**Jules Renard**

**A WEEK IN THE COUNTRY  
(Huit Jours à la campagne)  
(1912)**

**CHARACTERS**

Maman Perrier, 67 years old

Madame Perrier, her daughter-in-law, 40 years old

Marie Perrier, her grand-daughter, 16 years old

Georges Rigal, 27 years old

The action takes place in a village in [Yonne départment](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yonne).

A small dry courtyard, a bench, a chair made of iron — At the rear, next to the street, a plain fence with vertical green bars — At the right, the facade of a bourgeois village house, white and almost new. One reaches it by climbing three steps — At the left, a border of boxwood hedge separates the courtyard from the garden.

This translation into English by Paulette Collet and Anna-Lyn Di Paolo of [La Troupe des Anciens de l’Université de Toronto](http://latroupedesanciens.org/). Released by La Troupe des Anciens de l’Université de Toronto on 2018-02-22 under license [Creative Commons CC BY-SA 4.0](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Creative_Commons_license).

CC-BY-SA_3_icon_88x31.png (88×31)

SCENE I

*Georges Rigal arrives at the gate, in a travelling outfit, with a case. Looks happy and Parisian. He vainly looks for a bell. He opens the gate and enters.*

**Georges Rigal**

No bell! Real country! You come in as in your own home…Nobody! … Charming… Somebody, please?

*Maman Perrier comes slowly from the garden; she is old, small, straight, thin, suspicious.*

**Georges Rigal**

Good morning, madame. *Maman Perrier does not answer.* This **is** Mr. Maurice Perrier’s house, isn’t it?

**Maman Perrier**

No, monsieur.

**Georges Rigal**

Forgive me, madame, I thought…

**Maman Perrier**

It’s mine.

**Georges Rigal**

They told me in the village that it was Mr. Maurice Perrier’s house.

*He turns to leave.*

**Maman Perrier**

It may perhaps belong to Maurice, when I am dead, but for the time being, it belongs to me.

**Georges Rigal**

Ah! It belongs to you… Very well, madame.

**Maman Perrier**

And I am Maurice’s grandmother.

**Georges Rigal**

Oh! Madame! **…** What I meant to say was: It is here, is it not, in his grandmother’s house,  
that Mr. Maurice Perrier lives.

**Maman Perrier**

Yes, Sir, he lives here when he is on holiday. And he is not likely to have a home of his own any time soon.

**Georges Rigal**

My name is Georges Rigal.

**Maman Perrier**

What did you say?

**Georges Rigal**

Maurice’s friend.

**Maman Perrier**

What friend?

**Georges Rigal**

The one you’re expecting.

**Maman Perrier**

We’re not expecting anyone.

**Georges Rigal**

Didn’t you get my letter?

**Maman Perrier**

Your letter?

**Georges Rigal**

The one I sent you yesterday from Paris?

**Maman Perrier**

You sent **me** a letter?

**Georges Rigal**

No, Madame, to Maurice.

**Maman Perrier**

I have nothing to do with Maurice’s letters; he may have received something; I’m going to ask.

*She goes into the house.*

Scene II

**Georges Rigal**, *alone*

What a wonderful example of an old country woman! So natural, not spoiled by society.  
I thought that they had been informed, but it’s better this way. I arrive unexpectedly, I don’t disturb anybody, it’s more fun. *He sniffs.* You can really smell the grass! Oh! What a pretty house! The only thing missing is a little moss, some ivy. My dream for my old age!

Scene III

*Maman Perrier, Madame Perrier, Georges*

**Maman Perrier**. *She brings Madame Perrier*

Here is my daughter-in-law.

**Georges Rigal**

Madame, I am delighted to make your acquaintance. It is of course to Maurice Perrier’s mother that I have the honour…

**Madame Perrier**

Yes, monsieur.

**Maman Perrier**

I told you so.

**Madame Perrier**, *as surprised as Maman Perrier, but more polite.*

We have indeed received this letter for Maurice, monsieur.

**Georges Rigal**

It’s mine, madame; I recognise my writing, the envelope and the stamp… In that letter I was informing him of my arrival.

**Madame Perrier**

Maurice went out this morning, before the mailman came by. He therefore has not read your letter and I have not opened it; I had put it in my pocket. Here you are, monsieur.

**Georges Rigal**

You may read it, madame.

**Madame Perrier**

There is no point, monsieur, since you are here.

**Georges Rigal**, *taking the letter.*

It does not contain any secret, madame; I was writing to Maurice. *He puts his case on the bench, opens the letter and reads:* “Dear friend, my time off has been granted. You have been inviting me for so long and I have been promising you that week…”

**Madame Perrier**, *worried*

A week!

**Madame Perrier**, *as if unconcerned, trying to make amends.*

A week.

**Georges Rigal**

I wrote *a week,* just to put down a number, but I shall stay as long as I want, as long as Maurice wants, as long as you, ladies, want… *He continues to read the letter.*“I’ll arrive tomorrow morning, Thursday, (today is Thursday. You see how punctual I am!) by the first train; I am looking forward to chatting with you and finally to meet your mother and your sister…”

**Maman Perrier**

And the grandmother, she is not mentioned.

**Georges Rigal**

Oh! Madame.

**Maman Perrier**

She doesn’t count anymore!

**Georges Rigal**

How can you say that, madame?

**Maman Perrier**

That Maurice, I bet he’s already buried me.

**Georges Rigal**

No, madame.

**Maman Perrier**

It wouldn’t surprise me, coming from him. Perhaps you did not even know that I exist.

**Georges Rigal**

Oh! madame, I know… I know how deeply Maurice cares for you. I forgot you through absent-mindedness. Forgive me.

**Maman Perrier**, *conciliating.*

Besides, what is the good of writing long letters that never end when people are going to meet?

**Georges Rigal**

Isn’t it so, madame? You are quite right. *Silence.* I shall take back my letter then.

*He puts the letter in his wallet and drops a telegram*.

**Maman Perrier**

You’ve dropping something.

**Georges Rigal**

Thank you, madame, it’s only an old telegram, to be torn up.

*He puts it in his timetable.*

**Madame Perrier**

I am so sorry Maurice went out! But that doesn’t matter, monsieur, please…

*She points to the door of the house.*

**Georges Rigal**

Will he be back soon, madame?

**Madame Perrier**

Oh yes! Probably!

**Maman Perrier**

Does one ever know with him?

**Madame Perrier**

I hope he won’t be long. Such an unfortunate coincidence. Maurice never goes out in the morning. And for once you’re here, he goes away. He must be walking in the fields. Would you like us to go and look for him?

**Georges Rigal**

I’ll wait awhile in your pleasant company, ladies; and if he delays too long, I’ll go to meet him: that will give me a chance to walk, I’ll see your part of the country, which has seemed very pretty to me, ladies, truthfully.

**Maman Perrier**

It’s as pretty as any part of the country is pretty!

**Georges Rigal**

Madame, I have travelled a great deal and I have rarely seen a more pleasant place.

**Madame Perrier**

You should see it when the sun is shining. It does not look its best in this dull weather;  
it even rained last night, isn’t it so, mother.

**Maman Perrier**

It didn’t rain enough.

**Madame Perrier**

What did you expect?

**Maman Perrier**

I expected rain… I don’t call that rain. The garden is dying of thirst. After a three-month drought, that little shower barely moistened the surface.

**Georges Rigal**

It is surprising, madame, because it rained hard until we got into the station. I was even afraid of getting soaked.

**Maman Perrier**

The places where you come from are lucky. The others get everything, we get nothing.

**Georges Rigal**

Your turn will come, madame; after the sun, the rain.

**Madame Perrier**

But it has just occurred to me, nobody was at the station to meet you.

**Georges Rigal**

There was the station master, and then it’s so close. Besides, what could be more pleasant than this journey. You fall asleep in Paris, you wake up in an unknown place, early in the morning. You are alone, free. You have left daily cares behind. You think you are starting a new life and you feel proud to rise with the sun.

**Maman Perrier**

Fine sunshine we’re having today!

**Georges Rigal**

Oh! madame, who cares about one or two clouds in the country?

**Madame Perrier**

I did not even hear you open the gate.

**Georges Rigal**

Indeed, how close to nature it all is! There is no bell at your gate.

**Maman Perrier**

Yes, there is, it’s with the locksmith.

**Madame Perrier**

He is taking forever to mend it.

**Maman Perrier**

If it had not been for me, the gentleman would have been stuck outside; I was in the garden, weeding the carrots; I hear someone call; I raise my head and what do I see? I see the gentleman standing there, with his luggage.

**Georges Rigal**

Ah! I must have surprised you.

**Maman Perrier**

Yes.

**Georges Rigal**

It’s much more fun. *Only he laughs.*

**Madame Perrier**

And that Maurice who is not coming back! Come in and have a rest, monsieur, come and  
sit down.

**Georges Rigal**, *who is beginning to be uncomfortable.*

Oh! Thank you, madame, I am not tired.

**Maman Perrier**

Monsieur sat all he wanted in the train.

**Madame Perrier**

But perhaps he needs to freshen up?

**Georges Rigal**

Gladly, madame, although in the country… *He turns towards the door.*

**Maman Perrier**

Monsieur is staying for lunch then?

**Madame Perrier**

Of course. Do you think he travelled hundreds of miles just to say hello and leave without eating anything?

**Georges Rigal**

Madame, you are much too kind. I really don’t want you to go to any trouble!

**Madame Perrier**

Even if it meant some trouble!

**Maman Perrier**

Are we savages?

**Madame Perrier**

But you know, you’ll get whatever there is.

**Georges Rigal**

And what more could I wish for, madame. Soft boiled eggs and cream cheese will be a treat.

**Maman Perrier**

If you’re expecting that, my dear monsieur, you’ll be disappointed; it’s not enough to say:  
Amen for a hen to lay and for the milk to curdle.

**Georges Rigal**

I have a healthy appetite, I’ll eat meat; it must be first class in this region; I saw some magnificent cattle in your fields.

**Maman Perrier**

Yes, but we don’t keep it here, and besides, the magnificent cattle, as you say, are sent to Paris. Our butcher keeps only old cows, and even then, he butchers only on Saturday; we’ll be lucky if he has a decent piece left.

**Georges Rigal**

Please, don’t worry. It will be pot luck! Maurice has spoken so much about you that I already feel as if I belong to your family.

**Maman Perrier**

Strange. He never mentions you to us.

**Madame Perrier**

Oh yes, he does.

**Maman Perrier**

No, no.

**Madame Perrier**

Yes, sometimes. Monsieur is studying medicine, like Maurice.

**Georges Rigal**

Not quite, madame. I work for a notary. Oh! It’s the same thing, we were at school together.  
I met Maurice in high school, at the lycée Charlemagne; I lost touch with him, then found him again, one evening, in the fall, at a concert in the Luxembourg gardens. We meet frequently and are very fond of each other.

**Madame Perrier**

Yes, yes, I remember.

**Maman Perrier**

I **don’t** remember.

**Madame Perrier**

You remember, mother, that Maurice was telling us…

**Maman Perrier**

I don’t remember anything. Besides, Maurice never speaks about this gentleman nor any other; he never opens his mouth.

**Madame Perrier**

He is not talkative by nature, and there is not much for him to do around here. But his studies are very costly and we don’t have the money to enable him to travel during his holidays

**Georges Rigal**

I assure you, madame, that Maurice is not bored when he is with you.

**Maman Perrier**

That would be the last straw!

**Georges Rigal**

He was telling me when he invited me: “You’ll see what fun we have in my home”.  
*To Maman Perrier:* In your home, madame. “First, we’ll walk all over my estate…”

**Maman Perrier**

His estate!

**Georges Rigal**

Yours, of course, madame.

**Maman Perrier**

What estate? This shack and two or three pieces of land, the size of handkerchiefs? I am sixty-seven, monsieur!…

**Georges Rigal**

You don’t look your age, madame.

**Maman Perrier**

Oh! I’m not ashamed of my age, monsieur; not everyone gets to become old! I am sixty-seven, soon sixty-eight, I have always earned my living, and I continue to work to not to be a burden on anybody and to delay as long as possible the time when Maurice’s extravagance will leave  
us penniless. If monsieur thinks he is among rich people, he is mistaken.

**Georges Rigal**

Madame, I think I am among good people and that is enough for me.

**Maman Perrier**

Maurice is boastful and proud. His father’s death was a great tragedy. *Georges bows*.  
He has a nerve.

**Georges Rigal**

He only exaggerated a little, and it’s quite natural. We are all proud of our village and I,  
who was born in Paris, brag about it; but don’t worry, madame, I don’t need to travel up and down large expanses of land; on the contrary, I dislike walking, I hate hunting.

**Maman Perrier**

That’s a good thing. All hunting here is private.

**Georges Rigal**

I’ll be happy to sit by the river with a fishing rod.

**Madame Perrier**

It’s a pleasant walk.

**Maman Perrier**

Yes, it’s a fair walk.

**Georges Rigal**

Is the river a long way off?

**Maman Perrier**

Quite close.

**Maman Perrier**

Quite close, about five miles from here.

**Georges Rigal**

I shall be all the happier to sit down.

*Marie Perrier enters through the gate.*

SCENE IV

*The same, Marie*

**Madame Perrier**

Here is my daughter, who is returning from her teacher’s house, monsieur.

**Georges Rigal**

Mademoiselle, mademoiselle… Marie, isn’t it?

**Maman Perrier**

What are you waiting for? Monsieur asks you a question, answer it, instead of hiding behind  
my skirts.

**Marie**

Yes grandmamma; yes, monsieur.

**Maman Perrier**

Yes, what? Monsieur asks you if your name is Marie, Is your name Marie or Jaquotte?

**Marie**

Marie.

**Georges Rigal**

I knew it, mademoiselle, I knew you by your first name. My friend Maurice constantly speaks about you.

**Madame Perrier**

Didn’t you see your brother?

**Marie**

No, mother.

**Madame Perrier**

Where on earth can he be?

**Marie**

I don’t know, I have just come straight from school.

**Georges Rigal**

You will soon have completed your schooling, mademoiselle; it’ a little boring, don’t you agree?

**Marie**

I would rather go to mademoiselle Moreau’s…

**Madame Perrier**

That’s her teacher.

**Marie**

… than stay home from morning till night.

**Georges Rigal**

I can understand you, mademoiselle.

**Madame Perrier**

She says that because at home, she helps with the housework.

**Maman Perrier**

And mademoiselle finds that hard.

**Marie**

Heck! They make me wash the plates.

**Maman Perrier**

And that ruins your delicate hands. Why shouldn’t you work like everybody else? Do you also imagine, like the gentleman, that we are rich and that you will get a dowry?

**Marie**

I don’t need one.

**Maman Perrier**

Really. Someone will marry you just to please you?

**Marie**

First, I shall never get married.

**Georges Rigal**

Oh! mademoiselle! It would be a crime.

**Maman Perrier**

You’ll do what others do, you conceited girl! You’ll get married, if you can, if someone asks you.

**Georges Rigal**

Oh! madame! It will be up to her.

**Maman Perrier**

I advise you not to fill your head with ludicrous ideas; do me the favour of going to your room and beginning your homework.

**Georges Rigal**

Madame, I ask for a day off for her, in my honour.

**Maman Perrier**

It’s not worth it, believe me! If I took you at your word, she would soon be in your way.  
*She goes toward the house and stops halfway.*

**Georges Rigal**

I object, madame, I object; don’t you believe it, mademoiselle.

**Madame Perrier**

Listen, dear, go and do your homework, and if you are good, I’ll give you the afternoon off; come, you go, I’ll take care of lunch. Will you come in, monsieur?

**Georges Rigal**, *his mind made up*

Oh! thank you, madame; all things considered, I’d rather wait for Maurice outside, breathe in the clean air.

**Madame Perrier**, *from the house.*

Monsieur did not come here to stifle inside.

**Georges Rigal**

I’ll walk round the garden.

**Maman Perrier**

That won’t take long.

**Georges Rigal**

Then I’ll go for a walk and look for Maurice.

**Madame Perrier**

You’ll probably meet him if you go that way.

**Georges Rigal**

That way?

**Madame Perrier**

Yes, to the right, on the way to the château.

**Georges Rigal**

Very well; thank you, madame.

**Maman Perrier**

Or else, that way.

**Georges Rigal**

That way?

**Maman Perrier**

Yes, to the left, on the way to the mill.

**Georges Rigal**

Very well; thank you, madame.

**Maman Perrier**

Oh! you’ll find him; he is not lost.

**Madame Perrier**

See you soon, monsieur; excuse us.

**Georges Rigal**

Go ahead, ladies.

*The ladies go in.*

SCENE V

**Georges Rigal**, *alone*

Go ahead, ladies, you’re in your own home – and I can’t say the same. *He sighs and sits on the metal chair.* What warmth! It almost seems as if I am disturbing them! *He looks at the house.* Ah! ladies, I don’t pride myself with having a dog’s nose, but judging from the way you treated me, I can guess you must be experts at bowling A week in your company will be real fun. Fortunately, I had the foresight to bring with me the railway timetable, the most entertaining of all books, and the most necessary when one is not prepared to be bored to death in a resort*. He takes the timetable from his pocket and thumbs through it, with his back turned to the house.* A whole week here! The venerable grandmother is right; my friend Maurice is a joker. For the last four or five years, he’s been pestering me to come and visit him in his country house. “Come, come”, he says to me, “it’s just a stone’s throw from here” (a stone’s throw of five hundred miles); “I’ll introduce you to my dear family, which will welcome you like my brother, to my dear old grandmother, to my mother who is the best of women and to my nice little sister”. For five whole years, I energetically refuse. I invent stupid excuses which are all believed (I should have noticed that); finally, all of a sudden, on a whim, when nobody is thinking about it anymore, I make up my mind, I inform them of my arrival, I spend a bad night on the train, and a costly night, too, as I travelled in first class so that I might appear posh when I fell in the arms of my future friends, and I arrive. There isn’t a soul at the station, and Maurice isn’t even home. He isn’t home, but the dear old grandmother is; the best of mothers is there, the nice little sister is there. Poor child! She may be nice after all, but one would need time to find out, and I think I don’t think I shall have the time.

SCENE VI

*Georges, Marie*

**Georges Rigal**, *Marie comes out of the kitchen and comes to him; he gets up.*

Mademoiselle…

**Marie**

Monsieur, my grandmother sends me to ask you which you prefer, old bread or fresh bread?

**Georges Rigal**

Your grandmother, mademoiselle? She is most kind… I am not afraid of eating fresh bread.

**Marie**

We have only old bread in the house.

**Georges Rigal**

Good, I prefer old bread.

**Marie**

But the baker is down the road.

**Georges Rigal**

Do you want me to go, mademoiselle?

**Marie**

Oh! monsieur!

**Georges Rigal**

I am joking, mademoiselle; in the country, I like any kind of bread; I’d even eat hempseed bread; I am so happy to see trees and fields, to see Maurice and to see you, mademoiselle. *Marie is silent.* Maurice has a charming sister, mademoiselle. Allow me to tell you that I have had a great liking for her for a long time. *Marie is silent.* It’s strange, mademoiselle, I think you have some of your grandmother’s features.

**Marie**

Me?

**Georges Rigal**

Yes, there, the lower part of your face.

**Marie**

I’m not as old.

**Georges Rigal**

I suspected as much, mademoiselle; you’re even about ten years younger than Maurice.  
You are sixteen or seventeen, sixteen rather.

**Marie**

I’ll be sixteen at Michaelmas.

**Georges Rigal**

At Michaelmas, perfect. You see that Maurice keeps me up to date; I know that you get on well with him.

**Marie**

Sometimes, he teases me

**Georges Rigal**

Oh! How naughty of him! But you are good-natured?

**Marie**

I don’t know.

**Georges Rigal**

I know, Maurice told me.

**Marie**

He does not know; he hardly ever sees me.

**Georges Rigal**

Of course, mademoiselle. Still he does not know his sister only from hearsay. He spends his  
free time with you. He considers you as a friend. When he takes photographs, for instance,  
you help him.

**Marie**

There’s no fear he’ll let me touch his things. He’s much too fussy.

**Georges Rigal**

You go for walks together. You go cycling.

**Marie**

Oh! no, monsieur.

**Georges Rigal**

I can assure you, mademoiselle, that nowadays the best brought up young ladies, young ladies of the best circles of society, all ride bicycles.

**Marie**

One would first need to own one.

**Georges Rigal**

That is true, mademoiselle. Ask your generous grandmother to get you one.

**Marie**

She’d send me packing in a big way.

**Georges Rigal**

What about Maurice? Perhaps he has some savings; would you like me to speak to Maurice?

**Marie**

Oh! monsieur!

**Georges Rigal**

Yes or no?

**Marie**

Monsieur!

**Georges Rigal**

I’ll speak to him. What have I to lose? I tell you again that he really loves his sister. Besides, does he not shower you with presents on your name day, on your birthday? For example.  
Do you want me to tell you what he sent you last time?

**Marie**

The Blue Danube.

**Georges Rigal**

I knew it. He tells me everything. You’re an exceptionally accomplished piano player.

**Marie**

Oh! hardly, monsieur.

**Georges Rigal**

You must play the Blue Danube beautifully.

**Marie**

I haven’t yet been able to decipher it.

**Georges Rigal**

I don’t blame you, mademoiselle; I am telling you this to prove to you that Maurice does not hide from me anything that concerns you. He makes me take an interest in your life and even … you know that Maurice likes to make plans; he tells me about all of them; it’s so pleasant to confide in someone. Among all those plans, he has a special one which might perhaps astonish you. Oh! It’s a vague plan, but which could be realised, and for my part, at first glance, I hope It may be realised; but as yet, I don’t have the right to confide it to you: you are too young, we are too young… Later, later… it’s a secret between Maurice and me; don’t try to guess, mademoiselle, you would not be able to.

**Marie**

I don’t care.

**Georges Rigal**

And I even less!**…** it’s terrible, mademoiselle, the more one looks at you, the more you resemble your grandmother.

**Marie**

Then I can say that you like older bread.

**Georges Rigal**

Mademoiselle, I should be most grateful.

SCENE VII

*Georges, then Madame Perrier and Marie, then Maman Perrier*

**Georges Rigal**, *alone*

Really, this will not lead to a marriage; I’m wasting my time here. Come now! One must look on the bright side of things, when there is no other choice. *He takes the time table, finds the telegram, and after hesitating briefly, he goes to the gate.* Whom are you asking, for?**…** Georges Rigal!**…**That’s me, my good man… A telegram!…Yes, yes, Georges Rigal, c/o Maurice Perrier… That’s it… Give it to me at once, thank you, thank you… *To Madame Perrier, drawn by the noise.* It’s a telegram which has just been delivered.

**Madame Perrier**

For us?**…** Oh! My goodness!

**Georges Rigal**

For me, madame*. Georges Rigal, c/o Maurice Perrier.*

**Madame Perrier**

Oh! I really got scared.

**Georges Rigal***, reading the telegram*

Oh! Damn, damn, damn! What a nuisance! Can you imagine such bad luck? They’re summoning me back to Paris. “Come back immediately, without fail. Signed: Tabuteau.” He’s the boss of my firm.

**Madame Perrier**

What did you say?

**Georges Rigal**

Read it, madame. *Madame Perrier stretches out her hand. Georges does not give over the telegram and reads it himself.*

“Come back immediately, without fail. Urgent matter.”

**Madame Perrier**

Well?

**Georges Rigal**

Well! I have to leave immediately.

**Madame Perrier**

What? You’re going to leave?

**Georges Rigal**

I have to, madame.

**Madame Perrier**

But tomorrow.

**Georges Rigal**

Today, madame; it’s an order and Mr. Tabuteau is a stickler for discipline.

**Madame Perrier**

Today?**…** Tonight.

**Georges Rigal**

Immediately, madame. Alas! Immediately, if there is a train.

**Madame Perrier**

There’s only one, the eleven o’clock.

**Georges Rigal**

I’ll take it.

**Madame Perrier**

What? You would be leaving in half an hour? It’s crazy.

**Georges Rigal**

Oh! madame! You don’t know Mr. Tabuteau. He’s terrible.

**Madame Perrier**

My word! That’s a dirty trick! Mother! Hey! Hey! Mother! *Maman Perrier appears*.  
This gentleman wants to leave now.

**Maman Perrier**

Really?

**Madame Perrier**

He’s just received a telegram.

**Georges Rigal**

You read it, madame.

**Maman Perrier**

Oh! I believe you.

**Georges Rigal**

I am being called back to my law firm immediately.

**Madame Perrier**

For an urgent matter, he says. Eh! Would you believe it, mother? How annoying!

**Maman Perrier**, *changing her attitude*

What do you expect, daughter; business is business. I am sure this gentleman knows his better than you do.

**Madame Perrier**

Of course, and I would be sorry if he felt we stood in his way. But to leave so quickly! Come, monsieur, think about it; send a wire to your boss.

**Georges Rigal**

Impossible, madame, it would land me in a fine pickle.

**Maman Perrier**

Let us stop insisting. Good! There’s a responsible young man, Ah! If only Maurice were like him.

**Georges Rigal**

I don’t deserve any credit, madame, put yourself in my place.

**Maman Perrier**

I approve of your behaviour and your modesty, monsieur, and I only wish Maurice were like you.

**Georges Rigal**

Madame, you make me blush.

**Madame Perrier**

I can’t get over it.

**Georges Rigal**

I couldn’t get over it either when the man gave me the telegram.

**Madame Perrier**

The man? What man? Normally, it’s a woman who brings them, Honorine.

**Maman Perrier**, *still in the same spot*

Old Honorine is sick.

**Madame Perrier**

Ah! At least take another train instead of the eleven o’clock.

**Maman Perrier**

It’s the fastest.

**Madame Perrier**

But it stops here in forty-five minutes. Where will you have lunch? I no longer have time to prepare lunch.

**Georges Rigal**

I shall lunch in the course of the trip, at some station buffet.

**Maman Perrier**

In Laroche.

**Madame Perrier**

He’s not in Laroche yet.

**Maman Perrier**

Let him take something to eat. A piece of bread with something. There’s always eggs and cheese in the kitchen cupboard.

**Madame Perrier**

Go and have a look, Marie. *She pushes Marie into the house.*

**Georges Rigal**. *aside.*

I feel quite moved. You need only to know how to deal with them.

**Maman Perrier**

As for me, I feel I have enough strength left in my old legs to climb on the ladder and pick a few cherries.

**Georges Rigal**

Cherries? Don’t do that, madame!

**Maman Perrier**

It’s against thirst. They’ll take away the taste of dust and leave a good taste in your mouth.

**Georges Rigal**

Madame, please, do not climb on that ladder at your age; I couldn’t bear to see you taking risks. I would never forgive myself if there were an accident.

**Maman Perrier**

Don’t be afraid, my dear young man, the ladder is sturdy.

**Madame Perrier**

And the tree is not very high. We are so sorry, monsieur; and what will your parents say?

**Georges Rigal**

Nothing at all, madame.

**Madame Perrier**

You’ll make them think badly of us; they’ll think you were anxious to leave us.

**Georges Rigal**

Don’t worry, madame, I answer for them.

**Madame Perrier**

You’re kind.

**Georges Rigal**

I’m an orphan.

**Madame Perrier**

Oh!**…**monsieur! And I was hoping to keep you for a long time; I was preparing your room. I had picked flowers. Marie! Marie!

**Marie**, *at a window*

What, mother?

**Madame Perrier**

You know the flowers which are in water in a pot on the mantelpiece?

**Marie**

On the mantelpiece in your room? Yes mother.

**Madame Perrier**

I intended monsieur Georges to have them. Put a string round them and bring them down.

**Georges Rigal**

Oh! madame, what a kind thought! But I hate having to carry…

**Madame Perrier**

It’s not heavy. Parisians like to return from the country with bunches of flowers.

**Georges Rigal**

I am embarrassed, madame. I am upsetting all your household.

**Maman Perrier***comes back*

Here, monsieur, here’s a handful of beautiful cherries.

**Georges Rigal**

At least I have not come for nothing.

**Maman Perrier**

They’re ripe and juicy, even though they are called sour cherries.

**Georges Rigal**

Thank you, madame; as I suck them, I shall think of you, but it is almost time, ladies; allow me to leave.

**Maman Perrier**

Don’t be in such a hurry, you have time. Once the departure time is set, we do not mess around with our guests and we have never made anyone miss the train.

**Georges Rigal**

Besides, I have my ticket; I had bought a return ticket.

**Maman Perrier**

It makes the return easy.

**Georges Rigal**

It’s valid for a week, but may be used before.

**Marie***coming back.*

Here we are, monsieur, the small package and the flowers.

**Georges Rigal**

Thank you, mademoiselle. I think that's everything, ladies.

**Maman Perrier**

And your case, on the bench.

**Georges Rigal**

Thank you, madame. *He holds the cherries in one hand, the flowers in the other and to take his case, he wants to put the little package in his mouth.* Oh! the little package smells as good as the flowers.

**Marie**

Perhaps it’s the cheese, monsieur.

**Georges Rigal**

If you told me it’s something else, I would refuse to believe you, but it’s very pleasant after a good meal… Will you allow me, mademoiselle, in the name of my long friendship with your brother, to kiss you.

**Maman Perrier**

Of course, she allows it!

**Marie**

As you wish, monsieur.

**Georges Rigal**

I really want to, mademoiselle. *He does not kiss her.* And now, ladies, after this pleasant conversation, there only remains for me to tell you of my deep gratitude, to thank you warmly for your unforgettable welcome.

**Madame Perrier**

It was nothing, monsieur.

**Georges Rigal**

On the contrary, madame, it was a great deal.

**Maman Perrier**

One does what one can.

**Georges Rigal**

I am deeply touched. Please, give my best and my congratulations to Maurice; tell him from me that he has an exemplary family.

**Maman Perrier**

We certainly will.

**Georges Rigal**

That this family has certainly won me over.

**Madame Perrier**

What is he going to say. He’ll be furious.

**Maman Perrier**

He should have been here.

**Georges Rigal**

It will be a lesson for him and for me also.

**Maman Perrier**

You may run into him between here and the station.

**Georges Rigal**

I have lost hope.

**Madame Perrier**

Do you know the way?

**Georges Rigal**

I haven’t had time to forget it. Goodbye, ladies.

**Maman Perrier**

Just follow the lane with the acacias.

**Georges Rigal**

I know, madame; one follows the telegraph wires.

**Madame Perrier**

Goodbye; you will come back, I hope.

**Georges Rigal**

Perhaps sooner than you think

**Madame Perrier**

But next time, let it be worth it.

**Georges Rigal**

Oh! not for only a week. I’ll stay until you throw me out.

**Madame Perrier**, *shaking her old grandmother’s handkerchief.*

Good!

**All Together**

Good, good!

*Curtain*

**THE END**