

Simone Says

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SIMONE SAYS

Light Q#___: SPOT UP

(Centre Stage choreography: large pen in hand, struggling to write towards audience (pen jerking up & down), pause, take drag of cigarette - PUT OUT on table)

(Scene directions: drinking wine in the Café de Flore and realize smoking cigarette - go to table and butt out. Have wicked thoughts about Sartre & Olga while making large arches with pen - use whole body to write with - jiggle butt)

Slide #1 JEAN PAUL SARTRE IS..

(3 dots and slowly turn right, stare - scribble sideways in air & crouch)

Slide #3 SHORT

You were expecting profundity? I don't mean to *belittle* Sartre. We are having a spat.

But I am not *angry* (stab pen into ink well)

Slide #4: LOOK IN THE FACE OF REALITY

What do you mean? Are you implying that I am not? Don't distract me from what I need to do. (place pen back)

Light Q#___: Lights up

(stand between 2) Here is the situation.

Olga, ma petite russe, is sensitive and helpless.

(move to Sartre - 2 steps)

Sartre, mon poulou, is sensitive and helpless.

(move to Olga - 2 steps)

Olga needs me.

(move to Sartre - 2 steps)

Sartre needs me.

(move to Olga - 2 steps)

Olga admires me.

(move to Sartre - 1 step - heavy)

Sartre cherishes and respects me.

(move to Olga - 1 step - heavy)

Olga tolerates the company of Sartre, but leads him to believe she cares for him.

(move to Sartre)

Sartre lusts after and is passionately in love with her.

(angrily) (hit Sartre)

Do you see my problem? **(turn and walk back from them).**

This amour a trois is a failing experiment, since jealousy is crushing me.

Slide #5: The OTHER

(walk downstage right)

Do you know the feeling, when that **other** person is making your life so miserable, that you want to kill that **other**? Oui? **(looks out)** But you don't. That **other** who reflects your doubts, your sacrifices, your clumsiness...HELL IS OTHER PEOPLE.

Light Q#__ : Lights out

Euuff. I saw that Olga. **(on ground) (tone goes up - threaten) (move stage left and rise up slowly)**

Slide #__ : nature scene

When life gets too absurd, I go for a 40 kilometre hike. **(walking, knees high)** My brain is in turmoil, so I must exorcise (get it? Exor-cise not exer-cise?) my demons. Nature is my exorcist. **(grab head - cross arms down across chest & start slow swing of arms)**

Sound Q#__ : ave satani

(climb on table) Here I am atop Mount Sainte Victoire. The view of Marseille below is spectacular. See that brick building? That is the Lycee Montgrand where I teach philosophy. I have caused a scandal at the school - a single woman hiking alone. Improper behaviour!

Such a steep cliff. I am stranded. No one to help me, but myself. I find my way down. **(realization)**

(stand beside table) Perhaps, I need to be alone in order to discover who I am. I feel too dependent on Sartre. But if I leave him, would any of this happen?

Slide #: St Germain des Pr. s...1947

Sound Q#__: **"Beat it, existentialist!"**

(sit at table) Me? An existentialist? A person who follows the philosophy of existentialism. Oui, I believe so. But why are you so angry with me?

Sound Q#__: **Existentialists are corrupting our young!**

I see.

The word existentialist was coined by reporters. It became a derogatory term. We were celebrities. A fad. Scrutinized and criticized.

How famous were we?

Sartre was the Pope of existentialism and I was Nortre Dame de Sartre.

Headlines in Le Figaro newspaper would read: "Favourite Food of the Existentialists..."

Pork and sauerkraut, steak, blue cheese, french fries...

(take a breath).

If I dropped a fry on the floor, someone would grab it and claim it was an existentialist fry.

Sound Q: **"Beat it, existentialist!"**

(take a slouching pose - really laid back - slow talking - centre stage- lean sideways)

We got a bad reputation - existentialists drank to excess, smoked, were lazy and accomplished nothing. Why? Because nothing really mattered. Well, that wasn't quite what we said.

Light Cue#__: **spot**

Simone Says: Put your hands on your hips

Simone Says: Let's dance existentially. **(perkily said, then drop head to chest)**

Sound Q#__: **Charlie Parker**
stop dancing, bend over table and droopily say:

Being passionate about existentialism, is like being passionate about nothing.

If you know you exist, (**hit butt**) then you've got the gist.
(**touch body all over**) (**breath out- look at slide, lean back on table**)

Slide #___: **Existence precedes essence.**

Sit at table with empty glass and bottle of wine

True. (**nod head**)

*We are born (**see glass and grab**) an empty wine glass. As we live, we fill the glass with sirah, cabernet-sauvignon, merlot, bordeaux, and each wine is unique. Our existence is the empty wine glass, the wine is the essence. (**take a sip from glass**) I love a good wine. (**breath**)*

Sound Q#___: **Charlie parker**

(centre stage)

So,
if you choose to dance existentially and drink all night in the caves of St. Germain-des-Pres - so be it. Wear black, be depressed, be idle, and ponder the shortness of life, the eventuality of death. If that's what you *need* to do.

(move stage right)

And knowing that death will find you one day, and there is nothing you can do about it. (**evilly**) No innate meaning to your existence, and the nothingness of death looms and there is more of nothing and nothing ... I'm experiencing existential angst!

Sound Q#___: **a SLAP**

What? (**put jacket on**)

[Refer to Sartre - stage left)

"You need more editing on your work? What work? Nauseas? You're feeling nauseas? You don't have a fever. Oui, oui, you are writing a book called Nausea. I remember.

*Writing as usual. Of course, leave it. (**look through papers**) I'll look it over, rework some sections. What are **you** doing? (**look out**) Oh, seducing Olga, fine. You be with Olga, she needs you...*

I have my feeble moments.

Slide #___: **females**

I would be writing and he would be off consoling & cajoling her, her and her...

(look at females-projected on slides) (eyes role, head shakes) (point to Olga).

Don't worry, I'll finish this chapter for you...

Just call me a sieve. He gives me pages of ideas to sift through. My opinion is what he wants. I am his editor and his bodyguard. **(look to Sartre)**

I know he is infatuated with women. All women. My Sweet Little One - too many *womanly* distractions. You need a defense against the world and I am that defense. **(Hands on hips)**

I can't leave him, because I need to protect him. **(pick up Sartre - balance him on back)**

(stage right) "How could she put up with all those **other** women?" You may ask? Well, one of our concepts was **physical-intimacy-with-freedom**. And if you like that phrase, you should read some of our philosophical works. **(end slide)**

But seriously, I was insecure at times, of course. Yet, as long as I knew their intentions, and how beautiful and smart they were, then I was confident that I was the essential one in Sartre's life, and all the **others** were *con-tin-gent*. **(said evilly) (put him in splits)**

Sound Q#__:

Hold Sartre in arms like a child

"I deeply and sincerely feel that I am a bastard, and a small time operator, on top of all that, a kind of scholarly sadist and civil servant Don-Juan-enough to make you vomit."

How could you not love someone like that?

(Movement: grab him really, really tight - release)

(stand centre stage head to head)

We met studying for l'agregation at the Sorbonne in 1929. His intelligence was intoxicating, and he pushed me to think harder. He was my double in thought, my comrade in writing. He helped me define my reason for living. We figured out the world together. **(sit him down)** I can't leave him now. **(kiss his hand)**

Light Q#__: **dim**

The lights of the Louvre are magical. What? You want to marry me? No, Sartre that is not what I want. It would compromise my freedom. If society and the church condone

it, it is not for me. But I do love you. Instead, let us make a vow not to allow others in our lives for 2 years. Yes? Good, that makes me very happy. (kiss him)

After 2 years there were **others**.

There were 3... one too many - **[hit swing-girl]** you too many...

(realization) I don't have to leave you **(look at Sartre)**, I have to kill her! **(put Sartre back) (arms fold)**

Olga, don't press that lit cigarette into your hand. (sarcastically)

She was beautiful and young - very young. She was 14 going on 32. **(caress swing-girl)** I enjoyed teaching and touching her. We would dance together. We had a connection of affection, of animosity. Was it love?

SoundQ#___: Yves Montand

(hang Olga) (look left then right)

Light Q#___: Lights down, spot on Olga

(hover around her) Enough of her games. I need to resolve our dilemma of love and jealousy - our amour a trois. How shall I kill her? (choke hold around neck)

(Movement: peak out from right side & left side, mime hitting on head, ...)

Sound Q#___: hammer

REALIZATION - I will shoot her

(back up stage left)

Sound Q#___: gun shot (count)

[hold onto Olga and sway with her & say directly to her]
Olga, but I had to kill you. The only way out of this mess we created. I hope you don't mind. (thought: grab pen)

I am determined to be a writer.

No, I don't go to prison for killing her. I kill her in fiction only, not reality.

She came to wreak havoc in our lives for 2 years, but it seemed much longer, as if she were *never going to leave*. The only way for me to confront and accept this situation was to write about it. I wrote *She Came to Stay*, which was

my first book published in 1945. Olga is fine, but still a thorn in my side.

You don't think I spend *all* of my time obsessing over Olga and Sartre, do you?

But, I am obsessed with writing.

Slide #__ : pickle girl

(at table) Because I was reading at 3 years old. By 7, I wrote my first story - "the Pickle Family". At 15, I decided to be a *famous* writer. But what to write about? My life, which is my writing, which is my life. MY ART IS MY LIFE, MY LIFE IS MY ART. I write to prolong the experience of living?

Sound Q#__ : café music

Light Q: Light flood

(Movement: sit and begin to write using pen - stop stare stunned, write, stop tilt head, write, etc.) (Urgency (rest pen on neck) Writing as a force inside of me wanting to get out...think about the feel of the pen in my hand. (caress pen) Chin on table, pen on head - be dragged out by pen AND ...

"I walk into a café and sit down to write about a woman walking into a café and sit down to write about a woman walking into a cafe..."

(shake pen) I need more ink! (get ink from well)

Light Q#__ ; out

Slide#__ : 7 hours later

I walk into a café and sit down to write about a woman...

(head on pen) Finis! I am exhausted. (pen stage left?)

My brain hurts from all this thinking. **(struggle with book - "Perry Mason & the Lame Canary")**

You thought I only read significant books? I am not so uptight. **(notice beaver)**

Light Q#__ : Lights down

Slide#__ : Beaver

See! Le castor - beaver - that's me - a striking resemblance - don't you think? **(take pose)**

Le castor - the nickname I earned at the Sorbonne. Clever classmates.

(walk to centre stage) After all, I was a diligent worker and beauvoir sounds like beaver in English. **(end slide)**

I will be a famous writer. **(resolved)**

Light Q#___: Spot light up

Sound Q#___: boxing bell

I earned degrees in latin and greek **(punch, punch)**, mathematics and history **(punch, punch)**, philosophy **(punch)**. I studied for exams, like a boxer trained for a fight. Every minute of my day was dedicated to studying. I disciplined myself to sleep 4 hours a night and I stopped brushing my hair and my teeth. At the dinner table I would be conjugating greek verbs and solving math problems. **(2 punches & hands drop to side)**

(stop - look stage right)

Papa, how many degrees do I need to please you? 3, no 4 would be better. Since I am a girl, no achievement will ever be enough. Never good enough. L'agregation de philosophe? C'est impossible. C'est trop difficile pour une femme. POOOOOR FEMME.

Light Q#___: up

Poor femme, my foot! At 21, I became the youngest person to achieve the agrJgation de philsophe. I came second to Sartre in graduating. Not to be egotistical, but Sartre failed the exam the year before. If I recall, he was *last* in his class. *(pause)*

Papa would urge me on: "If you have something to say, write it already! Write the great book you keep promising."

Slide #___ Simone's mother and father

Sound Q#___: punch & judy music

A handsome couple Georges & Francoise de Beauvoir. Shown here as Punch & Judy.

Papa, an aristocrat at heart had no desire to work. He had a passion for the theatre, but wasn't allowed to pursue it. Boring law courses only fuelled his desire to act. He ended up working for a lawyer and became an amateur actor.

Mama, a strict Catholic with high moral standards, wanted to be an explorer, but she married and had children instead. Her promised marriage dowry never came, since my Grandpere Basseur went bankrupt. He

spent 15 months in jail for less than proper accounting practices. Money became an issue.

Their marriage was based on social status. It was all about the "de" in de Beauvoir.

(lovingly) Papa instilled the love of literature in me. He thought writing would be a worthy profession. Not too bourgeois. He tried to write, but he couldn't handle the blank page.

Slide#__ : BLANK PAGE ON SCREEN

A very quiet moment - staring at the page ... **(go running to the page, slide down wall and turn downstage)**

I need my cafes to alleviate the silence of the page.
(end slide)

Sound Q#__ : café sound

Light Q#__ : spot
(stay back stage centre) My bourgeois upbringing scarred me. I saw my life set out before me - be educated, associate with your own class, marry well, and have children. Such a future inspired me to act bohemian. I hung out in seedy bars and told my mother I was volunteering at the charity mission. Be a proper young lady. What would people think if they knew the real me? I didn't care.

(hand clasped in prayer) Mama was very upset when I told her: **GOD IS DEAD**, for me. Yes, God I did love you, but I can no longer devote my life to you. How can I give myself to you when I have desires of the flesh. At 14 I realized I was alone in the world. And I could not deny nature.

Slide#__

Because when I am in nature, I know that I am alive. **(hit chest and stretch out arms)** Nature brings my life into focus. Its beauty, mesmerizes me. I live now, not for eternity.

Lights: out

Slide #__ : LOOK IN THE FACE OF REALITY

What do you think I am doing?

I need to learn *everything* about the world. **(end slide)**

But what is *my life* supposed to be? **THERE**, that's my life - in the streets of Paris, Montparnasse... **(at table) (wave hand stage right)**

Sound Q#__: **sound of people's voices-loud**

Do you hear that? ... La Rotonde café - a mecca of energy...Can you see who's inside? It's Picasso..., Modigliani..., Leger...Brancusi..., Lenin..., Trotsky..., ... hey you guys, talk louder, I can't quite hear you - something about cubism, impressionism, communism..

How will I ever understand so many isms?

Humanism, **SOLIPSISM (theory that self is the only thing that exists)**, trotskyism, socialism, surrealism, idealism, realism, stoicism, **QUIETISM (annihilation of the will through passive absorption in contemplation of God).**

(Pause) More isms?

nihilism, scientism, conservatism, conformism, catastrophism, opportunism, bohemianism, miserablism, **EX-CRE-MENT-AL-ISM (what existentialism is to some), and Nazi-ism ...**

Sound Q#__: **Sound of heavy footsteps, marching..**

Do not get any closer!

It cannot be true - German soldiers in Paris. Two soldiers are coming into the cafe. **(use head to follow movement)** We stare at them, through them, we despise them.

Light Q#__: **spot**

(stage right) The Nazis seemed pompous and hollow - we were wrong. Germany was influenced by their thinking, and many people in France as well. We didn't have much food or freedom, but at least we had our thoughts. No, you can't make me think that way!**(grab head - collapse downstage)** I have spent half my life crying. Enough of that. **(blow nose)**

Slide #__: **Picasso's group**

That's me standing beside Picasso - looking a bit stiff. Here we are in Picasso's studio for a play reading of:"Desire Caught by the Tail". Written by Picasso in 1941 when his hands were too cold for him to paint.

Such a magnetic personalilty he has. If Picasso says "pickle", everyone listens as if he has made the greatest revelation. When Picasso talks everyone listens.

I wore a red angora sweater accented with large blue pearls. He complimented me on my ensemble. He noticed me. I was pleased.

(go to table) Even though France was under occupation by the Germans, we held parties. It helped us deal with the possibility of death at any moment. A part of daily life was knowing where our gas masks were at all times. The parties relieved the tension.
(end slide)

(grab a hat-sneak around Sartre) Sartre formed the resistance group "Socialisme et Liberte". **(go under table)** We were lousy spies. The group disbanded, but the resistance movement continued under our feet, in the catacombs of Montparnasse. I believed it was more important for me to observe and write about the war, then to engage in sabotage. As usual I wrote a novel, about the resistance movement, called the Blood of Others.

The thought of blood makes me want to ski. Does that make me selfish and callous? Probably. I don't apologize for anything I have done. Does the guilt of happiness stop you from enjoying life? The war is happening around me, near me, but not directly to me - how should I feel?

The air is fresh here in Chamonix, and I can forget about the Germans for now.

Sound Q#___: skiing sound

(realization) But of course, I am responsible for my own actions. Sartre and I created our own rules of behaviour, which I must explain to Olga. We chose Olga for our experiment because she was the embodiment of someone experiencing existential angst. She must understand why this experiment has gone awry.

Attention class... : **(clap hands) (go to slide but hear student)**

Slide#___: "Essential, Contingent, Transparent"

[Movement: hear someone say they can't understand...- use wand]

What do you mean you CAN'T understand KANT? **(cross arms)**

Immanuel Kant 1724-1804 - - Material objects, from a reasonable point of view, are unknowable. They are merely the raw material from which sensations are formed. Objects do not exist. Space and time exist only as part of the mind, as intuitions, by which perceptions are measured and judged.

As a teacher at the Lycee Jeanne d'Arc in Rouen, I was bored with teaching.

Questions? Example:

(Movement: poke at Olga with pointer)

a silhouette of a girl - does it know it is a silhouette of a girl - is it conscious of consciousness? That is the real question. If it doesn't realize it exists, is it really there? Others see the silhouette of a girl - how irritating not to know that you are a silhouette of a girl. Therefore, does the silhouette of a girl exist?

Does she know how much pain she inflicts on me?

"No, Olga. Don't press that lit cigarette into your hand."

Mademoiselle de Beauvoir (cont'd)

Georg Wilhem Frederich Hegel 1770-1831: *World spirit referring to human life, thought and culture. Human thought determined by where you are in the timeline of history. No eternal truths or timeless reason. Reason is progressive - constantly changing, evolving.*

If you have any questions, please see me after class. Otherwise, class dismissed.

[turn to leave]

Un moment...I forgot to explain the terms.

(point to projected words) My love for Sartre is an *essential* love. A love that transcends all others.

We could love someone else, a *contingent* someone else. This is how we got into this predicament with you, Olga. *Contingent* love could be as strong as the essential love, but it is always relegated to second place. Obviously, you don't want to be contingent.

(stand beside Sartre) Neither did Wanda, Natalie, Bianca...

I cared for many women and besides, all the *men* were at war or prisoners of war - what was a girl supposed to do?

We told each other everything. **(lean towards Sartre)**

Thank you Sartre, but I don't need to know that she sucked on your tongue as hard as a vacuum cleaner... Maybe not everything. Therefore, transparent. Is this transparent enough for you Olga? **(Put pointer down)**

No Olga, don't press that lit cigarette into your hand.

It doesn't matter how many times you do that, you cannot manipulate us. You will always be the **other** and this experiment is finished. I will always care for you.

(lift silhouette, hug and hang on hook) You will always be a part of our lives. We remain friends for over 40 years. **(place in corner stage right)**

(pick up Sartre) He is all mine, for now. **(look around)** Sometimes, it is difficult to be involved with a genius, Sartre's brain is so sexy. You can count on him to develop some type of crustacious concept.

Slide #__ Lobster

(talk to Sartre) I said, "Sartre, don't take the mescaline." I warned him, but there he was, walking down a street in Venice with a lobster chasing after him.

All right, Olga was useful, she kept the lobsters at bay.

(hold half bent & swing him)

It was research for his book: L'Imagination. Paranoia was taking over his life and he thought he was going crazy. I told him to stop letting the drug control him. **(end slide)**

Just another battle we conquered together, like any married couple, but we never lived together. Like any married couple, the sex wasn't inspiring after 11 years. But our relationship went *beyond* sex - ...talking all night over wine and cigarettes - we had great oral sex.

My **other** manly affairs? **(drop Sartre flat & step over him)**

Jacques-Laurent Bost **(take step)**, Claude Lanzmann **(take step & lunge)**...

(Movement: caress wall with slide -slink up to it)

Slide #__: Nelson Algren

and Nelson Algren **(walk backwards towards slide)**...I love you with all my passion. Your love makes me stupid. I want to cook and clean for you and I never do that for anyone. You are in Chicago writing about the seamier side of life. My writing is in Paris. Our life together could never last, but you will always be my **other** to Sartre's essential love. Our love will continue forever in print. **(kiss him)**

I write about our relationship in The Mandarins. The book follows the lives of the post-war intellectuals in France. **(slide out)**

Slide#__ : body of work

Sound Q#__ : applause

Merci. The Prix Goncourt is a great honour for me. I accept it on behalf of all The Mandarins who inspired me to write this book.

But what else to write? **(look at pile of books)**

I was trying to decide, and I happened to be having coffee with Giacometti and he said "Write anything." Easy for him to say. I wanted to write my memoirs, but I had to figure out: "What it has meant to me to be a Woman?" So,

Slide #__ : The Second Sex

was born.

Remember, these ideas are *pre-Vagina Monologues*.

The Second Sex refers to the status of woman in relation to man. Man as subject, woman as object. The book is dense. I should have done more editing on it, but at the time I had to write my ideas down as quickly as possible.

Slide # __ : YOU ARE NOT BORN A WOMAN, YOU BECOME ONE

That's my most famous quote. I am very proud of that one. You can even find it written on a postcard today in Paris.

I set out to prove that there is no intrinsic female nature. A woman is a human being, but myths and society poison a woman's thinking. My body may be capable of reproduction, but my brain is virtually the same as a man's.

Obviously, all women don't think the same. Olga and I had different ideas about love. I was trying to explain why women think the way they do.

Who knew so many women would read my book and use it as a "bible" of sorts.

Sound Q#__ : children screaming

I never wrote: "women shouldn't have children, I wrote that women should *assume* the role of motherhood in order to be fulfilled. Not hide behind motherhood to avoid their own ambitions in life. It was the inequality of raising the child between the sexes that I had the problem with. I even adopted a young woman Sylvie Le Bon de Beauvoir when I was 70.

Slide #__ : heart and brain

It was said that I had the heart of a woman and the brain of a man. Another reason I wrote the Second Sex. I was criticized for being too passionate or too intellectual. Why can't I be both? I am a woman who needs passion in my life, as well as intellectual accomplishments. Passion mixed with reason, a perfect combination for life.

Light Q#___: strobe

What is life? Is this all there is to it? **(lift and look behind letters)**

Life is a strange object...you can look at it from all angles and try to decipher it.

(Movement: Stop and pose - head facing stage right)

Playing with the concept of life can get you into trouble. But questioning life will make you free.

Think out of the ordinary cycles of thought. **(start turning in circles)**

Think for yourself. Don't worry what **others** will say.

Creating a meaningful life and being happy were my goals...my *project* was *life*.

Life is an experience that ends with death. **(pick up letters, hug and kick stage right)**

Slide #__ DEATH

(hit at slide) The inevitability of death is my fear. Not knowing the exact moment that death will come for me.

Life moves quickly, I must spend time wisely or it will be over. My childhood friend, Zaza, died suddenly at 21. When will I die? **(end slide)**

(pick up Sartre) I never do leave you. We stay together for 50 years, and I was at your bedside when you died in 1980.

I stayed with Sartre for many reasons, but not for his looks. I had my **others**, but I always went back to my Most Dear Little Being.

Would I have been as great without you? Would you have been as great without me? Who knows? Our lives are inextricably linked forever - after all, I join you in the Montparnasse Cemetery 6 years later.

(to audience) I no longer live, yet you are the **OTHERS** that allow me to continue to exist.

I have outlived my life. I am a memory.
(walk towards slide)

Slide #__ : LOOK IN THE FACE OF REALITY

the end
