

En Pleine Campagne

By Jenny St. Angelo

An over-eager French student wants more than her small town can offer, while her partner just wants an "A" on their assignment.

EXT. ARGYLE, TEXAS. AFTERNOON.

Pastures and fields surround a massive highway, built in anticipation of urban sprawl that never arrived.

ADDIE, 17, is putting the finishing touches on an elaborate picnic on the side of the road. She is humming "Aux Champs-Elysées". A car pulls up next to hers, and out pops DAMIEN, 17, looking perplexed. He grabs his backpack and stands looking down at Addie, who is grinning.

ADDIE
Salut Damien!

DAMIEN
Hi Addie.

ADDIE
En Français?

DAMIEN
C'mon, we're not in class.

ADDIE
Madame Walton said-

DAMIEN
It's the weekend. We shouldn't be forced to speak French and hang out with-

Addie looks at him, anticipating the blow.

DAMIEN (CONT'D)
-uh, bunch of cows in a field.

He gestures. There are no cows.

ADDIE
Mais bien sûr! Bienvenue à Paris!

She gestures to the massive billboard they are sitting under: "2 DIRECT FLIGHTS A DAY" with a night time skyline of Paris.

Damien sighs, then plops down on the blanket and begins to pull out crumpled papers.

ADDIE (CONT'D)
I thought we could have a picnic first and then do the homework.

DAMIEN
I'm meeting up with Ben and Garrett once we finish this, so...

ADDIE

Oh. Okay.

She pulls out a folder covered with pictures of the Eiffel Tower, finds the pages, and looks expectantly at Damien.

DAMIEN

Okay, uh, so what's our scenario?

ADDIE

(looking around)
We're on a picnic?

DAMIEN

Right. Um. Bonjour Addie, ça va?

As he says this Addie writes it down in French. Damien does the same for Addie. Subtitles appear on the screen.

ADDIE

Ça va bien, merci. Et tu?
[I'm well, thank you, and you?]

DAMIEN

Bien. Um, merci.[Good. Um, thanks.]

ADDIE

Il fait beau aujourd'hui, non?
[It's a nice day isn't it?]

DAMIEN

Oui. [Yes]

Addie waits, expectantly. Damien looks back, confused.

ADDIE

It's your turn to ask a question.
On a date you should-

DAMIEN

This isn't a date.

ADDIE

(mortified)
No, I didn't mean us on a, no I mean, these two French people are on a date, I thought that was part of the scenario. We're not, no, I mean, veux-tu du fromage? [Do you want some cheese?]

DAMIEN

D'accord... [okay...]

Addie pulls out a hunk of parmesan and a cheese grater.

ADDIE

Kroger didn't have any French cheeses, so I had to get parmesan.

DAMIEN

Why did you bring a cheese grater?

ADDIE

I thought we could sprinkle it over the prosciutto.

DAMIEN

You got prosciutto? Isn't that Italian too?

ADDIE

Well, technically yes, but I couldn't find prosciutto either so it's just...it's ham.

She grates the cheese onto the ham. They both look at it. It's rather sad and unappetizing. Damien laughs and looks at Addie, who is tearing up.

DAMIEN

Oh! Hey, I'm sorry, I wasn't-

ADDIE

(wiping away tears)

It's fine. I just, I thought this would be fun. Like, we could pretend to be anyone we wanted, and not be from...here. We could be sophisticated and have witty conversation and we could pretend to be French and like, friends.

DAMIEN

We are friends. Tu est ma amie.

ADDIE

Mon amie. Mon, not ma. Ma amie sounds bad.

DAMIEN

See? You're super French already. Tu est très intelligent.

ADDIE

You're just saying that so I'll do the homework and you can leave.

DAMIEN

No, I'm not. You really are smart. I mean, you definitely went all in on this Paris stuff, but I like that you care.

ADDIE

I didn't even show you the worst part.

She pulls out two berets. Damien laughs, and puts one on. Addie grins and puts hers on.

DAMIEN

(with a French accent)
'ow do I look?

ADDIE

(matching him)
Très chic, like you could be a model.

They sit, looking at each other.

ADDIE (CONT'D)

I'm sorry I made you come sit in a field on a Saturday. If you want to go hang out with Ben and Garrett I can just make up a conversation and send it to you.

DAMIEN

No, you don't have to do that. I'll stay. Um, tu es très jeudi. [You are very Thursday.]

ADDIE

What?

DAMIEN

(seriously)
Tu es très jeudi.

ADDIE

I am very Thursday?

DAMIEN

What? No! No, I'm trying to say...uh, you are very pretty.

ADDIE

(blushing)
Oh! Jolie. Pretty is jolie. Um.
(MORE)

ADDIE (CONT'D)
 Merci. Tu est très beau. [You are
 very handsome]

Damien stands up suddenly.

ADDIE (CONT'D)
 Sorry! The beret made me do it I-

DAMIEN
 I have an idea.

He grabs the picnic basket, which is heavier than he
 expected, and pulls out a bottle of wine.

DAMIEN (CONT'D)
 You brought wine?

ADDIE
 It's sparkling grape juice-

He puts the "wine" back in the basket, grabs the cheese, a
 baguette, and a blanket.

DAMIEN
 Follow me.

He heads to the billboard. Addie follows, watching as he
 ascends the ladder. She takes a deep breath, and climbs.

EXT. BILLBOARD. EVENING.

The sun is setting. They sit side by side on the catwalk.
 Damien takes out the "wine" and pours two glasses. They hold
 up their glasses, swirling like it's actually wine. They
 cheers, and take a sip. It's pretty gross.

ADDIE
 I guess I'm not very French after
 all.

DAMIEN
 Maybe not. But you are very
 Thursday.

He leans over and kisses her on the cheek. She is stunned.
 Thrilled. She looks out, smiling, as the sun fully sets, the
 camera zooming out, revealing their bodies silhouetted
 against the Parisian backdrop, the billboard growing smaller,
 enveloped by the night sky of the countryside, as one or two
 cars drive down the highway.

FADE TO BLACK.