

Scene Five
René's Café

(The next day. The Café René. Peasants are sitting at the tables at the front, making chit-chat with the serving girls. RENÉ and EDITH are behind the bar.)

YVETTE. *(To the peasants.)* And can I get you anything else?

(A peasant whispers something in her ear.)

(Slapping him.) You naughty boy! *(Pause.)* Come back at eight o'clock. But the sugar tongs will cost you extra.

(The COLONEL, GEERING and GRUBER enter and stand in the middle of the café.)

COLONEL. Heil Hitler!

GEERING. *(Late.)* 'Tler!

RENÉ. Ah! Good afternoon, gentlemen. I trust you, and indeed Hitler, are all well? Where would you like to sit? We have several tables available.

COLONEL. You do. *(Indicating a table where the peasants are seated.)* We want this one.

RENÉ. Could I not press you to one with a better view? This one, for instance would put your back to my wife for your entire visit.

COLONEL. If you do not remove these peasants immediately, I will have them shot.

RENÉ. That seems a fairly extreme method of clearing a table.

COLONEL. Or, of course, I could have *you* shot.

RENÉ. Move over to this other table, peasant scum.

(RENÉ hustles the peasants over to another table whilst MIMI and YVETTE bustle around the GERMAN OFFICERS as they take their seats. YVETTE is very friendly, but MIMI is far frostier with the GERMANS. RENÉ stays in the background placating the peasants.)

YVETTE. Please take a seat. If there is anything that I can do for you, please let me know.

GEERING. *(Excitedly.)* Oh, we will, we will.

GRUBER. I'm fine, thank you.

COLONEL. Yvette, tell René that I must speak to him at once on urgent business.

YVETTE. At once, Colonel.

(EDITH comes across to the Germans at the table. YVETTE goes across to RENÉ.)

EDITH. You seem a little out-of-sorts today, Colonel.

COLONEL. I apologise, Madame Edith. The pressures of command weigh heavily on me. I have brought my two comrades to partake in wine and women.

EDITH. And song?

COLONEL. *(Quickly.)* No! Just wine and women...

GRUBER. Only wine for me.

EDITH. I have all sorts of songs in my repertoire whatever the occasion. I can sing something special no matter what fate throws at me.

RENÉ. *(Approaching from behind.)* Usually onions or stale bread rolls. You have something you wish to discuss, Colonel?

COLONEL. I do. René, times are not as they once were.

RENÉ. This I know. But I thought your war efforts were going your way?

GEERING. We should have them more often, you know. We do them so well.

COLONEL. Indeed, however, since the General thinks we lost his painting things have gotten very uncomfortable.

GRUBER. He is making it very hard for us.

RENÉ. I can imagine that is not a problem for you at least, Lieutenant.

COLONEL. I will be blunt. The General is demanding money from us to make up for the loss of the painting.

RENÉ. What? Well, I suppose we could have a whip round...

COLONEL. I could have everyone in the town roundly whipped, but it will not raise the money required. René, unless you get us fifty thousand francs I will have no choice but to drop you in it for hiding the British airmen.

RENÉ. But Colonel, I assure you they are long gone.

COLONEL. René, do not play me for a fool. Union Jack underpants have been seen drying on the line in your back yard more than once this past month.

RENÉ. Is that so? (*To himself.*) They will be drying at half-mast when I speak to them later. Colonel! Be reasonable! Where am I going to get fifty thousand francs?

GEERING. This is not our problem.

COLONEL. Hans is right. The how is not something I need to know – we just need the money. By Saturday night.

RENÉ. Saturday night? This is not possible. You might as well ask me to bring you the moon.

(**LECLERC** enters, in no disguise this time!
RENÉ spots him and needs to get across to
him.)

Oh my God. Excuse me, Colonel, I must set plans in motion.

COLONEL. Saturday night, René. Or I'm afraid it's the firing squad for you.

(**RENÉ** hot foots it across to the bar, to speak with **LECLERC**.)

RENÉ. And what do you want?

LECLERC. (*Raising his glasses.*) It is I, Leclerc!

RENÉ. I know! You're not even in disguise!

LECLERC. I am dressed as a sad, confused elderly man.

RENÉ. Need I say more? What can I do for you?

LECLERC. I bring a message from Michelle of the Resistance.

RENÉ. Be quiet you old goat! People will hear and I will be shot!

LECLERC. (*Whispering.*) I bring a message from Michelle of the Resistance.

RENÉ. And now I can't hear a word. Can you not strike a happy medium?

LECLERC. I would never hit a cheerful Gypsy! The curse would be...

RENÉ. I mean talk at a normal volume. What is this message?

LECLERC. The message?

RENÉ. The one from Michelle.

LECLERC. You have a message from Michelle? So do I!