

A DAY OF GRACE

By

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&

ChatGPT-4

A short of feature ambition, a taut AI-collaborated neo-noir of shadows, suspense, and moral compromise brought to life by a world-class cast.

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To be directed by: Alexis Néret

RADIO ANNOUNCER (V.O.)  
Despite the official abolition of  
capital punishment, authorities  
confirm a final, exceptional  
measure will be carried out  
tomorrow.

FADE IN:

**ACT I: WAITING FOR GRACE**

SUPERIMPOSE:

"PARIS — SUNDAY, MARCH 29, 1981 — DAWN"

Fog coils across the cobblestones.

The Seine glistens under the first pale light. A faint WIND  
RATTLES IRON FENCES and TORN POSTERS.

A VENDOR (#1) pins up Le Journal du Dimanche on a bulletin  
board:

"The GUILLOTINE ABOLISHED — FINAL EXECUTION THIS MONDAY"

Below the headline is a grainy photo of CLAIRE LEMARCHAND  
(late 30s) in custody; bruised, *defiant*.

A MIME (50s) stands still nearby, face painted white with a  
single black tear beneath one eye.  
Scars peek faintly beneath the makeup.

His eyes lock on the poster, he knows her.

A blink. A tremor runs through him, subtle, but total.

He reaches for the image, misses.  
Sways, just slightly, as if the ground shifts.

Steps back. Breath caught.

The street falls silent. Faces blur past. Only her image  
stays sharp.

He presses a hand to his chest, like something inside just  
broke loose.

Drops to the curb. No act. Just stillness.

3 EXT. PRISON DE LA SANTÉ - MORNING 3

Cold, symmetrical, oppressive.

4 INT. CLAIRE'S CELL - CONTINUOUS 4

Small. Damp. No window.

Claire sits on a cot. Her hair is cropped. Her posture straight.

Across from her a PRIEST finishes a prayer.

PRIEST  
You may still speak with God. Even  
now.

She looks at him, No anger. No fear.

CLAIRE  
God wasn't at my trial.

5 FLASHBACK - INT. POLICE VAN - NIGHT (1975) 5

Dim interior. RAIN SPATTERS the WINDOWS.

Claire, early 30s, sits handcuffed between TWO OFFICERS.

The OFFICER on Claire's left (40s) holds a **clipboard**.

OFFICER  
Just sign. It's done either way.

Claire doesn't even look at it.

CLAIRE  
I won't confess to a lie.

OFFICER  
Suit yourself.

He tosses the clipboard aside. Claire stares forward, fierce, unblinking.

6 INT. CLAIRE'S CELL - MORNING (BACK TO PRESENT) 6

She exhales, slow, steady. Looks down at her hands.

Her wrists are bruised, skin pinched and purpling beneath the steel.

CLAIRE  
 (to herself)  
 They didn't want truth. Just  
 someone to blame.

7 **EXT. CITY STREETS - MORNING**

7

The mime peels off his costume, revealing worn civilian clothes underneath.

From a nearby trash bin, he pulls a scrap of cardboard.

With charcoal, he **draws a single bold line** from a street corner to the prison.

He folds the paper and starts walking. Past cafes, past tourists, past posters for movies and politics.

Every step *purposeful*. Every second *ticking*.

"UN JOUR DE GRÂCE"

8 **FLASHBACK - INT. PARIS BACK ALLEY - NIGHT (1975)**

8

RAIN LASHES the STREETS. Yellow lamplight flickers over garbage bins and puddles.

A YOUNGER version of the MIME, unpainted, is dragged by TWO COPS in uniform. His coat is torn. Blood on his lip. He doesn't speak. Doesn't resist.

A THIRD COP follows behind, holding a truncheon stick.

COP #1  
 Used to be a cop, this one.  
 Algiers. Thought he could clean up  
 their mess.

COP #2  
 Now look at him. Tongue cut, face  
 like a puzzle.

A FIGURE steps out of the shadows.

It's CLAIRE. A bag of groceries lies forgotten behind her.

She moves between the cops and the mime.

CLAIRE  
 He's done nothing. Let him go.

COP #1  
Keep walking Miss. Nothing to see  
here.

She doesn't move, instead, she pulls something from her coat  
— a camera.

FLASH! The bulb explodes with light.

CLAIRE  
Try explaining that to the paper.

Tense silence. The mime's nose drips blood. Her jaw clenches.

The third cop lifts the truncheon —  
A blur — he swings.

She raises her arm, THWACK! The blow lands on her wrist.

She gasps, just once. But stays standing.

The cops hesitate, then back off. They glance at each  
other... Walk away.

COP #2  
You're lucky he's mute. Would have  
hung himself with his own tongue.

They disappear into the night fog.

The mime slowly straightens, unsteady, stumbles.

She approaches.

From under her coat, she pulls a **soft scarf**.

But she doesn't hand it over yet.

Instead:

With a trembling wrist, she gently dabs his cheek with her  
scarf.

Wipes the blood from his nose.

He flinches. Slowly relaxes.

Then — and only then — she offers him the scarf.

CLAIRE  
Don't let them break you.

He lifts one hand, pantomimes "**thank you.**"

She half-smiles. Turns. Doesn't look back.

9      **EXT. PARK BENCH - MIDDAY (BACK TO PRESENT)**

9

The mime sits alone.

He opens his sketchbook, the first PAGE CRACKLES. A drawing, old, almost worn through: **Claire dabbing his bloody cheek.** The gesture that saved him.

He stares at it. For a long beat.

Then turns the page. **Blank.** He rips it out. Draws, fast, focused.

A map. A plan. A mission.

He tears the scarf she gave him years ago into a strip, ties it around his wrist: a warrior's binding, a reminder that grace comes at a cost.

He rises.

10      **INT. CROWDED MÉTRO TRAIN (MOVING) - EARLY AFTERNOON**

10

Dark tunnels. Flickering overhead lights.

The mime stands among strangers, invisible in plain sight. He clutches a worn sketch of her face.

His reflection slides across the métro window: a ghost chasing ghosts with nothing but silence and doubt.

11      **EXT. CITY COURTHOUSE - AFTERNOON**

11

The mime climbs a side gate.

12      **EXT. COURTHOUSE SERVICE ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS**

12

Behind the grand facade lies a **narrow alley**, wedged between sandstone walls. A rusted **delivery hatch** marked "SERVICE / ARCHIVES" is half-obsured behind trash bins and a leaking gutter.

The mime crouches low. Pulls wire from his coat. Works the hatch quietly. CLICK. It opens inward, revealing a steep, narrow staircase descending into dark stone.

He slips inside. The LID CREAKS SHUT but doesn't lock.

## ACT II: THE DESCENT

13      **INT. BASEMENT SERVICE STAIRWELL - CONTINUOUS**      13

He descends. One flickering bulb dangles above. At the bottom:

14      **A REINFORCED DOOR**      14

The mime slips a mirror under the gap — no feet.

He struggles to open the LOCK... CLICK.

15      **INT. COURTHOUSE BASEMENT ARCHIVES - CONTINUOUS**      15

Only the faintest light filters through a high, transom window.

He moves between metal cabinets, guiding himself with a pocket mirror, catching slivers of light.

Overhead, fluorescent tubes hang dormant, unlit.

At a shelf, he pulls a LIGHTER from his coat. FLICKS it.

A small flame reveals a **box** marked:

"CLAIRE LEMARCHAND" — SEALED

Inside:

- A weathered folder stamped:  
"EVIDENCE WITHHELD - SEE SUBFILE B"
- A typed witness list, one name **crossed out in red**:  
"Mme. Roussel - neighbor"
- A press ID — \*\*Elise Fournier\*\* (address scribbled on the back: 47 Rue Keller)\*

The mime takes the press ID, then scans the list.

INSERT — CLOSE ON:

A **torn photo** corner stamped: "**ARCH. 71-A**"

His eyes lock on the code. He runs his finger under the words.





MATCH CUT BACK TO:

20      **INT. COURTHOUSE BASEMENT ARCHIVES - LATE AFTERNOON (BACK TO PRESENT)**      20

The mime blinks.

He clutches the torn statement.

Somewhere above, a DOOR SLAMS.  
VOICES echo faintly, descending the stairwell. Keys JINGLE.

The mime freezes, the charred note pressed to his chest.

The footsteps grow louder.  
A flashlight beam flickers under the door at the far end.

The mime stuffs the files into his coat and bolts, swallowed by the maze of metal stacks.

21      **INT. MÉTRO TRAIN - EVENING (MOVING)**      21

The CAR RATTLES through black tunnels. Fluorescent bulbs stutter.

The mime rides, the file corner stamped "ARCH. 71-A", rests on his knee. He studies it, unsure what it means yet.

The mime folds the fragment, tucks it away.

22      **INT. ELISE'S APARTMENT - EVENING**      22

Dust dances in the mime's flashlight beams. Heavy.

Walls lined with notebooks, reel-to-reel tapes.

A **cracked photo frame** holds a "La Liberté, October 1975." newspaper clipping.

Headline: "Elise Fournier's Final Story – Hidden Archive Scandal Exposed"

Caption below a black-and-white photo: "Elise shaking hands with a union rep."

Beside it:

A **municipal infrastructure map**.

**Red grease pencil**:

→ ARCHIVES MUNICIPAL - 7<sup>e</sup>

→ Access Point: Ligne 9 - Hidden Gate

→ ARCH. 71-A = Restricted Basement.

The mime scans the desk.

A shoe box labeled: **CLAIRE LEMARCHAND - 1975.**

Inside:

- Torn envelopes
- Clipped articles
- A burned letter fragment: "...she didn't do it. She arrived after. I saw—"
- A cassette labeled: **"MICHEL - Sept 12, 1975"**

He slides it into a **battered tape recorder**. CLICKS PLAY.

MICHEL (ON TAPE)

She said she'd go public. That letter, you still have it, don't you? If I don't get the rest, everyone finds out what I did. You think I care? Let them. But she'll go down too. She kept copies, Raymond! The land deal, the kickbacks...  
If Elise talks, my father's name is ruined. I go to prison.  
(voice cracks)  
I never meant to hurt her... But she wouldn't stop.

Silence. Then, a CLICK.

23

### **FLASHBACK - SILENT**

23

- Claire entering Elise's apartment
- Blood already on the floor
- Michel watching from across the street
- Mme. Roussel's silhouette behind lace curtains.

24

### **BACK IN THE ROOM**

24

The mime searches deeper.

A **typed note**:

"Roussel confirmed timeline. Met Claire in stairwell 6:17 PM, too late to be killer."

**Margin:**

"Roussel dead. No witnesses."

25      **FLASHBACK - INT. PRIVATE DINING CLUB - NIGHT**      25

Crystal chandeliers. Velvet chairs. MICHEL (40s) toasts with a GENERAL, a BANK EXECUTIVE, and LAMARQUE'S SON.

GENERAL

Monday's the last chop, they say.

LAMARQUE'S SON

A shame. Tradition had such...  
finality.

MICHEL

Some things deserve a clean end.

They laugh. COGNAC GLASSES CLINK. Michel's smile fades for a beat... then returns.

26      **MÉTRO TRAIN (MOVING) - NIGHTFALL (BACK TO PRESENT)**      26

The mime rides again, soot-streaked, eyes hollow.

In his lap: the folded map. The code. The names.

A tunnel light flickers. Outside the window: a wall flashes past.

**GRAFFITI** - crude and urgent:

"→ **ARCH. 71 - KEEP OUT**"

The mime blinks. Leans forward.  
As the train slows, he rises.

27      **INT. SHUTTERED PLATFORM - CONTINUOUS**      27

The TRAIN GROANS to a STOP. DOORS WHEEZE OPEN.

He steps out.

Old TILES CRACK beneath his FEET.

Across the distant wall, the same message **repeated**, but this time older, **partially eroded**:

"**ARCH. 71 - KEEP OUT**"

He scans the darkness.

At the far end, behind broken scaffolding, he finds it: a half-collapsed access tunnel.

Bricked over, but cracked wide enough to squeeze through.

Torn tarp flaps across the opening. He pulls it aside. Slides in.

28      **INT. ACCESS TUNNEL - CONTINUOUS**

28

The ceiling barely clears five feet, rough brick and mortar, arched and damp.

He crawls hunched, knees scraping the gritty floor.

Rusty pipes crisscross overhead.

His flashlight beam flickers across rat droppings, a rusted wrench, an old gas mask.

At the far end, the bricks give way to rough, gray concrete. A jagged opening, just wide enough. He squeezes through.

29      **INT. UNDERGROUND SERVICE CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS**

29

Colder. Narrower.

Flat concrete walls. Paint peeled back like skin.

An empty pipe rack hugs one side. The ceiling sags above.

His flashlight shakes in his hand.

WATER DRIPS, slow and rhythmic.

Up ahead, at the dead end:

30      **A SEALED FIRE DOOR**

30

Stenciled on it, faded and cracked:

"PRÉFECTURE POLICE ARCHIVES - 1970"

He grips the handle. Tries to pull.

Nothing. Stuck solid.

He drops to a knee, studies the base.

The door frame is blackened, a half-melted gasket fused to the jamb. A burnt matchstick curls in the corner.

He wedges a broken pipe into the frame.

Pushes. Strains.

The PIPE SCREECHES.

Finally:

A dull POP. The latch gives.

The DOOR GROANS OPEN an inch.

31

# **INT. ABANDONED POLICE ARCHIVE - CONTINUOUS**

31

Blackened cabinets lean like tombstones. Ash floats in his lighter's glow.

The mime pries open a drawer: "C. LEMARCHAND - 1975."

**One folder survives, charred but intact.**

He opens it, carefully.

Inside:

- **POLICE REPORT** (partly burned):

"Witness: Mme. Roussel. Met Claire on Rue Keller at 6:17 PM, too late to commit homicide."

Stamped "**RECEIVED.**"

Hand-scrawled: *"Disregard, witness now deceased."*

- **EMERGENCY CALL LOG:**

*"Caller: Claire Lemarchand. Café des Deux Mondes, 6:05 PM."*

*Dispatch notes: "Caller distressed. Claimed to find victim upon entering."*

- **ADDITIONAL POLICE MEMO** (burned edges): "Subject claims to have found the body at approx. 18:00."

Handwritten: "Why wait 5 minutes to call?"

Stamped: "INCONCLUSIVE — open for prosecution"

Later scrawl: "Disregard, witness (Roussel) now deceased."

• **SCORCHED LETTER FRAGMENT:**

One torn scrap, ink faded, heat-blistered, but legible:

"... if anything happens to me..."  
"she arrived after."

The mime freezes. Recognizes the handwriting — Elise's. A chill runs through him.

As his thumb brushes the singed corner—

32     **FLASHBACK - INT. ELISE'S FLAT - NIGHT (1975 - MICHEL'S POV)**     32

The faint CLICK of a door handle.

A shaft of hallway light cuts into the dark as Michel slips inside, careful, silent.

Dim interior. Stifling.

Stacks of papers. Tapes.

A corkboard on the wall:

"**Lamarque Cover-up - 1975**" scratched across it in fading red marker.

**Index cards** and **Polaroids** line the corkboard.

- A Polaroid labeled: *Michel Deneuvebourg*, circled in red.
- Another: *Claire Lemarchand*, circled, then crossed out.

Michel's eyes dart —

On the table: a **complete letter**, crisp:

"... if anything happens to me, the land deal and the kickbacks will surface. He fled, she arrived after."

He grabs it. Folds it. Slides it into his coat.

A voice from the hallway:

ELISE (O.S.)  
You weren't supposed to come here.

She appears, defiant.

MICHEL  
You sent that letter. You wanted this.

ELISE

You think hush money can bury a murder? If anything happens to me... it doesn't stop.

She moves forward, shoves him.  
He stumbles, knocks over a LAMP. CRASH.

She steps back, his heel catches the rug. She slips, hits the edge of the desk. THUD. Blood pools beneath her cheek.

Michel freezes. Trembling.  
He wipes the lamp. Puts it upright.

Then—

FOOTSTEPS OUTSIDE.

**Claire** climbing the stairwell, groceries in hand.

Michel panics. Grabs his coat. The letter secure in his pocket. He starts to run, then stumbles. Nearly falls into the corkboard.

His eyes flick across it —  
Everything laid out: the **cover-up**, the **names**, the **archive code**:

▶ "ARCH. 71-A"

▶ "Hidden basement access - Métro Ligne 9"

Another sound, the STAIRWELL DOOR CREAKS OPEN. CLAIRE'S FOOTSTEPS NEAR.

He bolts out the back. Just before the door shuts, he glances back:

Elise's body.  
The empty table.  
The corkboard still intact.

Too much to grab. He disappears into the night.

CUT BACK TO:

33      **INT. ABANDONED POLICE ARCHIVE - NIGHT (BACK TO PRESENT)**      33

The mime's grip tightens on the half-burned page.

34      **FLASHBACK - EXT. APARTMENT COURTYARD - NIGHT (1975)**      34

A BREEZE stirs curtains.

Above, MME. ROUSSEL, silver-haired, stern, leans close to the window.

Her eyes narrow as she watches below.

Claire enters the building's stairwell, groceries in hand.

Mme. Roussel doesn't move. Watches Claire disappear inside.

35      **INT. ABANDONED POLICE ARCHIVE - NIGHT (BACK TO PRESENT)**      35

The mime tucks Elise's charred page and the notes into his coat.

He pauses, then turns for the exit.

He freezes.

A STRAY DOG sits in the middle of the corridor. Mangy. Alert. Watching him. It must have followed him through the tunnel.

A long beat.

The mime tries to shoo it gently, miming "Go."

The dog cocks its head.

A tense PAW forward.

STRAY DOG

WOOF!

The mime, startled, slips on ash, catches himself, then bolts.

36      **INT. UNDERGROUND SERVICE CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS**      36

He runs back the way he came, the dog bounding after.

37      **INT. ACCESS TUNNEL - CONTINUOUS**      37

He crawls quickly through the jagged break, up the sloped tunnel, lungs burning.

38      **EXT. ARCHIVE TRENCH - CONTINUOUS**      38

He bursts out into the cold air, gasping — the dog scrambles out behind him, tail wagging wildly.

They pause, then split. The mime darts away.



The dog sniffs the air... and **struts** the other way.

39      **INT. MARTINE'S APARTMENT - OFFICE (RUE DU TEMPLE) - NIGHT**      39

Books stacked in towers. News clippings on the walls.

INSERT - WALL CLIPPINGS:

"LA GRÂCE REFUSÉE - By Martine Vernet"

"COLD JUSTICE: The Guillotine's Last Victims"

MARTINE (60s), sharp-eyed, studies a clipping, her jaw tightens.

MARTINE  
(to herself)  
Wrote it too many times. Never  
changed a damn thing...

OFFSCREEN EDITOR (V.O.)  
Your column's dead unless you get  
Lemarchand. We need something that  
sells.

Martine slams a key. The typewriter jams. She lights a cigarette.

She opens a lower drawer.

Inside:

A **black-and-white photo**.

Two young women, **Martine** on the left, the other: **Elise**.  
Bright-eyed, alive. Their arms wrapped around each other,  
wine in hand.

Martine studies it.

She runs a thumb along Elise's smile, then glances up.

Above her desk:

A newer photo tacked to a **corkboard**: **Claire's mugshot** shows  
her, bruised but defiant, beside Elise's press badge.

Martine walks to it. Fingers the corner.

MARTINE  
I saw it. I just... looked away.

40      **INT. MARTINE'S APARTMENT - OFFICE - EARLY MORNING (4:30AM)**      40

Martine, still in last night's clothes, sits at her desk. A half-drunk cup of coffee steams beside her.

A KNOCK.

Martine opens the door. Takes one look at the mime, then at the documents he holds.

MARTINE  
You... Algiers. The Lamarque probe.  
    (a bitter laugh)  
They buried you too.

She lets him in.

41      **LATER**      41

Martine sorts through a rejection letter:

INSERT - FORM LETTER:

"Visitation Denied: Claire Lemarchand. Authority signature:  
M. Deneuvebourg."

MARTINE  
Michel. You bastard. You're still  
protecting them.

Martine studies the documents.

On the corkboard:

- The victim's **Polaroid**.
- The **suppressed witness note**:  
    *Mme. Roussel - Testimony Removed, Sept 15, 1975.*
- The **police report** with the alibi timestamp - half-burned,  
    but damning.

A **tape recorder** sits open beside them, the reel slowing to a stop. Beside it, a case reads: "Michel - Sept 12, 1975."

The mime stands beside Martine - eyes flicking between the fragments. Focused.

MARTINE (CONT'D)  
    (reading fast, muttering)  
Michel... he called her.  
    (MORE)

MARTINE (CONT'D)  
 (holds up the page; the  
 mime shakes his head,  
 fists tight)  
 I know Roussel saw Claire arrive  
 after.  
 (mime slams a hand on the  
 table; she winces,  
 steadies herself)  
 The timeline holds.

She pins one last item:  
 A page stamped:

"Subfile B - Evidence Withheld for State Security."

MARTINE (CONT'D)  
 Lamarque had friends, high up.  
 Military, maybe. Michel blackmailed  
 the wrong man. Claire got buried so  
 the rest could stay clean.

She exhales, her pen trembling.

MARTINE (CONT'D)  
 The judge retired. The lead  
 detective "fell" off a train.  
 Roussel died in a gas leak.  
 (beat)  
 This wasn't justice. It was a  
 trade.

She catches a detail in Subfile B. Her breath shortens.

MARTINE (CONT'D)  
 (shaken)  
 Step-siblings... same roof, two  
 years. He buried her like she was a  
 stranger.  
 (beat)  
 My guy at Santé called just before  
 you showed up. They're prepping her  
 for six.

The mime points to the **tape**.

MARTINE (CONT'D)  
 I know someone at Le Gazette. Truth  
 costs more than ink these days. He  
 drinks to afford it.

She grabs her coat. Opens the door.

MARTINE (CONT'D)  
 We go together. No masks now.

The mime nods. They step out.

42           **INT. PRISON CELL - EARLY MORNING**

42

Claire is alone.

The sun cuts a square on the wall.

A GUARD (#1) opens the door. She rises calmly.

GUARD #1  
You have one hour in the chapel.  
Then... back here.

She walks with quiet dignity.

43           **INT. PRISON CHAPEL - EARLY MORNING**

43

She kneels. Silent. Not praying.

From her sleeve, she slips a folded sketch, drawn by the mime. A child. A street corner. Birds in flight.

Her eyes well. But she doesn't cry.

INTERCUT - Claire hides a scrap of paper under her sleeve:

"REQUEST FOR RETRIAL - NEW EVIDENCE"

- unsigned.

A GUARD (#2) confiscates it, drops it in a trash basket as he exits.

Claire glares at the guard, starts to speak, then turns her head forward, remains silent.

44           **EXT. PARIS STREETS - DAWN**

44

The mime and Martine rush through the streets. They stop at a news kiosk.

MARTINE  
The minister's already sweating. We  
get this in print, we walk in and  
show it to him - he has to choose:  
her head or his.

The mime slaps down the **evidence** and...

The VENDOR (#2) shrugs-unimpressed.

MARTINE (CONT'D)  
Where's Gérard?

VENDOR  
Hungover. Again.

They run on, time is short.

45      **INT. NEWSPAPER BASEMENT PRESSROOM - DAWN**

45

An old man, GÉRARD (70s), smokes and stares at the file.

GÉRARD  
You're serious?

Martine holds his gaze. Gérard hesitates, then glances at the mime.

A long pause.

He stubs out his cigarette.

GÉRARD (CONT'D)  
I'll print it. But getting it to  
the Palace in time... that's on  
you.

The mime clenches his fists, then bows slightly.

46      **INT. NEWSROOM - DAWN**

46

Gérard hunched over a desk, typing furiously.

Headline takes shape:

"Suppressed Witness Resurfaces in Lamarque Scandal"

A sub-headline:

"Whistleblower Tied to Judge's Murder - Truth Buried for  
Decades"

**Photo** of young Elise Vernet (archival), beside a **blurry  
surveillance still** of Mme. Roussel at her window - the name  
circled in red pen:

"Mme. Roussel - neighbor."

A reel-to-reel tape recorder plays Michel's blackmail  
confession:

MICHEL (ON TAPE)  
 ...The land deal, the kickbacks. If  
 Elise talks, my father's name is  
 ruined. I never meant to hurt  
 her...

Gérard covers his mouth.

GÉRARD  
 Jesus...

The mime trembles, lips cracked...

MIME  
 Cl...Claire.

Martine's eyes well up. She nods softly.

MARTINE  
 Yes. For Claire.

CUT TO:

PRINTING PRESS CLATTERS. Sheets rush through.

Gérard slaps a finished proof down:

"They Called Her Guilty — But She Was Silenced."

Martine turns—

The mime is already gone.

She grabs a second proof, rushing after him.

47      **INT. PRISON - DAWN**

47

Claire stands at the small barred window of her cell.

The sky turns **pink and bruised purple**.

She touches the sketch again, presses it to her chest.

48      **EXT. PARIS STREETS - DAWN**

48

The mime runs, coat flaring, newspaper and files clutched  
 like a lifeline... he stops—reaches into one pocket, then  
 another. Nothing. He turns them inside out.

A single BUTTON FALLS.

He **freezes** for a beat. Then takes off, **running**.

CUT TO:

49      **EXT. CHÂTELET MÉTRO ENTRANCE - DAWN**

49

Martine jogs toward the stairs.

She digs into her coat pocket, pulls out her **wallet**.

The coin pouch, empty.

She checks the other pocket — only a lint covered mint.

MARTINE  
(under her breath)  
Of course.

She turns, scanning the street, then **takes off in the opposite direction**, HEELS CLACKING like gunfire on the STONE.

CUT TO:

50      **INT. PALAIS DE JUSTICE - MINISTER'S OFFICE - DAWN**

50

The mime slams the file down on the desk in front of MAÎTRE LEBRUN (50s), Chief Legal Officer to the Minister of Justice.

LEBRUN  
Jesus... they said it was clean. No  
witnesses. No surviving files.  
(slower)  
That's what was in the report.

Lebrun places the folder down, gently. Doesn't meet the mime's eyes.

LEBRUN (CONT'D)  
I remember her name. Vernet. She  
was... loud. Determined. Made  
enemies.  
(beat)  
Then one day... her name stopped  
coming up.

He steps to the intercom.

LEBRUN (INTO INTERCOM) (CONT'D)  
I need two minutes with the  
Minister. Urgently.

INTERCOM (V.O.)  
 He's preparing for the Palace.  
 You've got one.

LEBRUN  
 (to mime)  
 Wait here.

Lebrun exits through the side door.

The clock: **5:43 AM.**

The mime waits, anxious.

Lebrun returns, holding a signed and stamped order.

**\*\*\*STAY OF EXECUTION - MINISTERIAL ORDER\*\*\***

LEBRUN (CONT'D)  
 Effective immediately.  
 (beat)  
 But it's not valid until they have  
 it in hand.

The mime grabs it, already running.

51      **INT. PRISON - DAWN**      51

Claire is taken to the...

52      **INT. PREPARATION CELL - DAWN**      52

A black dress lies folded on a chair.

The GUARD (#1) closes the door slowly. The bolt echoes.

53      **EXT. PALAIS DE JUSTICE - DAWN**      53

The mime stumbles down the steps. Martine runs to meet him.

MARTINE  
 What did they say?

The mime holds up the document.

She grabs his arm and flags down a passing **yellowed Peugeot taxi.**



MARTINE (CONT'D)  
 (to driver, urgent)  
 La prison de la Santé. Vite!

54      **INT. TAXI - MOVING - MOMENTS LATER**

54

The mime and Martine jolt in the back seat.  
 Martine fumbles for **paper bills**.

MARTINE  
 (to driver)  
 There's no time. Don't stop.

She presses the money forward. The driver nods, accelerates.

### **ACT III - THE SACRIFICE**

55      **EXT. STREETS OF PARIS - DAYBREAK**

55

The **taxi** tears through the sleeping city.  
 Time: **5:50 AM**.

56      **INT. TAXI - MOVING - CONTINUOUS**

56

Martine leans forward, urging the driver on.  
 Beside her, the mime clutches the **stay of execution**, creased  
 and damp from his hands.  
 They swerve through alleys, and bypass blockades.

57      **INT. PRISON - PREPARATION ROOM - DAYBREAK**

57

Claire stands, hands cuffed, dressed in plain black, hair  
 tightly pulled back.  
 TWO GUARDS (#3-#4), escort her toward the yard.

58      **INT. PRISON - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS**

58

Claire passes a window; the faintest blue light peeks  
 through.  
 A tear rolls down her cheek. She breathes deeply — one last  
 act of courage.

59

**EXT. PRISON YARD**

59

The PRIEST waits near the **guillotine**. His lips move in silent prayer.

GUARD #3 glances at his **wristwatch**, an old government-issue timepiece.

INSERT - WRISTWATCH:

**5:59:30 AM.**

The SECOND HAND TICKS.

The **guillotine** looms, metallic, cold, **final**.

She kneels. Her head is positioned in the lunette. No resistance.

GUARD #3  
CLAIRE LEMARCHAND... une dernière  
déclaration?

SILENCE.

60

**EXT. PRISON GATES - DAYBREAK**

60

The TAXI SCREECHES to a halt.

MARTINE  
Shit. Daylight Saving started  
today... Claire is dead... unless  
they forgot to change the  
clocks...?

The MIME bursts out, clutching a **folded document**, running full-tilt toward the gate.

A RIFLE-BEARING GUARD (#5), steps in his path, weapon rising.

MARTINE scrambles from the car, waving another copy of **the order**.

MARTINE (CONT'D)  
Stay of execution! Signed by the  
Minister!

The GUARD keeps the rifle trained. The mime closes fast.

Martine plants herself between barrel and mime.

MARTINE (CONT'D)  
 Shoot him and every paper in Paris  
 runs your face above the fold.

The guard hesitates, eyes flicking to the **official seal** on her paperwork.

He lowers the weapon.

The mime slips through the gates; he's inside before anyone else can react.

61      **EXT. PRISON YARD - CONTINUOUS**

61

Guards raise their rifles. One yells.

GUARD  
 Intruder!

MIME  
 St...st...stop!

The mine waves the paper – but it's too late.

A SHOT RINGS OUT.

He **staggers**, clutches his chest, but keeps walking.

Another shot, he falls to one knee, then **drags** himself toward the scaffold.

The executioner hesitates.

A SENIOR OFFICER yells:

SENIOR OFFICER  
 Hold your fire!

A beat of stunned silence.

62      **INT. GUILLOTINE PLATFORM - CONTINUOUS**

62

Claire raises her head slightly. She blinks, eyes soften. A breath escapes. Her body relaxes.

The mime trembles. He lifts his sleeve, revealing Claire's scarf tied around his wrist.

Claire's eyes fill with tears. She whispers, barely audible:

CLAIRE  
 It's you.

The mime nods. Collapses at the base of the scaffold.

63      **EXT. PRISON YARD - LATER**

63

Claire walks out of the gates — **free**.

Martine stands nearby, speechless.

The mime's body is gone.

But in her hands:

His **sketchbook** and **white gloves**.

64      **EXT. SEINE RIVERBANK - MORNING (AFTER SUNRISE)**

64

A gentle breeze.

On a small platform, near the water, a **new mime** performs.

It's Claire.

No makeup. No fanfare.

Just a coat, and his white gloves.

She performs the mime's old gesture, the one he once made for her:

**"Merci, LUCIEN..."**

FADE TO WHITE.

**FINAL TITLE CARD:**

*Un Jour de Grâce*  
*One day. One life. One chance at grace.*