The Raft of the Medusa

written by
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Based on a true story

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BLACK SCREEN:

We HEAR a MOTHER’S VOICE, singing a lullaby.

MOTHER’S VOICE (V.O.)
Close your eyes, my son
And sail away,
‘Cross the ocean of dreams
Where waves drown the day.

In slumber we’ll skim
O’er green sprays of foam,
On rainbow sea horses
We’ll ride safely home.

The song FADES AWAY as we...

FADE IN:

EXT. ATLANTIC OCEAN - DAY

AERIAL SHOT of the immense, blue sea. It’s early morning.

SUBTITLE: “JULY 17, 1816. OFF THE COAST OF WEST AFRICA.”

We ZOOM IN on a tiny ship, barely visible in the vast expanse of ocean. CLOSER now, the French tricolor flag can be seen atop her sails, full from the wind. On the ship’s bow her name, “ARGUS,” is visible.

EXT. DECK OF THE “ARGUS” - DAY

The crew is busy with routine tasks. CAPTAIN DE PARNAJON stands at the stern, scanning the sea behind them through his spyglass. Beside him is FIRST LIEUTENANT LEMAIGRE.

FIRST LIEUTENANT LEMAIGRE
We tried our best, captain. No shame in that.

No response from the captain, still staring through the glass.

FIRST LIEUTENANT LEMAIGRE (cont’d)
We should make Senegal in about a day and a half, sir. The men shall be glad that...

The captain suddenly turns and looks at Lemaigre. Lemaigre appears confused. De Parnajon looks up at the sails. The wind is dying. Lemaigre now notices the change, too.

FIRST LIEUTENANT LEMAIGRE (cont’d)
Captain, should I...?
CAPTAIN DE PARNAJON
(raising a hand)
Wait. Wait a moment.

The sails hang lifeless. The crew has taken note and all eyes are on the captain. He looks back up at the sails. They begin to flutter. Now, the wind comes from the opposite direction.

CAPTAIN DE PARNAJON (cont’d)
Monsieur Lemaigre, swing her about.

Lemaigre YELLS THE ORDER to the SECOND LIEUTENANT, who twirls the wheel furiously. He then SHOUTS orders to the crew as the deck becomes a flurry of activity.

CAPTAIN DE PARNAJON (cont’d)
(looking up at the LOOKOUT)
Keep a sharp eye, ensign!
(under his breath)
We shall see what the fates have in store for us.

EXT. DECK OF THE “ARGUS” (TWO HOURS LATER) - DAY

All is quiet, except for the SOUND OF THE "ARGUS" SLICING THROUGH THE SEA. The captain, on the bridge, surveys the horizon through his glass. Suddenly, the lookout’s cry from the masthead breaks the silence.

LOOKOUT
(pointing)
Sighting off the larboard! About two leagues!

CAPTAIN DE PARNAJON
(with the spyglass to his eye)
Where?!

LOOKOUT
(also looking through a glass)
About forty-five degrees to larboard, captain. She’s low to the water. I doubt you could see her from the deck, sir.

CAPTAIN DE PARNAJON
Is it the “Medusa?”

LOOKOUT
I don’t think so, sir.
CAPTAIN DE PARNAJON
(to Lemaigre)
Forty-five to larboard, lieutenant!
(to the lookout)
What’s her bearing?

LOOKOUT
Can’t tell, sir. No white water. She seems to be drifting.
(beat)
There’s some sort of...movement on the deck, sir. Someone waving a red cloth...trying to get our attention.

CAPTAIN DE PARNAJON
Gunner’s Mate!

The GUNNER’S MATE and his men spring to attention near the cannon on deck.

CAPTAIN DE PARNAJON (CONT’D)
Load the powder, no ball. Fire a hailing shot at will.

The cannon is loaded, the fuse is lit, and BOOM!

EXT. DECK OF THE “ARGUS” (A FEW MINUTES LATER) - DAY

ANGLE ON the captain and crew, staring in silent disbelief over the side. The men respectfully remove their hats at the horrible sight:

THE “ARGUS” CREW’S P.O.V.

of a battered raft, 65 feet by 28 feet, bobbing helplessly in the water near the “Argus.” Several sharks silently glide nearby. A tattered, makeshift tent is in the center. On the deck of the vessel lie fifteen skeletal men. All are bearded, sun-burned and covered with sores. Some simply lie prone, looking blankly at the “Argus.” Those with the most strength raise their arms to heaven, tears streaming down their cheeks, too weak to even make crying sounds.

A BLACK MAN is crumpled against some barrels at one end of the raft. One leg is mangled below the knee and bandaged with a shirt.

EXT. BEACH - NIGHT

Before we see anything in the darkness, we HEAR the sounds: WAVES CRASHING, HORSES SNORTING, POUNDING HOOVES, and a MAN BREATHING HEAVILY.
In the dim light, we now see a SERIES OF CLOSE-UPS IN RAPID SUCCESSION: A) Hooves kicking up sand. B) A man’s eyes wide open in fear. C) Spokes of a chariot wheel furiously spinning. D) Leather straps straining against some unforeseen weight. E) The wild eyes of a horse.

INT. HOTEL ROOM, ROME - MORNING

In the darkened room, a MAN bolts up in bed, BREATHING HEAVILY. The nightmare is over. He gets up and walks to the window shutters and opens them. Blinding light pours into the room, silhouetting him.

FIGURE’S P.O.V.

of the skyline of Rome, dominated by St. Peter’s dome.

SUBTITLE: “ROME, ITALY. FOURTEEN MONTHS LATER.”

BACK TO SCENE

ANGLE ON the man’s face, warmly lit by the Roman sun. He’s THEODORE GÉRICAULT. Young and handsome, he has long, slightly tousled hair. He wipes the sweat of his nightmare from his forehead.

INT. SISTINE CHAPEL, ROME (SEPT. 1817) - DAY

CLOSE-UP of the Sistine Chapel ceiling, showing Michelangelo’s Flood with Noah’s Ark. In the scene, muscular bodies fight to stay above the rising waters. As we ZOOM OUT and PAN DOWN, we see the chapel is empty but for a few tourists staring at the ceiling.

Sitting on a bench against a far wall, Géricault is hunched over his sketch pad. He’s immaculate: elegantly dressed, clean-shaven, and his long hair neatly combed back into a ponytail. While one hand draws at a furious pace, the other holds a mirror, reflecting the frescoes above. Géricault is so absorbed in his work, he doesn’t notice a man who has approached and is now looking over his shoulder. He is Géricault’s younger artist friend, EUGENE DELACROIX. He has dark hair, a moustache and is a bit less polished in appearance.

CLOSE-UP of Géricault’s mirror, which reflects the flood scene above.

EUGENE (O.S.)
Help me, I’m drowning.

Géricault jerks his head up, jolted out of his concentration.
GÉRICAULT
Good God, man. Why must you always do that?
(with a hint of a smile)
Show some respect to your master.

EUGENE
Master Géricault? But I’m the better painter.

GÉRICAULT
It’s a pity you were never blessed with humility...nor talent, Eugene.

EUGENE
“Master Delacroix” to you.

Eugene studies Géricault’s drawing. They become serious as their attention focuses on art.

EUGENE (CONT’D)
The flood, eh? Destruction and salvation. Death and rescue.

Géricault gestures toward the famous Creation of Adam scene above them, showing God about to touch Adam’s finger.

GÉRICAULT
Michelangelo’s compositions are pure genius. The divine moment is just out of reach.

EUGENE
And yet we are certain it will happen.

GÉRICAULT
Anticipation and tension are embodied in that gap. We shall always wait for that magical moment...for man to be rescued from the abyss with the touch of life.
(beat)
I tell you the truth, Eugene. I would take one centimeter of Italian fresco over a thousand meters of French canvas.

EUGENE
Well, I shall be seeing my share of French canvas soon. I return to Paris in a few weeks.

GÉRICAULT
As am I. Tomorrow.
EUGENE
(surprised)
I thought you were staying on another year.
(beat)
Are you going to see her?

GÉRICault
I haven’t stopped seeing her...

INSERT
the mirror reflects Michelangelo’s God Creating Eve.

BACK TO SCENE

GÉRICault
...everywhere.

EUGENE
Theodore, you know you can never...

GÉRICault
I know, I know. But sometimes...I feel she’s my destiny.

Eugene looks up at the same scene on the ceiling, then back down to Géricault’s mirror.

INSERT
Eugene adjusts the mirror to reflect another scene: the couple being expelled from the Garden of Eden for their sin.

BACK TO SCENE

EUGENE
Look what Adam’s “destiny” brought him.

Eugene pats Géricault on the shoulder and leaves the chapel. Géricault stares at his sketchbook a moment, then begins leafing through the pages.

INSERT
the top sheet shows his ceiling sketches. He turns that page to reveal one with a dark-haired woman, her hair loosely piled up. She’s beautiful. We SLOWLY ZOOM IN on the woman’s face and...

FADE TO:
EXT. PARIS STAGECOACH STATION - DAY

The woman in Géricault’s sketch becomes ALEXANDRINE MODESTE CARUEL, 32. She’s stunning. Her dark hair is piled up beneath a very fashionable hat and her dress is beautiful. She is looking about for someone amidst the bustle of passengers and baggage handlers. She scans the various coaches, impatiently tapping her hands together. Now, pausing, she fixes her gaze in one direction.

ALEXANDRINE’S P.O.V.

of one carriage that stands out from the rest. Amid the frenzy of loading and unloading, its disgusted DRIVER is standing outside the open carriage door, impatiently waiting for someone inside.

INT. CARRIAGE - DAY

Géricault sits, preening himself in front of a handheld mirror. He brushes back his hair and adjusts his collar.

EXT. PARIS STAGECOACH STATION - DAY

Géricault steps out and surveys his surroundings. ANGLE ON Alexandrine. A rush of joy crosses her face as she sees Géricault. She starts running towards him, then catches herself, and walks as quickly, and ladylike, as she can.

They pause in front of each other. Géricault reaches a hand toward Alexandrine’s face. She recoils, smiling coyly, looks around to see if anyone noticed, then returns his gaze.

ALEXANDRINE
You’re late. Your letter said...

GÉRICAULT
I’ve missed you, Alexandrine.

She tries not to be pulled in by his considerable charm.

ALEXANDRINE
How was your journey?

GÉRICAULT

ALEXANDRINE
(smiling, knowingly)
The dashing artiste, Theodore Géricault, lonely? I doubt that.
She and Géricault walk toward her carriage. She notices an envelope sticking out of the sketchbook under his arm. She pulls it out.

ALEXANDRINE (cont’d)  
(a little suspicious)  
From an admirer?

GÉRICAULT  
From my father, I’m sure. I received several while in Rome. Each with a bank note, but no letter or signature. I couldn’t have stayed abroad without the money he sent.

He takes the envelope and looks at the seal on the back.

INSERT  
the fancy seal showing a bearded man’s head with “HEPHAESTUS” above it. Below are a flame and a hammer.

BACK TO SCENE

GÉRICAULT (cont’d)  
He’s begun using a new seal.

ALEXANDRINE  
What is it?

GÉRICAULT  
Hephaestus. Greek god of fire and the forge. Married to Aphrodite.

He slips the envelope back into his sketchbook.

GÉRICAULT (CONT’D)  
(patting his sketchbook)  
I’ve much to show you, Alex.

ALEXANDRINE  
Well, you’ll have to show me later. I’m meeting Jean-Baptiste nearby and we’re then going to your father’s...to welcome you home.

GÉRICAULT  
(smiling)  
Why not wait to meet me there?

ALEXANDRINE  
(blushing)  
I was anxious.
GÉRICAULT
Will anyone else be there?

ALEXANDRINE
I don’t know. Your father organized everything.

They reach her carriage. Géricault is distracted as he looks intently over Alexandrine’s shoulder.

GÉRICAULT’S P.O.V.

of an ANGRY MAN on the street, pulling his horse, but the rearing, snorting animal won’t budge. Frustrated, he whips the horse.

BACK TO SCENE

Géricault motions for Alexandrine to enter her carriage.

GÉRICAULT
I’ll meet you later.
(to the driver, who’s ready to leave)
Go!

As Alexandrine’s carriage bolts off, Géricault rushes toward the angry man and grabs the whip from his hand, twirls him around, and punches him in the nose. The man drops, then gets back up and stands face to face with Géricault. A small crowd forms around the two men.

ANGRY MAN
Are you mad?! He’s my beast. I’m in my right to...

Géricault stares closely at the man’s nose. Blood drips out. Géricault looks at his sleeve and then his coat, searching for blood. There’s none. Then he looks at his lapel. There’s a single drop of blood. He stares at it a moment, this stain on his expensive coat. The angry man looks confused. Suddenly, Géricault unleashes a series of blows to the man’s face. Blood is flying, but Géricault doesn’t care. The man falls to the ground, where Géricault begins whipping him. A few MEN FROM THE CROWD pull Géricault off the barely conscious man. Géricault composes himself, fixes his hair, takes out a wad of money and flings it at the man.

GÉRICAULT
He’s not your “beast” any longer.

He quietly approaches the horse and strokes its head. The animal responds to this gentle touch and becomes docile.
Géricault climbs into the saddle, throws the whip at the man and rides over to his carriage driver.

GÉRICAULT (cont’d)
   Try to keep up.

EXT. PARIS STREETS - DAY

Géricault has his horse in a full gallop, speeding along twisting avenues. The carriage driver struggles to keep up.

EXT. GEORGES-NICOLAS’ HOUSE, PARIS - DUSK

Géricault dismounts at the ornate home of his father, Georges-Nicolas. SERVANTS take his horse. He wipes his blood-stained fist with a handkerchief and shakes the dust from his clothes. MUFFLED VOICES and MUSIC can be heard coming from the house. Géricault walks up the steps, pauses for a moment, then opens the door. He’s surprised to find...

INT. GEORGES-NICOLAS’ HOUSE, GREAT ROOM - DUSK

A full scale party is in progress. Musicians PLAY A WALTZ from one corner of the cavernous Great Room. Elegantly dressed couples dance, while others TALK at the perimeter. Black servants roam about with drinks. Géricault stands at the entry, shocked. The guests are having such a good time, no one even notices him. Then, a LOUD BARITONE VOICE booms from the back of the room.

BARITONE VOICE (O.S.)
   Stop!  Stop the music!  Out of my way!
   Let a poor, crippled man through!

The crowd parts. Through them emerges JEAN-BAPTISTE, 60, a barrel-chested, shorter man who waddles up to Géricault with a cane in one hand and a drink in the other. He downs his drink, gives his glass to a passing servant, grabs Géricault by the shoulder and stares proudly into his eyes.

JEAN-BAPTISTE
   (to the crowd)
   Madames and monsieurs!  Fresh from his Italian sojourn, the unwitting guest of honor...
   (laughter from the crowd)
   ...my talented nephew, Theodore Géricault!

Géricault manages a smile as he is showered with APPLAUSE.

GÉRICAULT
   (to Jean-Baptiste)
   Uncle, I had no idea...
JEAN-BAPTISTE
Of course you didn’t. No one did until a few days ago. And truth be told, this was your father’s scheme. I merely assisted him with this fête in his beautiful home.

Géricault seems out of sorts.

GÉRICAULT
I’m sorry if I’m a little disengaged. The stress of the journey...

JEAN-BAPTISTE
No apologies, my dear Theodore. I am simply thankful you are home safely.
(beat)
I thought the beauty of the Italian countryside and art might tempt you to stay forever.

GÉRICAULT
Not forever. But my trip was productive.

JEAN-BAPTISTE
Excellent. In good time I want to hear all about it.
(looking intently at Géricault)
You have my sister’s eyes. I always see your mother looking back at me through you. And I’m sure she’s watching you, from some heavenly rampart, bursting with pride.
(beat)
You hold a special place in my heart, young Theodore.

GÉRICAULT
And you in mine, uncle.

GEORGES-NICOLAS (O.S.)
Hail, master artist!

Géricault wheels around to see his father, GEORGES-NICOLAS. He is gray, with a close-cut beard, but very much in shape. Georges-Nicolas grabs Géricault by the face and gives him a hard kiss on the cheek.

GÉRICAULT
Father!
Géricault is taken back by his father’s rare display of affection. He moves to hug his father, but is met with a handshake.

GEORGES-NICOLAS
I have missed you, son.

GÉRICAULT
Thank you for your support while I was abroad.

Georges-Nicolas looks confused, but nods like he understands.

GÉRICAULT (CONT’D)
(joking)
You haven’t rented out my studio, have you?

GEORGES-NICOLAS
It is just as you left it.
(beat)
The house has been lonely since your departure. Let us make a pact to never be apart for that long again. Nothing is more important than family.

Georges-Nicolas turns and sees his brother, ETIENNE, with his wife, ANNABELLE. He greets them warmly.

GEORGES-NICOLAS (cont’d)
Etienne! My dear brother! And Annabelle. You look lovely. Did you just arrive?

ETIENNE
Yes. I’m so sorry we’re late, Georges.
(to Géricault)
Welcome home, Theodore.

Géricault hugs them both.

GÉRICAULT
Thank you. How was your journey?

ETIENNE
Rouen seems to get farther from Paris each time we make the trip.

GEORGES-NICOLAS
Excuse us, Theodore. Let me show the weary travellers to their room.
Georges-Nicolas, Etienne and Annabelle walk away. At that moment, someone catches Jean-Baptiste’s eye over Géricault’s shoulder.

JEAN-BAPTISTE
Speaking of family...

Jean-Baptiste turns Géricault around to face a woman whose back is to them.

JEAN-BAPTISTE (cont’d)
Alexandrine!

Alexandrine turns around and is shocked to be face-to-face with Géricault.

ALEXANDRINE
Uh. Hello. Good evening...Theodore.

GÉRICAULT
(stiffly)
Good evening. You are...how are you?

Alexandrine curtsies just as Géricault attempts to shake her hand. Jean-Baptiste looks on, confused at their awkwardness.

JEAN-BAPTISTE
(to Géricault)
Dear God, boy. Is that any way to greet your own aunt? Look, be a good nephew. Do your lame old uncle a favor...

(he shoves them together)

...and dance with my lovely wife. With all these foxes about, I can only entrust her to my own flesh and blood.

Alexandrine and Géricault continue to stare at each other.

JEAN-BAPTISTE (cont’d)
Go!

Jean-Baptiste pushes the pair onto the dance floor. Touching in only the most minimal way, they dance, falling into the same movements as the other couples.

ALEXANDRINE
I’m sorry. I had no idea about the party. I mean, with this many people...

(noticing the blood on his coat)

What happened back there?
GÉRICAULT
Disagreement over equestrian care.

PAN to the back of the room, where double French doors lead to the Sitting Room. Behind the glass panes are three figures, all in serious conversation: Georges-Nicolas, Jean-Baptiste, and a dark-skinned Creole woman known as MADAME LALLEMAND. She is an exotic beauty among the pale European guests.

A younger man, HORACE VERNET, enters the Sitting Room. The conversation stops and Madame Lallemand kisses Jean-Baptiste on both cheeks. She exchanges a glance with Georges-Nicolas as she and Horace re-enter the Great Room with the dancing couples.

BACK ON Géricault and Alexandrine dancing, lost in each others’ gaze. Suddenly, a hand taps Géricault’s shoulder. He wheels around to see his friend, Horace Vernet.

HORACE
Just because you’re the guest of honor doesn’t mean you can foul us all up.

WIDE ANGLE of the room: the precision of the dance is off because Alexandrine and Géricault haven’t switched partners as the others have.

GÉRICAULT
Horace! My dear friend.
(embarrassed)
I am so sorry. We were just...

HORACE
...switching partners.
(gestures to Lallemand)
Madame Lallemand, meet Theodore Géricault. Now your dance partner.

Madame Lallemand looks intently into Géricault’s eyes.

GÉRICAULT
It’s a pleasure, Madame.

MADAME LALLEMAND
I know.

As she pulls Géricault away, Horace moves in the opposite direction with Alexandrine. Géricault shoots a helpless glance towards Alexandrine.
INT. GEORGES-NICOLAS’ HOUSE, DINING ROOM - NIGHT

The huge Dining Room is elegantly decorated. On the silk walls hang paintings of mythological subjects. A dozen SERVANTS take silverware off the table as the meal is just finishing.

At the far end of the enormous table is Georges-Nicolas. To his right is Géricault, then Horace and Madame Lallemand. To his left is Alexandrine and Jean-Baptiste. On the wall behind Jean-Baptiste is a large painting of the unfaithful Aphrodite and her lover, Ares. Next to Jean-Baptiste is a man in full navy uniform, the Viscount du Bouchage, MINISTER OF THE MARINE. Everyone is drinking and listening to Géricault, who is talking passionately about his art.

GÉRICAULT
...the Wounded Cuirassier? A dreadful work. I’m ashamed to have exhibited it.

JEAN-BAPTISTE
Why? The officer fighting back death is brilliant in its pathos.

GÉRICAULT
But it is false. It does not convey the truth of war or the terror of impending death. I had no more right to paint that officer’s gallant struggle than I had to paint...

(he glances at the Aphrodite painting)
...a myth. Have I seen with my own eyes Ares, god of war? No. Have I laid with Aphrodite?

The men CHUCKLE. A few of the older women look shocked.

GÉRICAULT (cont’d)

(beat)
I lack the experience of suffering.

GEORGES-NICOLAS
I wonder whether patrons are ready to embrace this “modern” art of yours. I, for one, would not care for a painting on my wall that smelled of death.

(smiling)
I prefer my crucifixions to match my fabrics.
More CHUCKLES.

GÉRICAULT
(serious)
And that is why the Christ of your generation are without soul, dear father. What could be more hypocritical? My friends, art is passion. In order to paint the passions, they must be experienced.

MINISTER OF THE MARINE
Are you therefore saying that all passionate men are great artists?

GÉRICAULT
No. But all great artists are passionate men.
(he looks at Horace)
Horace is a painter. He knows what I am speaking of.

HORACE
(nodding in agreement)
Emotion. Freedom.

GÉRICAULT
Freedom from constraint. Freedom from conventions. Freedom to live life to the fullest.

Alexandrine is engrossed in Géricault’s speech, as are the others. She passes a basket of fruit to Georges-Nicolas, which then makes its way around to Géricault.

GÉRICAULT (CONT'D)
To feel that which must be felt.

Géricault takes out an apple, then looks at Alexandrine.

GÉRICAULT (cont’d)
To taste that which begs to be tasted.

He takes a big, juicy bite. Alexandrine’s eyes widen and she looks down. Everyone is quiet staring at Géricault, waiting for more words of wisdom.

JEAN-BAPTISTE
Well, I wish to hear that which should be heard.
(to Alexandrine)
My dear, would you grace us with a...passionate...rendition at the piano?
The guests CLAP as Alexandrine smiles and nods “yes.” As the group adjourns to the Music Room, the Minister of the Marine bumps into a BLACK SERVANT holding a tray of plates, spilling them to the floor. He lashes out at the servant.

MINISTER OF THE MARINE
Clumsy mule!

Géricault shoots an angry glare toward the Minister, then puts a sympathetic hand on the servant’s shoulder. Géricault helps the servant pick up the mess. Georges-Nicolas, looking disdainful of his son, leads the still angry Minister into the Music Room.

INT. GEORGES-NICOLAS’ HOUSE, MUSIC ROOM - NIGHT

Alexandrine sits at a grand piano in front of the seated guests. She SINGS AND PLAYS beautifully, yet restrained. All are engrossed in the tune. Géricault comes into the room a little late, stuffing an envelope into his pocket. He stands in the back, next to Madame Lallemand.

Alexandrine finishes playing and the group APPLAUDS enthusiastically.

MADAME LALLEMAND
(to Géricault)
Does Madame Caruel fulfill your requirements for a great artist, monsieur Géricault?

GÉRICAULT
She exceeds them. Although she doesn’t realize the depth of her own talent.

As the guests exit the room, Géricault walks up to Alexandrine at the piano. As she watches, he smiles and casually slips an envelope between the sheets of music. Alexandrine gathers up the sheet music and holds it close.

INT. GEORGES-NICOLAS’ HOUSE, DRAWING ROOM - NIGHT

It is late and just the men have retired to the paneled Drawing Room with their brandies and cigars. The fireplace bathes the room in a warm orange glow.

MINISTER OF THE MARINE
We have managed to keep the press reports to a minimum, but this damned book, when it is published, may ignite public opinion like a powder keg.
GEORGES-NICOLAS
Is the crown supporting your position?

MINISTER OF THE MARINE
Not in the least. What’s worse, the king may use the situation to strengthen his own political standing. His distaste for the Bonapartist faction in the Navy is no secret. Louis would seize any opportunity to discredit the Ministry.

Géricault enters the room and catches the tail end of the conversation.

GÉRICAULT
Bonapartist faction? Royalists? I can see I’ve missed all the juicy gossip while abroad.

He’s met by silence. Horace puts his arm around Géricault.

HORACE
The discussion wasn’t about Royalists or Bonapartists, Theodore. It was about a thus far, little-known...incident...which some would like to keep quiet.

GÉRICAULT
Do tell.

GEORGES-NICOLAS
Theodore, this is a friend of mine, the Viscount du Bouchage, Minister of the Marine.

GÉRICAULT
Minister.

The Minister eyes Géricault for a moment. As we SLOWLY ZOOM IN on the Minister, the orange, flickering firelight gives his face an ominous look.

MINISTER OF THE MARINE
About fourteen months ago, one of our frigates, the “Medusa,” set sail for Senegal on the west African coast with a convoy of three other vessels. En route, she became separated from the others. Due to navigational errors...

HORACE
...or incompetence...
MINISTER OF THE MARINE (ignoring Horace)
...she ran aground on the Arguin Bank.

GÉRICAULT
Arguin Bank?

MINISTER OF THE MARINE
A sandbar in shallow water, about twenty leagues from land.

JEAN-BAPTISTE
Could they see the shore from that distance?

MINISTER OF THE MARINE
No. The captain determined that the best course of action was to abandon the ship. Unfortunately, there were insufficient lifeboats, so he ordered the “Medusa” stripped and her timbers used to construct a raft, so that all might be saved. They then set out, together, for the coast. Four of the lifeboats connected by rigging towed the raft.

The Minister pauses for a moment, growing uncomfortable. A DISTANT THUNDER is heard outside.

GEORGES-NICOLAS
Storm is coming.

GÉRICAULT
(to the Minister)
Go on.

MINISTER OF THE MARINE
Somehow, the line to the raft became disengaged...

Horace shakes his head in disagreement.

MINISTER OF THE MARINE (CONT'D)
...and the rowboats were unable to reestablish contact.

GÉRICAULT
And...?

MINISTER OF THE MARINE
The raft drifted away.
They were rescued?

Of course. As soon as the rowboats reached shore, they made their way to the port of St. Louis, where the “Medusa’s” captain ordered the brig “Argus” to conduct a thorough search...

For the “Medusa,” not the raft.

The “Argus” found the raft and brought the survivors to port.

How many were on the raft?

When?

(confused)

When...? How many boarded the raft?

(beat)
One hundred and forty-nine.

Géricault can’t believe the number. The room is silent. The Minister turns away from Géricault and gazes into the fire. Everyone else stares at Géricault. He returns their gazes, not understanding. Then it hits him...

And how many were rescued?

(beat)
Fifteen. Fifteen souls survived for thirteen days on the high seas.

Géricault doesn’t know what to say. Georges-Nicolas and Jean-Baptiste look away. Horace shakes his head in disgust.

The worst part is, this could have been avoided.

You do not know that.
GÉRICAULT
What do you mean, Horace?

HORACE
The captain. His commission was awarded based on his Royalist ties, not his naval experience. His incompetence was the direct cause for this disaster.

MINISTER OF THE MARINE
That is not true. He is a well qualified officer who was the victim of unfortunate circumstances. In any event, his court-martial trial should conclude in the next day or so, at which point I am sure he will be exonerated. Justice will prevail, gentlemen, of that you can be assured.

GÉRICAULT
Who is this captain?

FLASHBACK – INT. GREAT CABIN OF THE “MEDUSA” (JULY 2, 1816) – DAY

The Great Cabin has been converted into a chapel. In attendance are army and navy officers, including SECOND-LIEUTENANT ESPIAUX, 38. Also present are administrative officials about to receive large tracts of land in Senegal, as well as their wives and children. Everyone fans themselves in the hot room. Sitting in the front row, ramrod straight, is CAPTAIN DE CHAUMAREYS. He’s an older, clean-shaven man with his long, gray hair combed back into a ponytail. His uniform is spotless and buttoned to his neck, despite the oppressive heat.

At the front of the cabin, the SHIP’S PRIEST stands at a makeshift pulpit, reading from the scriptures.

SHIP’S PRIEST
“...and lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude with swords and clubs....Now he that betrayed him gave them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he; hold him fast. And forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, master; and kissed him...”

EXT. DECK OF THE “MEDUSA”– DAY

FIRST LIEUTENANT REYNAUD, 40, a thin man with a friendly face, casually leans on the wheel.
Next to Reynaud is the younger SUB-LIEUTENANT CLAIRET. Reynaud looks up at the blazing sun, wipes the sweat from his brow and unbuttons his coat.

On the main deck, most of the sailors are engaged in routine tasks with their shirts off. The other main group of men are soldiers, who lounge about in small groups, some playing cards, others sleeping in the heat.

On one side of the deck, a group of men in general civilian clothes bait fishing lines and throw them over the side. They are part of the engineering detachment. Their head engineer is ALEXANDER CORRÉARD, 28. He has dark hair and soft features. Next to him is his foreman, TOUCHE LAVILLETTE, 35. He is a big ex-sergeant with a close-shaved beard.

FIRST LIEUTENANT REYNAUD
(laughing)
Monsieur Corréard! I gather you and your engineers haven’t been out to sea before.

CORRÉARD
Why do you say that?

FIRST LIEUTENANT REYNAUD
Because your short lines will only work in shallow water. It’s too deep here. You’ll never catch anything...except ridicule from my crew.

The sailors and engineers LAUGH at the good-natured ribbing.

CORRÉARD
Well, lieutenant Reynaud, we would not be forced to fish if your ship’s cook gave us portions larger than a sardine. As you can see...
(gestures to big Lavillette)
...some of my men need more than that!

More LAUGHTER.

FIRST LIEUTENANT REYNAUD
Very well. If I spot a whale, I’ll notify Lavillette to bait his hook.

Near Lavillette are some sailors SINGING A SEA SHANTY to the same tune as the “mother’s lullaby” we heard at the beginning. Lavillette SINGS THE CHORUS with them.
SAILORS AND LAVILLETTE

Take me home, across the sea,
Where the sun always shines,
On hills evergreen.
There waits my true love,
Arms wide, calling me.

A SINGING SAILOR sings the next verse:

SINGING SAILOR

Captain, oh captain,
Where is my trust?
Keep me from storms,
From foul winds and rust.

Plot a course,
That is straight and true,
And in you I'll trust,
Sure as oceans are blue.

Soldiers line up and go below to the Mess Deck for breakfast. The door is held open for them by LÉON, a skinny 12 year-old sailor boy. He wears a red cloth around his waist like a belt. Léon notices one soldier not in line: JEAN-CHARLES. He is a tall, muscular Black man, who sits alone reading his Bible. Léon goes below, then emerges a moment later with a plate of food. He brings it to Jean-Charles.

LÉON
You don’t go below deck?

Jean-Charles looks up from his Bible at Léon, then at the food. He gives a slight, but warm, smile and takes the food.

LÉON (CONT'D)
Why not?

JEAN-CHARLES
(beat)
Too hot.

His response is short enough to stop Léon from prying.

LÉON
I’m Léon.

Jean-Charles considers this boy for a moment. There’s an awkward moment of silence.

LÉON (cont’d)
I’ve fought in the East Indies. This isn’t my first time at sea. I’m an experienced...
JEAN-CHARLES
(interrupting)
I’m Jean-Charles.

Léon smiles, realizing he doesn’t have to prove himself. He sits down next to the big man.

LÉON
What are you reading?

JEAN-CHARLES
(holding up the Bible)
King James version.

Léon looks a little surprised.

LÉON
My mother used to read that to me every night before bed. Then she’d sing me a lullaby ’til I fell asleep.

(beat)
I outgrew those things when I became a man, though. Not very useful for a sailor at sea.

Jean-Charles turns a few pages and finds a passage.

JEAN-CHARLES
“The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea.”

Léon smiles at the appropriateness of the verse. Jean-Charles points at the red cloth around Léon’s waist.

JEAN-CHARLES (cont’d)
None of the other sailors have a red belt.

LÉON
(a little self-conscious)
Oh, that. My mother gave it to me for good luck before we pulled out of port.

(lowers his voice a bit)
She swaddled me in it when I was a baby. Made me swear to wear it. Said it was the most precious thing she owned, and if she lent it to me, I’d be sure and return to her.

Léon stares down at the cloth for a moment, touching it gently as he thinks of his mother.
LÉON (cont’d)
You don’t think it makes me look...like a child...does it?

JEAN-CHARLES
Not at all. In Africa, red is the color of courage. Like a lion. Your name is Léon?

Léon nods “yes.”

JEAN-CHARLES (cont’d)
“Little lion.”

Léon smiles at the big soldier’s approval. Faintly, we can hear the sailors again SINGING THE SHANTY again.

LÉON
That’s the same tune as my mother’s lullaby.

Jean-Charles gestures for Léon to demonstrate.

LÉON (cont’d)
(quietly)
In my arms, dear child,
I’ll rock you to sleep.
On God’s ship of hope,
His servants he keeps.

When our journey’s complete,
I’ll ‘ever swim in your eyes,
Seeing no one but you,
Not betrayal nor lies.

Just then, the fishing poles begin twitching. First two or three, then ten, now twenty. The engineers jump up, startled by the unexpected activity on their lines. As they pull up their catch, soldiers and sailors rush over. One of the sailors is ENSIGN MAUDET, 18.

CLOSE ON Reynaud, who appears concerned.

FIRST LIEUTENANT REYNAUD
(to ensign Maudet)
Ensign! What type of fish are those?

ENSIGN MAUDET
They’re cod, sir.
(suddenly perplexed)
Cod?
FIRST LIEUTENANT REYNAUD
(to sub-lieutenant Clairet)
Take the wheel.

Reynaud rushes to the starboard side and looks over the railing. He then hurries back and takes the wheel from Clairet, gripping it tighter than before.

FIRST LIEUTENANT REYNAUD (CONT'D)
Lieutenant, have the studding sails taken in. We need to slow her down.

SUB-LIEUTENANT CLAIRET
Aye, sir.
(to some sailors on deck)
Take in the studding sails! Double time!

The men rush off to lower the small sails that give the “Medusa” her extra speed.

FIRST LIEUTENANT REYNAUD
Seaman Léon!

Léon runs over to Reynaud, salutes and stands at attention.

FIRST LIEUTENANT REYNAUD (CONT'D)
I have an important job for you. The captain is in chapel. Tell him I’d like to see him on deck...quickly, Léon.

LÉON
Right away, sir.

The boy salutes and rushes off toward the Great Cabin.

FIRST LIEUTENANT REYNAUD
(to ensign Maudet)
Ensign! As soon as we’ve slowed enough, take a sounding.

ENSIGN MAUDET
Aye, sir.

Maudet runs off to retrieve the sounding line. A moment later, captain de Chaumareys and second lieutenant Espiaux come briskly up the stairs to the deck. De Chaumareys marches up to the quarterdeck where Reynaud is still at the wheel. Espiaux follows after observing the fish.

FIRST LIEUTENANT REYNAUD
(saluting)
Captain. Sir. I’m sorry to disturb your service, sir, but...
CAPTAIN DE CHAUMAREYS
(interrupting)
Lieutenant!

FIRST LIEUTENANT REYNAUD
Yes, sir?

The captain looks at Reynaud’s coat and points to the few buttons undone.

CAPTAIN DE CHAUMAREYS
For God’s sake, strive to be an example to the crew.

Reynaud is surprised at this attention to an insignificant detail, but buttons his coat.

FIRST LIEUTENANT REYNAUD
I’m sorry, sir.

CAPTAIN DE CHAUMAREYS
Now, lieutenant, what is the urgency?

Reynaud looks at the fish flapping on the deck, then back at the captain. He can’t believe the captain doesn’t see the connection.

FIRST LIEUTENANT REYNAUD
Sir, the fish. They’re cod, sir.

No response from de Chaumareys.

FIRST LIEUTENANT REYNAUD (cont’d)
Cod. They’re a shallow water fish, sir.

CAPTAIN DE CHAUMAREYS
Ridiculous.

De Chaumareys pulls out a chart and spreads it over the navigation table. He then scans the horizon for a moment.

SECOND LIEUTENANT ESPIAUX
Sir, may I ask what you’re looking for?

De Chaumareys looks back at the chart and points to a spot.

CAPTAIN DE CHAUMAREYS
We are here, gentlemen...
(reads the chart’s markings)
...in one hundred fathoms of water.
FIRST LIEUTENANT REYNAUD
One hundred fathoms?  But the fish, sir...

CAPTAIN DE CHAUMAREYS
Either those are not cod or, if they are, they are simply a lost school.  Nothing to be alarmed about, lieutenant.  Stay the current course.

Ensign Maudet pulls up the last of his sounding line from over the railing.

ENSIGN MAUDET
Lieutenant!  Captain!  We are in eighteen fathoms, sir!

CAPTAIN DE CHAUMAREYS
Eighteen?  Impossible!
(to Maudet)
Take another sounding, ensign.

Maudet throws his line over again.

CAPTAIN DE CHAUMAREYS (cont’d)
Our charts could be off.

SECOND LIEUTENANT ESPIAUX
Captain, the Arguin Bank is an ill-charted obstacle.  Perhaps a portion of it reaches further south than we anticipated.  If we stopped to take a more accurate sounding and fix our position...

CAPTAIN DE CHAUMAREYS
(interrupting)
Lieutenant Espiaux!  The Minister ordered us to reach Senegal with all due haste.  If the chart is off, it is not by much.  We are not stopping to verify a position I already know.
(to Reynaud)
Reynaud, take us a little more into the wind.  We need merely head out to sea a bit more.

FIRST LIEUTENANT REYNAUD
(hesitant)
Aye, sir.

LAVILLETTE
Look!
LAVILLETTE’S P.O.V.

of the water, now more of a light green. A few long blades of grass float on the surface.

BACK TO SCENE

SECOND LIEUTENANT ESPIAUX
What is it?

LAVILLETTE
It looks like long blades of grass.

FIRST LIEUTENANT REYNAUD
River grasses.

The officers look back at the chart and study it.

SECOND LIEUTENANT ESPIAUX
We must be close to the Senegal and Gambia rivers. We are much closer...
(beat)
We may be on top of the bank, sir.

CAPTAIN DE CHAUMAREYS
(to Reynaud)
Increase our angle away from the coast, lieutenant.

FIRST LIEUTENANT REYNAUD
Aye, sir.

CAPTAIN DE CHAUMAREYS
(to Maudet on deck)
Ensign!

Maudet has just pulled up his sounding line.

ENSIGN MAUDET
Sir! Six fathoms, sir!

CAPTAIN DE CHAUMAREYS
(to Reynaud)
Take in the topsails...!

LAVILLETTE
(excitedly pointing toward the water)
Sand! I saw sand! There! Again!

CAPTAIN DE CHAUMAREYS
(shouting at the crew)
Take in the...!
Suddenly the ship gives a SCRAPING SHUDDER, jostling everyone on board. Everyone freezes. The ship sails along smoothly, then...a BUMP. The "Medusa" breaks free again, sails on for a moment, then grounds a third time with a LOUD GRINDING sound. As the timbers CREAK and GROAN, the ship lists over slightly to the larboard (port) side. It is firmly lodged. Everyone tries to steady themselves amidst the movement and angle of the deck. Espiaux looks at de Chaumareys, who appears in a trance, staring off to sea. He moves close to the captain.

SECOND LIEUTENANT ESPIAUX
Captain? What would you have us do, sir?

No response. The captain looks down at his chart.

SECOND LIEUTENANT ESPIAUX (cont’d)
Sir?

As if in a trance, de Chaumareys silently walks to his cabin.

INT. ALEXANDRINE’S CARRIAGE, COUNTRY ROAD OUTSIDE PARIS – DAY

Alexandrine is alone in her moving carriage. Her hair is tucked under a large, wide-brimmed hat. She looks outside, anxiously.

ALEXANDRINE’S P.O.V.

of a lush, forested landscape. A country chateau is suddenly visible at the end of a dirt road, behind an ivy-covered iron fence. Cypress trees and tall foliage on either side give us only glimpses of the chateau.

BACK TO SCENE

Alexandrine TAPS on the carriage ceiling with her umbrella. The carriage comes to a halt.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

Alexandrine walks down the dirt road toward the chateau, inhaling the fresh air. Behind her, her carriage driver leans back in his seat, ready to take a nap. She passes through the open gate and now sees the ivy-covered chateau’s beauty. It’s a large mansion, worn but not neglected.

SUBTITLE: “CHATEAU DE CHESNAY, JUST OUTSIDE PARIS, NEAR VERSAILLES.”
EXT. CHATEAU DE CHESNAY - DAY

Alexandrine approaches the chateau and is about to peek inside a window near the front door, when she hears AN ANIMAL’S SNORT. She turns to see a GARDNER, some distance away, in a wide brimmed hat that obscures his face. He is putting hay in front of a bull tethered to a cart. He hasn’t noticed her, but she doesn’t want to be seen. She tries the front door. It’s open. She slips inside.

INT. ENTRANCE ROOM, CHATEAU DE CHESNAY - DAY

All of the furniture is covered with white sheets. Beautiful paintings and decorative rugs are everywhere. Alexandrine makes her way through the room slowly, examining the rich decorations. She enters an adjoining room.

INT. SITTING ROOM, CHATEAU DE CHESNAY - DAY

On the far side of the room, two high-backed chairs face a fireplace with an ornate mantle. Alexandrine approaches to study a large painting that hangs above the mantle.

ALEXANDRINE’S P.O.V.

of the painting that shows a family posed on a balcony with a lush forest behind them, the same one surrounding the chateau. The seated mother is beautiful and smiling. Her warmth and love emanate from the work of art. Standing behind her is the cool and distant father, who looks familiar. He doesn’t touch his wife. The boy in the painting stands by his mother. He is about five-years-old. He rests his head on her shoulder, as she looks lovingly at him, her arm around him. The boy also holds the reins to a small pony, which stands off to the side of the painting. As we ZOOM IN on the boy’s face...

BACK TO SCENE

Alexandrine squints, studying the boy carefully.

        ALEXANDRINE

        Theodore?

        GÉRICAULT (O.S.)

        Yes?

Frightened, Alexandrine whirs around, face to face with Géricault, dressed in work clothes and just removing a big wide-brimmed hat. He’s the “gardener” she saw outside.
ALEXANDRINE
(somewhat angry and out of breath)
How long have you been here?!

Géricault looks at the painting.

GÉRICAULT
Since I was a child. On holidays.

Alexandrine looks puzzled.

GÉRICAULT (cont’d)
This chateau has been in my mother’s family. It’s always been a special place for me...a refuge.
(beat)
I want to show you something.

INT. STABLES, CHATEAU DE CHESNAY - DAY

The large stable has a long dirt walkway down the middle and stalls on either side. Géricault and Alexandrine enter.

GÉRICAULT
My mother loved to ride. She said she only felt truly free when she had stirrups at her heels and wind in her hair.

ALEXANDRINE
You are your mother’s son.

Géricault picks up a polo mallet hanging from a wall.

GÉRICAULT
We’d have polo matches with family and some of the servants. A few still live here, maintaining the house and grounds.

Alexandrine looks around, wondering if they’re nearby.

GÉRICAULT (cont’d)
Don’t worry. This place is so big, I hardly ever see them.

They stop in front of a stall. Inside is a beautiful white stallion. He rears up on his hind legs and SNORTS loudly.

GÉRICAULT (cont’d)
Pegasus!
Géricault opens the stall door and walks in. Apprehensive, Alexandrine stays outside. Pegasus becomes calm as Géricault pats his neck.

GÉRICAULT (cont’d)
He’s mine. He’ll let one of the caretakers walk him, but no one else can ride him.

Géricault pauses and stares at Alexandrine.

GÉRICAULT (cont’d)
Unless of course, I’m already on him.

EXT. STABLES, CHATEAU DE CHESNAY - DAY

Géricault is on Pegasus and Alexandrine is next to them, standing on a wooden crate.

GÉRICAULT
Trust me. Jump and twist. I’ll catch you.

Alexandrine looks nervous, but she jumps toward them, twisting her body so her side is toward Géricault. He grabs her waist and pulls her in front of him, side-saddle. They sit there for a moment, his arms around her, looking at each other. The horse lets out a SNORT, interrupting the moment.

ALEXANDRINE
Your horse doesn’t approve.

GÉRICAULT
I’ll teach him.

Géricault digs in his spurs and the stallion bursts into a gallop. Alexandrine lets out an excited SCREAM as they take off down a dirt path into the forest of trees.

EXT. FOREST, ON THE GROUNDS OF THE CHATEAU DE CHESNAY - DAY

The path twists and turns through the forest as filtered light breaks through the canopy of leaves above. CLOSE ON Alexandrine, thrilled with the excitement of the moment. Géricault is surprised as she flips one leg over the horse and grabs his mane. The path rises up to a small, grassy plateau. A narrow stream runs over the edge, with the SOUND OF A WATERFALL below.

EXT. PLATEAU, ON THE GROUNDS OF THE CHATEAU DE CHESNAY - DAY

Not wanting to take the horse too close to the waterfall, they dismount near the stream.
Géricault gets down first, but as Alexandrine swings her foot over, it gets tangled in the reins. She falls onto her back and Pegasus rears up. Géricault quickly snags the reins and calms the horse, then frees her foot.

GÉRICAULT
(gently touching her ankle)
Is it badly hurt?

ALEXANDRINE
(wincing slightly)
No, I...I don’t think so.

GÉRICAULT
I shall have to call you “Hippolytus” from now on.

ALEXANDRINE
Hippolytus?

GÉRICAULT
From Greek myth. He was a king’s son who loved to hunt and ride. His step-mother was in love with him. He didn’t return her affections. So, she hung herself. But not before leaving a note stating that Hippolytus had compromised her chastity.

ALEXANDRINE
Did he have an affair with her?

GÉRICAULT
No. He was an honorable son.

ALEXANDRINE
The father didn’t believe the lie, did he?

GÉRICAULT
He did. He banished his son from the kingdom, then prayed to the sea god Poseidon to avenge him against his own son.

Géricault pauses, lost in thought.

ALEXANDRINE
What did Poseidon do? To Hippolytus?

He doesn’t answer.

ALEXANDRINE (CONT’D)
Why did that story remind you...?
GÉRICAULT
I don’t know.

His short answer cuts her off. He forces a smile.

ALEXANDRINE
You should paint it.

GÉRICAULT
Why?

ALEXANDRINE
You know what Hippolytus went through.

He gives her a blank look.

ALEXANDRINE (CONT’D)
An implied love affair with an older woman...?

GÉRICAULT
Please. You’re not my father’s wife.

ALEXANDRINE
I’m your uncle’s wife.

GÉRICAULT
(sarcastic)
Is our love affair “implied”?

She ignores his last comment.

GÉRICAULT (CONT’D)
I don’t want to paint mythology, Alexandrine. I want to paint my own epoch, but on a grand, heroic scale, like Michelangelo.

ALEXANDRINE
What’s stopping you?

GÉRICAULT
Nothing...now.
  (more excited)
The other night, I heard a tale...a raft full of survivors at sea. Frenchmen. From a ship called the “Medusa.” That’s what I’m going to paint, Alexandrine.
  (beat)
The raft of the “Medusa.”

ALEXANDRINE
Have you begun sketches?
GÉRICAULT
I will. But first, I need to experience what those men did.

ALEXANDRINE
Why?

He puts his hand in the nearby stream.

GÉRICAULT
If I want to paint this stream, I need to touch it first. Feel its cool movement through my fingers.

He grabs her hand and leads her along the stream to the edge of the plateau.

GÉRICAULT AND ALEXANDRINE’S P.O.V.

The stream drops to a gentle waterfall, forming a small man-made lake about thirty feet below. Near the lake is a miniature neoclassical temple about the size of a large gazebo. Large trees on green rolling hills surround them.

BACK TO SCENE

Géricault becomes more animated.

GÉRICAULT
To paint this view, I must first smell the air, enter that temple...
   (looking at the lake)
   ...immerse myself in the water.

He looks at her with a wild look in his eyes. He’s ready to jump into the lake. She’s excited, too. She looks at the water, then back at him. But, her rational side takes over and she looks away.

ALEXANDRINE
I wish I had your enthusiasm, Theodore...your talent.

GÉRICAULT
You do. It’s just buried. You can do anything, Alexandrine. Write. Paint....

ALEXANDRINE
(holding up her hands)
I’m too clumsy.
GÉRICAULT
To be an artist, you don’t need “these”...
       (holding her hands)
...just “this.”
       (touching her chest above her heart)

They hold that pose for a moment, looking deeply at each other. Then...he kisses her. She kisses back for a moment, then pulls away.

He grabs her hand and she reluctantly follows to the very edge of the plateau. They stand there, looking at the lake below. He stretches his arms out. She follows his lead.

GÉRICAULT (cont’d)
Close your eyes.

She does it. He stares at her.

GÉRICAULT (cont’d)
Make a wish. What do you most want out of this life?

ALEXANDRINE
Love.

She pauses, waiting for his response.

GÉRICAULT
Freedom.

She opens her eyes and looks at him. She’s confused, hurt.

GÉRICAULT (cont’d)
It’s the same thing.

Alexandrine closes her eyes. They both lean to fall into the lake. At the last second, Alexandrine pulls away and takes a step back, watching him go over the side. She stands there a moment, not sure if she’s angry, exhilarated or concerned for his safety. She peers over the edge.

ALEXANDRINE’S P.O.V.
Géricault is treading water, looking up at her and smiling.

BACK TO SCENE
Alexandrine takes off running down a path to meet him.
EXT. LAKE, CHATEAU DE CHESNAY - DAY

As Géricault walks out of the lake, Alexandrine runs into the knee-deep water to meet him. They stand close, with the small temple on the shore near them. Géricault smiles, but Alexandrine stares at him, looking serious. Suddenly, she kisses him, very passionately.

EXT. BOOKSTORE, PARIS - DAY

Alexander Corréard and J. B. HENRI SAVIGNY, 30, two survivors of the raft ordeal, exit the bookstore. They look tired. A crowd follows them out, all holding identical books. They shake Corréard’s and Savigny’s hands and pat their backs. Just then, the two men spot a familiar face in the crowd: Géricault’s friend, Horace Vernet.

SAVIGNY
Horace! You are a sight for sore eyes.

CORRÉARD
My God, you have no idea what we’ve just been through.

HORACE
That’s what you get for putting your “Medusa” experience to paper. However, I have just the balm: excellent wine, some food...
(beat)
...and someone I want you to meet.

INT. GÉRICAULT’S STUDIO AT HIS FATHER’S HOUSE, PARIS - DAY

Géricault’s studio is cramped and cluttered. There is an easel, some paintings (portraits, muscular nude men trying to control rearing horses, landscapes), and everywhere sketches lie about. On one table are a few bottles of wine, some bread and cheese. Near the table, drinking wine, are Géricault and Madame Lallemand. She is close to him, touching his hand as they talk.

MADAME LALLEMAND
I would love to model for you. Anytime.

GÉRICAULT
(smiling)
Whenever you feel the need to make a sacrifice on the altar of art...

Horace, Corréard and Savigny enter the studio. Géricault drops Lallemand’s hand and rises as the men come over to him.
HORACE
(to Corréard and Savigny)
You remember Madame Lallemand, gentlemen.

They nod to her.

HORACE (CONT’D)
Alexander, Henri...this is my friend
Theodore. He’s a painter, too.

GÉRICAULT
Monsieurs, it’s an honor to meet you.

They all shake hands.

GÉRICAULT (cont’d)
(to Corréard and Savigny)
I’ll admit I know very little about your
ordeal aboard the raft, other than the
vaguest generalities.

Horace hands Géricault a book.

HORACE
Your belated welcome-home present.

INSERT

CLOSE-UP of the book, which is titled, “Narrative of a Voyage
to Senegal.” At the bottom are the authors’ names: “J. B.
Henri Savigny and Alexander Corréard.”

BACK TO SCENE

HORACE
Corréard was the head of the engineering
detachment aboard the “Medusa,” and
Savigny was the ship’s doctor.

SAVIGNY
So, you are an artist like Horace?

GÉRICAULT
Is that what Horace is calling himself
these days?

They all LAUGH.

CORRÉARD
What do you paint?

GÉRICAULT
Horace looks at Corréard and Savigny. The two men knowingly return his gaze.

HORACE
(to Géricault)
Sit, my friend.

INT. GÉRICAULT’S STUDIO AT HIS FATHER’S HOUSE (A FEW HOURS LATER) - NIGHT

Empty wine bottles lie about. Candles illuminate the room. Everyone has loosened their clothing. Madame Lallemand sits on Horace’s lap. Géricault takes notes and sketches as Corréard and Savigny relate their story.

GÉRICAULT
Getting back to the boarding of the raft, how was it determined who would board the raft, and who on the lifeboats?

CORRÉARD
Lists were made up. In private. If you were wealthy, an officer,...

SAVIGNY
...a Royalist....

CORRÉARD
...you were reserved a spot on a lifeboat. Soldiers, a few sailors, Bonapartists...the raft.

GÉRICAULT
Who designed the raft?

CORRÉARD
The foreman of my group, Touche Lavillette.

FLASHBACK - EXT. DECK OF THE “MEDUSA” (JULY 5, 1816) - MORNING

WIDE SHOT of the “Medusa” listing slightly to larboard (port), as six lifeboats circle her in the water. Her upper masts are missing, having been taken down to construct the raft. The raft bobs in the water, tied to the “Medusa.”

CLOSE ON deck as the frigate is a flurry of activity. The wealthier passengers, along with the few women and children, are helped over the side of the ship onto ladders leading to the lifeboats.
The rougher-looking passengers, mostly soldiers and lower-class workers, stand to the side, simply watching. Among this group is Jean-Charles. Next to him is Léon.

To one side of the ship, captain de Chaumareys, first lieutenant Reynaud and second lieutenant Espiaux stand with Corréard and Lavillette. They are looking at the raft.

CAPTAIN DE CHAUMAREYS
You are sure she is seaworthy, monsieur Lavillette?

LAVILLETTE
Under the circumstances, and with the materials available, yes sir. She won’t take more than fifty men and a few supplies, though. But when the lifeboats are filled to capacity, we shouldn’t have more than that left for the raft.

CAPTAIN DE CHAUMAREYS
As long as she floats. That is my only concern for the moment.

LAVILLETTE
Well, she’ll float. Without a mast, sail, rudder or bow...that’s about all she’ll do. Whoever’s on her will be completely dependent on the lifeboats towing her.

CORRÉARD
(to the captain)
Sir, if I may, who exactly will be on the raft?

The captain looks at Lavillette, then Corréard.

CAPTAIN DE CHAUMAREYS
You needn’t concern yourself with that, monsieur Corréard. Everything has been arranged.

EXT. THE “MEDUSA” (LATER) - MORNING

WIDE SHOT of the “Medusa” as a few men are now on the raft, with more climbing down ropes to board it. There are just two water barrels and six small wine casks on the raft.

Amid the frenzy of activity on the “Medusa’s” deck, Corréard searches for his engineers. Out of the crowd, Espiaux grabs his arm.
SECOND LIEUTENANT ESPIAUX
Monsieur Corréard. This way.

Espiaux leads Corréard closer to the bow, where a lifeboat is waiting below.

SECOND LIEUTENANT ESPIAUX (cont’d)
You’ve been assigned to this boat.

Corréard descends the rope ladder. He looks at the raft a few yards away and sees what he’d been searching for earlier: his men. All of them, including Lavillette, are huddled together with some soldiers, close to fifty altogether. The raft is already partially submerged, with water lapping at their ankles. Corréard makes eye contact with Lavillette. A wave of anger crosses Corréard’s face as he climbs back up the ladder.

LAVILLETTE
Alexander! No!

Now on deck, Corréard storms past Espiaux and pushes his way through the crowd of soldiers reluctantly gathered at the railing near the raft. There, he finds de Chaumareys and Reynaud trying to keep things in hand.

CORRÉARD
(angry, to the captain)
You’ve made a mistake on your list, captain. I’m with my men.

Corréard hops over the railing and descends the ladder. The rest of the men are grumbling and reluctant to board the raft. Reynaud tries to restore order.

FIRST LIEUTENANT REYNAUD
Men! I can assure you the vessel is seaworthy. You will be towed the entire way. You will be safe. The captain has assured it.

SOLDIER IN CROWD
Why do all of the lifeboats have officers in them? I’m not getting on that death raft unless an officer boards first!

Others in the group SHOUT THEIR AGREEMENT. Reynaud is losing control. De Chaumareys eyes the chaos for a moment.

CAPTAIN DE CHAUMAREYS
(yelling)
I will join you!

(MORE)
CAPTAIN DE CHAUMAREYS (cont'd)
As the captain, I will be the last to leave this ship. Once she is emptied, I will board the raft and personally lead you.

The men, now silent, stare at the captain. No one moves. Then, from the back, some of the men move aside to make room for Jean-Charles. He reaches the captain and first lieutenant, looks at them, glances at the crowd, then descends the ladder. Léon follows and slowly, quietly, the others do the same.

EXT. THE RAFT - DAY

About one hundred men are now on the raft, with more descending the ladder. All are up to their knees in water as the vessel rises and falls with the waves. Most are crowded into the center of the raft, trying to keep their balance. Sounds of MOANING and GRUMBLING rise up. With his big arms, Jean-Charles moves an ANGRY SOLDIER aside to make room for Léon, who is being jostled. As the water rises higher up his waist, Léon looks at Jean-Charles, manages a weak smile, and holds his forearm for support.

ANGRY SOLDIER
(yelling toward the ship)
There’s no more room!

The last few men descend the ladder. The raft now holds 149 people, crammed tightly together. They are all up to their waists in water. Those on the perimeter hold on to each other to keep from being washed out to sea. Near the center of the raft, Corréard is pressed close to Savigny.

CORRÉARD
You’re the doctor, right?

SAVIGNY
Yes.

CORRÉARD
Thank God you’re with us.

Corréard spots the captain at the railing of the “Medusa.” De Chaumareys is huddled with Reynaud and Espiaux, who are both listening intently to his orders. They nod in agreement to the captain, salute, then run off.

CORRÉARD (CONT'D)
(shouting to be heard)
Captain!
EXT. DECK OF THE “MEDUSA” - DAY

CORRÉARD (O.S.)
Do we have charts or a compass in case we’re separated?!

CAPTAIN DE CHAUMAREYS
I will fetch them and bring them down with me! Have no fear, men!

The captain goes to the quarterdeck and grabs a chart. From his pocket he pulls a small compass. Then, instead of heading toward the raft, he moves to the opposite side of the “Medusa.” He descends a ladder and boards his own lifeboat. Twenty-six muscular sailors are at the oars.

EXT. ON THE CAPTAIN’S LIFEBOAT - DAY

De Chaumareys sits and stretches his legs. There’s plenty of room.

CAPTAIN DE CHAUMAREYS (to one of the sailors)
You retrieved my clothing and personal effects?

The SAILOR nods toward two large trunks at the back.

CAPTAIN DE CHAUMAREYS (cont’d)
Very good. You may begin rowing, men.

EXT. “MEDUSA,” RAFT AND LIFEBOATS - DAY

As we PULL BACK, we see all four rowboats connected by lines, with de Chaumareys’ in the lead and Reynaud’s at the rear, towing the raft. The two sailboats have taken up positions on either side of the convoy. Together, the seven vessels pull away from the “Medusa.”

END FLASHBACK

INT. GEORGES-NICOLAS’ HOUSE, SITTING ROOM - DAY

Georges-Nicolas, the Minister of the Marine, Jean-Baptiste and Alexandrine are all seated engaged in light conversation. Alexandrine coughs, then gets up and excuses herself. The men respectfully rise as she exits.

INT. GÉRICAULT’S STUDIO AT HIS FATHER’S HOUSE - DAY

We follow Alexandrine as she quietly enters Géricault’s studio. His back is to us as he sketches. As she approaches him, she picks up a paintbrush from a jar.
Now directly behind him, she gently tickles his ear with the brush. Géricault stands up and spins around. He starts in to kiss her, but she puts her finger to her lips, glancing toward the house where the men are. She takes a few steps back, still staring at Géricault, and playfully picks up a small, jointed, wooden figure on the table beside her. Géricault picks up another wooden figure, poses the arms outstretched and places it on the same table as Alexandrine’s figure. He slowly walks toward her, sliding the figure across the table until the two dolls seem to embrace. She smiles. He’s now right in front of her and begins to very softly kiss her neck.

EXT. GEORGES-NICOLAS’ HOUSE - DAY

Alexandrine and Jean-Baptiste, with the aid of his cane, are walking toward their carriage, as Georges-Nicolas and the Minister of the Marine see them off.

GEORGES-NICOLAS
(to Alexandrine)
I wish you had time to say hello to Theodore.

ALEXANDRINE
Perhaps next time.

They enter their carriage and take off.

ANGLE ON an open second storey window, where Géricault stands behind a curtain, watching Alexandrine’s carriage leave. Below, his father and the Minister are in conversation.

MINISTER OF THE MARINE
I will have to decline your kind invitation, my friend. The “Medusa” affair is once again demanding my full attention.

Géricault moves closer to the window to listen, careful to stay out of sight.

GEORGES-NICOLAS
What is it?

The Minister glances around to see if anyone is near.

MINISTER OF THE MARINE
It’s been decided that the captain of the “Medusa,” de Chaumareys, will serve out his short sentence at Bicêtre Prison and Asylum, here in the city. If the journals get wind of this, they will have protesters in the streets.
Géricault backs away from the window, contemplating this bit of information.

INT. FOYER, BICÊTRE PRISON/ASYLUM - NIGHT

The entrance foyer of Bicêtre is cavernous and dark. Sparsely placed torches supply minimal light. An OLD GUARD searches Géricault. Two other GUARDS play cards at a far table. Near them is one of two passageways that lead off the foyer. Géricault stares in the opposite direction toward the other passage, which is unguarded. Coming from there, barely audible, are MUFFLED GROANS, emanating from somewhere deep within the complex.

OLD GUARD
They didn’t tell us about no son of de Chaumareys coming to visit.

Géricault gets close to the guard’s ear.

GÉRICAULT
Illegitimate son. But still family. How else would I know he’s here?

The old guard looks suspicious. Géricault smiles, gesturing toward his sketchbook.

GÉRICAULT (CONT'D)
You’d better search this.

Géricault opens the sketchbook. Inside is a flask. The old guard smiles, takes it and quickly tucks it into his pocket.

OLD GUARD
(to the other guards)
He’s clean.

Géricault starts toward the unguarded passage, but the old guard quickly grabs him by the arm.

OLD GUARD (CONT'D)
(with an evil grin)
You don’t want to go that way. Trust me. You want the prison cells.
(motioning toward the other passageway)
This way.

Géricault goes where he’s told, still looking over his shoulder at the mysterious passage behind him.
INT. HALL, BICÊTRE PRISON/ASYLUM - NIGHT

Géricault walks down a long, dark hallway. He rounds a corner and squints into some of the prison cells. He stops in front of one and peers inside.

GÉRICAULT’S P.O.V.

A man in a naval uniform sits on his cot, knees pulled up to his chest, with his back toward us. He’s gently rocking.

GÉRICAULT (O.S.)

Captain?

The man stops rocking and slowly turns to face Géricault.

It’s not the captain. It’s First Lieutenant Reynaud. His hair is unkempt and he’s unshaven. He stares at Géricault.

BACK TO SCENE

GÉRICAULT

Captain de Chaumareys?

No response from Reynaud.

CAPTAIN DE CHAUMAREYS (O.S.)

Yes? Who is it?

Géricault moves over one cell as Reynaud continues to stare.

INT. DE CHAUMAREYS’ CELL, BICÊTRE PRISON/ASYLUM - NIGHT

Captain de Chaumareys, removing his reading glasses, gets up from a table piled with papers and books. He pulls back his tangled hair into a ponytail. His clothes are wrinkled.

GÉRICAULT

You are captain de Chaumareys?

Géricault, who is immaculately dressed and groomed, looks over the captain. He can’t believe this disheveled man is de Chaumareys.

CAPTAIN DE CHAUMAREYS

Who are you?

(inspects Géricault)

You are too well-dressed to be with the Ministry.

GÉRICAULT

I am Theodore Géricault. I was hoping I might ask you some questions.
CAPTAIN DE CHAUMAREYS
Well, Theodore Géricault, in what capacity are you here?

GÉRICAULT
I am...an artist. I am doing research for a painting.

CAPTAIN DE CHAUMAREYS
An artist?
(slight chuckle)
I am afraid my knowledge of brushes and paint is rather thin. What do you want?

GÉRICAULT
I wish to submit a painting for the upcoming Salon...
(beat)
...on the events surrounding the “Medusa.”

De Chaumareys silently turns and walks back to his table, sits down, puts on his glasses and resumes reading.

GÉRICAULT (cont’d)
Sir, I want to understand what happened in order to faithfully represent...

CAPTAIN DE CHAUMAREYS
Read the newspapers.

GÉRICAULT
I want to hear the story from those who saw it with their own eyes. I am after truth in my painting.

CAPTAIN DE CHAUMAREYS
(angry)
Truth?! Which truth? The truth of the court? The Ministry? The truth of those who were aboard the raft? Or those aboard the lifeboats?
(beat)
There is no ultimate truth, monsieur Géricault. There are only versions of it.

GÉRICAULT
Truth does exist. And I aim to paint it.
CAPTAIN DE CHAUMAREYS
I have already told the truth. Petition the Ministry of the Navy if you wish to read it.

GÉRICAULT
I wanted to hear it from you. I could ask the Viscount du Bouchage if I wanted the official version.

The captain looks up from his papers.

CAPTAIN DE CHAUMAREYS
You know the Minister of the Marine?

GÉRICAULT
Yes. He’s a friend of my... (beat) He’s a friend of mine.

INT. GÉRICAULT’S STUDIO AT HIS FATHER’S HOUSE - DAY

In a far corner, Horace is sketching the semi-nude Madame Lallemand in exotic “Odalisque” attire (beads and feathers), as she reclines on a couch with rich draperies. In the center of the studio Géricault sketches furiously as Savigny paces about. Corréard is nearby.

INSERT

Géricault’s sketchpad. There’s a roughly drawn view of a raft with muscular figures lying about.

BACK TO SCENE

SAVIGNY
I remember someone from the “Argus” saying they’d seen a cloth...a red cloth...being waved from the raft. To catch their attention.

GÉRICAULT
Who was waving it?

SAVIGNY
I don’t know. We were in the shelter the morning of the rescue.

CORRÉARD
Lavillette told me he did that.

HORACE
Is that in your book?
CORRÉARD
We didn’t see it. So, no.

Savigny examines Géricault’s sketch.

SAVIGNY
I’m afraid your figures are a bit too
idealized. We’d been without food...real
food...for nearly ten days at that point.

Géricault makes some adjustments to his sketch.

SAVIGNY (cont’d)
Thinner.

Géricault looks frustrated, but continues sketching.

SAVIGNY (cont’d)
During my medical training, I spent some
time at Beaujon Hospital here in the
city. Many of the patients brought in
were the destitute of the city.
(stares off)
The same lost souls we pass on the street
each day, on our way to cafes or the
theater. They would bring one in and we
would take off his clothes to examine
him. Layer after layer. And then,
beneath it all, the body. Nothing but a
skeleton, with skin stretched so tightly
that it was almost translucent. You
could make out each bone, each sinew.

Savigny focuses back on Géricault.

SAVIGNY (cont’d)
The living dead. The only other place I
saw men in that condition was aboard the
raft. Except the raft was worse.
Sunburnt skin, the flesh on our legs
peeling off in sheets from extended
submersion in salt water.
(beat)
I do not fear hell, Theodore. For I have
already been there.

Everyone quietly stares at Savigny. Just then, the door
opens. Into the silence walks Eugene Delacroix. He surveys
the room for a moment, noting all of the somber faces.

EUGENE
I see that Theodore just told a joke.
Géricault gets up and hugs Eugene.

GÉRICAULT
Eugene! When did you get back from Rome?

EUGENE
Yesterday.

Eugene surveys the many sketches lying about.

EUGENE (CONT'D)
Someone’s been a busy little bee.

GÉRICAULT
I’ve found a subject, Eugene. A grand subject.

Géricault puts his previous sketch aside and pulls out another from his pad.

GÉRICAULT (CONT'D)
(to Corréard)
The moment that the raft became separated from the tethered rowboats. How did the line come loose?

CORRÉARD
Cut. Or thrown loose, from the rowboat.

Géricault starts to sketch.

GÉRICAULT
An accident?

CORRÉARD
No.

Géricault looks up from his sketch and stares at Corréard.

GÉRICAULT
Did you see someone cut the line?

CORRÉARD
We were crowded together too closely. It was difficult to see over the swells.

SAVIGNY
If it was an accident, they would have returned for us.

GÉRICAULT
Who was in charge on the boat pulling the raft?
CORRÉARD
Reynaud, the first lieutenant.

GÉRICAULT
Why would he have cut you loose?

CORRÉARD
The decision would not have been his to make.

GÉRICAULT
The captain?

Géricault starts searching frantically among his piles of papers. He can’t find what he’s looking for.

GÉRICAULT (cont’d)
(frustrated)
Damn it! This studio is too small! I can’t find anything!

He finally pulls a sheet of paper out of a stack.

GÉRICAULT (cont’d)
Here it is!
(scanning the sheet)
Earlier, you said the captain’s rowboat was in the lead, furthest from the raft.

SAVIGNY
It was.

GÉRICAULT
So how could he have signalled Reynaud?

SAVIGNY
I don’t know how, but we’re sure that, ultimately, this was the captain’s treachery.

CORRÉARD
He’s a Royalist dog, Theodore. A coward who betrayed his men.

Lallemand, finished modeling for Horace, has partially dressed herself and now stands by Géricault, looking at his drawings. Géricault keeps his head down, sketching. He doesn’t want to betray his knowledge of the captain or come across as a Royalist sympathizer.

No one heard her enter, but Alexandrine stands in the doorway. She knocks on the open door so they know she’s there. Everyone pauses to look at her.
ALEXANDRINE
I’m sorry. I...
(looking at Géricault)
Your father said I’d find you here.

GÉRICAULT
(absentmindedly)
Yes, I’m....What are you doing here?

ALEXANDRINE
Our...appointment?

Géricault looks blank. Alexandrine eyes the partially clad Madame Lallemand disapprovingly. Lallemand buttons her dress, picks up a cloak and exits.

GÉRICAULT
Appointment...my God! I almost forgot!

He quickly gathers up his sketches and heads for the door, stopping in front of Alexandrine.

GÉRICAULT (cont’d)
I’m terribly sorry. I have to meet...someone. I’ll explain later.
(quietly and sincerely)
I’m sorry.

Alexandrine tries to hide her disappointment. On his way out, Géricault picks up a small, wrapped gift on a table by the door. She takes note of this.

INT. DE CHAUMAREYS’ CELL, BICÔTRE PRISON/ASYLUM – DAY

CLOSE-UP of the present, being unwrapped in de Chaumareys’ hands. Inside a fancy box is a HAIRBRUSH. MED SHOT of Géricault and de Chaumareys. Géricault’s hair is a little more disheveled than their last meeting. His clothes a little more wrinkled.

CAPTAIN DE CHAUMAREYS
It is a wonder the guards allowed you to bring this in.

GÉRICAULT
One of them wants something. I get it for him.

CAPTAIN DE CHAUMAREYS
As an artist, you must be adept at discerning details, nuances...people’s desires.
GÉRICAULT
I gathered that you were a man of taste.
In surroundings that are less than ideal.

CAPTAIN DE CHAUMAREYS
(combing his hair)
Such is the fate of honest men in
dishonest times.

The captain looks at the sketchbook under Géricault’s arm.

CAPTAIN DE CHAUMAREYS (cont’d)
Your drawings?

GÉRICAULT
Yes.

CAPTAIN DE CHAUMAREYS
Of the “Medusa”?

Géricault nods “yes” and passes a few pages through the bars. The captain looks through them.

CAPTAIN DE CHAUMAREYS (cont’d)
You have quite a talent, monsieur
Géricault. It is a pity you have chosen
such a horrid event to display it.

GÉRICAULT
Much great art seemed repulsive at first.
(beat)
Captain, the day the raft was...lost.
How did that transpire?

De Chaumareys stares at the drawing before him. He carefully runs his hand over it. Memories are coming back to him.

CAPTAIN DE CHAUMAREYS
That morning was chaotic. The lives of
my men and passengers were paramount in
my mind. I ordered the raft lashed to
our rescue ships. We had every intention
of towing them to shore.

GÉRICAULT
How did the line come loose?

CAPTAIN DE CHAUMAREYS
I do not know. Reynaud’s boat was
closest, tied to the raft.
GÉRICAULT
Didn’t Reynaud go back? Didn’t you order him to go back?

CAPTAIN DE CHAUMAREYS
Monsieur Géricault, I was in the boat furthest from the raft. Our momentum was headed toward the shore. I believed Reynaud knew something from his close proximity that I was not privy to. Perhaps he was afraid of coming too close to the raft and having his boat overrun. I did not know. The decision was his.

From the next cell over, Reynaud lets out a MUFFLED LAUGH.

GÉRICAULT
Who is that?

The captain is about to speak, but Reynaud interrupts by HUMMING A TUNE. It’s the lullaby/sea shanty. De Chaumareys becomes unusually angry. He charges to the bars, where the sketches he was holding fall to the floor.

CAPTAIN DE CHAUMAREYS
(straining to look at Reynaud)
Silence! Silence!! Face your sentence like a man, not a cowardly lunatic!!
GUARDS!!

Reynaud continues to HUM and CHUCKLE. A guard arrives and runs the butt of his musket across the bars of Reynaud’s cell. Reynaud doesn’t stop. Géricault gathers his sketches through the bars and exits amid the uproar.

INT. FOYER, BICÔTRE PRISON/ASYLUM - DAY

As Géricault moves through the foyer, he suddenly stops. He hears the TUNE that Reynaud was humming, very FAINT, but now coming from another direction: the other passageway in the foyer. He slowly walks in that direction. The TUNE GETS LOUNDER. Suddenly, the old guard emerges from the passage, stepping in front of Géricault. Not wanting a confrontation, Géricault turns and walks out of the prison.

EXT. BICÔTRE PRISON/ASYLUM, PARIS - DAY

As Géricault exits, a HOODED AND CLOAKED FIGURE watches him from an alley.
INT. ARTIST'S STUDIO, PARIS - DAY

Géricault walks around a cavernous upstairs loft with the LANDLORD. Through large windows on one side, the rooftops and chimneys of Paris are visible.

    LANDLORD
    I think you will find the rent more than reasonable, monsieur.
    (a little nervous)
    There is just one thing, perhaps, that I should mention. I hope it won’t dissuade you from...

Géricault stares at him.

    GÉRICAULT
    Yes?

    LANDLORD
    There is a hospital nearby. Beaujon. But I can assure you that you will never see...

    GÉRICAULT
    How close?

    LANDLORD
    Just down the street.

Géricault takes out his billfold and starts peeling off bills into the landlord’s hands.

INT. BEAUJON HOSPITAL - DAY

In the hospital hallway, nurses and doctors move about. Géricault, holding his sketchbook, and Savigny walk up to a DOCTOR LAVIGNE. Savigny pats the doctor’s shoulder. They obviously know each other. Savigny introduces Géricault, then leaves as the doctor leads Géricault down the hall to a set of closed double doors.

    DOCTOR LAVIGNE
    This is where the poor and homeless of the city are sent. By the time they’ve come here, there is little we can do for them.
    (beat)
    If it is death and suffering you seek, monsieur Géricault, this is where you will find it.

Lavigne opens the doors.
INT. BEAUJON HOSPITAL, DEATH WARD - DAY

The room is long, with beds lining both sides of the room. The patients are either asleep or comatose. Some have their mouths open, in a silent scream. Most are mere whispers of human beings. A quiet Géricault and the doctor walk down the center of the room.

DOCTOR LAVIGNE

We’ve run so short on beds, we’ve had to send some to the asylum at Bicêtre.

They come to the bedside of an almost skeletal man who has just died. A NURSE is pulling the bedsheet over his face. Dr. Lavigne approaches the nurse and gently puts his hand on her shoulder. He speaks into her ear, glancing over at Géricault. She develops an angry scowl on her face and marches past Géricault, pausing to scold him.

NURSE

Allow him some dignity, in death at least.

Géricault doesn’t respond, he just watches her move to another patient’s bedside. Dr. Lavigne leaves. Alone with the dead man, Géricault pulls up a chair and opens his sketchbook. He gently pulls the sheet off the man’s face. His eyes are open and his mouth agape. Géricault looks at the body, wanting to draw the complete figure. He pulls the sheet lower, revealing the man’s sunken chest. He pauses, looks around, and makes eye contact with the nurse. He pulls the sheet back up to the man’s neck. He can’t sketch the full figure here. He stares at the man’s head for a moment, then begins sketching.

EXT. GÉRICAULT’S STUDIO - DAY

Two DELIVERY MEN struggle to unload a very long, rolled-up canvas from the back of a carriage. They enter the studio with the sixteen-foot parcel.

INT. GÉRICAULT’S STUDIO - DAY

Géricault, Horace and Eugene stare at the huge canvas, still rolled-up, on the floor. Horace and Eugene give Géricault a look, as if he’s mad to attempt a painting this large.

SERIES OF CLOSE-UPS: A) The wooden frame and its inner supports nailed together. B) The canvas unrolled and lifted onto the frame. C) Muscles straining to pull the canvas taut over the frame. D) Hammers pounding in nails, securing the canvas in place.
CLOSE-UP of the three men, all staring at the ground. They all bend down, OUT OF FRAME. As they come up, the rising assembled canvas FILLS THE FRAME. As we ZOOM OUT, we now see the huge 16’ x 23’ canvas, leaning against the wall. The men contemplate its size for a moment, then Eugene breaks the silence.

**EUGENE**
(to Géricault)
So. What do you think? Finish it in a day or two?

**INT. GÉRICAULT’S STUDIO (A FEW DAYS LATER) – DAY**

Géricault sits at a drawing table, sifting through his sketches of the “Medusa” story. Horace, Eugene and Corréard are huddled around him. Other sketches are spread out all over the room: some are tacked to walls, others on tables. As we PAN OVER the drawings, we see different episodes and their variations: the abandonment of the raft, mutiny aboard the raft, cannibalism, and the sighting of the rescue ship. As we PULL BACK, we see the huge canvas dominating the wall in front of Géricault. It is attached to a shallow wooden framework that functions as an easel.

Géricault shows a sketch of the raft to Corréard.

**GÉRICAULT**
How is this? Accurate?

**CORRÉARD**
Too tidy. It wasn’t built in dry dock, you know. The ends were quite jagged.

Géricault pulls out a new sheet and roughly sketches a raft, with jagged ends. Corréard looks over his shoulder.

**CORRÉARD (cont’d)**
Better, but the wood was of different sizes. Nothing matched.

Frustrated, Géricault makes some corrections.

**CORRÉARD (cont’d)**
The dimensions seem off. The length was much greater, with respect to the ....

**GÉRICAULT**
(interrupting)
I need to see it.

The others smile at the absurdity of the statement.
GÉRICAULT (CONT'D)
Lavillette built the raft, right?

CORRÉARD
Yes.

GÉRICAULT
Where is he now?

EXT. TOUR BOAT DOCK, SEINE RIVER, PARIS - DAY

Lavillette, in fairly worn clothing, helps passengers disembark a tour boat. He always keeps two feet on the dock, never touching the boat. As he helps a RICH WOMAN out, she drops her umbrella on the boat. She impatiently looks at Lavillette to fetch it. He just stares at it. Finally, a frustrated CO-WORKER picks up the umbrella and hands it to the woman. He gives Lavillette an angry look.

EXT. OUTDOOR CAFE, NEAR THE SEINE RIVER - DAY

Lavillette and Géricault, with his sketchbook, sit at a table with wine and food. The tour boat dock is visible behind them. Lavillette looks a little uncomfortable, yet he ravenously eats his meal.

LAVILLETTE
You say Corréard is helping you?

GÉRICAULT
Yes. Although he thought you may be able to fill in some gaps in his recollection.

Lavillette considers Géricault for a moment.

LAVILLETTE
You know, I loved the sea, before....
(beat)
I thought this job would be good for me, help me overcome my fear of the water.

Lavillette stares off. Géricault gently poses a question.

GÉRICAULT
The raft. Corréard said you oversaw its construction. What was it like?

Lavillette thinks a moment, then downs his glass of wine.

LAVILLETTE
It was roughly twenty meters by seven meters. The ship’s masts, yards, booms...we used everything we could.
(MORE)
It was big enough to carry supplies and a few men.

(beat)

But not big enough for the number of men the captain stuffed onto her.

Géricault sketches and takes notes as Lavillette talks.

GÉRICAULT
What about the red cloth?

Lavillette gives a blank look.

GÉRICAULT (cont’d)
Corréard said you were waving a red cloth. To catch the attention of the rescue ship.

Lavillette nods “yes.”

GÉRICAULT (cont’d)
Where is it now?

LAVILLETTE
I don’t know. Gone. I threw it away.

Géricault is puzzled. Why get rid of an instrument of your salvation?

GÉRICAULT
What was it like? Toward the end?

Lavillette looks down, full of emotion. He begins to HUM. It’s the sea shanty. His eyes fill with tears.

LAVILLETTE
I would sing a shanty I learned on the ship to take my mind off the...horrors.

He pauses for a moment. Something is coming back to him.

LAVILLETTE (cont’d)
And I remember others singing it. When we drifted away from the row boats.

GÉRICAULT
How did that happen? Were you cut loose?

Lavillette thinks a moment...the memory is too painful. He looks off and starts to SING A VERSE of the shanty:
LAVILLETTE
(quietly)
Lover, oh lover,
Where is my heart?
Like a reef that’s submerged,
Not found on the charts.
Like an anchor of iron,
It sinks to the deep,
There to await you,
In eternal blue sleep.

Géricault writes down the words in his sketchbook.

GÉRICAULT
Lavillette, my friend. Would you like to earn better wages than working the tour boats?

INT. GÉRICAULT’S STUDIO – DAY

Against one wall is a stack of lumber. Géricault and Lavillette study the pile with a serious expression.

GÉRICAULT
I’ll help. Tell me what to do.

INT. LOUVRE, GRANDE GALLERIE, PARIS – DAY

Géricault and Alexandrine walk along the museum’s long Grande Gallerie. She looks at him, he looks at the art.

GÉRICAULT
Many of the Salon paintings will be displayed in this room. It’s just over a year away.

ALEXANDRINE
(uninterested)
Yes.

He’s stopped in front of a painting showing Medusa with snakes for hair. She continues looking at him.

GÉRICAULT
Medusa.

ALEXANDRINE
(not looking at the painting)
Can we talk about something beside your shipwreck?
GÉRICAULT
No. The painting. Medusa from mythology.

ALEXANDRINE
Everything comes back to your studies, your painting, your work.
(beat)
There’s no time for anything, or anyone, else.

He still focuses on the painting, not her.

ALEXANDRINE (cont’d)
Look at me.

He finally faces her.

ALEXANDRINE (cont’d)
When you were in Italy, I took some comfort in the fact that you were far away. I knew I couldn’t see you. Now, we are in the same city, but you’re farther away from me than ever.
(beat)
Don’t do this to me.

GÉRICAULT
I’m sorry. Really. But the topic is fresh, it cannot wait...

ALEXANDRINE
Nor can I. Not forever.

GÉRICAULT
Once I finish helping Lavillette with the raft, I can finish my preliminary sketches and then I promise...

ALEXANDRINE
Raft?

GÉRICAULT
Yes. We’re building a raft. In my studio.

She looks at him like he’s losing his mind.

ALEXANDRINE
This is not a painting. It’s an obsession.
GÉRICAULT
(a little angry)
Alexandrine. I can’t just “paint a pretty picture.” I need to experience it, as best I can. I must see the raft. Do you understand? I must stand on it. Crawl on it. Lie on it.
(beat)
I need to feel my life drain away on it.

He walks on without her.

ALEXANDRINE
(quietly to herself)
Our lives drain away on it.

INT. GÉRICAULT’S STUDIO - DAY

CLOSE UP of Géricault’s sketch, showing lying and kneeling men on the raft in a low, horizontal composition. On the far right, on his knees, is Lavillette waving the cloth.

WIDE SHOT of the room. Géricault, whose clothes and hair are a mess, sketches Lavillette. The big man is on the completed raft, in the same pose as his figure in the drawing. He looks tired as he waves a cloth.

GÉRICAULT
Higher! Wave it!

At the back of the room, Eugene quietly watches the demanding, obsessive Géricault. Eugene hangs his head in disappointment and quietly leaves.

EXT. GÉRICAULT’S STUDIO, ACROSS THE STREET - DAY

WE see Eugene exit and walk away. As we PULL BACK, a hooded figure stands on the corner, watching the studio.

INT. GÉRICAULT’S STUDIO (WEEKS LATER) - NIGHT

There is the SOUND OF RAIN hitting the big studio windows. Occasional LIGHTNING FLASHES and THUNDER CLAPS break the silence in the candle-lit studio. Géricault stands on the raft, back to us, staring at the large, empty canvas in front of him. Suddenly, there’s a LOUD KNOCKING at the door.

EUGENE (O.S.)
Open up, hermit! We are your saviors from the “Argus,” come to rescue you!

Géricault doesn’t move.
INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE GÉRICAULT’S STUDIO - NIGHT

Eugene, Horace and Madame Lallemand stand in front of the closed door. Horace COUGHS, just recovering from an illness. They look at a paper tacked to the door.

INSERT

the paper, which reads “Stay away.”

BACK TO SCENE

EUGENE

Bullshit.

Eugene opens the door.

INT. GÉRICAULT’S STUDIO - NIGHT

The three visitors enter. Géricault is hunched over his drawings and doesn’t turn around.

EUGENE

Theodore. Are you all right?

No answer.

HORACE

It’s been weeks.

(beat)

We’ve been worried. Come out with us.

GÉRICAULT

(quietly)

No.

HORACE

We’re going for supper and then to...

Géricault’s body is stiffening, his fists clenched.

GÉRICAULT

No!

He exhales and releases some anger. Now calmer, he turns and walks toward Horace.

GÉRICAULT (cont’d)

No. I need to...I must stay here. I must focus.

Horace COUGHS into a handkerchief. Géricault stares at Horace’s face, then looks over his thinner body.
GÉRICAULT (cont’d)
You’ve been ill?

HORACE
I was. Nothing serious. I’m better now. I thought that getting out would do me...

Géricault isn’t listening. He just stares at Horace’s pale, slightly sunken features. He touches Horace’s cheek.

GÉRICAULT
You’re beautiful.
(beat)
Sit. Let me sketch you.

HORACE
(angry)
I didn’t come here to pose for one of your raft survivors! I came here as a friend. You do remember what that is, don’t you?!

Horace gets into a COUGHING FIT and Lallemand pulls him away. Eugene, at a far table examining some sketches, MOTIONS for Horace and Lallemand to leave. They exit. Géricault walks over to Eugene. They look at the sketches.

INSERT
scattered drawings on the table showing dead bodies, emaciated figures and lifeless faces.

BACK TO SCENE

EUGENE
My friend, you need not follow the story too closely. Remember Michelangelo. Take reality and then make it heroic. Make it yours.

GÉRICAULT
But reality must be the foundation.
(beat)
You understand, don’t you? I can’t have distractions. Not now.

EUGENE
How much of this is about her?

GÉRICAULT
What?
“No distractions.” Immersing yourself in your work.

Don’t be ridiculous.

Please, Theodore. I’ve known you too long. In the battle between your heart and mind, your heart always wins.

Gericault, everything in my life – my training, my travels, my passion – has led me to this painting.

Maybe everything in your life has led you to Alexandrine.

Gericault doesn’t answer. He just leans over the sketches, his scraggly hair hanging down over his face. Eugene smiles and tries to lighten the mood.

Come. Fix your hair, dear, and I’ll take you out on the town.

Eugene reaches to pull back Gericault’s hair. Gericault slaps his hand away. Eugene thinks it’s a game and moves back in toward Gericault.

Honey, I won’t take “no” for an...

Gericault shoves Eugene, who falls onto an easel. Eugene gets up and takes off his coat. He angrily moves toward Gericault.

You self-centered bastard.

He shoves Gericault back, who quickly recovers.

You’re right. Food or drink won’t help you. You need a beating.

Géricault stands there a moment, catching his breath. He begins to weep over this change in his personality. He approaches the unconscious Eugene and kneels by him, tenderly wiping the blood from his friend’s nose. He starts to drag Eugene to a nearby cot. Part way there, he pauses. CLOSE ON Géricault’s face. He looks at the raft. Then back down at Eugene. He changes direction and drags Eugene onto the raft.

GÉRICAULT (CONT'D)
I’m sorry, my friend.

On the raft, he poses Eugene face down. Géricault backs up and considers the pose. He moves back in and pulls Eugene’s left arm up above his head, draping his wrist over a board. He backs up again and starts sketching.

INSERT

sketch, with Eugene in the center of the raft. This figure will also be in the finished painting.

BACK TO SCENE

After a few moments of sketching, Géricault rests. He looks down at one of his papers knocked to the floor in the fight. He picks it up, sits by Eugene on the raft, and reads:

CORRÉARD (V.O.)
The mutiny aboard the raft? What was it like? Men insane with fear...fighting fear. Fighting their fellow men. And fighting the Almighty Himself.

With a FLASH OF LIGHTNING we...

FLASHBACK - EXT. ON THE RAFT (SECOND NIGHT) - NIGHT

CLOSE SHOT of the raft, bobbing in the ocean, illuminated through LIGHTNING FLASHES. Towering waves are periodically glimpsed. The wind is fierce.
CORRÉARD (V.O.)

It was the second night aboard the raft.

Everyone is up to their shins in water. As the raft tips back and forth from the waves, either end is alternately dunked, submerging the men on that side to their necks.

CORRÉARD (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Due to the weakness of the waterlogged ropes, the planks beneath our feet would separate...

UNDERWATER ANGLE ON a SOLDIER'S leg, which slips down between the planks.

CORRÉARD (V.O.) (cont'd)

...then come back together.

ABOVE THE WATER, the soldier struggles to free himself. He CRIES OUT, but those near him are powerless in the pitching seas. As his end of the raft drops, he’s submerged over his head. As we PAN OUT, another MAN dips below the waves.

CORRÉARD (V.O.) (CONT'D)

No one had slept in two days. Many had lost hope. Some decided to ease their passage into the next world through drink.

Some distraught soldiers crouch near the stacked wine barrels, where they’ve poked a hole in one with a knife. With army issue tin cups, they’re filling them and getting drunk. The scene grows more chaotic as others fight to get the wine.

CORRÉARD (V.O.) (cont'd)

The officers tried to regain control, but were met with defiance.

As the officers move the men away from the barrels, the raft divides into two opposing camps. On one side are the survivalists: officers, Corréard and his engineers, Savigny, Lavillette, Jean-Charles and Léon. Opposite them are the mutineers: drunken, hopeless soldiers and a few sailors. The mutineers ready their bayonets and knives. The officers unsheathe their sabers. The two sides glare at each other. An ARMY OFFICER in the front rank of the survivalists, near Jean-Charles, appeals for calm.

ARMY OFFICER
(to the mutineers)

Lay down your weapons and all will be forgiven! We are brothers! Frenchmen!
At that, a CRAZED MUTINEER rushes the survivalists, but is quickly stabbed and dropped by TWO OFFICERS. The mutineers seethe with anger. CRIES OF RAGE rise up among them. Knowing what’s about to come, Jean-Charles places an arm around the shaking Léon.

CORRÉARD (V.O.)
In a hopeless situation, men will do strange things to end their suffering.

Behind the front row of mutineers, a SOLDIER WITH A KNIFE is kneeling, cutting at the ropes that hold the raft together. ANGLE ON Jean-Charles, who notices this.

JEAN-CHARLES
One is cutting the lashings! We’ll break apart!

ARMY OFFICER
(to the survivalists)
They’re destroying the raft!

Sensing they’re about to be charged, the mutineers strike first.

MUTINEER
(to his mates)
Kill them! Kill them all!

CORRÉARD (V.O.)
And with that, our battered barque descended deeper into the inferno.

The mutineers rush forward with a CLANGING OF SABERS ON BAYONETS and CRIES OF RAGE AND PAIN. Soldiers without weapons bite and claw their foes. The mutineers push to the center of the raft and slash at the ropes holding the mast. It falls, pinning an officer beneath it. A large wave tilts the raft in favor of the officers, who move down the raft, stabbing and slashing at the madmen as they go. The mutineers are pushed to the end of the raft, as a few fall into the sea SCREAMING. Waves carry some of them around to the front of the raft, where they climb back aboard. Corréard turns and notices this new threat.

CORRÉARD (cont’d)
(to his engineers)
Behind us!

The engineers attack, punching and kicking men off the raft. Lavillette, in a rage, picks up a man over his head and throws him back into the sea.
At the side of the raft, one mutineer has made it back onto the raft. He grabs Léon from behind and throws him into the ocean.

LÉON
Jean-Charles!

Jean-Charles tosses aside the man he was grappling with and sees Léon floundering in the sea. He grabs a cut rope that is attached to the toppled mast and ties it around his waist. He makes his way to the edge of the raft, but before he can jump, the planks beneath his feet separate. He is submerged.

UNDERWATER VIEW as Jean-Charles struggles with his leg. Just a few feet away are Léon’s kicking legs. The raft bobs up and Jean-Charles is...

ABOVE THE WATER, looking for Léon. He sees a hand above the waves. The raft dips again and he’s...

UNDERWATER. With a FLASH OF LIGHTNING, Jean-Charles is face-to-face with Léon, just out of reach. The boy’s face is panicked. Bubbles escape from his mouth.

ABOVE THE WATER again, Jean-Charles puts both hands around his wedged leg and, with a SCREAM OF AGONY, pulls it free. He dives over to Léon, then pulls himself and the boy back to the raft using the rope. He props the exhausted Léon up on a barrel, then pulls himself onto another barrel nearby. Jean-Charles’ leg is mangled below the knee.

The storm clouds part and the moonlight reveals a WIDE SHOT of the raft. The mutiny has been put down. Dead bodies float around the raft. Some are stuck between the planks, face down in the water. The surviving mutineers turn their weapons over to the officers, begging for mercy. Though diminished, wind and waves still buffet the small raft.

GÉRICAULT (V.O.)
My dear Alexandrine. I write to you, because I am unable to see you. Whether that is by my own choosing or by fate, I do not know. All I do know is that I am caught up in a storm. Forces beyond my control blow fiercely against me. Waves of doubt and confusion threaten to overwhelm me at any moment. Without you, I would drown. Only you can rescue me, but I cannot reach you.

END FLASHBACK
INT. GÉRICAULT’S STUDIO - NIGHT

Géricault sits at a table, writing a letter to Alexandrine. Eugene is still passed out on the raft. Géricault pauses, rereading his last line.

GÉRICAULT
"Only you can rescue me, but I cannot reach you."

He pulls out a sketch from a nearby stack of papers.

INSERT

the drawing, which shows the raft survivors, trying to catch the attention of the “Argus” on the horizon.

BACK TO SCENE

GÉRICAULT (cont’d)
(under his breath)
Rescue. Just out of reach.

He looks over and smiles at Eugene, still passed out.

GÉRICAULT (cont’d)
Michelangelo would be proud, Eugene.

Géricault places his two forefingers close together, but not touching, copying God’s and Adam’s fingers from the Sistine Chapel.

GÉRICAULT (cont’d)
Anticipation. We will always wait for the rescue.

He places that sketch on top of the pile and returns to writing his letter.

GÉRICAULT (V.O.) (CONT'D)
You are my salvation, Alexandrine. I can see you, distant on the horizon, but getting closer. Do not give up on me.

CLOSE-UP of Géricault closing the envelope, dripping wax on it, then pressing his seal into it. The seal is a large “G.”

INT. JEAN-BAPTISTE’S HOUSE, STUDY - NIGHT

It’s another night. Alexandrine is alone, reading Géricault’s letter as the embers in the fireplace die out.
If you understand me...if you love me as I love you, write back. Tell me you will wait for this storm to pass and meet me on the other side.

She finishes reading the letter, folds it, and tucks it into a pocket. At a writing table, she takes out paper and a quill pen.

INT. HORACE’S STUDIO – DAY

Alexandrine is at the door, talking to Horace, who holds his paint palette. Madame Lallemand is out of earshot, posing as Salomé: she holds a thin veil over her face, stands in a seductive pose, and holds a platter with a mannequin’s head on it (John the Baptist). She intently watches Alexandrine and Horace. Alexandrine hands an envelope to Horace, then leaves. Horace walks back in, looking at the envelope, obviously thinking. Back at his easel, he drops the letter onto a pile of sketches. ANGLE ON Lallemand, whose eyes follow the letter.

EXT. BEAUJON HOSPITAL – NIGHT

It’s raining. In the distance, from the direction of the hospital, a lone figure approaches. He walks quickly down the deserted cobblestone street. He wears a large hat, raincoat and carries a sack over his back. As he passes beneath a streetlamp we see it’s Géricault.

INT. GÉRICAULT’S STUDIO – NIGHT

Géricault enters. He removes his wet raincoat and hat. He is unshaven and his hair is a mess. In the darkness, he makes his way to a table in the center of the room. A sheet covers something on it. In the background, we can see a few other objects on tables and on the floor, also covered by sheets. He places the sack on the floor and lights a candle. Suddenly illuminated in the darkness, Géricault is startled to see Madame Lallemand. She wears a long overcoat.

MADAME LALLEMAND

I want to pose for you.
(repeating his earlier invitation)
“I feel the need to make a sacrifice on the altar of art.”

Géricault is torn: she’s beautiful, but a distraction.
GÉRICAULT
Let me just finish this still life arrangement.

He pulls back the cloth covering the table to reveal two pale, severed, human arms. Lallemand is horrified, but also fascinated.

GÉRICAULT (CONT'D)
I’ve needed to make my own sacrifices in the name of art.

Géricault pulls a leg from his sack, severed just above the knee. He arranges it on the table. He then takes a sheet off a nearby easel to reveal a canvas with severed arms painted on it.

GÉRICAULT (CONT'D)
(matter of factly)
It became so tedious, constantly sketching at the hospital.
(looks around)
Somewhere around here are some heads. They’re from Bicêtre. Guillotined prisoners.

An unconventional woman, Lallemand is fascinated by, and drawn to, this unconventional man. As she gazes into his eyes, she lets her overcoat slip off, holding it at her waist. She’s completely nude.

GÉRICAULT (CONT'D)
I’ve often felt you watching me.

She steps closer to him and glances at a table next to her.

INSERT

table with papers and Géricault’s “G” seal on it.

BACK TO SCENE

MADAME LALLEMAND
Do you see me in your dreams?

She drops her coat onto the table, covering the seal. She puts her arms around Géricault’s neck.

GÉRICAULT
I don’t have dreams. Only nightmares.
EXT. BEACH - NIGHT

This is a continuation of Géricault’s earlier nightmare. In the darkness, we HEAR the sounds of WAVES, HORSES SNORTING, POUNDING HOOVES, and HEAVY BREATHING. This time, we are PULLED BACK a little farther. Before we only saw details, now we see:

SERIES OF CLOSE-UPS IN RAPID SUCCESSION: 
A) Géricault’s full face, eyes wide and breathing hard. 
B) Horses’ hooves, rearing up and kicking. 
C) Horses’ heads whipping around, eyes fearful. 
D) A chariot wheel spinning, stopping, then tipping over. 
E) Géricault in the sand, struggling, tangled in the reins. 
F) Reins and straps digging into Géricault’s forearms and ankles, pulling hard.

INT. BICÊTRE PRISON/ASYLUM, PARIS - DAY

Géricault stands at Captain de Chaumareys’ cell. De Chaumareys’ hair is neatly combed back, Géricault’s is disheveled. Géricault passes a small, wrapped item through the bars. De Chaumareys unwraps it.

INSERT

a small iron for pressing clothes and a metal box for coal to heat the iron.

BACK TO SCENE

CAPTAIN DE CHAUMAREYS

Thank you.

Géricault takes out his sketchbook and a pencil. De Chaumareys sits on his cot, examining the iron.

GÉRICAULT

If I may...the day the raft became separated...

CAPTAIN DE CHAUMAREYS

Is that the subject you have settled upon? For your painting?

GÉRICAULT

No. Actually, I don’t know. I think I may paint the morning of the rescue, but...

CAPTAIN DE CHAUMAREYS

Then why, each time, have you asked me about the abandonment? Or, as others have termed it: “the betrayal.”
GÉRICAULT
Because I need to know all aspects of the story, to truly...

CAPTAIN DE CHAUMAREYS
When I give my men orders, I do not clutter their minds with matters peripheral to the task at hand.
(beat)
Let us try something different, monsieur Géricault. Let me ask you a question. Your father...what is he like?

GÉRICAULT
He’s a...good man. He has supported me generously, allowing me to...

CAPTAIN DE CHAUMAREYS
Do you love him? Or fear him?

Géricault pauses. He doesn’t know how to answer.

CAPTAIN DE CHAUMAREYS (CONT’D)
I see. And your mother?

GÉRICAULT
Dead. For some time.

CAPTAIN DE CHAUMAREYS
Of course.
(beat)
Any other women in your life?

Géricault looks down and begins sketching rapidly.

CAPTAIN DE CHAUMAREYS (CONT’D)
A wealthy, talented young artist who...
(looks at Géricault’s wrinkled clothes)
...was at one time, well-groomed?

Géricault doesn’t respond.

CAPTAIN DE CHAUMAREYS (cont’d)
Interesting.
(beat)
I am rather tired. Shall we save the “betrayal” for another day?

INT. GÉRICAULT’S STUDIO – DAY

Géricault is alone, working on sketches. He’s pale, his hair is a mess, his shirt stained.
INSERT

sketch of men on the raft, with one holding a dead man’s arm, taking a bite: cannibalism aboard the raft.

BACK TO SCENE

Géricault stops sketching, crumples up the paper and throws it. He gets up to stretch and wanders over to the table with the severed body parts. He contemplates an arm. It’s pale and bloodless. He lightly pinches the flesh, testing its texture. He slowly brings it to his mouth, barely touches the flesh to his teeth, then drops the arm and doubles over, retching.

FLASHBACK - EXT. ON THE RAFT (THIRD DAY) - DAY

It’s a calm, clear day. The raft quietly bobs in the water. There are only about sixty survivors left. Their legs are no longer submerged below the water, but they are sunburnt and starving. About half the group is on the verge of death. The rest are in the center of the raft, kneeling around Savigny, whose arms move deliberately as he works on something out of our view. All are quiet, staring at Savigny’s activity. One DISTRAUGHT MAN begins to CRY.

DISTRAUGHT MAN
I can’t. I can’t.

A COMPANION next to him puts his arm around him for comfort.

DISTRAUGHT MAN (cont’d)
The Lord will damn us to hell.

CORRÉARD
The Lord took his soul, not his body.

Savigny stops what he is doing.

SAVIGNY
There.

There is a long silence. The men look at each other. Jean-Charles moves closer to Savigny. He picks up something small from the deck and holds it in his hands.

JEAN-CHARLES
And the Lord said, “I am the living bread that came down from Heaven; if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever.”

Jean-Charles pauses. All eyes are on him.
JEAN-CHARLES (cont’d)

“And the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.”

Jean-Charles then places a small strip of human meat into his mouth and slowly chews. One by one, the others move to Savigny and follow Jean-Charles’ lead. Some CRY. Others WHISPER a prayer before eating. Others gag on the meat, but still force it down. No one speaks.

END FLASHBACK

INT. GÉRICAULT’S STUDIO - DAY

Géricault stands at a large table that is littered with sketches of the last survivors aboard the raft, hailing the rescue ship. He is impatiently looking at each one, then throwing it aside in disgust.

GÉRICAULT

Too crowded!

With a piece of charcoal in his hand, he draws a big “X” over the composition and tosses it. Another sketch.

GÉRICAULT (cont’d)

Too flat!

INSERT

sketch with the men arranged horizontally across the composition. His charcoal ENTERS THE FRAME and another big “X” goes over the drawing.

BACK TO SCENE

Géricault is about to toss this one aside, then he pauses. He looks at the sketch more carefully.

GÉRICAULT (cont’d)

(quietly)

Too flat.

INSERT

the same sketch with the “X” over it. Géricault’s pencil ENTERS THE FRAME as he sketches some figures along one diagonal of the “X”, from the lower left to the upper right. The figure in the upper right, Lavillette waving his cloth, is too low. Géricault draws a barrel and places Lavillette atop it. Along the other diagonal, he traces new ropes holding the mast, from the lower right to the upper left.
Géricault looks at the altered sketch and smiles.

GÉRICAULT (cont’d)
An “X.” Mark of negation. Warning.

He tilts his head to the left.

GÉRICAULT (cont’d)
A cross. Salvation.

He is pleased with this composition. He turns and stares at the huge, blank canvas behind him. His jaw is set in determination.

GÉRICAULT (cont’d)
You’re next, bastard.

SERIES OF SHOTS:

A) Géricault at an easel, finishing a small oil sketch of his new “X” composition. He looks pleased. B) With a ruler, Géricault draws a grid over a precise sketch of the final composition. C) Eugene, with the remnants of a black eye, holds one end of a powdered string flush with the left side of the canvas. On the right, Horace holds the other end. In the middle, Géricault pulls the line back and snaps it onto the canvas. The powder leaves a faint line as a grid begins to take shape. Géricault walks back to Eugene and pats him appreciatively on the back. Eugene smiles. There’s no bad blood between them from their earlier fight.

INT. GÉRICAULT’S STUDIO - DAY

Géricault is alone, standing on a table, drawing the horizon on the right side of the canvas. He glances at the grid sketch next to him as he works. Already, all of the figures, drawn in contour, are in place. He is immersed in his work, WHISTLING THE SEA SHANTY he learned from Lavillette. His breath is visible in the cold studio.

As we PULL BACK, we see that Jean-Baptiste, Alexandrine and Georges-Nicolas are in the studio, silently watching Géricault work. ANGLE ON Alexandrine, who closes her eyes as GÉRICAULT WHISTLES, nodding her head to the tune of the shanty.

JEAN-BAPTISTE
Good Lord. It is freezing in here.

Géricault wheels around to see the group staring at him.
GÉRICAULT
When...? How long have you been here?

GEORGES-NICOLAS
A few minutes.

Alexandrine is wearing a heavy, long coat. She pulls the fur collar up around her neck.

GÉRICAULT
I’m sorry for the cold. I had to open the windows. There was a bad smell....

He glances around to see if any body parts are lying about.

JEAN-BAPTISTE
My boy, we are worried about you.

Géricault stares blankly.

GEORGES-NICOLAS
Have you seen yourself?

Géricault looks at his wrinkled, stained clothes, then runs a hand through his scraggly hair. He climbs down from the table. The group wanders about, looking at the studio where Géricault has isolated himself.

JEAN-BAPTISTE
You need to get out of this...place. Come to my house tomorrow evening. A good meal will do wonders for you. And Alexandrine has promised to sing for us.

Géricault looks at her. She looks away and wanders around the studio.

GÉRICAULT
I don’t know. I have much to do.

Alexandrine pauses by a table near the big canvas with papers scattered all over it. She focuses on one.

INSERT

sheet of paper, with lyrics to Lavillette’s sea shanty.

BACK TO SCENE

Alexandrine mouths the words, nodding her head to the same rhythm as the tune Géricault was whistling. She quietly folds the sheet and puts it in her pocket.
As Jean-Baptiste and Georges-Nicolas examine some drawings, Géricault approaches Alexandrine. She is staring at the huge canvas. CLOSE-UP of her face, with tears welling up in her eyes.

ALEXANDRINE
They are alone. So alone.

He is impressed by how much she connects with his painting. He gently touches her back, but she moves away. She looks down at a drawing on a nearby table.

ALEXANDRINE (CONT'D)
Is this the mythological figure you mentioned that day at the lake? Hippo...?

GÉRICAULT
Hippolytus. Yes.

ALEXANDRINE
You never told me how he died.

Géricault pauses a moment.

GÉRICAULT
Hippolytus’ father prayed to Poseidon for vengeance. The sea god sent a bull. It startled Hippolytus’ horses as they pulled his chariot along the beach. Hippolytus became entangled in the reins and the horses bolted in different directions.

(beat)
He was torn apart. Limb from limb.

She looks weary. The emotion seems drained from her.

ALEXANDRINE
Pulled in different directions.

She surveys the cluttered studio for a moment.

ALEXANDRINE (cont’d)
You live your life on the edge, Theodore.

He moves close to her again. This time, she doesn’t pull away. He WHISPERS in her ear. She closes her eyes.

GÉRICAULT
Meet me there. That edge between darkness and light. Death and rescue. That edge between your dreams and waking. (MORE)
GÉRICAULT (cont'd)
Between what you should do and what you want to do. That’s where you truly live. That’s where I’ll always be.

He looks intently at her. She still doesn’t meet his eyes.

ALEXANDRINE
I don’t have your luxury of choice. I live the life that is required of me.

ANGLE ON Jean-Baptiste, who is across the studio, next to Georges-Nicolas. He looks up from some sketches to see the pair talking, quietly and intently.

JEAN-BAPTISTE
Dear boy, you have such talent.

Alexandrine walks away from Géricault, staring at the canvas again.

JEAN-BAPTISTE (cont’d)
Such youth. Such creative powers. I cannot tell you how much I envy you. What is it like? To create something from nothing?

He thinks for a moment, having trouble formulating an answer.

GÉRICAULT
Well, it’s...

ALEXANDRINE
Humbling.

Everyone looks at her. She is right in front of the canvas. She can’t see the others staring at her.

ALEXANDRINE (cont’d)
It is humbling because you created this, and yet you did not. You were merely the incubator for something greater than yourself. Something which had to exist. Something which at one time was just an emotion, a feeling, but now assumes physical form with a will of its own. And because of that, you feel insignificant compared to the...life...your creation assumes. But until it is completely finished, completely formed, it obsesses you, not letting you forget about it for one waking moment...

(beat)
...no matter how hard you try.
There is a moment of silence as everyone stares at her. She continues to stare at the canvas, with everyone behind her. ANGLE ON Alexandrine’s face, which no one can see. She winces slightly, as if in pain, and looks down. Then she turns and walks toward the door.

ALEXANDRINE (cont’d)
(to Jean-Baptiste)
Dear, I don’t feel well. May we leave now?

ANGLE ON Géricault. He’s in shock. Alexandrine put into words exactly how he feels about his art.

GEORGES-NICOLAS
My God...

Everyone looks at Georges-Nicolas, who holds up a sketch of severed heads and looks at Géricault.

GEORGES-NICOLAS (cont’d)
What is this?

GÉRICAULT
Studies.

GEORGES-NICOLAS
Studies? Was there a guillotine aboard the raft?

Géricault is getting angry, but doesn’t answer. Jean-Baptiste looks at a sketch of a dead man, but can’t find a corresponding figure drawn on the huge canvas.

JEAN-BAPTISTE
Which figure on the raft will this be?

GÉRICAULT
No one.

JEAN-BAPTISTE
Then why...?

Agitated, Géricault rips back a heavy tarp covering something on the table next to him. Everyone GASPS. A pale cadaver lies there. Alexandrine looks as though she may faint.

GÉRICAULT
(shouting)
Because I have to! I have to understand death for my work to have meaning! I have to...live amongst it.
GEORGES-NICOLAS
(looking at the canvas)
They lived amongst death because they had no choice.

GÉRICAULT
Neither do I.

Jean-Baptiste helps Alexandrine to the door. Georges-Nicolas pauses for a moment before leaving. He turns to his son.

GEORGES-NICOLAS
Please, come tomorrow night.

As everyone leaves, Géricault closes the door. He looks at his dirty shirt and removes it in disgust. He looks into a mirror, running his fingers through his scraggly hair, trying in vain to make it look neater. He runs a hand over his stubbly face, then picks up a straight razor from a shelf by the mirror. He pauses, staring at himself in the mirror. Tears of frustration form in his eyes. He looks back at the canvas, then into the mirror again. He stares at himself with a determined look. He must stay and work. He grabs a clump of his long hair in one hand and brings the razor to it. He slices. It falls to the ground. He grabs another clump and cuts it off. ANGLE ON the floor. The pile of hair grows larger.

His head now shaved, Géricault walks toward the canvas, as if in a daze. He drops the razor to the floor and picks up a small jar of paint and a brush. CLOSE-UP as the brush meets the canvas. The first stroke of paint is down.

EXT. BICÊTRE PRISON/ASYLUM - NIGHT

In an overcoat, Géricault walks toward the prison in the rain. Some distance behind, a hooded and cloaked figure follows.

INT. BICÊTRE PRISON/ASYLUM - NIGHT

In his cell, de Chaumareys examines his new straight razor from Géricault. His hair is neatly combed and his clothes ironed. He lathers his stubbly face and starts shaving. Géricault, with stubble on his head and face, is haggard and thinner. He sits on a stool with a sketchbook in his lap.

CAPTAIN DE CHAUMAREYS
I loved the sea. And I was terrified by it.

(beat)
Have you ever been on the high seas?

(MORE)
CAPTAIN DE CHAUMAREYS (cont'd)
Where the water is deeper than your fears?

GÉRICAULT
No.

CAPTAIN DE CHAUMAREYS
You float on a membrane. Above are the infinite heavens, with all their mysteries. Below, the unfathomable depths with all their monsters. As the captain, it was my responsibility to balance my ship on that edge.

Géricault understands.

GÉRICAULT
It is on that edge that we all live.

CAPTAIN DE CHAUMAREYS
True. And that is what makes life worth living, is it not, monsieur Géricault? The sea was both intimidating and a challenge. I wanted to master her. (beat) And there is the irony. Trying to control that which you have no power over. My love for the sea blinded me to its harm.

Géricault stares off. The captain realizes that he may have hit a nerve. He may be able to manipulate Géricault. That intrigues him. He stops shaving and walks to the bars. For the first time, he uses Géricault’s first name.

CAPTAIN DE CHAUMAREYS (cont’d)
Theodore, have you ever been so obsessed by something that it blinded you?

Géricault looks down at his sketchbook, where he’s been absentmindedly doodling.

INSERT
rough sketch of Alexandrine.

BACK TO SCENE

GÉRICAULT
Blinded? No.

He gets up and touches the bars that separate them.
GÉRICAULT (cont’d)
But a prisoner...

CAPTAIN DE CHAUMAREYS
We are not so different.

GÉRICAULT
(angrily defensive)
You abandoned your men! You betrayed them! We are very different.

De Chaumareys LAUGHS.

CAPTAIN DE CHAUMAREYS
My father was a priest. Did I mention that? He told me that those who complained the loudest about others’ sin were the ones who confessed that very same transgression repeatedly in the booth.

Géricault storms out.

EXT. BICÔTRE PRISON/ASYLUM - NIGHT

It’s still raining. As Géricault walks away from the prison, the hooded and cloaked figure, standing on the opposite corner, crosses the street and enters Bicêtre.

INT. FOYER, BICÔTRE PRISON/ASYLUM - NIGHT

The figure shakes the water from the cloak, then removes the hood. It’s Alexandrine. She’s out of breath. She looks around, curious as to why Géricault would come here. But she wants to understand why he’s so distant. One of the guards approaches her.

ALEXANDRINE
Monsieur Géricault forgot his sketches. He sent me to...

She suddenly grimaces in pain and doubles over. She quickly straightens herself. The guard considers her but says nothing. Alexandrine takes out some money.

ALEXANDRINE (cont’d)
Could you show me the way?

He takes the money and leads her into the corridor.
INT. BICÊTRE PRISON/ASYLUM - NIGHT

The guard leads Alexandrine to de Chaumareys’ cell, then walks away without saying a word. She stares at the captain, who has just finished shaving. Alexandrine wonders why Géricault would be secretly meeting this man. De Chaumareys considers her for a moment. Since Géricault just left, he has an idea she knows him.

CAPTAIN DE CHAUMAREYS
Monsieur Géricault sent you?

ALEXANDRINE
Yes.

She winces in pain again and sits down.

ALEXANDRINE (cont’d)
No. I came on my own.

CAPTAIN DE CHAUMAREYS
You are...?

ALEXANDRINE
(beat)
His aunt.

He looks her over. She’s young and beautiful.

CAPTAIN DE CHAUMAREYS
Not by blood?

ALEXANDRINE
No.

He notices she’s sweating, but hasn’t removed her large cloak.

CAPTAIN DE CHAUMAREYS
Are you well, madame?

ALEXANDRINE
I’m fine.

She takes a breath then looks at him directly.

ALEXANDRINE (cont’d)
Who are you?

CAPTAIN DE CHAUMAREYS
I make it a point to never refuse a beautiful woman’s question. I am Hugues Duroy de Chaumareys.
The name doesn’t register with her.

CAPTAIN DE CHAUMAREYS (cont’d)
Captain...of the...

She understands now.

ALEXANDRINE
Medusa.

He gives a mock deferential bow.

CAPTAIN DE CHAUMAREYS
To what do I owe the pleasure?

ALEXANDRINE
Theodore. Has he come here often?

CAPTAIN DE CHAUMAREYS
Tonight wasn’t his first visit.

ALEXANDRINE
Why? What does he want from you?

CAPTAIN DE CHAUMAREYS
He...is looking for answers.

ALEXANDRINE
What are his questions?

CAPTAIN DE CHAUMAREYS
Madame. When your...nephew...

He emphasizes “nephew,” causing Alexandrine to wince again. He’s enjoying manipulating her.

CAPTAIN DE CHAUMAREYS (cont’d)
...visits, he has the good sense to realize that information, valuable information, is not free.

Alexandrine digs into her small bag and pulls out some money.

CAPTAIN DE CHAUMAREYS (cont’d)
What would I do with that?

He approaches the bars and lowers his voice.

CAPTAIN DE CHAUMAREYS (cont’d)
You have not impressed upon me the urgency of your investigation. What is the extent of your relationship?

(MORE)
CAPTAIN DE CHAUMAREYS (cont’d)

Why should I betray knowledge of my...dear friend, Theodore?

She knows where he’s leading, but she wants to learn more. She stares him in the eyes as she stands up and walks toward the bars, stopping just out of his reach. She slowly unfastens the top button on her coat. Then the next button. Beneath, we catch a glimpse of the top of her breasts beneath a low-cut gown. She’s sweating.

VIEW OF HER BACK as her coat drops to the ground. A candle in de Chaumareys’ cell lights her in silhouette. She is wearing a thin, almost transparent nightgown. CLOSE ON de Chaumareys, as WE FOLLOW his eyes down her body. His face betrays the slightest hint of surprise.

FLASHBACK - EXT. ON THE RAFT (SIXTH DAY) - DAY

It’s a clear day. Only twenty-seven people remain on the raft. About half are clearly near death, including Léon, who rests near Jean-Charles at the raft’s edge. Jean-Charles blocks the sun from the boy’s face and wipes the sweat from his brow. Jean-Charles’ leg is bandaged with a shirt. Near the center of the raft, the fifteen healthiest hold a meeting. Included are Savigny, Corréard and Lavillette. Savigny summons Jean-Charles over.

SAVIGNY
(to Jean-Charles)
We have been discussing a new plan for our survival. There are twelve who are certainly on death’s door. If we were to take their rations and distribute them to those of us in better health, and have a chance of survival...it could give us another six days. However, they would die a slow death.

Jean-Charles looks down. He understands what must be done.

JEAN-CHARLES

How?

One of the officers quietly unsheathes his saber.

OFFICER
Quick. They’ll be free of pain.

Jean-Charles looks at Léon, then back at Savigny.

JEAN-CHARLES
The boy?

Savigny nods “yes.” Jean-Charles thinks a moment.
JEAN-CHARLES (cont’d)

Let me.

The officer starts to hand over his saber, but Jean-Charles refuses it. He hobbles over to Léon. The boy looks at Jean-Charles’ injured leg.

LÉON
Streets of gold.

Jean-Charles doesn’t understand.

LÉON (cont’d)
In heaven. You’ll dance on streets of gold.

Jean-Charles smiles and tenderly touches Léon’s thin, sun-burnt face.

JEAN-CHARLES
We both will.

A look of panic suddenly crosses Léon’s face. He’s dying. Jean-Charles cradles him in his arms. Léon puts his hand on the big man’s upper arm, feeling the raised mark of a branding iron.

LÉON
What’s that?

JEAN-CHARLES
The brand of a slave.

(beat)
I came to France on a ship, its hold filled with three hundred from my village. Many did not survive the crossing. That’s why I never went below deck on the “Medusa.” After my master died, I enlisted in the military to gain my freedom. I joined the army...

(he looks at the sea)
...so I would never again have to set foot on a ship.

Léon smiles. Jean-Charles smiles, too.

JEAN-CHARLES (cont’d)
Do you find that funny?

LÉON
No. I hear my mother. She’s singing. Am I going mad?
JEAN-CHARLES
No, little lion. I hear her, too.

Jean-Charles starts to SING THE LULLABY he heard Léon sing to him before.

JEAN-CHARLES (cont’d)
Close your eyes, my son
And sail away,
‘Cross the ocean of dreams
Where waves drown the day.

VIEW FROM BEHIND Jean-Charles, on his knees, as he bends over Léon, whom he cradles in his arms. He gently puts the boy in the calm water. ANGLE ON Léon’s face. His eyes close peacefully as the water surrounds him.

JEAN-CHARLES (O.S.) (CONT'D)
In slumber we’ll skim
O’er green sprays of foam,
On rainbow sea horses
We’ll ride safely home.

Léon quietly slips below the glassy surface. Jean-Charles doesn’t move. He just stares at the sea. Lavillette looks angry and approaches Jean-Charles.

LAVILLETTE
Why waste his flesh to the sea?

Jean-Charles turns around and, through teary eyes, shoots Lavillette an angry glare. Lavillette looks down at Jean-Charles’ pant pocket. He sees something.

LAVILLETTE (cont’d)
What have you got there? What are you hiding from us...?

He reaches for the pocket, but Jean-Charles grabs Lavillette by the neck and throws him to the deck.

END FLASHBACK

INT. GÉRICAULT’S STUDIO - DAY

It’s late in the day. Géricault poses a shirtless MALE MODEL, who has one arm in the air to signal the rescue ship. Géricault constantly refers back to the canvas, where that figure is drawn in contour, standing atop some barrels. He’s matching the model to his drawing. Géricault then mounts the table in front of the canvas and paints within the contour.
The figure is Lavillette signalling the “Argus,” which is already painted on the horizon. A few of the other figures are already “filled in” with paint.

Géricault takes off his shirt, too. He crouches down on the table, mixing some paints from different jars. He stands again and paints a shaded area on the figure. He steps back to consider this dark area.

GÉRICAULT
Damn! Too much burnt sienna.

He gets a palette knife and scrapes the paint off the canvas.

GÉRICAULT (cont’d)
Too much burnt sienna and everything goes black.

As he remixes some paint onto his palette, he spills a jar of oil paint. He angrily picks up the glass jar and flings it across the room. It breaks against a far wall.

GÉRICAULT (cont’d)
(without looking at the model)
Tomorrow. We shall pick up here tomorrow.

The model throws on his shirt and a coat and leaves. Géricault stares at the canvas. He looks at the “Argus,” running his fingers across the painted ship.

GÉRICAULT (cont’d)
(quietly to himself)
Alexandrine.

He’s drained, emotionally and physically. On the verge of collapsing, he leans against the painting for support and begins to sob. Shirt off, emaciated, he seems to blend in with the suffering, painted lifesize figures. He raises his left arm, like Lavillette hailing the rescue ship. He wipes it slowly back and forth across the canvas.

GÉRICAULT (cont’d)
Save me. Save me.

He collapses onto the table, exhausted.

INT. GÉRICAULT’S STUDIO (A FEW HOURS LATER) – NIGHT

Géricault wakes up on the table. He gets down and looks at the painting for a moment. He paces around restlessly, unable to sleep. After taking a drink from a whiskey bottle, he throws an overcoat over his bare back, grabs his sketchbook and staggers out the door.
EXT. BICÊTRE PRISON/ASYLUM - NIGHT
It’s raining. Géricault stumbles into Bicêtre.

INT. FOYER, BICÊTRE PRISON/ASYLUM - NIGHT
Dripping, Géricault stands in the foyer. Just then, there’s a commotion near the passageway leading toward the prison cells. Two guards are struggling with a resistant PRISONER in shackles. The guard near the other passageway leaves his post to help. Géricault looks at the now unguarded passage. It was from there that he’d earlier heard strange sounds. He slips unnoticed into this dark corridor.

INT. BICÊTRE ASYLUM, PASSAGEWAY - NIGHT
As Géricault makes his way along the torch-lit passage, we HEAR MOANS and occasional SHOUTS growing LOUDER. He pushes on, as the passage turns this way and that. After one turn, there are now doors on either side. Each door has a small peephole with a cover over it. Géricault pauses in front of one door and slides the cover to the side. He looks in.

GÉRICAULT’S P.O.V.

The dark room has a single barred window high up on the wall. Strange LAUGHING and CRYING can be heard. Several dark, shadowy figures move about.

BACK TO SCENE

Disturbed, Géricault closes the peephole and continues down the passageway. As the passage takes another turn, he finds himself in...

INT. BICÊTRE ASYLUM, COMMUNAL ROOM - NIGHT
An INSANE MAN is suddenly in Géricault’s face. He wears only a soiled cloth, wrapped around his waist like a diaper. He YELLS at Géricault.

INSANE MAN
Virgil! Quickly! Our boat! On the River Styx! Come, come!

Géricault steps away from the man and takes in his surroundings. The large room is dark and cold. Moonlight streams in from some high windows. All around are the insane. They wander about, twitching or talking to themselves. Some huddle on the ground, whimpering. Puddles of urine are everywhere.
CLOSE ON Géricault. He’s horrified. He crumples to the floor. Utterly drained, he rocks back and forth and HUMS THE SEA SHANTY, trying to comfort himself. WIDE SHOT of the room, with Géricault looking like just another of the patients.

INT. JEAN-BAPTISTE’S HOUSE, MUSIC ROOM - NIGHT

Alexandrine is PLAYING THE PIANO. In the room are Jean-Baptiste, Georges-Nicolas, Horace, Madame Lallemand and some other wealthy-looking GUESTS. As she finishes, the assembled group politely CLAPS. Alexandrine stares at the keyboard, lost in thought. She begins to LIGHTLY TAP A TUNE on the keys. It’s the SEA SHANTY she’d heard Géricault singing in his studio.

INT. BICÊTRE ASYLUM, COMMUNAL ROOM - NIGHT

Géricault HUMS THE SAME SONG, then suddenly stops. He hears something. He stands up, trying to determine the source. Now WE CAN HEAR IT, TOO. It’s the same song, THE SHANTY, but someone else is WHISTLING it. Géricault follows the SONG back to the passageway he was just in.

INT. BICÊTRE ASYLUM, PASSAGEWAY - NIGHT

Géricault quickly goes from door to door, listening. Finally, he pauses in front of one cell. The SONG is coming from in here. He pulls back the peephole cover and looks in.

GÉRICAULT’S P.O.V.

In the darkness, a few silhouetted figures pace about. Against a far wall, a figure on a cot can barely be seen.

BACK TO SCENE

Géricault places his mouth to the peephole and SINGS:

GÉRICAULT

Lord, oh Lord
Where is my soul?
Battered by waves,
I pitch and I roll.

INT. JEAN-BAPTISTE’S HOUSE, MUSIC ROOM - NIGHT

Alexandrine continues PLAYING THE SHANTY, hitting one key at a time. The others appear uneasy, not sure what she’s doing or how they should react. She begins to SING.
ALEXANDRINE
Lover, oh lover
Where is my heart?
Like a reef that’s submerged
And not found on the charts.

INT. BICÊTRE ASYLUM, CELL - NIGHT

The figure on the cot strains to sit up. He can’t. He’s tied down. The other figures move about more quickly, agitated by the commotion.

INT. BICÊTRE ASYLUM, PASSAGEWAY - NIGHT

Géricault pulls at the door. It won’t budge. As he searches for a way to open it, he continues SINGING. Now, the figure in the cell SINGS with him.

GÉRICAULT AND OTHER MAN
Deliver your servant
And when someday we meet,
With you I’ll dance
On a pure golden street.

ANGLE ON an ORDERLY walking down the hall. Out of the shadows, Géricault drops him with a punch to the jaw. He takes the keys off the unconscious man and opens the door. Immediately, THREE INSANE MEN come out SCREAMING and run down the hall. Géricault slowly enters the cell.

INT. BICÊTRE ASYLUM, CELL - NIGHT

Géricault makes his way to the cot. He stands over the figure who is tied down, waiting for his eyes to become accustomed to the gloom.

GÉRICAULT’S P.O.V.

As the man comes into focus, we see it is Jean-Charles. Around his knee is a bandage, covering the stump where his leg was amputated. Jean-Charles looks up at Géricault with hope in his eyes.

BACK TO SCENE

Géricault kneels. He looks at the leather straps wrapped around Jean-Charles’ wrists, tying him to the bed. Géricault touches his own wrist, seemingly in pain.

FLASHBACK - GÉRICAULT’S NIGHTMARE

his wrists straining against the leather straps.
Géricault notices something poking out of Jean-Charles’ pocket. He pulls it out. It’s Léon’s red cloth.

**GÉRICAULT**
The “Medusa”?

Jean-Charles nods “yes.”

**INT. JEAN-BAPTISTE’S HOUSE, MUSIC ROOM – NIGHT**

Alexandrine is still SINGING.

**ALEXANDRINE**
Take me home, across the sea,
Where the sun always shines,
On hills evergreen.
There waits my true love,
Arms wide, calling me.

She stops. Everyone in the room stares at her.

**INT. BICÊTRE ASYLUM, CELL – NIGHT**

Géricault, cradling Jean-Charles in his arms, walks out of the cell.

**INT. JEAN-BAPTISTE’S HOUSE, ALEXANDRINE’S BEDROOM (A FEW DAYS LATER) – DAY**

Alexandrine sits on her bed, holding an envelope.

**INSERT**

the envelope, with Géricault’s “G” seal on the back.

**BACK TO SCENE**

We see her from behind as she rips open the envelope. CLOSE ON her face as she grows anxious, breathing heavily.

**ALEXANDRINE**
(reading to herself)
Meet me. You know where. I’ll explain everything when we’re together...

**EXT. CHATEAU DE CHESNAY – DAY**

Alexandrine’s carriage rolls up to the front of the chateau. No longer worried about being secretive, she hurries up the entry steps and throws open the front door.
INT. ENTRANCE ROOM, CHATEAU DE CHESNAY - DAY

Alexandrine enters, out of breath and sweating.

ALEXANDRINE
Theodore!

There’s no sign of life. She looks toward the Sitting Room, where she’d met Géricault before.

INT. SITTING ROOM, CHATEAU DE CHESNAY - DAY

She enters and notices the fireplace, with a roaring fire in it. Above is the painting of Géricault’s family. Just then, someone stirs in one of the high-backed chairs facing the fire. CLOSE ON Alexandrine’s face, full of joy and hope. A long shadow falls across her face as the figure stands. Alexandrine now looks as if her life has just drained away. Tears fill her eyes.

ALEXANDRINE
(whispering)
No. No.

INT. DE CHAUMAREYS’ CELL, BICÊTRE PRISON/ASYLUM - DAY

De Chaumareys sits at his small table, sketching. He’s immaculate: clean-shaven, hair combed, clothes pressed.

INSERT

de Chaumareys’ crude sketch of the “Medusa.”

BACK TO SCENE

Géricault quietly sits down outside the cell. He’s the opposite of the captain: unkempt, thin and pale. De Chaumareys quickly hides his sketch beneath a book.

CAPTAIN DE CHAUMAREYS
I have a present for you today. You may find it useful.

GÉRICAULT
For my painting?

CAPTAIN DE CHAUMAREYS
For your life.

The captain goes right into what Géricault has wanted for some time: a description of the abandonment of the raft.
CAPTAIN DE CHAUMAREYS (cont’d)
The day we lost the raft...the ropes
between our boats were straining. The
raft was the least seaworthy of the
vessels. Dead weight. Our supplies were
scant. We did not know how long we would
be at sea, or what we might encounter on
land.

(beat)
Before we boarded the lifeboats, I had
instructed my officers that if the
situation became dire, I would signal
them to set the raft adrift.

GÉRICAULT
Signal them?

FLASHBACK - EXT. ON THE CAPTAIN’S LIFEBOAT - DAY
As his sailors row, the captain surveys the other boats. In
the far distance is the crowded raft. The lines between the
boats are taut. De Chaumareys’ expression becomes more
serious as he contemplates the situation. He moves to the
stern of his boat, nearest to the next lifeboat. He SHOUTS
to the officer in charge of that boat, MAUDET.

CAPTAIN DE CHAUMAREYS
Maudet! We need to keep the crews’
spirits up!

Maudet looks at de Chaumareys with a serious, almost sad,
expression.

MAUDET
Yes, sir?! How...shall we do that, sir?!

De Chaumareys SINGS THE SEA SHANTY. A slight smile crosses
his face as he notes the irony of the song.

CAPTAIN DE CHAUMAREYS
Captain, oh captain,
Where is my trust?
Keep me from storms,
From foul winds and rust.

Maudet reluctantly PICKS UP THE SONG. It travels to the next
boat, then finally to Reynaud’s, which is towing the raft.

CAPTAIN, OFFICERS AND CREW
Plot a course,
That is straight and true,
(MORE)
And in you I’ll trust,
Sure as oceans are blue.

EXT. ON REYNAUD’S LIFEBOAT - DAY

Reynaud is sweating, realizing what he must do. He moves near the rope, but can’t bring himself to disengage it. Second-lieutenant Espiaux, whose boat is nearby, but not attached to the four in the tow line, moves his boat to the stern of Reynaud’s. He speaks to Reynaud, keeping his voice down.

SECOND LIEUTENANT ESPIAUX
You must follow orders. You must!

Reynaud can’t do it. Espiaux has his men row to the bow of Reynaud’s boat. Espiaux takes out his saber and cuts the line connecting Reynaud with the rest of the lifeboats. Reynaud is shocked. His single rowboat cannot tow the raft by itself. He now has no choice. He pulls the tow line off the cleat. The rope falls into the sea. The raft is adrift.

EXT. ON THE RAFT - DAY

The men closest to the tow line notice that it is suddenly limp. They SHOUT and tug at the line, finally pulling up the end of the rope. SHOUTS of “The line has come loose!” and “Come back!” fill the air.

EXT. ON REYNAUD’S LIFEBOAT - DAY

As his men row away from the raft, Reynaud is crumpled at the stern. There are no more cries of help, only the sounds of OARS HITTING THE WATER...and the SEA SHANTY. Reynaud covers his ears.

END FLASHBACK

INT. BICÊTRE PRISON/ASYLUM - DAY

Géricault is shocked at the captain’s admission of guilt.

CAPTAIN DE CHAUMAREYS
Naturally, a price must be paid for such an...oversight. And it has been paid.

Géricault looks at the next cell. It’s now empty.

GÉRICAULT
Reynaud? That was Reynaud?

CAPTAIN DE CHAUMAREYS
He was weak. His fate is a direct result of that weakness.
CAPTAIN DE CHAUMAREYS
Did what I had to!

GÉRICAULT
But you were the captain! It is you who bears ultimate responsibility!

CAPTAIN DE CHAUMAREYS
And I will carry that responsibility with me until the day I die. Reynaud is free.

Géricault puts his head in his hands and stares at the floor.

CAPTAIN DE CHAUMAREYS (CONT'D)
When I was given my commission for the "Medusa," I asked the admiral who Medusa was. He told me she was the lover of the sea god. A good omen, I thought.

(beat)
Do you know the full story of Medusa?

GÉRICAULT
Snakes for hair. Yes.

CAPTAIN DE CHAUMAREYS
Do you know how she got that way?

No answer.

CAPTAIN DE CHAUMAREYS (CONT'D)
She was a very beautiful woman. Very beautiful.

Géricault raises his head and looks at de Chaumareys.

FLASHBACK - EXT. LAKE, CHATEAU DE CHESNAY - DAY

Alexandrine, wearing a large hat, is running into the lake, where Géricault has just jumped in from the small cliff above.

CAPTAIN DE CHAUMAREYS (V.O.)
Poseidon, god of the sea, fell in love with her. And she with him.

Géricault and Alexandrine are in the knee-deep water. She suddenly kisses him, very passionately.
The scene continues, revealing what we did not see earlier: she leads him out of the water to the small Neoclassical temple nearby.

CAPTAIN DE CHAUMAREYS (V.O.) (CONT'D)
They met, secretly, in Athena’s temple...

INT. NEOCLASSICAL TEMPLE, CHATEAU DE CHESNAY - DAY

As the dripping couple enter the temple, Géricault is the dominant one. He slowly moves into her, unbuttoning her dress as she backs up. Then, she grabs his hands, looking him deeply in the eyes. She releases his hands and removes her hat. Her long, dark, curly hair spills out...looking almost like snakes. She then becomes the forceful one, taking off his jacket, ripping off his shirt and kissing his neck and chest. With only a few stitches of clothes on their bodies, she pushes him to the ground and gets on top. Géricault is surprised, but compliant. For the first time in Alexandrine’s life, she is in control.

CAPTAIN DE CHAUMAREYS (V.O.)
...and they made love.

Alexandrine collapses, exhausted, on Géricault.

BACK TO SCENE

Géricault stares at de Chaumareys, wide eyed.

CAPTAIN DE CHAUMAREYS
Athena learned of the indiscretion in her temple. She cursed Medusa, who lived out her days in isolation and embarrassment, abandoned by the gods, and even by her lover.

(beat)
Sailors are a superstitious lot, monsieur Géricault. Even sailors as poor as I. I learned of that story while at sea. Had I known it earlier, I never would have set foot on that ship.

Géricault is unnerved by the story. He tries to deflect his guilt onto de Chaumareys.

GÉRICAULT
Do something! Admit you were responsible! Admit you abandoned your men!

CAPTAIN DE CHAUMAREYS
Admit you abandoned Alexandrine!
Géricault is shocked. How did the captain know about her?

GÉRICAULT

What?

CAPTAIN DE CHAUMAREYS

Save her. And if not her, then...

(beat)

...your child, whose heart beats within her.

Géricault’s face goes blank.

GÉRICAULT

No.

FLASHBACK - INT. GÉRICAULT’S STUDIO - DAY

Alexandrine, Jean-Baptiste and Georges-Nicolas are all in the studio, where they urge Géricault to join them for Alexandrine’s recital. ANGLE ON Alexandrine, wearing her large coat that hides her pregnancy, as she winces in pain.

ALEXANDRINE

(to Jean-Baptiste)

Dear, I don’t feel well. May we leave now?

BACK TO SCENE

Géricault stares at de Chaumareys.

CAPTAIN DE CHAUMAREYS

(shouting)

Abandonment! Betrayal! You know them quite well, monsieur Géricault! Quite well!

De Chaumareys’ SHOUTING breaks Géricault’s trance. He races away down the corridor.

CAPTAIN DE CHAUMAREYS (cont’d)

(shouting)

You have become me, and I you, Theodore! We are brothers! Brothers in betrayal!

EXT. STREETS OF PARIS - DAY

Géricault on horseback, frantically riding.
EXT. JEAN-BAPTISTE’S HOUSE - DAY

Géricault dismounts so quickly he falls to the ground. He gets up and rushes to the door, throwing it open.

INT. JEAN-BAPTISTE’S HOUSE - DAY

Géricault races through the house.

GÉRICAULT
Alexandrine! Alexandrine!!

As he runs from room to room, he only encounters SERVANTS, who shrug at Géricault’s questions.

INT. GEORGES-NICOLAS’ HOUSE - DAY

Géricault bursts into his father’s house.

GÉRICAULT
Father!

No one is home here, either. He leaves.

INT. GÉRICAULT’S STUDIO - NIGHT

Exhausted, Géricault enters his studio, holding a bottle of whiskey. In one corner, Jean-Charles is on his belly on a cot, asleep. Géricault studies Jean-Charles’ bare back for a moment, then covers him with a blanket. He stumbles to his supply table and mixes some paint on his palette, then mounts the table in front of the canvas. The painting looks finished.

CLOSE ON his face, as he stares at the canvas with a look of determination. With an energy summoned from somewhere deep in his soul, Géricault attacks the figure of Lavillette, making his light flesh dark, transforming him into the African Jean-Charles. His brush flies across the canvas as he blocks in large areas of color across the figure’s back and arms.

WIDE SHOT of Géricault, working so furiously he GRUNTS as his body moves.

INT. BEDROOM, CHATEAU DE CHESNAY - NIGHT

At the same time, Alexandrine is in bed, going through the final stages of labor. She GRUNTS AND GROANS and flails about, as TWO MIDWIVES hold her down.
INT. GÉRICAULT’S STUDIO - NIGHT

Géricault is sweating and moving about. He’s now painting the red cloth that Jean-Charles used to signal the “Argus.”

INT. BEDROOM, CHATEAU DE CHESNAY - NIGHT

Alexandrine is sweating, giving the last pushes to bring the baby out. A midwife removes a red, bloody cloth.

MIDWIFE
Push! It’s almost out!

Alexandrine gives a final push while SCREAMING:

ALEXANDRINE
Theodore!!

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE BEDROOM, CHATEAU DE CHESNAY - NIGHT

Georges-Nicolas stands with Jean-Baptiste, who winces as his wife SCREAMS GÉRICAULT’S NAME. Next to Georges-Nicolas is a WETNURSE.

INT. BEDROOM, CHATEAU DE CHESNAY - NIGHT

The midwife lifts up a baby, with the cord still attached.

MIDWIFE
You have a boy!

Alexandrine collapses, a slight smile on her face. Tears fill her eyes as she looks at her baby.

INT. GÉRICAULT’S STUDIO - NIGHT

Géricault places the last strokes on the red cloth. As he finishes, he collapses onto the table.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE BEDROOM, CHATEAU DE CHESNAY - NIGHT

Jean-Baptiste leans on his cane and stares at the ground.

GEORGES-NICOLAS
Jean, this is the prudent course of action. It is our only choice.

A hard look washes over Jean-Baptiste’s face as he buries his emotions. He enters the room.
INT. BEDROOM, CHATEAU DE CHESNAY - NIGHT

Alexandrine is exhausted and drenched in sweat. She manages a smile for Jean-Baptiste, who doesn’t meet her eyes. One of the midwives cleans the baby.

ALEXANDRINE
(to Jean-Baptiste)
It’s a boy.
(to the midwife)
May I hold him now?

The midwife starts toward Alexandrine with the baby, but Jean-Baptiste steps between them.

JEAN-BAPTISTE
Let me hold him first.

He hands his cane to the midwife and takes the child, limping over to a candle to get a better look.

JEAN-BAPTISTE (cont’d)
A true Caruel. He has my sister’s eyes.

Jean-Baptiste walks toward the door with the baby. Alexandrine doesn’t understand.

ALEXANDRINE
Jean. Jean! Where are you going with my baby?! JEAN!!

The midwife drops Jean-Baptiste’s cane and rushes back to Alexandrine, assisting the other midwife in holding her down. Jean-Baptiste limps out the door.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE BEDROOM, CHATEAU DE CHESNAY - NIGHT

Jean-Baptiste fights back tears as he leans against the door, closing it behind him. Alexandrine’s SCREAMS can still be heard from the bedroom. He hands the baby to Georges-Nicolas.

JEAN-BAPTISTE
Go.

Georges-Nicolas looks at the child for a moment.

JEAN-BAPTISTE (cont’d)
Go! Now! Before I change my mind.

Georges-Nicolas hands the baby to the wet nurse and they quickly leave.
Without his cane, Jean-Baptiste slumps to the floor against the door, QUIETLY SOBBING as his wife continues to SCREAM on the other side.

INT. GEORGES-NICOLAS’ HOUSE, DRAWING ROOM - DAY

Georges-Nicolas sits at a chess table moving the pieces on both sides, playing against himself. Géricault is slumped in a chair nearby.

GEORGES-NICOLAS
I am terribly sorry, son. I wanted to shield you from the unpleasantness for as long as possible. I know how distracted you have been, especially with the Salon next week.

GÉRICAULT
Uncle Jean will never be able to forgive me. Nor should he. We never meant to hurt him.

GEORGES-NICOLAS
Of course not. Who could have foreseen something this tragic?

Georges-Nicolas considers his son for a moment.

GEORGES-NICOLAS (cont’d)
Theodore, there is a point that is unresolved. I did not want to burden your uncle with it...I know how draining funeral arrangements can be when it is for your own wife...but you may find some comfort in this final act.

Géricault looks at his father.

GEORGES-NICOLAS (CONT'D)
The...death certificate, for the child, needs to be completed. When you are ready, tell me....

GÉRICAULT
Hippolyte.

Georges-Nicolas is surprised at the rapidity of Géricault’s response.

GEORGES-NICOLAS
Very well. “Hippolyte” it shall be.
INT. GÉRICAULT’S STUDIO - DAY

Géricault is on the table, in front of the canvas. He holds his palette knife. The painting is completed. He stares at the “Argus,” the rescue ship, on the horizon. With his knife he scrapes the ship away. He then paints the rescue ship back onto the horizon, only now it’s just a small, vertical line, not the large, visible ship that was there before. The instrument of salvation is almost invisible.

INT. BIRTH REGISTRATION OFFICE, CITY HALL, PARIS - DAY

Georges-Nicolas stands at a desk. The CLERK opposite him fills out a form.

    CLERK
    Parents?
    GEORGES-NICOLAS
    Unknown.

The clerk looks at him.

    GEORGES-NICOLAS (cont’d)
    The child was abandoned. We’ve agreed to take him in.

    CLERK
    Very Christian of you. Name?

    GEORGES-NICOLAS
    Hippo...I mean, Georges-Hippolyte.

INT. LOUVRE, GRANDE GALLERIE - DAY

It is the opening day of the Salon, the official, government-sponsored exhibition showcasing over a thousand works of art. The event is held in two enormous rooms of the prestigious Louvre: the Grande Gallerie and the Salon Carré.

SUBTITLE: “SALON OF 1819, THE LOUVRE, PARIS”

As we TRACK DOWN the Grande Gallerie, every inch of wall space is covered with an ornately framed painting. Paris’ upper classes, wearing their finest, mill about.

A particularly large crowd hovers about the elderly KING LOUIS XVIII. He is having trouble walking, despite the use of a cane. The KING’S DOCTOR hovers nearby. A number of ministers follow the king, including the Minister of the Marine. The DIRECTOR OF ROYAL MUSEUMS, the Count de Forbin, walks just in front of the king. The Director stops to point out Ingres’ Grand Odalisque.
DIRECTOR OF ROYAL MUSEUMS
Your highness, you’ll notice in this work that...

Louis does not stop, pushing aside the director.

KING LOUIS XVIII
Yes, yes. I can see plenty of nude women whenever I...

The king’s doctor politely interrupts.

KING’S DOCTOR
(to the director)
His highness’ gout, he must keep moving.
Stopping and starting is most painful.

DIRECTOR OF ROYAL MUSEUMS
Yes, of course. My apologies, your highness.

We FOLLOW Louis and his retinue down the Grande Gallerie into the Salon Carré. Just inside the Salon’s entrance a crowd of spectators looks up at a painting hung above the doorway. As Louis enters, the crowd respectfully backs up to make room for the king. We ENTER the room with Louis and...

INT. LOUVRE, SALON CARRÉ – DAY

...TURN 180 degrees and PAN UP to see The Raft of the Medusa, hanging in a dominant spot above the entrance. It is the largest painting in the entire exhibition. Louis cranes his head up and sees the painting. His jaw drops. He slowly backs up. With a better vantage point, Louis stops.

KING’S DOCTOR
Your highness, it would be best if you kept moving in order...

KING LOUIS XVIII
Shut up.

CLOSE ON the Minister of the Marine, who is shocked by the painting. He speaks quietly to an OLD MINISTER near him.

MINISTER OF THE MARINE
A Negro at the top. Above us. “Saving” us. As ludicrous as it is disgusting.

KING LOUIS XVIII
(to the Director)
What is this called?
The Minister of the Marine shifts uncomfortably. The Director checks his notes.

**DIRECTOR OF ROYAL MUSEUMS**
Uh...yes, here it is. **Scene of a Shipwreck.**

**KING LOUIS XVIII**
**Scene of a Shipwreck?** How vague. Who is the artist?

In the silent room, Géricault steps forward. He had been standing in the crowd. He has cleaned himself up as best as he can, but he still looks gaunt and rumpled.

**GÉRICAULT**
Your highness.

Louis considers Géricault for a moment, then motions for him to come closer.

**KING LOUIS XVIII**
Who are you?

**GÉRICAULT**
I am Theodore Géricault. The painter.

**KING LOUIS XVIII**
And what do you call this?

Géricault pauses for a moment. He makes eye contact with the Minister of the Marine, who shoots him a contemptuous look.

**GÉRICAULT**
The **Raft of the Medusa.**

The king looks back at the painting.

**KING LOUIS XVIII**
Ahh, yes.
(beat)
It is hideous. Repulsive. We feel as though...we are on the raft. With those poor souls.
(looks at Géricault)
Excellent work, monsieur Géricault. We are most impressed.
(looks at the Minister of the Marine)
We must reform the Ministry of the Marine, to ensure that incompetents are not allowed to command our vessels.
The Minister of the Marine shrinks back into the entourage. The king motions and his followers trail him as he hobbles on to the rest of the exhibition.

**DISSOLVE TO:**

**INT. LOUVRE, SALON CARRÉ - DAY**

The Salon is over and the crowds are gone. The Director of Royal Museums holds some papers and directs TEAMS OF WORKERS, who are removing paintings from the wall.

**DIRECTOR OF ROYAL MUSEUMS**

Guillemot’s painting goes to Notre Dame. Guerin’s to Versailles...

**DISSOLVE TO:**

**INT. LOUVRE, SALON CARRÉ (NEXT DAY) - DAY**

Géricault and Eugene silently watch as *The Raft of the Medusa* is taken down. It’s the last painting in the room. The Director is gone. Eugene tries to comfort his friend.

**EUGENE**

You didn’t do it for the sale.

Géricault just stares.

**GÉRICAULT**

I will take it where it will be appreciated.

**EXT. SHIP IN THE ENGLISH CHANNEL - DAY**

Géricault is alone on deck aboard the “Iris.” It’s windy and raining. He is at the stern of the ship, watching the French coast fade away behind him.

**INT. HOTEL LOBBY, LONDON - DAY**

Géricault stands at the front desk, wet and tired.

**HOTEL CLERK**

And how long will you be staying in London, mister Géricault?

**GÉRICAULT**

I don’t know.
INT. GÉRICAULT’S ROOM, HOTEL, LONDON – NIGHT

Géricault sits by his window, staring at the rainy skyline of London. He finishes a whisky bottle and leaves the room.

EXT. BULLOCK’S EGYPTIAN HALL, PICADILLY, LONDON – NIGHT

Although it’s raining, Picadilly is bustling with umbrella-carrying pedestrians. Géricault makes his way through a crowd and into a building that stands out from the rest: its facade looks like an Egyptian temple, complete with columns and sculptures. Just above the entrance a sign reads, “Bullock’s Egyptian Hall.” In large letters, near the top of the building, is the word, “Museum.”

INT. BULLOCK’S EGYPTIAN HALL – NIGHT

The inside of the hall is part carnival, part art gallery. It’s dimly lit, with ORGAN MUSIC playing in the background. A BARKER in top hat and tails directs the growing crowd further into the hall.

BARKER
Right this way, ladies and gentlemen. See the enormous painting that caused a scandal in Paris. See the work of art causing women to faint and children to cry.

Géricault follows the crowd through a far doorway.

INT. BULLOCK’S EGYPTIAN HALL, EXHIBITION ROOM – NIGHT

At the far end of the dark room hangs The Raft of the Medusa, lit by stagelights in front of it. The dramatic light on the huge canvas makes for a memorable image. It is the only work of art in the room. Géricault stays at the back of the room, watching spectators gasp at his work. His eyes narrow as he focuses on something of interest.

GÉRICAULT’S P.O.V.

of a YOUNG COUPLE. The WOMAN has dark hair, faintly resembling Alexandrine. She hugs her MAN tightly, frightened by the spectacle of the painting. He holds her close, comforting her.

BACK TO SCENE

Géricault pulls out his flask and takes a drink.
EXT. BULLOCK’S EGYPTIAN HALL - NIGHT (A FEW HOURS LATER)

Couples exit the hall arm in arm. Géricault stumbles out, alone and drunk. He leans against a poster on the wall for support. He stares at the poster, trying to focus his eyes.

INSERT

the poster, which shows the “Medusa” stuck on the sandbank. The top reads, “Bullock’s Egyptian Hall, Picadilly, presents: The Raft of the Medusa!” We PAN TO the bottom, which reads, “12 June - 12 August 1820, Two Months Only!”

BACK TO SCENE

Géricault stumbles away into the night. We ZOOM BACK IN ON the poster. Night turns to...

EXT. BULLOCK’S EGYPTIAN HALL - DAY

...day. Two hands ENTER FROM O.S., plastering a strip with new dates over the poster: “Held Over by Popular Demand! Exhibition Ends 30 December 1820!”

INT. GÉRICAULT’S ROOM, HOTEL, LONDON - NIGHT

Géricault, sketching by candlelight, with an empty bottle on the table. His head drops and he passes out. OVERHEAD SHOT of the back of Géricault’s head, which partially obscures a drawing of Alexandrine’s face.

INT. GÉRICAULT’S STUDIO AT HIS FATHER’S HOUSE, PARIS - DAY

Géricault sits staring at his rolled up canvas for The Raft of the Medusa, propped up in a corner of the studio.

INT. GEORGES-NICOLAS’ HOUSE, DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Father and son eat quietly at opposite ends of the big dining room table.

GEORGES-NICOLAS
It’s good to have you home again, son.

Géricault picks at his food.

GEORGES-NICOLAS (cont’d)
Do you remember me writing to you about the losses I incurred on the tobacco plantations?

No response.
GEORGES-NICOLAS (cont’d)
Well, to minimize expenses, it is necessary to sell the chateau at Chesnay.

Géricault looks up.

GÉRICAULT
That was mother’s home. My...our home.

GEORGES-NICOLAS
It is a purely financial decision. One that I did not take lightly.

Géricault gets up to walk out. When he is nearly out the door, his father throws out a last comment.

GEORGES-NICOLAS (cont’d)
Therefore, no more clandestine visits.

Géricault pauses, puzzled as to how his father knew about his earlier trips there. He doesn’t talk to Georges-Nicolas as he leaves the room.

EXT. BICÊTRE PRISON/ASYLUM - DAY

Captain de Chaumareys is escorted out of the prison by a guard. A steady rain is falling. No one is here to greet the captain. The guard hands him a sack of his belongings. In the far distance, a church’s bells ring: DONG, DONG, DONG.

INT. BEAUJON HOSPITAL, EXAM ROOM - DAY

Dr. Lavigne finishes fitting Jean-Charles, seated on an exam table, with a wooden leg. Jean-Charles gets down from the table with help from the doctor. He stands there a moment, on his own, and smiles at Lavigne. As he takes his first steps, the wooden foot hitting the floor makes a sound: CLOP, CLOP, CLOP. Outside the window, the rain falls.

INT. JEAN-BAPTISTE’S HOUSE, MUSIC ROOM - DAY

Jean-Baptiste sits sadly alone at the piano that Alexandrine used to play. As the rain falls outside, distinct drops can be heard hitting a metal gutter in a steady beat: PLINK, PLINK, PLINK. Jean-Baptiste TAPS A SINGLE KEY to the same beat.

INT. ETIENNE AND ANNABELLE’S HOME, ROUEN - DAY

As the rain falls outside, little GEORGES-HIPPOLYTE, four years old, sits at a table, drawing. His adoptive father, Georges-Nicolas’ brother Etienne, walks by.
He pauses behind the boy, staring at his drawing. Etienne’s wife, Annabelle, walks over to see what Etienne is looking at. She covers her mouth in astonishment.

INSERT

Georges-Hippolyte’s drawing, of a horse galloping. It’s an amazingly realistic drawing given the boy’s age.

BACK TO SCENE

Etienne puts a gentle hand on the boy’s shoulder.

ETIENNE
That’s a fine drawing, Georges-Hippolyte.

ANNABELLE
Yes, it looks very real.

Georges-Hippolyte turns and looks up at them. He’s a beautiful child.

HIPPOLYTE
Thank you...father. Mother.

Etienne forces a smile for the boy. Annabelle walks quickly away, hiding her tears.

INT. RESTAURANT, PARIS – DAY

Géricault is having breakfast with Horace, who seems uncomfortable. There is an awkward silence between them. Géricault attempts to get the conversation going.

GÉRICAULT
Is Madame Lallemand still meeting us?

HORACE
Yes. She’s always late. Always up to something.

GÉRICAULT
Did I tell you my father’s away?

Horace doesn’t look up.

HORACE
Really? Where?

GÉRICAULT
Rouen. Some problems with his tobacco crops there.

(MORE)
I thought it strange, though...he mentioned a poor yield, but tobacco isn’t harvested for another few months.

Horace winces slightly. Something is bothering him.

Horace, what’s wrong?

Nothing.

Anyway, with the poor crops he said he’s going to have to sell my mother’s house.

Horace looks down, shaking with pent-up energy, then SLAMS a fist down on the table. He raises his head and stares into Géricault’s eyes.

I have something to tell you.

We FOLLOW Madame Lallemand as she exits her carriage and hurries to the restaurant’s entrance. Just then, Géricault comes bounding out, his face a mixture of panic and rage. He doesn’t see her, but turns and runs up the street. Lallemand hurries inside.

Lallemand quickly walks up to Horace, who has his face in his hands. She’s angry.

What did you tell him?

Horace raises his head. His eyes are red-rimmed. He just stares at her. She knows what he did. She represses her anger and WHISPERS in his ear.

While we are revealing secrets...did you know about Géricault’s mother’s will? It says that after her death, Georges-Nicolas controls her entire estate, provided he doesn’t remarry. And provided Theodore doesn’t have a legitimate heir.

Think about that...as I walk out the door.
She leaves as Horace looks after her.

INT. GÉRICAULT’S STUDIO AT GEORGES-NICOLAS’ HOUSE - DAY

Géricault gathers up some sketches, throws them into a satchel and runs out.

EXT. PARIS STREETS - DAY

Géricault rides fast, dodging carriages. He wears the satchel over his shoulder. He’s on a mission.

EXT. CHATEAU DE CHESNAY - DAY

The mysterious cloaked and hooded figure rides up to the chateau, jumps off the horse and rushes inside.

INT. CHATEAU DE CHESNAY - DAY

We FOLLOW the mysterious figure, who rushes up the stairs and down a hallway, pausing in front of a door. The figure starts to remove the hood.

INT. CHATEAU DE CHESNAY, MUSIC ROOM - DAY

The figure enters, wearing the cloak, but with the hood off. It’s Madame Lallemand.

In the small music room, Alexandrine PLAYS A MELANCHOLY TUNE at the piano. Behind her is a large window that looks out over the chateau’s entrance and the forest beyond. A few seated SERVANTS listen to her play. In the back of the room stands Georges-Nicolas. Madame Lallemand walks to him, takes his hand in a very intimate way and whispers in his ear.

MADAME LALLEMAND
He is on his way. He knows.

GEORGES-NICOLAS
(quietly)
At least we are here to welcome him. I knew I could count on you, my dear.

Georges-Nicolas walks over to a BIG SERVANT and WHISPERS some instructions to him. The servant nods and quietly exits.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

Géricault and his horse bolt along the road, kicking up dust.
INT. STABLES, CHATEAU DE CHESNAY - DAY

The big servant rides a horse out of the stable. As he exits, he grabs a polo mallet from the wall.

INT. CHATEAU DE CHESNAY, MUSIC ROOM - DAY

Alexandrine continues PLAYING, looking at no one. Georges-Nicolas stares past Alexandrine out the window.

GEORGES-NICOLAS’ P.O.V.

of the servant, riding away from the chateau.

BACK TO SCENE

Georges-Nicolas kisses Madame Lallemand on the cheek and walks quietly out of the room.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

Géricault rides hard. Suddenly, something hits him hard on the shoulder. He nearly falls out of the saddle, but manages to right himself. Slightly behind him is the big servant, riding fast and carrying the polo mallet. He swings again, but Géricault is able to shift and avoid the blow. He spurs his horse, which pulls away from the servant. The servant hunkers down, spurring his horse, too.

EXT. CHATEAU DE CHESNAY - DAY

Georges-Nicolas climbs onto a hay cart that is harnessed to a bull. He cracks a whip and the bull lumbers forward.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

The servant pulls alongside Géricault and swings the mallet. Géricault ducks, narrowly missing another hit. He moves his horse into the servant’s, forcing him to back off. Géricault looks to his sides. There is thick forest everywhere. Hoping to outmaneuver the servant, he pulls his horse off the road and into the woods. The servant follows, as the two of them weave in and out of trees.

The servant takes another swing at Géricault, but he’s off balance and Géricault grabs the mallet. He pulls hard on it, nearly yanking the servant off his horse. The mallet falls to the ground, but the servant is able to right himself.
EXT. CHATEAU DE CHESNAY, JUST INSIDE THE FENCE - DAY

Georges-Nicolas maneuvers the cart and bull to a spot just inside the ivy-covered fence surrounding the chateau, near the open iron gate. He gently unharnesses the bull.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

The servant pulls up next to Géricault. The two riders eye each other. The servant jumps up onto his saddle, ready to leap for Géricault. Géricault is about to pull his horse to the side, but tree branches brush his shoulder. The servant steadies himself and...leaps. At that moment, Géricault ducks to avoid a low branch. The branch catches the servant in mid air with a DULL THUD. He drops to the ground and Géricault rides on.

EXT. CHATEAU DE CHESNAY, JUST INSIDE THE FENCE - DAY

Day has become dusk. Georges-Nicolas is quiet, listening. We can now HEAR THE DISTANT SOUND OF A GALLOPING HORSE.

EXT. CHATEAU DE CHESNAY, JUST OUTSIDE THE FENCE - DUSK

Géricault rides fast, focused on the open gate in front of him and the chateau just beyond. He spurs his horse on.

EXT. CHATEAU DE CHESNAY, JUST INSIDE THE FENCE - DUSK

As the sound of POUNDING HOOVES GETS LOUDER, Georges-Nicolas calmly unravels the whip. He then snaps the whip onto the bull’s hind end with a CRACK! The bull lets out a LOUD SNORT and takes off toward the open gate.

At the same moment, Géricault bursts through the gate. His horse sees the charging bull and rears up. The bull veers away and runs off. Géricault is thrown, landing hard on his back. His satchel flies off his shoulder, scattering his sketches.

ANGLE ON Géricault, on his back, with drawings of Alexandrine all around. He MOANS and rolls over. We see a large rock. His back is bloody.

Georges-Nicolas is already walking away, toward the chateau. He motions to TWO SERVANTS, waiting in the shadows, to retrieve his son. As the servants approach, Géricault manages to rise to his feet. He stares at one of the chateau’s lit windows. He sees someone, a woman, seated at a piano.
INT. CHATEAU DE CHESNAY, MUSIC ROOM - DUSK

As Alexandrine PLAYS, Georges-Nicolas enters the room and stands by Madame Lallemand. He cranes his head to get a better view out the window.

GEORGES-NICOLAS’ P.O.V.

In the dusk, Géricault staggers toward the chateau. The servants grab his arms. Mustering what little strength he has left, Géricault struggles against them.

BACK TO SCENE

Georges-Nicolas’ face shows worry.

EXT. CHATEAU DE CHESNAY - DUSK

Géricault can see that it is Alexandrine in the window. Practically pulling the two servants with him toward the entrance, he fights to reach her, shouting her name.

GÉRICAULT
Alexandrine! ALEXANDRINE!!

INT. CHATEAU DE CHESNAY, MUSIC ROOM - DUSK

Alexandrine PLAYS ON, not able to hear GÉRICAULT’S SHOUTS or see him out the window just behind her.

EXT. CHATEAU DE CHESNAY - DUSK

Géricault’s energy is sapped. He collapses to his knees and is dragged away, still SHOUTING.

GÉRICAULT
ALEXANDRINE!

INT. CHATEAU DE CHESNAY, MUSIC ROOM - DUSK

Alexandrine finishes her song. It’s quiet. She stares down at the piano. Out the window, Géricault is almost out of sight, SHOUTING and being pulled away. She pauses for a moment. We can BARELY HEAR GÉRICAULT’S SHOUTS. She gets a strange look on her face. Is she imagining his voice? She hasn’t seen him in years.

ANGLE ON Georges-Nicolas, who sees Alexandrine’s expression change. Alexandrine starts to turn toward the window, when Georges-Nicolas suddenly CLAPS LOUDLY.

GEORGES-NICOLAS
Bravo! Bravo!!
Madame Lallemand also CLAPS, as the servants follow their lead. Distracted by the noise, Alexandrine faces the group. She manages a polite smile and bows her head. In the BACKGROUND, we see Géricault, now totally limp and unconscious, pulled OUT OF FRAME.

INT. GEORGE-NICOLAS’ HOUSE, BEDROOM - DAY

Géricault lies in bed, staring out the window. There is a bare tree outside. It’s raining. He tries get more comfortable, but grimaces. Georges-Nicolas rises from a chair in the corner and adjusts his son’s pillows.

GÉRICAULT
Why did you lie?

GEORGES-NICOLAS
I didn’t.

There is a THUNDER CLAP outside.

GEORGES-NICOLAS (cont’d)
They are dead...to you. You can never see them.

(beat)
You never loved her. Alexandrine was an infatuation. She was a mistress, married to your own uncle. She represented something you could not have. That is why you wanted her. You made a mistake. I remedied it. This is best for the family. Best for her. And for your son.

A second THUNDER CLAP.

GÉRICAULT
Ah yes. “Best for my son.”

GEORGES-NICOLAS
Do you really think you could be a father to that boy? Could you imagine his shame...our family’s shame...if you raised him and people knew the truth?

GÉRICAULT
The truth? An interesting choice of words, father.

GEORGES-NICOLAS
You have no idea how difficult it was for me, raising you after your mother’s death. You always loved her more, much more than me.

(MORE)
GEORGES-NICOLAS (cont'd)
The pain of not being loved by your own child...until you have children of your...

He pauses, realizing Theodore does have a child.

GEORGES-NICOLAS (cont’d)
After her death, I thought that I might, in some small way, take her place in your life. But, you withdrew, throwing yourself into your art. My only consolation was to remain on the periphery of your life, doing what I could.

(beat)
Since her death, you are all I have left. Everything I have done was to bring us closer. Everything I have done, I have done for you.

A third THUNDER CLAP.

INT. GEORGE-NICOLAS’ HOUSE, BEDROOM (ANOTHER DAY) - DAY

Géricault lies in bed, emaciated and sick. Over the following months, a series of visitors appear.

SERIES OF SHOTS: A) Eugene sits on the bed next to Géricault, showing him some sketches. Géricault manages a smile. The tree outside is winter bare. B) Horace stands next to his friend, combing his hair. The tree is in blossom. C) Jean-Charles sits in a chair next to Géricault’s bed, reading from his Bible. The tree is full. D) Georges-Nicolas leaves a tray of food on his son’s nightstand. Géricault, noticeably thinner, doesn’t look at him. All but one of the tree’s leaves have fallen off. Georges-Nicolas walks out the door and weeps.

INT. GEORGES-NICOLAS’ HOUSE, STUDY - DAY

Georges-Nicolas stands next to his LAWYER, who sits at a desk. He pauses from writing and stares at Georges-Nicolas in disbelief.

LAWYER
Everything?

GEORGES-NICOLAS
Yes.

LAWYER
And where is this...
(looks down at a paper)
...Georges-Hippolyte?
GEORGES-NICOLAS
My brother is his guardian.

The lawyer finishes writing.

LAWYER
I shall send you the amended will next week for your signature.

EXT. PLATEAU, ON THE GROUNDS OF THE CHATEAU DE CHESNAY - DAY

Alexandrine stands on the edge of the small cliff, near the waterfall. She looks out over the beauty of the landscape. The small neoclassical temple is in the distance. Ominous dark clouds gather and the wind picks up, blowing her long, dark curly hair.

INTO THE FRAME steps Jean-Baptiste. His limp now more pronounced, he makes his way toward her with his cane, then pauses a few feet away. He stares at her for a moment.

JEAN-BAPTISTE
(quietly)
Beautiful.

Alexandrine turns and glances at him, then returns to gazing at the landscape.

ALEXANDRINE
The landscape is beautiful.

JEAN-BAPTISTE
Yes. The landscape.
(beat)
You look well.

There’s an awkward moment of silence.

ALEXANDRINE
What is his name?

JEAN-BAPTISTE
You have never asked that before. I thought you did not want to...

ALEXANDRINE
I want to know.

JEAN-BAPTISTE

Alexandrine smiles, remembering Géricault’s story.
ALEXANDRINE
(to herself)
Hippolyte.
(beat)
How is he?

JEAN-BAPTISTE
(smiling)
All the energy of a five-year old. He loves to...

ALEXANDRINE
...and fourteen days.

JEAN-BAPTISTE
What?

ALEXANDRINE
His fifth birthday was two weeks ago.

Jean-Baptiste looks down. He takes an envelope out of his pocket and stands next to her.

JEAN-BAPTISTE
I wrote down some of his accomplishments for you.

Alexandrine takes the envelope. She looks at the seal on the back.

INSERT
the seal, with Hephaestus on it.

BACK TO SCENE
Alexandrine puts the letter in her pocket.

ALEXANDRINE
You were the one who sent Theodore money while he was in Rome. He thought it was his father.

JEAN-BAPTISTE
I always knew there was something between you two. I thought that the money might entice him to stay abroad, sparing me the pain of seeing you both....

ALEXANDRINE
You could have said the child was ours.

Jean-Baptiste laughs.
JEAN-BAPTISTE
Georges-Hippolyte is beautiful. Like his parents. No one would ever believe I was the father.

ALEXANDRINE
And Theodore?

JEAN-BAPTISTE
(looking down)
Not well. He...

Alexandrine takes a step toward the edge of the plateau. Worried, Jean-Baptiste steps next to her.

ALEXANDRINE
Never mind.

She turns faces him and manages a weak smile. She touches his cheek tenderly.

JEAN-BAPTISTE
You know, I loved Theodore, too.
(beat)
Like the son I never had.

ALEXANDRINE
Thank you, Jean.

He reaches to touch her hand on his cheek, but she pulls away. She takes another few steps toward the small cliff. She is now at the edge. Jean-Baptiste watches her for a moment, then turns and limps away.

Alexandrine takes the letter out of her pocket. Without opening it, she throws it into the lake below. The approaching storm grows closer. THUNDER sounds.

INT. STABLES, CHATEAU DE CHESNAY - DAY

ANGLE ON Géricault’s white stallion, Pegasus, in his stall. There’s a FLASH OF LIGHTNING and a CRACK OF THUNDER. Pegasus rears up, agitated and SNORTING. He kicks at the stall door with his rear hooves. The door begins to give.

EXT. PLATEAU, ON THE GROUNDS OF THE CHATEAU DE CHESNAY - DAY

As the wind grows stronger, Alexandrine puts her toes on the edge of the small cliff.
INT. STABLES, CHATEAU DE CHESNAY - DAY

With another FLASH OF LIGHTNING, Pegasus kicks hard and breaks open the stall door.

EXT. PLATEAU, ON THE GROUNDS OF THE CHATEAU DE CHESNAY - DAY

Alexandrine spreads her arms. Her eyes are closed. She leans toward the edge, then pulls back. She crumples to the ground, unable to make the leap. She begins to CRY.

INT. GEORGE-NICOLAS’ HOUSE, BEDROOM - DAY

Géricault lies in bed, sweating and feverish. His father stands at the back of the room. Horace and Eugene are at his bedside. A DOCTOR is walking out, but pauses to talk with Georges-Nicolas.

    DOCTOR
    (quietly)
    An infection has developed, near the injury, very close to his spine. It won’t be long.

Georges-Nicolas nods. The doctor leaves. Outside, rain pelts the window and the tree bends with the wind. The single remaining leaf blows away.

ANGLE ON Géricault, who is delirious.

    GÉRICAULT
    (whispering)
    Buckets of paint...

    HORACE
    What, Theodore?

    GÉRICAULT
    I am going to get better. I am going to paint an enormous canvas, using buckets of paint and brooms for brushes.

    EUGENE
    You have already accomplished that, my friend. Your Raft of the Medusa is a masterpiece.

    GÉRICAULT
    (dismissive)
    A mere study. A sketch.

A shot of pain runs through him. His eyes become glassy.
GÉRICAULT (cont’d)
Too much burnt sienna.

Horace and Eugene hang their heads. Georges-Nicolas slumps into a chair in the corner.

EXT. BEACH – NIGHT

This is a continuation of Géricault’s earlier nightmares. Again, we HEAR the sound of WAVES, HORSES SNORTING, and HEAVY BREATHING.

In a WIDE SHOT, Géricault lies on the beach, his arms and legs tangled in the reins of four horses who pull in different directions, like the mythological Hippolytus. A toppled chariot is nearby.

CLOSE ON Géricault’s face, sweating and in extreme pain. His head bobs back forth, his limbs straining against the reins. Suddenly, the movement stops. His face becomes peaceful. We HEAR THE HORSES HOOVES become fainter as they run away.

Géricault is dead. Both in his nightmare and in reality.

INT. STABLES, CHATEAU DE CHESNAY – DAY

Pegasus comes bounding out of his stall. He is free. He gallops out of the stable.

EXT. PLATEAU, ON THE GROUNDS OF THE CHATEAU DE CHESNAY – DAY

Pegasus gallops over to Alexandrine. He rears up, STOMPING his front hooves on the ground near her. She looks up at him and he becomes calm. She stands and pats him. Pegasus kneels down and Alexandrine gets on.

As we ZOOM OUT, Pegasus slowly rises with Alexandrine on his back. He then takes off galloping through the lush landscape toward the small lake below the plateau. The rain has stopped. The sun shines between parting black clouds. We PAN TO the lake, with its calm water.

FLASHBACK – EXT. ON THE RAFT (THIRTEENTH DAY) – DAY

We PAN from the water to the raft. It is a calm, peaceful morning. The sun is breaking through the clouds.

The fifteen survivors are nearly dead. Most are huddled beneath the makeshift tent at the center of the raft. Jean-Charles is at the end of the raft, near some barrels. Lavillette, barely conscious, lies near him. CLOSE ON Jean-Charles, who thinks he sees something on the horizon.
Despite his injured leg, he struggles to pull himself up onto one of the barrels.

JEAN-CHARLES’ P.O.V.

In the distance, the “Argus” sails toward the raft.

BACK TO SCENE

Jean-Charles pulls Léon’s red cloth out of his pocket. He struggles further up the barrel, and begins waving the cloth vigorously. Then, he loses his balance and falls to the deck. Lavillette just stares at Jean-Charles.

Slumped behind the barrels and out of strength, Jean-Charles can’t see the ship. He closes his eyes and prays, quoting scripture.

JEAN-CHARLES

“Deliver me out of the mire, and let me not sink; let me be delivered from those who hate me, and out of the deep waters. Let not the waterflood overflow me, neither let the deep swallow me up, and let not the pit shut her mouth upon me. Answer me, O Lord, for thy lovingkindness is good.”

At that moment, the “Argus” FIRES A HAILING SHOT FROM HER CANNON.

Jean-Charles smiles. He looks at Léon’s cloth.

JEAN-CHARLES (cont’d)

I’ll dance with you on those golden streets another day, little lion.

He shoves the cloth deep into his pocket, then leans against the barrels, exhausted. The other survivors crawl out of the tent, having heard the cannon fire. They can now see the “Argus” on a bearing straight for them. Those with the energy cry tears of joy.

FADE TO BLACK:

POSTSCRIPT:

“In 1980, a French expedition discovered the remains of the ‘Medusa,’ still on the Arguin Bank off the coast of west Africa.”

FADE TO BLACK:
“Alexandrine lived out her days in isolation at the Chateau de Chesnay. She died there in 1875, at the age of 90.”

FADE TO BLACK:

“Georges-Nicolas became senile in his old age. His will, leaving everything to Georges-Hippolyte, was amended by the family and Georges-Hippolyte received nothing.”

FADE TO BLACK:

“Georges-Hippolyte later learned the identity of his real parents. He was allowed to take the name ‘Géricault’ when he was 22. He spent the rest of his life searching in vain for his mother. He died in 1882, at 64 years of age.”

FADE TO BLACK:

“Theodore Géricault died in 1824, at the age of 32. After his death, his belongings were auctioned. His masterpiece, The Raft of the Medusa, was finally purchased by the Director of Royal Museums, just seven months after Géricault’s death, and placed in the Louvre. It hangs there to this day.”

FADE OUT.