

PLAYS FOR
New Audiences

A Division of Children's Theatre Company

Cave Boys

by Anne Negri

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CHARACTERS:

Jacques	French youth struggling to find his place in life	13	M
Madame Marsal	Jacques' Mother, runs a local restaurant/pub	36	F
Monsieur Laval	Local teacher and regional prehistory enthusiast	58	M
Simon	A refugee youth from Paris, skilled at drawing	13	M
Georges	A refugee youth from Paris	14	M
Franck	A refugee youth from Alsace-Lorraine	15	M

SETTING:

Montignac, France. Summer of 1940. A small village in the unoccupied region.

for Kjell Sporseen

An adventurer, explorer, and soldier

with the soul of an artist

SCENE ONE

MADAME MARSAL is sitting in her small restaurant in Montignac, France. The restaurant is well-worn with a small bar and several small tables.

It is early morning. MADAME MARSAL is quickly wiping down tables. She goes to the window and looks outside. We hear the sounds of bicycles bells and car engines going past.

MADAME MARSAL turns the hand-painted sign from FERME (closed) to OUVERT (open).

JACQUES, her son, runs into the restaurant waving a letter in his hand.

JACQUES

Mama! Mama! It's finally here!

MADAME MARSAL

What?! Where did you get that? (beat) *How* did you get it?!

JACQUES

I found a way.

MADAME MARSAL

Jacques?

JACQUES

Who cares how I got it?!

MADAME MARSAL

Moi! I care.

(beat)

JACQUES

I snuck into La Poste.

MADAME MARSAL

Jacques!

JACQUES

They shouldn't leave the door unlocked if they don't want people to come in.

MADAME MARSAL

What if everyone had your attitude?! Then everyone would be sniffing through everyone else's mail.

JACQUES

Mama! We've been waiting all summer. And it's finally here!

JACQUES holds up the letter.

MADAME MARSAL

Give it to me.

JACQUES

But...I got it. Can I open it? S'il vous plait, s'il vous plait, PLEASE??

MADAME MARSAL

Fine...BUT, no more sneaking into La Poste. After this, his letters will come when then come.

JACQUES and MADAME MARSAL sit down together. JACQUES tears open the envelope as quickly as he can without damaging the letter.

JACQUES reads from the letter.

JACQUES

"My sweet flower, my lovely sugar plum." (beat, grossed out) Uhhh...Mama, I think this page is for you.

MADAME MARSAL takes the letter and reads for a few moments.

MADAME MARSAL

(sighs and chuckles) Your Papa is more romantic in his letters than when he's home.

JACQUES

This is for both of us!

Ma Cherie and Mon Petit Jacques:

I tried to write earlier, but I was too ashamed. Surrendering after only three weeks! We just couldn't hold off the Germans and they pushed us all the way to Dunkirk. General DeGaulle says we can't lose hope, but this defeat has sent me and my soldiers into a deep despair. In the north we're under German orders now and I can't help thinking our country is lost. Jacques, stay strong for me and help your Mama with the restaurant. She needs you now, more than ever.

(long beat)

JACQUES (CONT'D)

Mama, do you really think France is lost?

I don't know.

MADAME MARSAL

Do you think the Germans are going to come here? To Montignac?

JACQUES

I hope not.

MADAME MARSAL

What's stopping them?

JACQUES

Right now? (beat) Nothing.

MADAME MARSAL

I wish I could be there, with Papa.

JACQUES

You heard him, you can be a good little Montignac soldier by helping me run the restaurant.

MADAME MARSAL

MADAME MARSAL walks behind JACQUES, gives him a hug, and kisses him on the top of his head.

JACQUES

How's running a restaurant going to help anyone?

MADAME MARSAL

Haven't you noticed, Jacques?

JACQUES

What?

MADAME MARSAL

All of the new people in Montignac?

JACQUES

(shrugs) Tourists.

MADAME MARSAL

No, Jacques. It's French people. Our people, from the north. (beat) Refugees.

JACQUES

What's that?

MADAME MARSAL

They're trying to escape the Germans.

JACQUES

Why don't they stay and fight? Instead of running away?

MADAME MARSAL

They just want to keep their families safe. (beat) Not everyone's a soldier.

JACQUES

I bet there's gonna be a bunch of new kids at school.

MADAME MARSAL

Yes, and many of those kids, and their families, will stop here for food or a drink. I've been busier than ever while you've been out playing with your friends all summer. So, when you get home from school today, I need you to help me.

JACQUES

(whines) With what? The dishes?

MADAME MARSAL

(whines back) Oui! Yes!

JACQUES

All of them?!

MADAME MARSAL

Yes, mon petit chou.

JACQUES

Mama! Please don't call me "your little cabbage" anymore...it's embarrassing.

MADAME MARSAL

Alright. Mon Petit...Jacques. You can also be a good soldier by behaving at school. I hope you aren't going to give Monsieur Laval trouble like you did last year.

JACQUES

I'll try.

MADAME MARSAL

You mean you will try NOT TO. (playfully swats him with the towel) Oui?...Oui?!

JACQUES

OUI!

MADAME MARSAL

I know you'll try. (teasing) You're a year older and wiser. (sees the clock) Oh! It's time! Don't be late for your first day back.

JACQUES jumps up grabs his cap and a book.
MADAME MARSAL gives him a hug and a kiss on
his forehead. JACQUES opens the door to leave.

MADAME MARSAL (CONT'D)

Hurry! Go! MON PETIT CHOU!

JACQUES

(turns back) Mama!

Once JACQUES is gone, MADAME MARSAL listens
to the radio playing news of the war. She picks up
the letter on the table, and reads it again.

SCENE TWO

The classroom. Four desks. One desk is slightly
separate from the other three. Facing the desks is a
podium that MONSIEUR LAVAL prefers to stand
behind when he instructs. He's never seen without
his black beret.

SIMON and GEORGES are seated. FRANCK is
standing at the front of the class. Two desks are
empty, one for FRANCK and one for JACQUES.

MONSIEUR LAVAL

Let's all welcome Franck! Bienvenue, Franck. He's new, as many of you are.
(beat, points) Take a seat.

FRANCK sits in the open desk separate from the
other.

MONSIEUR LAVAL (CONT'D)

Now, I will begin a new poem. In it, Victor Hugo uses the future tense. Listen
carefully because we will be transposing it into the past and imperfect tenses.

JACQUES scurries into the classroom and dashes
for the open desk.

MONSIEUR LAVAL (CONT'D)

Ah, Jacques! Tardy on the first day back to school.

JACQUES

Sorry, Monsieur Laval. I promise it'll never happen again.

MONSIEUR LAVAL

Let's not make promises we cannot keep. (gives JACQUES a long stare) Now, if
you don't mind, it's time for the poetry recitation.

JACQUES
Salut, Georges!

GEORGES
(whispers) Hey!

JACQUES
Simon! Bonjour!

JACQUES doesn't recognize FRANCK and eyes him warily.

JACQUES whispers to GEORGES and SIMON.

JACQUES (CONT'D)
(indicating FRANCK) Who's that?

MONSIEUR LAVAL
(clear his throat and looks at Jacques) May I begin?

The boys all quiet down.

MONSIEUR LAVAL (CONT'D)
"Demain, dès l'aube,
(Tomorrow, at dawn,)

à l'heure où blanchit la campagne,
(at the hour that whitens the countryside,)

Je partirai. Vois-tu, je sais que tu m'attends.
(I will leave. You see, I know that you wait for me.)

JACQUES and GEORGES wave goodbye to each other, wipe away fake tears.

J'irai par la forêt, j'irai par la montagne.
(I will go by the forest, I will go by the mountain.)

JACQUES becomes the mountain and GEORGES and SIMON become trees.

Je ne puis demeurer loin de toi plus longtemps.
(I cannot remain far from you any longer.)

JACQUES and GEORGES act out painful separation. They all start to giggle and laugh, including FRANCK.

Monsieur Laval suddenly looks in their direction and sees them goofing around.

MONSIEUR LAVAL (CONT'D)

Boys?! Les garçons?! (beat) Why are you out of your seats? What are you doing?!

JACQUES

(scurries to desk) Nothing.

GEORGES

Nothing.

MONSIEUR LAVAL

Don't you boys respect anything? This is a serious poem and all you can do is goof around?!

GEORGES

Monsieur Laval, that poem was so sad...

JACQUES

And boring! Why can't we read *The Three Musketeers* again?! That story was full of action and fighting. We're just like the Musketeers: Athos!

GEORGES

Porthos!

SIMON

...and Aramis!

JACQUES grabs his ruler from his desk and wields it like a sword, getting into an en garde position.

JACQUES

"One for all...

GEORGES and SIMON quickly grab their rulers, jump from their seats and rush to meet JACQUES.

GEORGES & SIMON

...and all for one!"

JACQUES

Just like we practiced!

JACQUES and SIMON begin a choreographed sword fight. Soon, SIMON is defeated and GEORGES steps in to continue the battle.

MONSIEUR LAVAL

Boys! Arrete! Stop that right now!

Finally MONSIEUR LAVAL comes from behind his podium and gets in the middle of the swordfight.

MONSIEUR LAVAL

Asseyez-vous! Sit down!

The three boys reluctantly sit down, putting away their rulers.

MONSIEUR LAVAL (CONT'D)

The Three Musketeers is a wonderful story, but we must move on and study new material. The literature of Victor Hugo can be equally as exciting as the work of Alexandre Dumas. You'll see. (beat) Now, I would like all of you take out a piece of paper and a pencil so we may can convert the verbs from the poem into multiple tenses.

The boys follow MONSIEUR LAVAL's instructions, except JACQUES. JACQUES gets an idea.

JACQUES

Monsieur Laval, did you do any work with prehistory this summer?

MONSIEUR LAVAL pauses, puts his book down, and words come flooding out.

MONSIEUR LAVAL

I visited a small village not very far from here, and I was able to see both a Cro-Magnon skull and the skeleton of a Neanderthal!

MONSIEUR LAVAL looks at the boys expectantly, the boys are smiling, happy for the distraction, but don't really know what he's talking about.

MONSIEUR LAVAL plunges in with vigor.

MONSIEUR LAVAL (CONT'D)

You see, this very land that we are standing upon, this precise spot, was inhabited by two types of prehistoric man: the Neanderthals and the Cro-Magnons. The Neanderthals came to this area from Germany.

GEORGES

Germany?

MONSIEUR LAVAL

Yes, Germany.

JACQUES

Why do the Germans keep invading our country?!

MONSIEUR LAVAL

It's not the same as today, Jacques. This was 15,000 years ago. (beat) Stand up, Jacques!

As MONSIEUR LAVAL describes the Neanderthals
JACQUES takes the shape of a Neanderthal.
JACQUES plays it up.

MONSIEUR LAVAL

These Neanderthals were short, stocky and had a large ridge across their foreheads.

GEORGES and SIMON start to laugh.

MONSIEUR LAVAL (CONT'D)

Franck. Come over here.

As MONSIEUR LAVAL describe the Cro-Magnons,
FRANCK takes the shape of a Cro-Magnon.

MONSIEUR LAVAL

The Cro-Magnons looked more like modern humans, taller, leaner, no big foreheads!

JACQUES looks at FRANCK and notices the difference.

SIMON

So they both lived here at the same time?

MONSIEUR LAVAL

Yes. There are several sites across the region where we've found artifacts of their lives.

JACQUES

Did they fight each other?!

GEORGES

Did they have prehistoric battles?!

MONSIEUR LAVAL

Well, undoubtedly there were conflicts between the two groups as they competed for animals to hunt.

JACQUES

Who won?

GEORGES

Yeah, who won?

MONSIEUR LAVAL

Well, I guess we did. We are Cro-Magnons.

The boys begin to celebrate.

SIMON

We beat them?

GEORGES

We kicked those Germans out of here.

JACQUES

And we can do it again!

MONSIEUR LAVAL

Boys, boys, boys, settle down! (beat) I think we've had enough excitement for one morning. We're going to take a recess. Go, go, allez!

SCENE THREE

Outside, at recess, GEORGES and JACQUES are kicking a soccer ball. FRANCK is sitting on a bench watching them play. SIMON is sitting on the same bench drawing in a sketch pad.

JACQUES

(grabs the ball) Welcome, welcome everyone to the 1938 World Cup finals in Paris!

GEORGES

Welcome to the finest stadium in France, the Olympic Stadium of Colombes! (signaling to Franck and Simon) Some lucky fans have front row seats to this World Cup match! (beat) Lucky fans?!

SIMON and FRANCK look at each and cheer.

JACQUES

(dribbling the ball around) Here come the great players from Italy!

GEORGES

Attendez! Wait! Stop. Jacques, why do you always get to play Italy?!

JACQUES

Because I always play Italy.

GEORGES

(grabs the ball from JACQUES) I'm sick of being the losing team. Besides, I was there, at the real match in Paris!

JACQUES

(grabs the ball from GEORGES) Well I think the better player should get to pick which team they want to be, and I'm better than you are.

GEORGES

(grabs the ball back from JACQUES) Maybe, but it's my ball.

JACQUES

Fine. Let's see what you got!

GEORGES

(dribbles the ball) Here come the great players from Italy! (passes to Jacques)

JACQUES

And the great players from Hungary!

GEORGES

But not as great as Italy!

They play in earnest. Each attempts to score a goal. FRANCK, who is sitting on the bench, clearly wants to play. Finally, GEORGES scores.

GEORGES (CONT'D)

GOAL! GOAL!

FRANCK

(jumps up from the bench) Hey guys, I got to see one of the World Cup matches too!

GEORGES

Where? In Paris?

FRANCK

No, in Strasbourg.

GEORGES

The match between Brazil and Poland?!

FRANCK

Yes! I saw Leonidas play!

GEORGES

Leonidas?! Really? Jacques, did you hear that?

FRANCK

He's the best player in the world! That was the match where he scored four goals! I've actually been working on some of his moves.

(points to the ball)

Can I?

GEORGES kicks the ball to FRANCK. FRANCK performs some sophisticated soccer tricks. FRANCK is clearly a better soccer player than both GEORGES and JACQUES. GEORGES and FRANCK kick back and forth a few times. The ball gets away and JACQUES stops it. FRANCK goes towards JACQUES.

FRANCK (CONT'D)

Pass it.

(beat)

JACQUES

What's your name again?

FRANCK

Franck.

JACQUES

Franck? That a German name?

FRANCK

I'm French.

JACQUES

Where are you from?

FRANCK

Near Strasbourg.

JACQUES

Strasbourg's really close to Germany, isn't it? Do you speak German?

FRANCK

A little bit.

JACQUES and FRANCK stare at each other. GEORGES looks down at what SIMON has been drawing. GEORGES grabs SIMON's drawing.

SIMON

Hey!

GEORGES

Guys! Look at this! Simon drew it. It's one of those Neanderthals that Monsieur Laval was talking about. Pretty good, isn't it? (laughs) It's got that big ridge on the forehead too!

FRANCK and JACQUES look at the drawing.
JACQUES takes the drawing from GEORGES for a closer look.

SIMON

Give it back to me!

JACQUES

Monsieur Laval was wrong when he turned me into a Neanderthal....this looks like someone else...let me think...big forehead...short and stocky? (JACQUES goes to FRANCK and hold the drawing near him) Oh hey, Franck! It looks just like you!

FRANCK

What's your problem?

JACQUES

I don't trust you.

FRANCK

I've never done anything to you.

JACQUES

Really?

FRANCK

What have I done?

(beat)

JACQUES

Are you German?

FRANCK

No. I told you, I'm French.

JACQUES

Are you sure you're not a German spy?

FRANCK

I'm no traitor!

JACQUES

Or maybe you're something worse...way worse.

GEORGES

Jacques!

JACQUES

Maybe you're a Nazi!

FRANCK rushes towards JACQUES. JACQUES tries to throw the soccer ball at FRANCK and he drops SIMON's drawing. They begin to fight, swinging fists at one another. GEORGES and SIMON stay back, unsure what to do, yelling at them to stop. The fight goes to the ground and FRANCK has the advantage.

MONSIEUR LAVAL enters, sees the fight and rushes forward.

MONSIEUR LAVAL

Hey, hey! Stop it! BOYS! Jacques! Arrete!

MONSIEUR LAVAL tears the boys apart and holds them by the backs of their shirts. JACQUES has a bloody nose and FRANCK's arm is hurt.

MONSIEUR LAVAL (CONT'D)

Jacques. What a surprise! (to FRANCK) And you, this is not a good first impression. Go home!

FRANCK stumbles offstage.

MONSIEUR LAVAL (CONT'D)

(sighs, looks back at JACQUES) I'm taking you home myself.

MONSIEUR LAVAL drags JACQUES offstage. GEORGES picks up his ball and follows a bit behind. SIMON sees his Neanderthal drawing on the ground, picks it up, flattens out the wrinkles, and puts it gently into his drawing pad. SIMON exits.

PURCHASE PERUSAL FOR FULL SCRIPT