is the musing of a secondary character on the verge of insanity, who doesn't follow this delirious thinking through! A novel isn't life, an author isn't her characters!

AG

Yet novels can express deeply buried desires *through* the characters! How not to draw parallels—

VINCENT (*cutting him off sharply*)

By focusing on the **FACTS**, **THAT IS HOW!!** We must **REFRAIN** from drawing any such parallels, otherwise I could just read Stephen King's entire body of work to you to prove he's a serial killer!

AG

However, Stephen King's wife didn't die in suspicious circumstances.

VINCENT (*growing irate*)

Focus on the actual circumstances and the facts!
Do your job!

The attorney general is shocked.

PRESIDING JUDGE

Mr. Renzi, I strongly advise you to calm down. Mr. Attorney General, I strongly advise you to follow Mr. Renzi's first piece of advice.

AG (to Sandra)

Aside from the slap that you admitted giving, had you ever previously hit your husband?

SANDRA

No.

AG

That was the only time? So, you have always been, under any and all circumstances, this admirably good soul, a thoughtful and altruistic person who prevents others from hurting themselves as this recording attests to?

VINCENT

This is biased, imprecise, slanderous, out of—

AG (interrupting him)

This is too much for me to put up with! I rest my case! Thank you.

Laughter in the courtroom. Sandra is pale, sweating profusely.

Vincent asks the presiding judge if he can ask the chief investigator two more questions, even if this is an exceptional request. The presiding judge asks the Chief investigator to return to the witness stand. Sandra goes back to her seat.

VINCENT (standing up)

I haven't! (*addressing the police officer*) Had Mr. Maleski shown the texts found on the USB key to anyone?

CHIEF INVESTIGATOR

Yes, he sent them to a friend of his who is a publisher, Paul Nachez. He's the one who was supposed to publish his first novel.

VINCENT (reading)

Email sent on July 12th, 2018: "I'm getting back in the saddle, I need your precious insight. It's still at a very early stage, I'm looking forward to discussing this with you." Nachez's reply: "Of course, send it along, I'll read it right away." From mid-July until the day he died, Samuel sent Nachez up to four text messages per week. What were their exchanges on the project?

CHIEF INVESTIGATOR

There weren't any; the publisher never got back to him. Apparently he was extremely busy and further he didn't understand what this project was about.

VINCENT

We can imagine what such a silence, especially coming from a friend, can represent for a man seeking to boost his self-esteem. He feels rejected, invisible. When you read all of the bits of manuscript that were sent to his publisher-friend, it is in fact very hard to make out a storyline or a narrative. It is at very best a rough, deconstructed project.

Maleski is a "project man": there is his first novel which he abandoned, of course, but also the chalet... (*He walks over to the jurors, speaking directly to them*). And since we're being told to mix literature with justice, since it is proposed that we imagine what we don't know, very well: let us imagine what Mr. Samuel Maleski's final year was like—

ATTORNEY GENERAL

And you're accusing *me* of fantasy?! Your honor—

VINCENT (*cutting him off*)

Grant me half the time you imposed upon the bench to read us excerpts from a novel.

AG

You've already taken it!

PRESIDING JUDGE

Please, get straight to the point.

VINCENT

During their difficult years in London, the couple went into debt to cover exorbitant medical bills. Samuel insisted on moving back to the region he came from: he was going to renovate this ruin of a chalet to turn it into a bed and breakfast to wipe out their debts. And above all, he was going to stop teaching to finally start writing again... The chalet needed a great deal of renovation work, it wasn't expensive, but they still had to take out a loan. It's a vicious circle: to pay it off, Samuel couldn't do without his professor's salary, and the renovation work dragged on. One and a half years after moving in, he felt trapped: his son's accident and his aborted novel have made him a deeply wounded man, whereas his wife is publishing one book after another. HE HAS TO write: painfully weaning himself off of his antidepressants, he started recording his life, all the while, considering autofiction as a new path.

Perhaps he was trying to draw inspiration from Sandra's method – feeling entitled to do so since she also picked things from their lives, and she'd even borrowed the most original part of his unfinished book.

AG (*interrupting him*)

What on earth will you have left for your closing argument?!—

Sandra feels faint, and nearly falls over. Nour supports her, Sandra pulls herself together.

VINCENT (*on a roll*)

Blindly forging ahead, he is only pushing back the moment when he'll have to acknowledge that transcribing isn't writing. Paul Nachez's silence turned a cruelly harsh spotlight on this truth.

The energy we hear in the fight that took place on November 23rd is the energy of despair, a vague attempt to keep going before giving up. What marked the last months of this man's life wasn't the war waged within his marriage, but the reckoning of a personal failure, one setback too many. If Sandra Voyter is guilty of anything, it's for having succeeded where her husband had failed.

Sandra looks at Daniel. He is frozen in place, shaken to the core over what he just heard.

PRESIDING JUDGE

Contrary to what you might believe, this wasn't Mr. Renzi's closing argument...

SANDRA* (*to Vincent, whispering in English*)

That wasn't Samuel—

VINCENT (*tense*)

I know.

PRESIDING JUDGE

...Ok, it's Friday evening, the weekend is upon us. Before adjourning for the weekend, I need to inform you that I have decided to call Daniel to the witness stand on Monday. He has shared new elements with me that are of interest to the court. (*Everyone is stunned*)

Given that the witness is the defendant's son and that he lives with her, I am asking each and every one of you to avoid coming into contact with him, and obviously, if contact is inevitable, to not discuss anything concerning this trial or the facts of this trial with him...

52 – MOUNTAIN ROAD, Car – EXT/EVENING

The drive back is strange – Snoop is still groggy in the back of the car. Marge is sitting in the front passenger seat, Sandra can't take her eyes off of Daniel, while in V.O. we hear the rest of the presiding judge's instructions.

PRESIDING JUDGE (OFF, cont'd)

Dr Berger, would you be so kind as to stay with Daniel for the entire weekend? You will make sure that the rules I have just explained are respected. And I must insist that no one should ask him about his testimony. I hope this is clear to everyone? Perfect then. Have a nice weekend.

53 – CHALET – ENTRANCE + KITCHEN + UPSTAIRS HALLWAY AND BATHROOM – INT/EVENING

They enter the chalet, exhausted and spent; Snoop settles down in a corner of the kitchen. Marge helps Daniel take his coat off. Sandra looks at them, not knowing what to do with herself.

MARGE

Are you hungry?

DANIEL

I'm cold, I'm going to go up and take a shower. Can you feed Snoop?

MARGE

Yes, I'm on it.

He heads upstairs.

SANDRA

I'm going to fix something to eat, egg salad? Does that sound good, Daniel? You like that with sautéed potatoes, right?

DANIEL

Yes.

He disappears up the stairs.

Once upstairs, Daniel slowly goes to the bathroom, undresses, takes his glasses off and steps into the shower, shaking with cold. The hot water runs down his hair, his face. Steam fills the room. The expression on his face betrays his inner turmoil; we can sense the emotionally-charged day echoing loudly in his silent thoughts.

He turns the water off, grabs a towel and goes to his room. He puts his pajamas on and strains his ears: there's soft music coming from the living room. He listens for a moment and then goes back downstairs.

He arrives downstairs. On the left, his mother, busy cooking; she doesn't see him. On the right, Marge is trying to start a fire in the fireplace. Daniel walks towards her.

MARGE

Come to the fire, it'll warm you up.

Daniel comes over and speaks softly into her ear.

DANIEL (*whispering*)

I think I want to be alone.

MARGE

All right... You want to eat alone in your room?

DANIEL

No, I want to be alone this weekend, before testifying again.

MARGE (*whispering in turn*)

... alone... do you mean, just with me?

DANIEL

Yes. I'd like you to ask her to leave until the trial is over.

Taken aback, Marge looks at him, and at Sandra, bustling about in the kitchen.

MARGE

Are you sure it's necessary? It's a bit complicated... to ask that of your mother... It's a big house, you won't have to—

DANIEL (*cutting her off*)

I want her to go, I need to be alone to think.

Marge takes a moment, uncomfortable, trying to find the best way to do what he's asking.

DANIEL

Go tell her, please.

Marge goes into the kitchen.

SANDRA (*focused on the food.*)

It'll be ready in 10 minutes.

Marge stops, facing her, while Daniel stays behind.

MARGE

Sandra, Daniel told me that he... he needs to be alone here this weekend... until Tuesday, until the trial is over.

Sandra is dumbstruck.

SANDRA* (*in English*)

Is that what *you* want, Daniel?

DANIEL (*to Marge, in French*)

It's not against her, it's just that I can't be in the same place as her.

SANDRA* (*in English, to Daniel*)

Is this because of what you heard today? I couldn't talk to you about all that before, do you understand? We weren't allowed to talk to you about it...

MARGE (*cutting her off*)

Please, speak to him in French, and you cannot talk to him about the trial.

SANDRA

I'm not talking about the trial, I'm just talking to my son. (*then in English*)* I understand that you need calm, but I'll just mind my own business and keep to myself; I won't talk to you if you don't want me to. Can we try?

MARGE

I'm sorry, but I can't let you speak to him in English. He doesn't wish to speak to you.

DANIEL

I don't want to listen to her anymore.

SANDRA

Daniel...

Daniel turns away, lowering his head as if to dodge his mother.

SANDRA (*in French, trying to connect with Daniel*)

You can talk to me directly. You don't want the two of us to talk first, and then you can make your decision?

MARGE (*stepping in*)

Please. I think he's made his decision. There's nothing against you...

Sandra is frozen in place, staring at Daniel, completely defeated. Marge goes to the stove to turn off the heat under the pan; the dinner is a little burnt.

54 – IN FRONT OF THE CHALET (A) /CHALET ROAD (B) – EXT/NIGHT

(A)

Sandra walks out the door with a suitcase, and gets into Vincent's car, which drives off right away. From the car, we see Marge close the door and join Daniel in the kitchen.

(B)

At the wheel, Vincent looks at Sandra – she's dazed. They drive in silence. Sandra is having an anxiety attack.

55 – (A)CHALET, Living room – kitchen (Sandra's bedroom?/or kitchen/ (B) Daniel's bedroom – INT/DAY

(A)

Daniel and Marge are having breakfast. Snoop drinks large quantities of water from a big bowl on the floor. The chalet seems big and empty. We can sense that Daniel is very upset.

DANIEL

I'm completely stuck...

I don't know if I should say what I'm supposed to say on Monday...

Marge gives him time to formulate his thoughts, attentive. Daniel seems torn, filled with doubt. He ends up jumping in:

DANIEL

I didn't know that my father was taking medication. I didn't know he was seeing a psychotherapist. I never heard about the puke and the aspirin before. It upset me... All of a sudden, it made me remember something... I think it was around the same time, I woke up one morning and Snoop was giving off this really strong, sickening smell—

(B)

***VISION:** we are in Daniel's bedroom; we see what he's describing. 12-year-old Daniel is in the vision as well, talking to us from a corner of the bedroom where he's seated.*

DANIEL (in the vision)

He was lying on the ground. I went over to him, and he smelled like puke. I thought he was the one who'd puked. He didn't seem right. I cleaned his mouth... He stayed in this weird state for several days, he'd sleep for hours, and whenever he tried to get up, his legs would give. He seemed drunk. I thought perhaps he'd caught some virus. And during the entire time, he smelled really bad. It was something peculiar, bland, and gross at the same time.

End of the vision.

(A)

Back in the kitchen.

DANIEL (*cont'd*)

...Do you see? I then thought perhaps Snoop had eaten some of my father's vomit with the aspirin tablets in it... I tried to check by giving him aspirin... and his reaction was the same, it made him completely stoned; he slept non-stop for 14 hours and especially he gave off the exact same smell, with the same weird slobber. And now, you see, he keeps drinking, like he did.

You see? After that experiment, I was sure my mother was telling the truth, I was sure the psychotherapist was wrong!

MARGE

Is that what you told the presiding judge?

DANIEL

Yes, and he said it was important for me to tell the jurors...

Silence, Daniel seems increasingly distressed.

DANIEL

But since yesterday, I don't know if I believe her or not. I knew they had fights, but not like that... I keep telling myself that maybe that night, in fact, maybe she's the one who tried to poison him with aspirin?! (*lost, speaking increasingly fast*) In fact, I have no way of knowing what really happened... The psychotherapist doesn't believe in his committing suicide, and what he said is convincing, right? I don't know what I should tell the jurors: if I tell them what I remember, it'll make my mother's version "true," when in fact maybe it's a story she's told to fool everyone??!

Daniel is stupefied. Marge takes her time to prepare her reply.

MARGE

You will testify on Monday; you can't go back now. The only thing you know for certain is what you remember. You will share that with the jury but you're only a witness-

DANIEL

I don't even know what to trust, even my memories... the problem's in my head—

A beat, Daniel seems at a loss.

DANIEL

And you, what do you believe? Do you think she could have killed him?

MARGE

It's not for me to judge...

DANIEL

Come on! You're the only person who can help me. You can't leave me alone like this!

MARGE

I can't answer you sincerely. My role is precisely that – to protect you from any influen-

DANIEL

STOP IT ! I KNOW! You're saying that makes me feel even more stuck!!

He leaves the table and disappears somewhere in the house. Marge stays alone, distraught.

56 –WOODS NEAR THE CHALET – EXT/DAY

Daniel and Marge are taking a walk on a snowy trail. Daniel is still distressed and torn. A very long moment of silence.

MARGE

When there's a missing element that stops us from being able to judge something, and this fact becomes unbearable, the only thing we can do is decide. To be rid of doubt, we sometimes have to decide to opt for one side rather than the other.

(A beat, Daniel is puzzled)

... Since you need to believe in *one* thing, and there are two...you are going to have to choose.

(alt: ... Since you can't believe in two things at once... you are going to have to choose.)

DANIEL

We have to pretend that we're certain, is that it?

MARGE

You could put it that way if you like.

DANIEL

But I'm not sure, does that mean I have to pretend?

Marge takes her time before answering. She looks at him very seriously:

MARGE

...in a way, perhaps you have to make yourself believe in a certain truth.

They walk in silence for a while.

DANIEL

Will you tell me what you believe about my mother, after Monday?

MARGE

We'll see.

57 – (A) CHALET, Living room/Attic/Samuel's room/Sandra's room – INT/DAY

(B) TV STATION ON SET – INT/DAY

(C) STREET IN GRENOBLE/Vincent's studio – EXT+INT/DAY

(57A)

Daniel watches TV in the living room: on the set of a cultural talk show, several guests are gathered, among which an enthusiastic literary critic.

(57B)

LITERARY CRITIC

In all of her books, which are a kind of distorted auto-fiction, the characters have violent impulses, sometimes murderous drives.

This is particularly the case when it comes to her alter egos, who are often eponymous characters or named Selma Velter. Her first book was particularly intriguing in that respect: it seems autobiographical, as she speaks of her childhood in an underprivileged milieu in Germany, her wish to write and her relationship with her mother... Except that in the book her mother is murdered when in reality she died of cancer. The sheer pleasure she seems to derive from describing the murder is quite striking—

The TV program continues **OFF SCREEN** while we see Daniel wander aimlessly through the chalet...

(57A)

Daniel enters Samuel's study-bedroom where Snoop is sleeping...

He comes back out and goes upstairs, into his mother's bedroom...

(57B)

TV SHOW HOST (OFF)

Indeed, this is precisely the section I wanted to read to you: "*The fallen lamp splits the room in two.*"

He goes out onto the balcony, puts his hands on the guardrail, feels the wind ruffling his hair...

Daniel climbs the ladder to the attic, which is exactly the way Samuel left it the day he died. He goes over to the window, opens it, leans against the high guardrail... Below him, emptiness.

Snoop joins him, Daniel crouches down and pets him...

He plays with his dog, they roll around on the attic's floor, playing light-heartedly...

Daniel lies on his back on the ground, Snoop next to him...

The show continues, we shift to Sandra (57C) in the streets of Grenoble. Wearing dark glasses she's walking, puffing on a cigarette.

(57C)
She enters her hotel room (apartment hotel) a bag of groceries in her hand...

She makes herself a rudimentary sandwich without taking her coat off...

She eats, wrapped up in her coat, lying on the bed facing the television: she watches the show.

Something in me is lifted by the terrifying beauty of these images. This impossible harmony, this bloodcurdling grandeur is something I've never experienced, as I've only ever known mediocrity. I seized this moment that others would have hated, I leaned into every bit of it like hurrying to leave a basement to emerge into the light of day." You are right, there's true elation here.

LITERARY CRITIC (OFF)
And we don't know if it is the character's or the author's.

TV SHOW HOST(OFF)
Probably both, she plays with this confusion. She goes even further in her second book, in which she recounts that her father couldn't stand her first novel, which probably was the case, and she imagines that the discord escalates, and she has to leave her town and her country because she is afraid of her father's anger and is prey to horrifying visions. I found an interview in which she declared: "My job is to create such confusion that fiction blows reality to pieces."

(57B)
LITERARY CRITIC (OFF)
I think this is the reason why what is happening today is so exciting to the public: it's because Samuel Maleski's death is just like one of her books! The very uncertainty with regard to the death, Sandra Voyter's shady character, her amoral deceptive side – all of this is already in her books. In a certain way, it matters little how he truly died. The theory of a novelist murdering her husband is far more interesting than a professor committing suicide.

58 –CHALET, Living room-kitchen – INT/DAY

Daniel is at the piano, lost in his thoughts. He's about to play, hesitates... only his right hand comes to rest on the keys and plays the slow, peaceful song we saw him play with his mother (sequence 18). At the end of the piece, he stays there in silence, still.

59 – (A) COURTHOUSE, courtroom/(B) VETERINARIAN/(C) MONICA'S HOUSE/(D) CITY STREET – INT/DAY

(A)

Daniel is on the witness stand.

DANIEL

... I'm now sure that Snoop had poisoned himself by swallowing the aspirin tablets that my father had vomited. *(he hesitates)* And I also remembered something else... As Snoop was really not well for several days, my Dad and I ended up taking him to the vet. In the car, he said nothing the entire time. He even refused to play music; Dad was never like that.

(B)

VISION: we're at the veterinarian's. Daniel and Samuel are looking at Snoop, sprawled on the examination table like a big lump.

DANIEL *(in the vision)*

The vet found nothing wrong with him. He said it could be a "degenerative" disease, fairly common with this dog breed, given his age. He also said it could be a virus or food poisoning. It was expensive to run tests and as Snoop was improving anyway, we decided to wait. Afterwards, we went to Monica's to have some soda and cookies.

(C) the vision continues at Monica's, we've been transported into a small kitchen).

DANIEL *(in the vision)*

We often visit her when we go into town. Monica, I don't know if you remember that day? My father was so quiet, he said nothing; I'm the one who told you about the visit to the vet. Dad just kept petting Snoop without saying a word. (Narrator-Daniel turns to the camera:) Do you remember?

End of the vision,

(A)

CUT to Monica in the courtroom, taken by surprise. Embarrassed, she looks at Daniel, then at the presiding judge, and ends up nodding in agreement, a little unsure.

PRESIDING JUDGE *(to Daniel)*

Are you done?

Daniel doesn't answer, we feel he is torn. An uncomfortable, suspended moment.

DANIEL

N-no, in fact, there's something else I'd like to explain.

Marge is shaken. Sandra is hanging on Daniel's every word.

(D)

VISION: *we're in a car, Samuel is driving, and Daniel is to his right in the passenger seat. Outside, the snow-covered mountains.*

DANIEL (OFF)

After visiting Monica, we left to drive back home. Snoop was lying down in the back...

We see Snoop on the car floor, shaken by the jolts. The camera pans up and we discover narrator-Daniel in the backseat, his dark glasses on, addressing us. As he speaks, we go back and forth between him observing the scene from the back seat and his father with the other, younger Daniel in the front. We barely hear what's being said but can feel the tension.

DANIEL *(in the vision)*

We weren't saying anything and then my father started talking about Snoop. He told me that I had to prepare myself in case he were to get sick and die. I didn't want him to say that. I could see Snoop was already better and I said he wasn't that old; he'd never been sick, and he wasn't going to die. But my father kept on saying that we had to consider this possibility, because it was going to happen one day... He said that in dog years, Snoop wasn't a young man, and that it wouldn't be so surprising if he started getting tired.

The camera zooms slowly in on Samuel: we only see his profile staring fixedly at the road; we can't see his eyes. His lips are moving but it's narrator-Daniel's voice that we hear.

DANIEL (OFF)

He said: "Do you realize what his life is like? He's not just your dog... he has to understand what you want, anticipate your every move and what could be a danger to you. He spends his life guessing what you need, thinking about everything that you don't see.

Perhaps he's tired of always taking care of others, perhaps at some point he won't be able to do that anymore." He saw it made me sad because I started crying but he kept on talking anyway and I remember that in the end he said: "When he has to go, he'll go and that's just how it is.

Maybe you should prepare yourself for this. It will be hard, but it won't be the end of your life." His voice...

There was something peculiar about it, it wasn't like usual, as if he had a lump in his throat. I asked him to stop, and we said nothing until we got home.

Narrator-Daniel pets the dog in silence.

End of the vision,

(A)

CUT to Daniel on the witness stand.

DANIEL

I think he was talking about himself. Now, I think he was talking about himself.

In the audience, Marge stares at Daniel, perplexed. The presiding judge lets the silence hover over the room, looking at the child whose account impressed everyone.

PRESIDING JUDGE

Mr. Attorney General, do you have any questions?

AG

Right. First of all, the witness' experiments with his dog do not prove anything – and above all aren't documented. But there's something more complicated: his providential "memories" came back to him *under the influence* of testimonies heard in the course of the trial. There's no verified date appearing in what would be a conclusive timeline. We would have to conduct an investigation with the veterinarian, and here again, the time period mentioned, about 6 months before Mr. Maleski's death, INITIALLY came from the defendant's own testimony.

However, I still would like to ask you... *(to Daniel)* Have you ever considered that the aspirin overdose that your father allegedly spit up could have resulted not from a suicide attempt but from an attempt on your mother's part to poison him?

Let us be clear, this is not an accusation, it's a rhetorical argument, yet in basing your explanation on speculations such as these, why favor one theory over other?

Even if we take your memories into consideration, they only shed light on consequences, not on actual causes.

DANIEL

Yes, I did consider it, but I don't see why my mother would have done that. When you don't have all the facts to know for certain how something happened, you must expand your search, and this is what we are doing in this trial.

And when you've looked everywhere and you still don't know how this thing happened, you have to wonder *why* it happened. If I imagine my mother doing this, it doesn't make sense to me. If I imagine my father doing this, I think I can understand; it makes sense.

My memories help me to make sense of things, that's why I wanted to come back and share them.

AG

We appreciate your efforts and the fact that these memories help you understand things better, but I am going to ask the jurors to bear in mind that this testimony solely relies on subjectivity and therefore unfortunately does not constitute an element of proof.

60 – CHALET, Living room (A) – INT/EVENING/COURTHOUSE, Steps (B) – EXT/EVENING

(A)

Daniel comes home from a stroll with Snoop. The dog is sluggish but doing better. They come in, Marge is planted in front of the TV, whose sound is on mute.

MARGE

They still aren't done.

On the screen, a journalist fills the airtime while waiting in front of the courthouse. Daniel sits at the piano and plays *Asturias (Albeniz)*, which he is now able to play well. Marge looks at him; she can sense a slight tension under his calm demeanor. Marge comes to sit down at the piano and plays right next to him. A duet. They play well together.

MARGE

Do you feel like talking?

He continues playing without reacting right away.

DANIEL (*pretending not to understand*)

About what?

MARGE

Is it true, what you added yesterday? The vet... and your father in the car? You hadn't told me about that.

Daniel doesn't answer and keeps playing. Marge keeps her eyes on him. He reaches the end of the piece.

MARGE

Daniel... Should we talk about it?

DANIEL *(after a beat)*
No, it's fine.

He starts playing the piece again, from the beginning. Marge watches him. On the muted TV screen, she doesn't notice the gathering of people stirring in front of the courthouse. The journalist speaks, facing the camera, we can't hear what she's saying. At the bottom of the screen a banner announces: "*Sandra Voyter acquitted after 7 hours of deliberations.*" Sandra, Nour and Vincent walk out of the courthouse, looking dazed.
(A) Marge finally turns her head to the TV screen:

MARGE
She's been acquitted!

She puts the sound back on, Daniel goes over to Marge, she wraps her arms around him. He smiles, somewhat in shock. On the screen, Sandra faces the media's microphones, overwhelmed with emotion. She waits a moment before speaking:

SANDRA
... I believe there were too many words in this trial...too much was said. There's nothing left to say... I just want to call my son and go home... obviously, I would like to thank my lawyers—

61 – COURTHOUSE AND CAR STREETS OF GRENOBLE – EXT/EVENING

We're now with Sandra, Nour and Vincent among a swarm of journalists, under a downpour of questions. They elbow their way through the crowd to reach a car. They get in and Nour drives away. Vincent and Sandra are sitting in the back seat. Sandra makes a phone call, Vincent stares at her as if she were a stranger.

SANDRA *(with a shaky voice)*
Hello Marge... Yes, it's incredible, such a relief... Does Daniel want to speak to me?... All right, of course, he must be tired... And... Is it all right with him if I come home tonight or would tomorrow be better? Ok, we're going to get something to eat, and I'll come home. See you later.

She hangs up and looks at Nour and Vincent, drained.

SANDRA* *(in English)*
I need a drink.

Vincent hasn't taken his eyes off of her.

62 - CHINESE RESTAURANT – INT/NIGHT

Sandra, Nour and Vincent are at a table covered with half-eaten dishes and empty baijiu bottles. They've had a lot to drink. It's late, the restaurant is empty except for them. A waiter brings another dish. Sandra lights up, as if to fend off the mounting anxiety of what is to come "afterwards."

SANDRA*

Oh this is really crazy, the Mapo Doufu, you have to try it with the chili paste.

Vincent and Nour taste it first and have an immediate reaction – their mouths are on fire! Sandra has a bite and is instantly in the same state. They eat a little more, laughing merrily. Her face flushed, in complete overdrive, Sandra stands up, downs her glass of alcohol, and then drinks some water. Their eyes are brimming with tears, because of the spicy food, because of the emotion, because it's *over*: they laugh and cry at the same time. Nour is excited about their win. She explains that she's got a TV interview. She talks a lot. She makes fun of the AG, the look on the prosecution team's faces when they came out after the verdict.

SANDRA*

It's so hot in here!

She walks out of the restaurant and lights a cigarette. The cool air appeases her. Vincent and Nour look at her from the other side of the restaurant's window. The exuberance dies down. Sandra finishes her cigarette and comes back inside. She goes to the counter to speak with the restaurant owner and returns to sit at their table.

SANDRA*

I ordered some eel, it's very mild...

VINCENT*

No thanks! I can't eat another bite, it's enough! Stop.

SANDRA*

Oh come on, you'll love it, and it makes me happy... you have to eat... we have to celebrate... it's important.

Nour smiles at her, exhausted. She drunkenly staggers to the restroom.

The restaurant owner brings the eel dish. Vincent looks at it, skeptical. A beat. He pushes the plate towards Sandra. They burst out laughing... then the joy slowly fades. She finishes the bottle of baijiu.

VINCENT*

Are you ready to go home? I can drop you off...

She's been dreading this moment.

SANDRA* (*anxious*)
Wait, just one more...

She holds out her glass, he goes to the bar. Sandra appears suddenly oppressed, completely alone, faced with herself.

Vincent comes back with their drinks. Her eyes are filled with tears.

VINCENT*
Are you all right?

SANDRA*
... I thought I'd feel relieved.

VINCENT*
It doesn't come right away.

SANDRA*
You know, when you lose, you lose. It's the worst thing that can happen. But when you win, you expect some kind of reward... and there isn't any. You leave empty-handed.

VINCENT*
We expect too much from victory...

She lets her head rest on his shoulder. He puts his arms around her. They stay a long moment like that, in each other's arms, with their eyes closed. Nour comes back from the restroom; she stops and watches them.

63 – (A) IN FRONT OF THE CHALET, Car/CHALET, (B) Living room/ (C) Daniel's room (D) Samuel's room – EXT+INT/NIGHT

(A)
Vincent's car stops in front of the chalet. Sandra grabs her bag, gathers her courage, and gets out of the car. She looks at Vincent one last time, they exchange a smile. She walks up to the house.

Vincent stays there, not moving, drained. He finally turns the car on and drives away.

(B)
Sandra walks discreetly into the chalet; she looks around the entrance area, goes up to the main level taking a sweeping glance of the living room, the kitchen, the stairs. She moves forward cautiously, her eyes growing accustomed to the darkness and freezes in place: Daniel is sleeping in the sofa bed under a comforter; Snoop is curled up next to him. Marge is huddled up in an armchair, asleep as well. She emerges from her sleep, sees Sandra, and sits up. They both look at Daniel.

MARGE (*whispering*)
Should we carry him to his bedroom?

(C)
They pick him up and carry him wrapped in the comforter to his bed, where they lay him down.

MARGE (*whispering*)
I'll be going now.

SANDRA
You're not staying for the night?

MARGE
No, it's time for me to go.

Sandra nods at her; we sense that they both have so much more to say, but the context doesn't allow them. Daniel opens his eyes, half asleep. Sandra sits next to him, Marge slips out of the room, leaving them alone.

DANIEL (*in French*)
I was afraid of your coming home.

SANDRA (*in French*)
... I was afraid of coming home too.

Daniel sits up. A silence that is too long, awkward.

DANIEL
Are going to use everything that's just happened to write a new book? You must have thought about it, haven't you?
(*she doesn't answer him*)
I never know what you are truly thinking. I don't know what to believe, or what's true.

The sentence tears right through her. She forces herself to answer.

SANDRA
Yes, I've thought about it...

DANIEL
Don't. I don't want you to. Ever.

She takes a moment, pondering his request. She takes his hand, places it on her cheek and nods in agreement. Daniel sinks back into his bed. She kisses him tenderly, whispering "I love you," and walks out of his room. From the corridor, she hears:

DANIEL (*OFF*)
Me too... I guess.
(alt: he doesn't answer)

Troubled, she pauses a moment before walking away, unsteadily. She walks down the stairs.

(D)

Once at the bottom, she heads for Samuel's study-bedroom, she goes in. She goes to lie down on the single bed, her eyes wide open.