

Clemenceau

by Phillip W. Weiss

**Phil's Literary Works LLC
19 West 34th Street
Penthouse
New York, NY 10001
212-388-8690
pwnycny@aol.com
www.philsliteraryworks.com**

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Characters

Georges Clemenceau – Premier of France

Mary – Georges's wife

Phil – a spirit

David Lloyd George – Prime Minister of Great Britain

Woodrow Wilson – President of the United States

Vittorio Orlando – Prime Minister of Italy

Yvette Duplaise – Clemenceau's mistress

Count Freiherr Wilhelm von Ratzenburg – German diplomat

Hans-Wolfgang von Hartenstein – German army general

An American

A French person

Although loosely based on actual persons and historical events, this play is a work of fiction and should be construed as such. The characters and dialog contained herein are entirely the product of the author's imagination.

Scene 1

Time: Now

Place: a room, maybe in heaven or maybe in hell or maybe in a laundromat. Two men are on stage. One is a writer, Phillip W. Weiss; the other, Georges Clemenceau, two time Premier of France and principle author of the Treaty of Versailles. Phil is reading a passage from a biography he wrote about Clemenceau.

PHIL

Regarding Monsieur Clemenceau, he had a long and distinguished career. He is a major figure in modern European history. He was in Paris at the time of the commune. He defended Dreyfus. He took charge of France in the middle of a war and did what he could to rally his country to victory. Also, he had deep cultural and personal ties to the United States. In fact, for several years he lived and worked as a physician in New York City. So many positives. Yet, his reputation is sullied by the Treaty of Versailles. Clemenceau chose retribution over reconciliation, and targeted precisely the wrong country for that kind of treatment. That showed poor judgement at a time when the world was looking to him for the leadership needed to make WW I truly the war to end all wars. True, other politicians were involved with the treaty (Wilson, Lloyd George), and true he did not write the actual language of the treaty (in fact, Article 231 was written by Americans), but it was Clemenceau who was the driving force behind that treaty. France had sustained massive losses in lives and property, losses that put France's survival as a nation at risk. There is no question that Clemenceau knew that, yet he chose a line of diplomacy that guaranteed continued friction between France and Germany. Nor is there any question that Clemenceau thought he was doing the right thing for his country, that is, he acted in good-faith, and that he was acting in accordance of the will of the French people. He wanted to create conditions whereby Germany could not invade France again. But a more astute diplomat would have taken into consideration the long-term consequences of a foreign policy that was founded on revenge against a nation that even in defeat was bigger, richer, and stronger than France, and proved it 21 years later.

CLEMENCEAU

I was not astute? How dare you?

PHIL

I'm saying it like it was. The truth is the truth.

CLEMENCEAU

Rubbish. You were not there. I was.

PHIL

I was there with you. I observed everything you did.

CLEMENCEAU

You Americans think you know everything.

PHIL

I'm speaking for myself, not for other Americans.

CLEMENCEAU

Then speak the truth! Your comments are mere distortions. France was hurting and the people were demanding that those responsible be punished.

PHIL

That's right. Blame the people.

CLEMENCEAU

I am not avoiding taking blame because I did nothing which warrants me having to take blame.

PHIL

I find your pomposity ridiculous.

CLEMENCEAU

More insults. Meant to divert attention away from the emptiness of your remarks. Why I even let you into my life is beyond me.

PHIL

You know why. You love showing off and I'm the best voyeur in town. Having me watch you in action turns you on. You love being admired. And besides, I'm also the best writer on the block. So, you got your money's worth.

CLEMENCEAU

So did you.

End of scene 1.

Scene 2

Time: 1919.

Place: Clemenceau's apartment in Paris. Clemenceau is sitting in the living room. A woman enters. Her name is Mary. She is Clemenceau's wife. Phil is situated at the edge of the stage. He is holding a notebook and jotting down notes.

MARY

Oh, Georges, I've been looking all over for you.

CLEMENCEAU

Yes, Mary, what is it now?

MARY

It's about Gerald. I'm afraid that he doesn't want to work for the government.

CLEMENCEAU

Then he'll just have to fend for himself. I will not support him indefinitely.

MARY

But Georges ...

CLEMENCEAU

No buts! My decision on this matter is final.

PHIL

Maybe I ought to be leave.

CLEMENCEAU

No. Please stay. You are the only real friend that I have.

MARY

That's right, Phillip. You mean more to him than his own son.

PHIL

I don't want to get in the middle of a family matter.

CLEMENCEAU

Don't you worry yourself about that. To me, you are the son I wish I had.

MARY

Georges!

CLEMENCEAU

It's true. Gerald is a malcontent. I did everything to protect him, pulled all kinds of strings to get him a deferment, yet he joined the service anyway.

MARY

For which you should be proud.

CLEMENCEAU

Oh, I was proud, all right. But I knew he was going into a meat grinder. Such a fool. It upset me.

MARY

And me too. You know, Phillip, I couldn't stop crying for a week.

PHIL

Those were rough times for a lot of French families, and German families too.

CLEMENCEAU

Don't you dare compare the Germans with the French. The Germans, or should I say the Boche, started that war. They deserved everything they got.

PHIL

But the war is over. Can't you put that hatred aside?

CLEMENCEAU

It destroyed my son. Before the war he was high strung, now he is an incorrigible dolt. All he does is eat, sleep and mope. It's just too much. He must go.

MARY

You're being too hard on him. After all, he is our son.

CLEMENCEAU

You spoiled him.

MARY

I did no such thing.

CLEMENCEAU

I saw it coming and kept insisting that you be firmer with him, but you never listened.

MARY

But you were never around.

CLEMENCEAU

I was running a government. It took up all my time. You know that.

MARY

Convenient excuses to avoid having to come home.

CLEMENCEAU

What are you insinuating?

MARY

Nothing.

PHIL

I think I'll leave now.

MARY

No, Phillip, wait. Please don't leave, yet.

CLEMENCEAU

You see. She's afraid of me.

MARY

I stopped being afraid of you a long time ago.

CLEMENCEAU

So now you want to air your laundry in front of our friend.

MARY

It was you who first asked him to stay.

CLEMENCEAU

I was just being polite. I did not expect this conversation to take such a, how can I say it, distasteful turn. So, my good friend, it might be better if you do leave. I need to have a talk with my wife.

PHIL

Yes, sir.

MARY

Please, don't leave! I implore you.

CLEMENCEAU

Stop your whining. It's about time we did have that talk.

PHIL

Good night. Mrs. Clemenceau.

Phil exits.

CLEMENCEAU

Now, as you were saying?

End of scene 2

Scene 3

Time: the following day.

Place: a conference room. In the room are seated four men: Clemenceau, Woodrow Wilson, David Lloyd George and Vittorio Orlando. Off to the side is Phil who is observing and taking notes.

WILSON

We must treat all nations fairly.

LLOYD GEORGE

That's easy for you to say. You came into the war late.

WILSON

You wanted our help and we provided it.

CLEMENCEAU

And we appreciate it.

LLOYD GEORGE

Yes, we do. Thank you.

WILSON

Gentlemen, I'm not here to make trouble or impose my will. I'm here because I want to make this treaty work.

LLOYD GEORGE

That's what we're all here for.

WILSON

Then let us not bicker over trifles.

ORLANDO

What Italy wants is not trifles.

LLOYD GEORGE

You're lucky we even let you sit here with us.

ORLANDO

Such effrontery. My country lost a million men.

CLEMENCEAU

We all lost a million men! And your country was useless during the war, utterly useless!

ORLANDO

How dare you? We didn't have to help you.

CLEMENCEAU

Who asked for your help anyway? Certainly not France.

LLOYD GEORGE

Gentlemen, this quarreling will get us nowhere. There is serious business to attend to.

CLEMENCEAU

You need not remind me of that. After all, you chose me to chair this conference.

LLOYD GEORGE

Yes, we did. I hope we made the right choice.

CLEMENCEAU

If you have any doubts, I'll resign right now.

(Silence)

CLEMENCEAU

No volunteers?

WILSON

You know, Monsieur, we all have the greatest faith in your ability to move things forward and get this job done.

LLOYD GEORGE

It's more than a job. We have a chance to redirect the course of history.

ORLANDO

Oh, who cares about that? My country is suffering and we have grievances that must be redressed.

CLEMENCEAU

We'll get that that, don't you worry.

ORLANDO

You assured me that Italy would be treated fairly.

CLEMENCEAU

You go on and on like a whining woman. It's unbecoming of you.

ORLANDO

The hell with ceremony!

WILSON

I have to agree with my Italian friend on that point. Formality is a bit out of place here.

CLEMENCEAU

So, you prefer that we put our cards on the table?

LLOYD GEORGE

Isn't that what we're supposed to do?

CLEMENCEAU

If you'd like, although I'd prefer that we do it with a bit of finesse.

WILSON

You, young man, standing there. Who are you and what are you doing here?

PHIL

My name is Phil and I'm an observer.

CLEMENCEAU

You again! This is a private meeting. How did you get in here?

PHIL

It's a long story and you probably wouldn't believe me.

WILSON

You sound like you are an American. Are you an American?

PHIL

Yes, I am, and I know who all of you gentlemen are and why you have convened this meeting.

CLEMENCEAU

Again, I ask: How did you get in here?

PHIL

I walked in. I told the guards outside that I had important business to discuss and they let me in.

CLEMENCEAU

What is your purpose for being here?

PHIL

Research.

LLOYD GEORGE

You know this man?

CLEMENCEAU

Not exactly. Yet for inexplicable reasons I feel a bond with him. I can't explain it.

LLOYD GEORGE

Our deliberations should be private.

PHIL

If you let me stay I promise not to interfere.

CLEMENCEAU

You remind me of a young man I knew when I was living in New York City. He made advances to my wife.

PHIL

It certainly wasn't me.

CLEMENCEAU

My wife took a fancy to him.

LLOYD GEORGE

Women are so fickle.

ORLANDO

What does this have to do with our business?

CLEMENCEAU

We are merely engaging in some innocent banter.

ORLANDO

The king has ordered me to conclude this business and return to Italy as soon as possible or he may demand my resignation.

CLEMENCEAU

After all that has happened, Italy still has a king. Why did your country even fight the war?

ORLANDO

Monsieur, I would appreciate if you not impugn my country's motives.

CLEMENCEAU

France fought for her survival. What about the English?

LLOYD GEORGE

Same here. A strong Germany upset the balance of power.

WILSON

Balance of power. I detest that term. It represents outmoded thinking.

LLOYD GEORGE

Yet your country joined us in the fight.

WILSON

We had to. The Germans were torpedoing our vessels.

CLEMENCEAU

We're glad that you joined our cause.

WILSON

Germany was getting a bit too big for her britches.

ORLANDO

I don't understand what you just said.

WILSON

Excuse me, my good friend. What it means is that Germany had overstepped her bounds and had to be contained.

LLOYD GEORGE

I think we all agree on that point. The question now is: what do we do about Germany now?

PHIL

May I make a comment?

CLEMENCEAU

You assured us that you would not interfere.

PHIL

That's why I'm asking for permission to speak.

CLEMENCEAU

Granted, but please do not take liberties with our hospitality.

PHIL

I do not mean to offend, but I would like to make a suggestion.

CLEMENCEAU

Oh, all right, that is, if it's acceptable to everyone else.

LLOYD GEORGE

I'm open to that.

WILSON

Let's hear what he has to say.

ORLANDO

Provided he does not take too much time.

CLEMENCEAU

Go ahead, but keep it brief.

PHIL

Gentleman, I represent posterity. I am the future, the present and the past. I urge you gentlemen to proceed with caution. That's all.

WILSON

A rather cryptic message. What does it mean?

PHIL

It means exactly what I said.

LLOYD GEORGE

Of course, we should move with caution, but caution over what? We won the war and now we will shape the peace. Isn't that right, Phillip?

PHIL

I've told you all I have to say on the subject. To say more would merely confuse you.

CLEMENCEAU

So, you have more to say?

PHIL

Yes, much more, and about other subjects as well for which this is neither the right time nor venue to discuss.

ORLANDO

Thank you, Signor Phillip. Now, can we finally proceed?

CLEMENCEAU

Yes, let us begin.

End of scene 3

Scene 4

Time: Later at night.

Place: the bedroom in Clemenceau's apartment. On stage are Clemenceau and his wife, Mary. Standing at the left near the edge of the stage is Phil who, as usual, is jotting down notes on a pad.

MARY

Rough day today?

CLEMENCEAU

Ach, don't ask. They're idiots, all of them.

MARY

Whom do you mean?

CLEMENCEAU

That fool, Orlando, and Wilson, whose head is in the clouds. As for Mr. David Lloyd George, I thought we could do business together, but no, he's already backing away and leaving me in the lurch. Typical of the Brits. Is there anything to eat? I'm hungry.

MARY

I'm sorry. I didn't know when you'd be home, so I made dinner just for myself and Gerard.

CLEMENCEAU

Even here, I am not the master of the house. Where is Gerard?

MARY

Sleeping in his room.

CLEMENCEAU

Don't you mean sleeping it off?

MARY

Now, please, Georges, don't start in on Gerard now. I'm in no mood.

CLEMENCEAU

You're in no mood? You mean I can't even talk about my son unless I first get permission from you? Outrageous!

MARY

Please, Georges, calm down. You'll wake up Gerard and you know how he gets when he's disturbed.

CLEMENCEAU

Mon Dieu, you care more about him than about me.

MARY

That's not true.

CLEMENCEAU

It is true. Ever since you gave birth to our son you've ignored me. There must be another man. Phillip, do you agree?

PHIL

I can't say. I'm just an observer.

MARY

Or do you mean voyeur?

CLEMENCEAU

How can he be a voyeur when we don't even share the same bed anymore?

MARY

That was your choice, Georges. I want to sleep with you.

CLEMENCEAU

Stop patronizing me! I'm just an old man. I can't perform like I used to.

MARY

That's because you won't let me help you.

CLEMENCEAU

Stop talking to me like I'm a child. Remember: I am the Premier of France and the most powerful man in the world.

MARY

I know that. You're such a strong and powerful man.

CLEMENCEAU

You see, Phillip, how she mocks me. I can't stand it. Mockery is worse than being hated.

MARY

Than what is it you want me to do?

CLEMENCEAU

I don't know. Things are not going well at the conference. Maybe that's what's making me feel so low.

MARY

Well, you're the chairman, so do something about it.

CLEMENCEAU

That is easier said than done.

MARY

Strong men don't talk like that.

CLEMENCEAU

What are you insinuating? That I am weak? That I am a weakling? Is that why you won't let me touch you? You want a strong man? Maybe you'd like to have Phillip.

PHIL

Wait a minute, sir. I am not interested in your wife.

CLEMENCEAU

Why? Is she not attractive?

PHIL

Sir, she is married.

CLEMENCEAU

So what? What's marriage anyway? Just a social convention created to make women happy, so they can make demands on men. Admit it, Mary, you have had affairs.

MARY

Are you asking me or telling me?

CLEMENCEAU

Don't quibble with me. I should have never started up with you in the first place. You were my student. I should have left it at that.

MARY

And you my professor. That's what attracted me to you.

CLEMENCEAU

I know you've been with other men.

MARY

Think what you like.

CLEMENCEAU

See how coy they are?

MARY

Oh, by the way, when I was going through some of our mail, I found a letter addressed to you from a certain Mademoiselle Yvette DuPlaise. Is she one of your proteges at the ministry?

CLEMENCEAU

How did you find that letter?

MARY

I told you. I was looking through our mail.

CLEMENCEAU

She is just a young girl.

MARY

Exactly your type. That's what you like.

CLEMENCEAU

It's nothing, I tell you. She's infatuated with me. That is all.

MARY

Is that why she called you her big teddy bear and roaring lion?

CLEMENCEAU

How dare you read that letter?

MARY

The envelop was opened, so I took out the letter and read it.

CLEMENCEAU

Mary, my dear wife, if you keep on pushing me, I may forget that I'm a gentleman.

MARY

It wouldn't be the first time, just like the last time when you asked Monsieur Phillip to leave. You want him to leave again? You see, Monsieur, when my big strong husband gets caught in a lie, he takes it out on me.

PHIL

Is that true?

CLEMENCEAU

That's the only way a woman will respect a man.

PHIL

Maybe it's time for me to leave.

MARY

Last time, I didn't want you to leave. Now it doesn't matter. You men are all the same. Cut through all the civility and what is left? A bunch of bullies. That's why there's war. It's a contest over who can out-bully whom.

CLEMENCEAU

Now you're pretending to be a statesman?

MARY

No. You're the one who's pretending. A real statesman would be patching up differences and converting enemies to friends, and then come home to tell his wife about all the wonderful things he's done to make the world a better place. All you bring home is a scowl, except when you're out "tutoring" one of your proteges.

CLEMENCEAU

Monsieur Phillip, you see what I have to put up with? The last time, I was nice. I didn't lose my temper. I conducted myself with restraint. I don't know if I can do that again.

PHIL

I don't know what to say.

MARY

What? Is there some kind of communication breakdown here? Monsieur, my husband is threatening me and all you can say is "I don't know what to say?" Will you not come to my rescue?

CLEMENCEAU

You are shameless!

MARY

Remember: I was one of those proteges too. That's when you loved me.

CLEMENCEAU

And that's when you used me!

MARY

Such cynicism.

CLEMENCEAU

No. Realism.

MARY

Realism? Isn't that a diplomatic term? Are we now engaged in diplomacy? Has it gotten to that point that we must speak in code?

CLEMENCEAU

Who's speaking in code? I'm speaking plainly.

MARY

I am not Germany, so stop bullying me.

CLEMENCEAU

I can't help it when you show such contempt for me.

MARY

Of course you can help it, but you won't because that's what you've become, a bully.

CLEMENCEAU

A wife should respect a husband.

MARY

And a husband should treasure his wife. It says so in the Bible.

CLEMENCEAU

Who cares what the Bible says? The Bible is rubbish, all nonsense. Maybe if you stop reading the Bible you'll recover your senses.

MARY

Monsieur Phillip, sometimes there's no talking to an atheist. They are always so full of themselves.

CLEMENCEAU

You see, Monsieur Phillip, who I'm married to: a Bible thumper. The next thing you'll be telling me is that you're becoming a nun, or even worse, an evangelist and joining a circus. Let me warn you now: stop reading the Bible. It offends me.

MARY

You knew I was a believer when we got married, so why should it upset you now?

CLEMENCEAU

The Church is a relic of the past, a bastion of superstition that owns property, collects tithes yet pays no taxes. In short, it is a parasite that is sucking the country dry.

MARY

That's your problem, Georges, you're intolerant.

CLEMENCEAU

Did you hear that, Phillip? Me intolerant? Talk about the dish calling the kettle black. The Church is steeped in intolerance. It is founded on intolerance. Love thy neighbor, but only if he accepts the savior. Eat a wafer and be absolved of your sins. Maybe I've been too lenient with you.

MARY

You hear him, Monsieur? He must dominate at all costs. He must be the master, right or wrong.

CLEMENCEAU

Monsieur Phillip, maybe it is time that you left us.

PHIL

As you wish.

MARY

What about me?

PHIL

I'm sorry, Madame. I must listen to your husband.

MARY

But you should also listen to your heart.

Phil exits.

CLEMENCEAU

Now, as you were saying?

End of scene 4

Scene 5

Time: The next day

Place: The conference room. Seated at the table are Clemenceau, Orlando, Wilson, Lloyd George. Off to the side is Phil, standing, pad in hand, jotting down notes.

ORLANDO

So far Italy has gotten nothing but talk and empty promises.

CLEMENCEAU

Stop your complaining. Today, matters will be made right. The wronged will have their day and justice will be served.

WILSON

Justice tempered with mercy, I hope.

LLOYD GEORGE

And fairness too.

CLEMENCEAU

Listen to you. You can afford such bourgeois largesse. France cannot. The French people demand restitution. The fighting took place on French soil, just a few miles from here. For four years the French people had to endure the sounds of cannons.

ORLANDO

So too did the Italians in the north.

CLEMENCEAU

That was in the north. The Boche were nowhere near Rome. Yet, they were practically a stone's throw from Paris. It was only because of the valor of the French soldier that Paris did not fall.

LLOYD GEORGE

Assisted by over a million Tommies. Don't forget that.

CLEMENCEAU

Of course not. But led by the French, of that there is no doubt.

WILSON

You did well with our colored troops. My compliments to you.

CLEMENCEAU

Yes, they were splendid. Marshall Foch conveys his thanks.

WILSON

General Pershing was truly surprised. You took a bunch of dishwashers and porters and made them into fighting men. It made a tremendous impact back in the states.

CLEMENCEAU

France has had a long history of dealing effectively with colored troops. When properly led they make splendid soldiers.

WILSON

Winning the war was team effort: now it is time to win the peace.

CLEMENCEAU

Yes, with France in the lead, now and on the battlefield.

LLOYD GEORGE

I beg to differ with you, sir. If it hadn't been for the British, the Germans would be the ones now be sitting in this room.

ORLANDO

And I don't forget how Italy defeated the Austrians.

CLEMENCEAU

With the help of the French.

WILSON

All made possible by the arrival of the American Expeditionary Force, whose entrance was decisive in tipping the battle in our favor.

CLEMENCEAU

You were late arrivals. The French and our British allies had already done most of the heavy lifting. Your boys, valiant though they were, merely accelerated the process of victory that was all but inevitable.

WILSON

That is not my understanding at all. According to my military people, the situation on the Western front was stalemated until the Americans arrived. Only then could the war be brought to a conclusion.

CLEMENCEAU

Let us not dwell on details. What matters is that we forced the enemy to sue for peace.

WILSON

At a heavy price. Millions killed, millions injured, entire governments toppled. The Bolsheviks now control Russia, and the people are in a foul mood.

CLEMENCEAU

That is the fault of the Germans. They must be held to account.

WILSON

Are you sure that only the Germans bear responsibility for bring on the war?

CLEMENCEAU

Of that I am certain. Who else can be blamed? The English? The Italians? No! We were victims. They fired the first shot.

WILSON

From the other side of the Atlantic things looked very different.

CLEMENCEAU

That's because from a distance a lot can be missed.

ORLANDO

Maybe it would have been better of Italy had stayed neutral.

WILSON

America tried that, but it didn't work.

ORLANDO

Italy risked everything to link up with the allies. Powerful countries turned against us. We were bled dry trying to keep them out.

CLEMENCEAU

What did you expect? That the Germans and Austrians would let Italy ride out the war? What were you thinking?

ORLANDO

You are so quick to judge. Going to war is no laughing matter.

CLEMENCEAU

Nobody was laughing when France decided to mobilize.

ORLANDO

No? The people were delirious with joy. I saw it in the newsreels. Everybody was so happy to the point of giddiness. The war was supposed to last just a few weeks. Isn't that what everybody said? Isn't that right, Signor?

PHIL

I'm afraid so.

ORLANDO

Italy showed restraint, and for that we should be criticized?

CLEMENCEAU

There is a time for restraint and a time for action. France took action.

ORLANDO

Only with the backing of the British.

LLOYD GEORGE

Britain had France's back.

CLEMENCEAU

France depended on no one! We were, and still are, a great power and masters of our fate.

WILSON

From the other side of the Atlantic it seemed that all you Europeans had lost your minds. A dispute between two nations located in the middle of Europe spirals into a total war, almost overnight. It made no sense to us.

CLEMENCEAU

Sir, your civil war made no sense to us either, especially since it seemed so utterly futile.

WILSON

That's where you're wrong. The survival of the union was at stake.

CLEMENCEAU

Nonsense. The war was about America's unwillingness to abolish slavery. How stupid was that? Yet you sit there now and judge us.

ORLANDO

Yes, Mister Wilson, on this point I must agree with my friend Clemenceau. Your superiority attitude is misplaced. Your country entered the war when it was propitious time for you to act.

WILSON

Yet, by America entering, the war was brought to a successful conclusion. That certainly counts for something.

ORLANDO

Yes, it does. But Germany straddled our borders, not yours. You would have been singing a different tune if Germany had, let's say, displaced Mexico.

WILSON

The United States has had its problems with Mexico too.

CLEMENCEAU

But Mexico does not pose the threat that Germany posed to us. It was either them or us. You, sitting in your White House, far away from the trouble, could afford to feel more detached. We did not have that luxury and that goes double for France.

WILSON

You speak as if Americans are a bunch of simpletons hiding behind a wall of water. That, sir, is not the case, and we proved it. Is that not right, Mister Phillip?

PHIL

Yes, Mister President, you proved it, with flying colors.

CLEMENCEAU

Said like a true American. Ask a Frenchman, and he may give you a different and more candid reply.

WILSON

Why do you insist on denigrating my country? You Europeans botched things up! That is a fact. And you could have lost the war if it hadn't been for the United States.

CLEMENCEAU

Sir, the outcome of the war was decided long before the Americans entered. Your entry, for which all here are grateful, just hastened the inevitable.

WILSON

That, sir, is pure balderdash. If it weren't for the American intervention, it is quite possible that Kaiser Wilhelm and not you would be sitting in this room and you waiting outside.

CLEMENCEAU

Sir, you are coming close to provoking a diplomatic incident.

LLOYD GEORGE

Please, gentlemen, the war is over. Let's not start another one over trifles.

CLEMENCEAU

Mr. Wilson insulted my country. I will not stand for that.

LLOYD GEORGE

Nobody insulted anyone's country. It's all talk.

WILSON

But, also the truth.

CLEMENCEAU

Why do you insist on trying to provoke me?

WILSON

I'm just stating my views. I can't control how you react.

CLEMENCEAU

I knew your participation in this conference would cause problems. You Americans think you know everything.

WILSON

Wrong. We speak plainly. Maybe what was needed was some good old American plain speaking to stave off this war. Instead, all we saw and heard coming out of Europe was posturing, threats, recriminations and lies.

CLEMENCEAU

Again, sir, you judge us.

WILSON

I can't help but judge. Your failures dragged us into this war.

LLOYD GEORGE

Mister President, let me remind you that we were confronted with a Germany that was becoming increasingly belligerent and not open to honest and sincere negotiations.

ORLANDO

Yes, that is true.

CLEMENCEAU

Who are you to talk? Italy was an ally of the German Empire.

ORLANDO

Not an ally. Just a good neighbor. Italy never entered into a defensive pact with Germany.

WILSON

Whatever the case, the old order in Europe all came crashing down.

CLEMENCEAU

Good riddance. Empires. Kingdoms, All medieval relics that were standing in the way of progress.

WILSON

Yes, but at dear price.

CLEMENCEAU

Certainly through no fault of France.

WILSON

France was part of it. Say, Phil, don't you think I'm right?

PHIL

Mister President, it's a little more complicated than that.

CLEMENCEAU

France did nothing to give Germany cause to attack us. Now it is time for Germany to pay the price for her folly.

WILSON

Speaking of Germany, when will we meet with their delegation?

LLOYD GEORGE

Mister Phillip, could you please ascertain if the German delegation has arrived.

PHIL

I already checked, and they are outside waiting for permission to enter.

CLEMENCEAU

Let them wait a while longer. Give them a chance to cool their heels.

WILSON

No. I's rather get this business over with as soon as possible.

ORLANDO

I make a motion that we put this matter to a vote.

CLEMENCEAU

Fine. A motion has been made to meet the German delegation without further delay. All in favor say aye.

WILSON

Aye.

ORLANDO

Aye.

LLOYD GEORGE

Aye.

CLEMENCEAU

No. The ayes have it. Let the German delegation enter. Monsieur Phillip, could you please inform the gentlemen waiting outside.

Phil exits. Soon he returns. With him are two men, Count Freiherr Wilhelm von Ratzenburg and Colonel General Hans-Wolfgang von Hartenstein.

CLEMENCEAU

Gentlemen, please take a seat. *Both men sit.*

RATZENBURG

I wish to lodge a protest over the way in which you kept us waiting outside. It was uncalled for.

CLEMENCEAU

Your protest is duly noted. Please understand that you are here at our request and that we set the agenda.

RATZENBURG

Our side needs no reminding of that, thank you. Now, if you don't mind, let us proceed without further delay.

CLEMENCEAU

Yes, by all means, let us proceed, as you wish. Germany requested a cessation of the fighting and we granted that request. The cessation of the fighting is a temporary measure which we, the allies, can choose to revoke at any time we deem necessary. Do you understand that?

RATZENBURG

Understood.

CLEMENCEAU

Good. With that understanding, we can now proceed to the main purpose of this meeting, namely, to bring the war to a formal close. This we intend to accomplish by drawing up a treaty. This treaty will set forth a series of terms that will promote peace and security and prevent Germany from ever again posing a threat to international order

RATZENBURG

I object to those terms. It was Germany's security that was threatened. We merely acted to defend ourselves against countries that were hostile to us.

CLEMENCEAU

Monsieur, we're not here to quibble or debate who started what or why. The purpose of this meeting is to come to terms so that we can have peace. Is that understood?

HARTENSTEIN

Sir, it is you who is quibbling, not us. Just tell us what it is you want from us.

LLOYD GEORGE

Gentlemen, we have had four long years of war. I know for a fact that Britain did not start it nor did we want it. Your country made us go to war. You settled that issue for us the moment you invaded Belgium.

RATZENBURG

No, sir. The issue was settled the moment Russia did not take our intentions to defend the interests of Serbia seriously.

ORLANDO

How does all this talk promote the cause of peace?

CLEMENCEAU

Sir, there can be no peace until responsibility for starting the war is established. It is a legal matter that has to do with reparations.

RATZENBURG

Reparations? You can't be serious. Do you hear, Herr General, what they want?

HARTENSTEIN

Yes, I hear. They want a certain party to take the blame so that legally that party can be assessed a fine.

RATZENBURG

Let's be candid. You want to bleed the German people to death, isn't that it?

CLEMENCEAU

No. that is not our intent. We are not barbarians. Germany proved through her belligerent attitude and aggressive conduct that she cannot be trusted. Therefore, we must create conditions that will place limits on Germany's ability to again cause trouble.

RATZENBURG

Again, Germany rejects that premise as utterly groundless. We will never agree that we bear full responsibility for starting the war. Never.

WILSON

Aren't your objections a bit premature? You haven't even heard our conditions yet.

RATZENBURG

The conditions mean nothing if they are founded on a fiction.

CLEMENCEAU

No. A fact. Germany invaded my country, transforming vast parts of it into a battlefield and in process causing untold and incalculable damage to the French people. France now demands full restitution.

RATZENBURG

France must bear major responsibility too.

CLEMENCEAU

You are not here to dictate terms to us.

HARTENSTEIN

Sir, we wish to engage in dialog, and do not need to be harangued as if we are naughty children.

WILSON

No insult was intended. I prefer productive dialog too.

CLEMENCEAU

We are prepared to negotiate in good faith. Are you?

RATZENBURG

Of course, we are. We have no choice, and even if we did, what good would it serve. After all, you have a gun to our heads.

CLEMENCEAU

Yes, and it would be wise for you to remember who exactly is holding that gun.

RATZENBURG

Under these conditions, how can the German people expect to be treated fairly?

CLEMENCEAU

You should have thought about that when you started the war.

RATZENBURG

Again, I reject that premise.

CLEMENCEAU

And again, I insist it is true.

HARTENSTEIN

I understand that assignment of responsibility was an idea that originated with the Americans. The Americans are a litigious people. They go to court over the slightest of issues. It is part of their culture.

WILSON

That is true. American are litigious, but the principles that guide tort actions are applicable to war as well. There are victims and perpetrators and the latter must pay to make the former whole again.

CLEMENCEAU

Well stated, sir. You see, that is our fundamental position.

HARTENSTEIN

So, who is to determine guilt? Where is due process?

LLOYD GEORGE

What a minute! Stop with your legalistic quibbling and be serious. We're not talking about some trivial dispute between a shop owner and customer. We're talking about making right massive losses caused by a war that Germany started. Great Britain lost over a million men killed and maimed and missing in combat. Our treasury is now depleted and we have nothing to show for it. So please, spare us your disdain.

CLEMENCEAU

You see, Monsieur, my associates and I are united on that point. We insist that Germany be forthright and honest or there is no sense for us to proceed.

RATZENBURG

Yes, let us proceed, but with the understanding that we do so under protest and duress. By the way, who is the gentleman who summoned us into this room?

CLEMENCEAU

Please introduce yourself, monsieur.

PHIL

My name is Phil and I am an observer.

RATZENBURG

So far, what have you observed?

PHIL

Angry and unhappy men struggling to find common ground.

CLEMENCEAU

France has every right to be angry.

RATZENBURG

You have Russia to blame for dragging France into the war.

CLEMENCEAU

Thanks to you, Russia is now Bolshevik. That alone is enough to give cause to assess damages.

RATZENBURG

You really amaze me. How your self-righteousness distorts your thinking. France never got over the throttling we gave her in 1870. Now, backed up by big powers, France wants revenge.

CLEMENCEAU

No. France wants justice. Revenge is for fools.

RATZENBURG

You hear this, Herr General? The Prime Minister wants us to believe that he is motivated by a sense of justice.

HARTENSTEIN

Yes, I heard it. Germany defeated France in 1870, and now Germany must pay for having bested that country in the field of battle. Disgraceful.

CLEMENCEAU

No, you are wrong. This war was fought because you started it. Revenge had nothing to do with it.

HARTENSTEIN

Yet now you talk about assigning guilt and assessing reparations.

CLEMENCEAU

You imposed the same on France in 1870.

HARTENSTEIN

Yes, I remember that. I was young artillery officer. We marched into Paris, down the Champs Elysees. The young ladies winked at us. My compliments to your country for producing such charming ladies. That is a part French culture that I truly enjoy, even now as an old man.

CLEMENCEAU

We are not here to reminisce about the past.

HARTENSTEIN

Sir, we know that, but an innocent digression does no harm.

LLOYD GEORGE

We all have stories and perhaps one day we can all meet in café for a smoke and drinks, but this not that time. We must get on with our business.

WILSON

The American people are still incensed over the sinking of several American vessels by German submarines while America was still neutral.

HARTENSTEIN

We issued public warnings that neutral ships carrying arms and supplies to our enemies could be targets for military action. So no laws that I know of were violated. What did you expect? That Germany should allow these supplies to reach our enemies?

WILSON

Neutral means just that, neutral.

RATZENBURG

Not when that term is used to conceal military contraband.

WILSON

Those were civilian vessels carrying non-military cargo.

RATZENBURG

Which included guns, ammunition and bullets, bombs and the like. We know this was the case.

WILSON

Your information was faulty. Obviously, you were misinformed.

RATZENBURG

No, we were not. Our sources were reliable. We obtained the actual manifests that listed the items those vessels were transporting. You were using civilians as cover.

WILSON

The United States did no such thing.

RATZENBURG

You did, you just won't admit it, probably because you don't want to weaken the legal case you're trying to put together against Germany.

HARTENSTEIN

I received numerous reports of excesses committed by allied troops in the field. Yet, we never saw fit to use that information to dehumanize you.

LLOYD GEORGE

Let's see the reports.

HARTENSTEIN

They were destroyed.

LLOYD GEORGE

Then produce the copies.

HARTENSTEIN

Likewise.

LLOYD GEORGE

All talk. Stop wasting our time. Let's get on with business.

CLEMENCEAU

Your stalling tactics will not work.

HARTENSTEIN

Monsieur, you're the one stalling, not us. We are under your control.

CLEMENCEAU

Your attempts at being clever will get you nowhere.

RATZENBURG

We have nowhere to go. We are defeated. We are at your mercy. So let us end this fiction that this is a conference. Let us call it for what it is, a diktat.

CLEMENCEAU

We are here to talk, not dictate.

RATZENBURG

We'll see about that. What are your terms?

CLEMENCEAU

After due consideration of a number of factors, we offer the following terms: one, Germany will cede the control of the Saar to the League of Nations, to be administered by France.

RATZENBURG

Based on what? The population in the Saar is mostly German.

CLEMENCEAU

As compensation for losses sustained by France during the war.

HARTENSTEIN

Already, I detect the rancid odor of injustice.

CLEMENCEAU

No, not injustice. Fairness. Now, may I continue?

RATZENBURG

Please do.

CLEMENCEAU

Second, Germany will cede all of her overseas colonies.

RATZENBURG

Take them. They were proving to be burden anyway. Now they're your problem.

CLEMENCEAU

Third, Germany will transfer all capital warships to the victorious powers.

HARTENSTEIN

You wish to continue to blockade Germany and starve the German people with our own ships. How cruel.

LLOYD GEORGE

No. So that Germany no longer can use the oceans to threaten the peace.

HARTENSTEIN

My dear sir, that image is strictly a product of your imagination. It was the British navy that posed the greatest threat to peace, not Germany's. We had no quarrel with your country. We wanted to promote trade; Britain wanted to retain control of the seas to isolate us. So unfair and so unnecessary.

LLOYD GEORGE

That's what you say now.

RATZENBURG

Your country couldn't deal with the competition and now you want to suck Germany dry, like a vampire.

LLOYD GEORGE

Mere sour grapes.

RATZENBURG

No, bitter grapes. What do you want us to do? Start begging for forgiveness?

LLOYD GEORGE

Stop the theatrics. Let us proceed.

CLEMENCEAU

Fourth, Germany will de-militarize the Rhineland and agree to permit allied troops to occupy that area for ten years.

RATZENBURG

Herr General, now the game is really getting serious.

HARTENSTEIN

Just as I had feared when the armistice was announced. We still could have won. I was prepared to launch another offensive. We could have taken Paris.

LLOYD GEORGE

Sir, your comments are based on a fantasy. You were decisively defeated. Accept it.

HARTENSTEIN

No! I will never accept it. We were defeated by traitors and fifth columnists in Berlin who hated their country and did everything in their power to sabotage the war effort. And after they succeeded, they sent us here to endure this humiliation because they lacked the courage to come here themselves. Now you want to dismember Germany. Not only kill us but mutilate us. Your cruelty knows no bounds. As a soldier, I feel outrage.

RATZENBURG

Gentlemen, let me remind you that the Rhineland is sovereign German territory against which you can make no valid claims. To impose an army of occupation would be a serious affront to the German people. It could have serious long term political repercussions.

CLEMENCEAU

Your government must see to it that such repercussions do not develop. Any attempt by your government to incite the people will invite a military response.

HARTENSTEIN

So you would have your soldiers fight helpless civilians?

LLOYD GEORGE

No. Only the ones who are armed and disturbing the peace.

RATZENBURG

If you think the German people will stand for such humiliation, then you do not know the German people.

LLOYD GEORGE

To the contrary. We know them all too well. That's what brought us to this place.

CLEMENCEAU

Fifth. Germany will disband its army and replace it with an internal security defense force that in size will not exceed one hundred thousand men.

HARTENSTEIN

I guess that puts me out of job.

RATZENBURG

Now you are rendering us defenseless, and why? To ravish us. It's the start of a feeding frenzy with Germany as the living carcass.

CLEMENCEAU

You bought all this upon yourselves, for which you must bear full responsibility. The French people demand no less.

RATZENBURG

And the German people will never forget.

LLOYD GEORGE

Nor the British people.

CLEMENCEAU

Sixth, Germany will cede parts of western Prussia to Poland.

RATZENBURG

Outrageous. You are splitting Germany into fragments! You are dismembering my country! Let me remind you that those regions have been German for almost one thousand years. This is a gross injustice!

CLEMENCEAU

No more of an injustice than when Germany forced France to cede Alsace Lorraine.

RATZENBURG

That was different. The majority of the residents in Alsace Lorraine were German and wanted to be part of the Reich. Now Germans will be at the mercy of the Poles. God help them. You and your so-called right to national self-determination. All a sham, pure hypocrisy. You want to destroy Germany.

WILSON

No, we do not. But certain adjustments have to be made to ensure that the treaty does not fail.

CLEMENCEAU

Seventh, regarding the matter of Alsace Lorraine, Germany will transfer Alsace Lorraine back to France, immediately and unconditionally.

RATZENBURG

No surprise there. What you could not defend on your own you now force us to return with the help of your friends. Four against one.

ORLANDO

What is Germany prepared to cede to Italy?

CLEMENCEAU

We will get to that later. Right now, other matters must be attended to first. I hope you understand.

ORLANDO

Why are you treating Italy so shabbily? Italy made sacrifices too. We demand compensation. Why should France and Poland and whoever else receive preference over Italy? Are we not allies? Am I not a part of this conference? Yet I am forced to remain silent. Well, let me tell you something, monsieur, the Italian people will not forget this. Italians are a proud people. We are the descendants of the greatest empire builders in history. Do not take us for granted. Italy is no backwater country. Please do not forget that.

CLEMENCEAU

Monsieur, I warned you earlier to stop your whining. Italy will get what she deserves. Now, let me continue. Eighth, Danzig will become a free city under the supervision of the League of Nations.

RATZENBURG

You're even taking Danzig? Does the humiliation ever stop? What have we done to warrant such callous treatment?

CLEMENCEAU

You started a war!

RATZENBURG

We did not!

LLOYD GEORGE

Yes, you did. Germany is at fault.

RATZENBURG

How can we expect to be treated fairly when you take it upon yourselves to be plaintiff, judge and jury at the same time? Right now you have Germany at a disadvantage, but things change.

WILSON

That's exactly the outcome that we wish to avoid, things changing for Germany. We want to avoid a repeat of the events that produced the war. We cannot tolerate a militaristic Germany. One war was enough. Let's do what we can to avoid another. What say you about that, Phillip?

PHIL

Mister President, wiser words have never been spoken. I just hope that the other parties at this table heed your advice, though I doubt that will be the case.

HARTENSTEIN

Mister President, you seem like a reasonable man. What exactly do you want from Germany?

WILSON

Assurances that you will not re-arm and choose the path of peace.

HARTENSTEIN

Speaking as a soldier, I don't want to fight anymore. I hate war, but by punishing us, you make it harder for us to want to cooperate.

CLEMENCEAU

You are making it harder on yourself. Germany proved that it cannot be trusted, and that its assurances are worthless. You fooled us in the past; we will not be fooled again.

HARTENSTEIN

I'm an old soldier, but sir, you have a hardening of the heart. I feel sorry for you. So much anger and bitterness. It saddens me.

CLEMENCEAU

I don't need your pretentious expressions of concern. Be concerned with yourself, not others. My personal issues are mine alone and are not open to discussion here. So I would appreciate it if you would keep your personal thoughts about me to yourself.

HARTENSTEIN

I did not mean to offend you. If I did, I apologize.

CLEMENCEAU

I see what you're doing. You're trying to win my sympathy. You are wasting your time. Quit it now.

RATZENBURG

Can't we at least be civil with one another? Must you harangue us?

LLOYD GEORGE

We are being civil. But that does not mean that we have to treat you as friends because you are not. Technically, the war is still going on and we are enemies. Let's not forget that. Maybe later, after all this negotiating is done and the dust has had a chance to settle. But now is not the right time.

RATZENBURG

We don't expect to be treated as friends but neither should we be treated with scorn.

CLEMENCEAU

We will treat you in any manner as we see fit, thank you. Now let's get back to business. Ninth, Germany will cede Northern Schleswig-Holstein to Denmark, the Hultschin district to Czechoslovakia, and Memel to Lithuania.

RATZENBURG

You are slicing up Germany like a gutted pig. You're cannibals.

CLEMENCEAU

You have no cause to complain. These are just minor border adjustments. The bulk of Germany is left intact.

RATZENBURG

And much smaller in area, population and wealth. So unfair.

CLEMENCEAU

Tenth, Germany will accept full responsibility for having started the war and pay fifty billion dollars in hard cash as reparations for damages caused.

RATZENBURG

Even the defeatists in Berlin will never agree to such an outrageous demand. Is there any room for negotiation?

CLEMENCEAU

None. Either agree or accept full responsibility for the consequences of what will follow.

RATZENBURG

You have us by the throat and now you want to make Germany destitute. You are like thieves with a gun who are fleecing their victim for every penny he has. You have no shame.

ORLANDO

Let me assure you that Italy is fleecing no one. Please remember that. It is exclusively they who are the beneficiaries. Germany makes concessions and Italy gets nothing.

WILSON

Same with the United States. We bear no grudges against Germany nor do we want to create conditions that will cause Germany undue hardship. The American people want this treaty to succeed, and if all parties show goodwill we believe that can happen. We fought this war to end all wars. Let us stay faithful to that pledge.

End of scene 5

Scene 6

Time: 2 AM

Place: a room in a hotel. Clemenceau is lying in bed with a young woman named Yvette DuPlaise. He is fully clothed. The woman is wearing a robe. Off to the side is Phil. As usual, he is standing, pad in hand, jotting down notes.

YVETTE

What is wrong? You seem upset.

CLEMENCEAU

I am upset, about everything. The negotiations are not going well. The Germans are being uncooperative.

YVETTE

That is too bad. Maybe you can help them become reasonable.

CLEMENCEAU

I try but they won't listen. They still want to fight. I don't want to resume the war, but if I have to, I'll do it. I swear.

YVETTE

I thought you don't believe in God.

CLEMENCEAU

I don't. It's just an expression. A platitude.

YVETTE

Oh, you mean like have a nice day. Something that you say but really don't mean?

CLEMENCEAU

Yes, something like that.

YVETTE

Or when you tell me that you love me?

CLEMENCEAU

That I do mean.

YVETTE

So somethings you say things you do mean and while other times you say things you don't mean.

CLEMENCEAU

Why are you giving me such a hard time? I open my mouth, words come out. Period.

YVETTE

You are so touchy, so moody.

CLEMENCEAU

It's my son, Gerard. He won't stop drinking. Since his discharge from the army he has not been behaving normally.

YVETTE

How long was he in the army?

CLEMENCEAU

Three years, most of which was at the front. I wanted to arrange for him to get a desk job but he said no, the fool. Now, he is a damaged, and I hate him for not agreeing to accept my help.

YVETTE

Oh, you poor, poor man. So many troubles. I feel sorry for you.

CLEMENCEAU

Don't pity me. Remember, who is paying your bills, so please afford me some respect.

YVETTE

Of course, I respect you. You have been good to me.

CLEMENCEAU

Yes, I have, even at the risk of my marriage. My wife found out about us. She found one of your letters.

YVETTE

Good. Now the truth can be told about us.

CLEMENCEAU

Not so fast. I can't afford a scandal at this time. It would bring down my government.

YVETTE

So you care more about your government than about me. Do you want me to leave?

CLEMENCEAU

Do you want to leave?

YVETTE

I don't know. Like you said, you pay the bills, and I perform services to please you.

CLEMENCEAU

Right now I don't know what to think. My wife scorns me, my son is a basket case, the conference is wearing me down and now you want to abandon me. I am feeling despair.

YVETTE

Then do something about it.

CLEMENCEAU

Like what?

YVETTE

Something that will make you feel happy.

Yvette reaches over to Clemenceau and begins to unbuckle his belt. He grabs her hand.

CLEMENCEAU

Stop. I'm in no mood for that. I feel too distracted. The issues of the day are wearing me down. I am feeling so old.

YVETTE

That will pass.

CLEMENCEAU

How do you know that?

YVETTE

Because all feelings pass. They are fleeting.

CLEMENCEAU

I did not know that you were a philosopher.

YVETTE

I have other skills as well.

CLEMENCEAU

Yes, I am familiar with them.

YVETTE

I'm talking about other skills that I have never shown you.

CLEMENCEAU

I don't like when people are not forthright with me. What are you concealing from me?

YVETTE

I know how to use a gun. I spent four years in prison for murder. I shot my boyfriend. Well, actually he was my pimp. He started beating on me, so I went and got a gun, learned how to use it and treasure it, and when he least expected it, shot him right in the heart. He died instantly.

CLEMENCEAU

Why weren't you executed?

YVETTE

The court took pity on me and took into account who I killed. In fact, some even said that I performed a valuable public service. Anyway, I spent four years in prison, got released and resumed my career as a professional companion. I hope this revelation does not alarm you.

CLEMENCEAU

My dear, not only does it not alarm me, my respect for you has increased exponentially.

YVETTE

By exponentially you mean what?

CLEMENCEAU

A lot. You see, we are like minded. You on the street and me in the conference room. We take no guff and deal straight. Did you know that I fought several duels?

YVETTE

I think I read about that somewhere.

CLEMENCEAU

I do not take personal insults lightly. To me they are an intolerable affront. They work on my mind to the point that I must act to defend my honor.

YVETTE

Did you ever kill anyone?

CLEMENCEAU

No, but not for through lack of trying. Shooting and hitting your target from a distance is harder than it looks. It gets even harder when you have only a split second to act. But I never deliberately missed the target. I often wonder how it would feel to personally kill someone. That's why I envy you. You've done it. I'm feeling better already.

YVETTE

I'm glad.

CLEMENCEAU

I think my wife is having an affair.

YVETTE

How do you know?

CLEMENCEAU

She no longer shows me affection.

YVETTE

Why bring that up now?

CLEMENCEAU

The thought just popped up. I don't like the idea of her being with another man.

YVETTE

But if you no longer love her, then so what?

CLEMENCEAU

I never said I no longer love my wife.

YVETTE

Now you're confusing me.

CLEMENCEAU

Let me explain. I'm married. If my wife wants to have an affair, that's fine, provided she is open about it. I'll just kick her out and she can take Gerard with her. But if she is doing something on the sly, I may ask you for your help. I cannot tolerate deceit. Is that clear?

YVETTE

Quite clear.

CLEMENCEAU

I'm starting to feel tired. I have a long day tomorrow. It's about time I got some sleep. Monsieur Phillip, I think it is time for you to leave.

PHIL

Of course, monsieur. You're tired and you need to sleep. *Phil exits.*

Yvette reaches over to Clemenceau and starts to unbuckle his belt. This time Clemenceau does not stop her.

YVETTE

You are the tiger of France.

End of scene 6

Scene 7

Time: The present

Place: A crowded train on the Paris Metro. Phil and Clemenceau are in the car. They are invisible. Two passengers are talking. One is American; the other French.

PA VOICE

Next stop Champs-Elysees Clemenceau.

AMERICAN

Clemenceau. That name sounds familiar.

FRENCH

He was the Premier of France during World War One.

AMERICAN

Now I remember. Wasn't he the guy responsible for the Treaty of Versailles?

FRENCH

A lot of people were responsible for the Treaty of Versailles.

AMERICAN

That treaty was a colossal failure. Because of it Hitler came to power.

FRENCH

It's a little more complicated than that.

AMERICAN

No, it isn't. I read somewhere that all Clemenceau wanted to do was bury Germany. What kind of negotiations was that?

FRENCH

Clemenceau did what he thought was best for France.

AMERICAN

Well, he did a poor job of it.

FRENCH

Let me say this again. A lot of people were responsible for drawing up that treaty. It wasn't all Clemenceau. President Wilson was involved too.

AMERICAN

Wilson acted without the backing of the Senate which voted not to ratify the treaty. I don't understand how France can honor a man who produced such a flawed document.

FRENCH

Clemenceau rallied the nation to victory during the darkest days of World War One.

AMERICAN

With the help of the United States.

FRENCH

What's your problem with Clemenceau?

AMERICAN

Personally, none. I never met him, never really studied his life. But for as long as I can remember, I never read or heard anything good about Clemenceau. So when I see and hear his name being honored, it goes against everything I've been taught or heard about the man.

FRENCH

That's the fault of the biased American media which never has anything good to say about France.

AMERICAN

Or it could be that what is being said is the truth that the French won't accept.

CLEMENCEAU

I did what I thought was best for France.

PHIL

You don't have to defend your record with me. I already know it, it's all written down in my book, and besides they can't hear you.

CLEMENCEAU

Who is anyone to judge me anyway?

PHIL

Come on, Georges, you know that everything you did is open to analysis and second guessing. That's part of being a public figure.

CLEMENCEAU

No one ever mentions the other work that I did. How I defended Dreyfus, advocated for separation of Church and State, promoted the interests of my country, and came forward to lead the nation when defeat seemed all but certain.

PHIL

That's because great men are expected to do great things. But when they fail, all else is forgotten. You botched up the Treaty of Versailles. Instead of bringing about peace, it set the stage for the next war.

CLEMENCEAU

We did the best we could.

PHIL

Which wasn't good enough, and you know it.

CLEMENCEAU

It's so easy to second guess after the fact. The goal was to secure the peace by making sure that Germany couldn't start another war.

PHIL

Well, they started another war.

CLEMENCEAU

Still, they named a train station after me, so the people still must love me.

PHIL

The French are a forgiving people. They don't blame you for 1940.

CLEMENCEAU

What happened in 1940?

PHIL

You were there with me as we watched the Germans enter Paris and parade up the Boulevard Foch. Your son Gerard, was among the crowd and called out to you: Father, where are you when we need you now?

CLEMENCEAU

I don't remember.

PHIL

I won't push the issue. You've gone through enough, both in life and in the hereafter. Even as a spirit you are vulnerable to emotion.

CLEMENCEAU

I hope Mary forgives me for my transgressions.

PHIL

She already has. In fact, here she comes now.

MARY

Oh Georges, I've been looking all over for you. I have such good news! Gerard stopped drinking. He also asked me to convey to you his fond greetings. My, I'm so lucky to have married such a fine man.

PHIL

You see?

Mary exits.

AMERICAN

I feel some kind of presence in this train.

FRENCH

Yeah. It's packed with people.

AMERICAN

No. Not that. Something that I can't really describe.

PHIL

Georges, you're at it again. Stop playing with their spirits. You know how that upsets them.

CLEMENCEAU

But I need to let that American know how wrong he is about me.

PHIL

You can't do that. He'll have to learn it all by himself. Or tell him yourself when he joins us.

CLEMENCEAU

But my legacy.

PHIL

Come on, Georges, let's go and take swing around the moon. That should clear your mind.

CLEMENCEAU

Such a thoughtful guardian angel. Thank you for putting in the good word about me with the Big Guy upstairs.

PHIL

Glad to be of help.

The rest the cast enters. All on stage sing La Marseillaise.

ENTIRE CAST

Vive La France!

CLEMENCEAU

Yes, Vive La France.

The end.

