Side 1 – Alois

Eugenie: *Monsieur*, I am-

Alois: The girl that was supposed to marry Joseph, yes I know about that as well. How've they been treating you here? You know I am a gentleman, regardless of what else you may've heard about me. Is Mrs. Dean still here? Did she take care of you adequately?

Eugenie: Mrs. Dean quit the house yesterday, but she did take excellent care of us before she departed.

Alois: Ah, what a shame! I should've liked to have seen her - she always hated me terribly, so it's probably just as well, but still. I'm sure it was my fault, me hitting her with that club all the time.

Alois pauses, chuckling and becoming wistful

Alois: I have to assume you arrived too recently to be involved in the plot with country bumpkin Brutus here and his band of down-home traitors.

Beat

Alois: Or did you? You stuck around instead of just going home after you learned that my brother had died, so you must have had some sort of idea to keep you here . . .

Alois comes to a realization

Alois: Oh you dogs! You dirty dogs! She came here to marry a D'Ascoyne and shore up the family name, then you lost the first D'Ascoyne, but the girl was already here, so why not keep her in your pocket while you gin up a second?

Alois approaches Francois

Alois: But I already am the second D'Ascoyne, aren't I? So if you were planning on killing me then you must have devised a third one. . . My word, you were going to have her marry old Ferdy, weren't you? You absolute devils! And you people call me a monster.

Side 2 – Corbeau

Matthieu: Show these ladies to the house. They'll be staying with us. . . for a time at least.

Corbeau: Oh I'd be happy to! You couldn't ask for a better guide than a Wainwright!

Matthieu: Yes, I can see you'll get along famously. Now farewell.

Mattheiu leaves once more, this time successfully

Corbeau: Ladies, it's my honor to guide you to the house! Come right along with me, I'll set you straight.

Marie: *Merci, monsieur*, we are in your debt.

Corbeau: It's my privilege to be of aid to some real aristocrats! We don't get many of your type around here - I mean we've got the D'Ascoynes, for whatever that's worth, but not real aristocrats. Like Frenchy types. From France.

Eugenie: I am of the family Dupleix, of Gascony. My great ancestor Phillipe the Brave was ennobled during the crusades under King Louis the 9th, the saint king.

Corbeau: Well now that is something. The crusades! We ain't so fancy out here, my family's from Kalamazoo. But out here we've got one of the biggest spreads in the county!

Eugenie: Incredible.

Corbeau: And you're single then, right? Since you came over to marry old Joe. I mean young Joe. Rest in peace.

Marie: *Monsieur-*

Eugenie: You are being too familiar, sir.

Corbeau: Oh I'm sorry, I didn't mean anything about it. It's just. . . Are you gonna stay? Or what? What's your plan?

Eugenie (through gritted teeth): God will light our path, *monsieur.*

Corbeau: Oh yeah. I mean - yes.

Side 3 - Matthieu & Francois

Matthieu: Did I hear you right? You want to get these girls, these strangers, involved in the plan?

Francois: I didn't say that.

Matthieu: You're a fool if you think you can use them! I've met Europeans before. They're totally unreliable.

Francois: I'm not saying we should make them co-conspirators! But I am saying that you can't see past your own nose if you have a real aristocrat drop into your lap, lost and adrift in the world, and you can't think of even a single use for her.

Matthieu frowns at Francois, who smiles in return

Matthieu: She's an outsider, a foreigner! We put her on the next train out of town and we just nip it right in the bud.

Francois: And if she doesn't leave? What then?

Matthieu: We make her! We run the town, without a Count we run the whole county! She's got no friends, no connections - she's absolutely nothing.

Francois: All of these are reasons why we should develop her! We could be her everything, can't you see it? And what's the cost? A room in this big empty house, a little bit of food, and just plain old being nice to this poor woman for a little while.

Matthieu: Distractions! Vanities! Alois is coming and that's the only thing that matters! He'll kill us all if we fail, we probably only have a week at most until he's here, and here you are fantasizing about some strange bird that just flew into the nest.

Francois: Just be nice, okay? That's all I'm asking. You'll regret it for the rest of your life if you antagonize her and then she sticks around.

Matthieu: Fine, fine! I'll be nice.

Francois: No you won't.

Matthieu: I'll be as nice as I can be.

Francois: Which is not nice.

Matthieu: As nice as I can be is, by definition, as nice as I can be.

Francois: That won't be good enough!

Side 4 – Ney

Ney: I am pleased to say that I have been successful in my bid to organize a welcoming party for our mutual friend - I have been in touch with three of my old comrades who have all agreed to help. The distances being such as they are, and the limited time-frame being such that it is, they have prepared to greet him in full style along the way from his arrival point in New Orleans while I await good news from them here in Boise. It is my dearest hope that everything back home will be ready by the time I return to you with joyful tidings. Your honorable servant, Lieutenant Paul Ney, retired, territorial grenadiers.

Side 5 – Matthieu & Mrs Dean

Mrs. Dean: Not to be a prying Brian, Mr. Vole, but. . .

Matthieu: What is it, Mrs. Dean?

Mrs. Dean: To speak seriously, sir - what will you do when Alois arrives? Will you work for him as you did his Father?

Matthieu (uncomfortable, irritated at her prying): I shall cross that bridge when I come to it. I should ask the same of you - you remember what he was like, you're in no small danger here yourself.

Mrs. Dean: Oh that's simple - I've got a sister in Coeur d'Alene, I'll just pack my bag and go live with her.

Matthieu: And leave us to Alois' tender mercies, after all our years together?

Mrs. Dean: Ha! As though you'd spare a single thought for me if the shoe was on the other boot! I'm sure if you had a single person in the world that cared about you and would be willing to take you in that you'd be thinking along the exact same line.

Matthieu: Thank you for the observation as to my status in life, Mrs. Dean. You are dismissed to your chores.

Mrs. Dean: Certainly, sir. Oh! The girls are up and are as hungry as birds, I told them to just come down to the kitchen.

Matthieu: Mrs. Dean! They're aristocrats, they'll want better than to eat in the kitchen like common servants.

Mrs. Dean: Well I'm sorry sir, but the dining room is still closed up for mourning, there was nothing else I could do. Maybe they won't notice.

Matthieu: Yes, and maybe the princess won't notice the pea we've so cunningly slipped beneath her mattress. What's done is done, show them in.

Side 6 – Francois

Francois: We met last night - but I would never miss an opportunity to say *enchante, mademoiselle.*

Marie: It is my pleasure, *monsieur* - you look like you are getting along well with *Mademoiselle* Dupleix.

Francois: I am - we've been having a very stimulating conversation. She's a remarkable woman, it's exhilarating to have someone of real breeding and culture out here. I think we'll all be fine friends. You ladies will bring our dusty little town a certain, how do you say, *jen-ay-say-gwa.*

Eugenie flinches but, like a great and elegant sailing ship, plows ahead regardless

Eugenie: Francois was just telling me about the other D'Ascoyne, the one with the ranch. He said he's very handsome.

Francois (lying with no small skill): Oh yes, Ferdy - I mean Ferdinand D'Ascoyne. I only met him once, some time ago, but I recall him cutting a fine figure. And, in more good news, I just spoke with Mr. Vole earlier today and it sounded like we would be throwing a little party for you at the end of the week! Nothing elaborate, of course, mourning and all, but we thought it might be nice to invite the town to come and get a look at the newcomers. It's not every day we get such *bella* visitors from such a prestigious *familia*!

Eugenie flinches again

Eugenie: That would be divine, *Monsieur* Butterfield. After wandering so long in the desert we have finally found our promised land.

Francois: My dear lady - together we shall turn this town on its head. To the ball!

Eugenie: *Santé!* To the ball!

Side 7 – Marie & Corbeau

Corbeau: Wow! So you really are from France, huh?

Marie: It is a place that people are from.

Corbeau: Not out here.

Marie: *Monsieur,* Idaho is recently settled, is it not? So you are all from somewhere else. You yourself are from Michigan, non?

Corbeau: That's true but, I mean, come on. Michigan's not France, it's not, you know. . . exotic.

Marie: It is all relative - what if I told you that Michigan was very exotic to a Frenchwoman?

Corbeau seems to see things in a new light

Corbeau: Oh! Well - I never considered it like that.

Marie: But now you are in Idaho. And you are rich?

Corbeau: We are! Well we're not. I mean, we're kind of. We have a lot of land. It's not much now but one day this'll all be irrigated, you know! There'll be development, farms and homes and families, and we can sell them all the land they'll need and THEN we'll be rich. I mean, we ARE rich right now, just not, you know-

Marie: In money.

Corbeau: . . . yeah. We gotta lotta quail though!

Marie: That is not so bad! Owning anything sounds fine to me. I do not have a plan really for myself beyond following my sister around, you know. And I cannot do that forever.

Corbeau: How is she doing?

Marie: She came all the way across creation to marry a man in Idaho, and then, as if that was not enough, he did not even do us the dignity of being alive when we got here. How do you think she is doing?

Corbeau (out of his depth): I don't think I could rightly say.

Marie (smiling, weirdly pleased that he's simple): You know - perhaps it is good you cannot say. Perhaps we all would be better if we could not say how Eugenie was doing. I do not have any of her pathologies - I am a normal person. Like yourself, *non*? You are normal here?

Corbeau: Oh I’m normal as hell.

Side 8 – Jeffers & Eugenie

Eugenie: We have heard that the late Count left an imperfect will behind.

Jeffers (very unhappy): Now see here, you're interrupting my work with total nonsense! Another will!? S-some kind of secret will!? How ridiculous! Nothing could be further from the truth! To hear you come in here and say-

Eugenie: What would happen to the title then, it would revert to the crown?

Jeffers: It would. . . well. . . now I don't really see how any of this is your business!

Eugenie: Noble and ancient family D'Ascoyne, *monsieur* Jeffers! It was to be my family! The title is not only my business, it is my only business!

Jeffers: Now lady I must insist you sit down-

Eugenie (sensing weakness, a predator in her element): Is it not true, *monsieur*, that you are preparing a secret will right now.

Jeffers (flustered, terrified): But. . . but how could-

Eugenie (wild in triumph): A secret will is the most ridiculous thing in the world, anyone with any sense knows it would not stand up to any kind of opposition!

Jeffers: Who told you all this?

Eugenie: The Dupleix family is 600 years old, *monsieur*. We have learned a thing or two in that time.

Jeffers: N-now I don't. . . I-I'm not saying anything! I don't know you and I'm not doing anything like what you describe!

Eugenie: *MONSIEUR*!

Jeffers: B-but even if what you said was true, which it isn't! Then I still don't understand what you want out of me! Why come and attack me like this?

Eugenie: There must be another relation, a cousin, with some sort of legitimate claim. A cousin.

Jeffers: You are talking purest nonsense, ladies! But I will tell you, in relation to absolutely nothing, if it will help you conclude your business here such that you can go and darken some other poor sinners' door, that there is another D'Ascoyne. A cousin once removed but from the male side so he can inherit. He lives on a ranch in Nebraska.

Marie: Is he handsome?

Jeffers: Well, as I am a man-

Marie: Do not give me that, you have eyes. Is he handsome?

Jeffers hesitates

Jeffers: I have never met the man, but I have never heard words like 'handsome' used to describe him.

Eugenie: But is he smart? Learned? Charming?

Jeffers (very carefully): Those words would, I think, to my knowledge, be even less relevant.

Marie: I see.

Eugenie: The woman of faith can endure any earthly troubles if she walks in the light of the Lord.

Jeffers (venomously): You are very brave, *madame*.

Side 8 – Mrs Dean, Eugenie & Marie

Mrs. Dean: Well my stars, if these aren't the ladies we've heard so much about, why aren't you a sight for dry eyes!

Marie (as an aside): Is this an Idaho expression?

Eugenie (reciprocating): I dread to think so.

Mrs. Dean: But I thought you weren't supposed to come? But then here you are! You must be worn to the dome, you poor things!

Marie: *Madame*, I think you are right.

Mrs. Dean: You just let me take it from here! We've already prepared your room for you and we'll have ham, cheese, and a pot of tea made up for you straight away, there's always rest for the weary as they say!

Eugenie: You have saved us, *madame*. You are salvation in a house dress.

Mrs. Dean: Well listen to you! It's such a shame Joseph had to go along with his dear departed Father, bless his soul - it would have been such a pleasure to have women in the house again, and we could've even had the ball like we'd planned! Mr. Vole said it was off, on account of the Counts being dead, bless their souls, but. . . Well there's nothing to be done about it now, what's bun is bun - come in and follow me.

Eugenie: You are truly a light in the darkness, Mrs. Dean. The star we have been following west through the desert all these days.

Mrs. Dean: Oh my, such fancy talk! It'll be such a treat to have you here, the manners of the town being what they are.

Eugenie: Two innocent women, women who have never hurt anybody in the world, show up to what they think is going to be a wedding, a future, a home, and not only is that all snatched away from them in an instant but then they immediately begin being bombarded about what their plans are! As though we could possibly have any conception of them ourselves!

Mrs. Dean: Well, what are your-

Eugenie: *Non.*

Mrs. Dean: What ARE your plans?

Eugenie: *Non!*

Marie: Well-

Mrs. Dean: You were supposed to stay here, maybe you still could!

Marie: We-

Mrs. Dean: Naturally we'd love to have you, but what would you do?

Marie: We have just arrived and-

Mrs. Dean: You'd need some kind of way to support yourselves, and-

Marie: - and we first need to rest before-

Mrs. Dean: You really haven't thought at all about what you'll do now?

Eugenie (with all her great might): We will figure it out! Later! We always figure it out! God will light our path, *madame*!

Mrs. Dean: Oh - well. Anyway, here's your room and if you need anything then you can just ring, tu casa es mi casa.