

ANTOINE AT THE BORDER

A play in 10 minutes

By Maggie Lou Rader

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CHARACTERS

ANTOINE	A nervous woman from Austria. Girl got a big day ahead of her.
CHARLOTTE	A peasant French woman. Plans in advance.

SETTING

A tent on the border between Austria and France.

TIME

Morning. 1770.

ACT I

SCENE 1

(A tent, decadently decorated considering its purpose. A woman in Austrian dress standing, uncomfortable. She waits. When will this be over? Now? Nope. Now? Still no? Fine. ...)

ANTOINE

Have you found it?

CHARLOTTE

*(From under ANTOINE'S skirt)* Not yet.

ANTOINE

Now?

CHARLOTTE

Sorry.

ANTOINE

Don't take offence, but I'm beginning to doubt your competency.

CHARLOTTE

*(Peeks her head out from under the skirt)*

.. May I speak candidly?

ANTOINE

I'd prefer it.

CHARLOTTE

I'm not entirely certain what I'm looking for.

ANTOINE

Oh.

CHARLOTTE

Very sorry / my lady.

ANTOINE

I only thought / that-

CHARLOTTE

But if it wasn't me / checking, I-

ANTOINE

Oh! Who else would do it?

CHARLOTTE

A priest.

ANTOINE

Like a *priest* could find a hymen.

CHARLOTTE

We're new to France, aren't we? (beat) Shall I continue?

ANTOINE

...I suppose you'll know it when you find it.

CHARLOTTE

Let's hope.

(CHARLOTTE goes back under the skirt. A beat.)

ANTOINE

Honestly, I'm not sure what you're looking for either.

CHARLOTTE

Hm. Perhaps we both of us could have benefited from some sort of comprehensive education about our existence as sexual beings.

ANTOINE

What was that?

CHARLOTTE

A thought. Anyhow, you'll figure it out by tonight. Surely you've been spoken to on the subject.

ANTOINE

(SHE hasn't)

Oh, of course.

CHARLOTTE

By a sister.. handmaid... your mother.

(ANTOINE tenses at the mentioning of her mother)

CHARLOTTE

Oh!

ANTOINE

Oh?

CHARLOTTE

Oh..

ANTOINE

Everything alright?

CHARLOTTE

(CHARLOTTE crawls out from under the skirt)

It's just- Well, if you weren't a virgin *before*, you are one *now*.

ANTOINE

Good news.

CHARLOTTE

Was that news to you?

ANTOINE

Not that I wasn't / a virgin-

CHARLOTTE

I didn't / mean-

ANTOINE

-before, I was only / saying-

CHARLOTTE

Very sorry, my / lady and-

ANTOINE

-that I'm glad to be / done with-

CHARLOTTE

-and, virginity is merely a societal construct created so women are made to find their worth being desirable while lacking experience in self-pleasure.

ANTOINE

...Pardon?

CHARLOTTE

A lofty idea.

ANTOINE

*(Introducing herself)* Antoine.

CHARLOTTE

Charlotte.

ANTOINE

Ha!

CHARLOTTE

Funny?

ANTOINE

My sister is also named Charlotte.

CHARLOTTE

Oh.

ANTOINE

My *favorite* sister, very brave. Actually, *she* was supposed to be *me*.

CHARLOTTE

Sorry?

ANTOINE

She was meant to be here.

CHARLOTTE

Is she missing?

ANTOINE

No, she's in Naples.

CHARLOTTE

Good for her!

ANTOINE

Not good, but- No, not important.

CHARLOTTE

If you say so. Now. Strip!... Sorry.

ANTOINE

If you say so.



(ANTOINE strips down to undergarments)

I'm not Austrian anymore, am I?

CHARLOTTE

In their eyes, you never were.

ANTOINE

Oh?

CHARLOTTE

Kings are ordained by God. So are their wives. Holy. I guess.

ANTOINE

"Ordained by God." Holy. I feel more like a chess piece.

CHARLOTTE

Who's playing? You mother?

(ANTOINE tenses again)

Oh, look at that; you're a virgin twice over and I didn't even have to be under your skirt.

ANTOINE

I don't think that's very funny.

CHARLOTTE

Sorry.

ANTOINE

Please stop saying that.

CHARLOTTE

What?

ANTOINE

“Sorry.”

CHARLOTTE

Sorry.

ANTOINE

Stop!

CHARLOTTE

Sorr-. Apologies. I mean, sorry.

ANTOINE

If you say “sorry” / again, I’ll-

CHARLOTTE

That court will eat you alive.

ANTOINE

Fuck off!

CHARLOTTE

Fuck off? Sorry, but-

ANTOINE

Did you just apologize for me saying “fuck off?”

CHARLOTTE

NO FUCK OFF! Sorry- SORRY! But if you / can’t-

ANTOINE

*(Big confession)* I NEVER ASKED FOR THIS!

CHARLOTTE

...Sorr- I mean, didn’t ask for what?

ANTOINE

This! You. Your fingers- Any of this.

CHARLOTTE

What about the power?

ANTOINE

No.

CHARLOTTE

Influence?

ANTOINE

No.

CHARLOTTE

The ear of the future King / of France?

ANTOINE

He's a fat and ugly and his letters speak of LOCKS which is weird and- No. No. I don't want it. No.

CHARLOTTE

Small price to drive change.

ANTOINE

What would you know of it?

CHARLOTTE

The frustration of being better equipped than my future queen.

ANTOINE

Bite your tongue, demeaning your queen / in this way.

CHARLOTTE

You're no one's queen.

ANTOINE

I will be.

CHARLOTTE

You're not married.

ANTOINE

I am by proxy.

CHARLOTTE

To your brother.

ANTOINE

BY PROXY!

CHARLOTTE

IT'S CREEPY!

ANTOINE

I DIDN'T ASK QUESTIONS!

CHARLOTTE

OBVIOUSLY!

ANTOINE

DON'T JUDGE ME!

CHARLOTTE

FOR CREEPILY MARRYING YOUR BROTHER? I JUDGE.

ANTOINE

THAT'S NOT / FAIR!

CHARLOTTE

STOP!! Stop. No. I will not pick apart the worth of any woman fighting to breathe under a system designed to crush her.

ANTOINE

*(Gasp!)* I *do* feel crushed under the pressure.

CHARLOTTE

I know.

ANTOINE

You're very wise for a peasant.

CHARLOTTE

Oh, you almost had me.

ANTOINE

*(idea)* You do it.

CHARLOTTE

... Sorry?

ANTOINE

You go. You be queen.

CHARLOTTE

*Future.* You're not / queen-

ANTOINE

FOCUS! My train is gone. You're the only one who knows what I look like.

CHARLOTTE

They've seen your portrait.

ANTOINE

Ha! Wasn't even me!

CHARLOTTE

Sorry?

ANTOINE

(ANTOINE begins pulling her French gown toward and on CHARLOTTE)

Stop saying that. When you're the 15<sup>th</sup> child, they just draw you like a shorter version of your mother. (*shudders*)

CHARLOTTE

That's / no.

ANTOINE

You have ideas!

CHARLOTTE

Nothing special.

ANTOINE

Like that one about virginity constructing society?

CHARLOTTE

That's not / what-

ANTOINE

Brilliant!

CHARLOTTE

Adequate.

ANTOINE

Revolutionary!

CHARLOTTE

Hardly.

ANTOINE

Why are you undermining yourself to seem less great than you are?

CHARLOTTE

I'm a woman. Who's going to follow me?

ANTOINE

Me and my two virginities.

CHARLOTTE

I'm just a peasant girl.

ANTOINE

You're a woman with ideas; what's more dangerous than that?

CHARLOTTE

French priests?

(A knock outside the tent)

ANTOINE

Coming! Please? For the greater good?

CHARLOTTE

Absolutely not.

ANTOINE

For me?

CHARLOTTE

WHO THE FUCK ARE YOU?

ANTOINE

For *France*?

CHARLOTTE

... I'll die for this.

ANTOINE

But you'll *live* first.

CHARLOTTE

... Give me the damn gown.

(More knocks)

ANTOINE

Put that thing on.

CHARLOTTE

My God, it's like a carriage with a skirt.

(More knocks)

CHARLOTTE

Coming!

ANTOINE

Look at you! You're doing it!

CHARLOTTE

WHAT THE FUCK AM I FUCKING DOING?

ANTOINE

What I couldn't do.

CHARLOTTE

What you *chose not* to do.

ANTOINE

What I don't *want* to do.

CHARLOTTE



What if they don't listen?

ANTOINE

Be tough. Close your eyes and think of my mother.

CHARLOTTE

I don't know your mother.

ANTOINE

Still good advice.

CHARLOTTE

Apparently.

ANTOINE

Will you regret this?

CHARLOTTE

No.

ANTOINE

It's all yours. The power.

CHARLOTTE

Yes.

ANTOINE

The influence.

CHARLOTTE

Yes.

ANTOINE

The ear of a future king.

CHARLOTTE

He's weak, and tepid, and I will watch him crumble while I lead my people.

ANTOINE

A bit dramatic, aren't we?

CHARLOTTE

Perhaps.

ANTOINE

And that kind of talk could stir a revolution.

CHARLOTTE

Now who's being dramatic?

ANTOINE

I don't-

CHARLOTTE

Quiet, peasant!

CHARLOTTE AND ANTOINE

*(gasp)* Oooooooooh!!!

ANTOINE

Have you been planning this?

CHARLOTTE

All women plan for when they hold the reins to the horse.

ANTOINE

I don't like horses. I like ponies. I have seven! They're adorable.

CHARLOTTE

Focus.

ANTOINE

Right. You'll be a good Queen.

CHARLOTTE

And you will be happy.

ANTOINE

I like you.

CHARLOTTE

I like you too.

(More knocks)

CHARLOTTE

COMING!

ANTOINE

You've got this.

CHARLOTTE

Yes I do.

ANTOINE

Just... Just..

CHARLOTTE

Yes?

ANTOINE

Imagine the cake.

CHARLOTTE

Delicious.

(CHARLOTTE hugs ANTOINE, exits the tent to fanfare.)