

DEUX AMIS  
(TWO FRIENDS)

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Based on the short story of the same name  
by Guy de Maupassant

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FADE IN:

EXT. PARIS CITYSCAPE 1871 - DAY

January 1871. We see the city of Paris from afar, its recognisable landmarks visible.

EXT. PARIS STREET 1871 - DAY

A typical Paris street, with cobblestone and old houses with balconies. However, the street is empty, derelict. Crows and emaciated sparrows sit on the roof tops, rats scurry along the street.

Some children chase down a rat and capture it. Some other children shoot down a crow with their sling shot. They cheer when they hit their target or catch their prey and carefully place them into bags.

The store fronts are empty, none of the shops seem open. Some are even barred up.

A man, Mr. MORRISOT, a watchmaker by profession, walks down the street. His clothes are old and torn, the colors faded and his shoes are falling apart.

From the other direction another man, Mr. SAUVAGE, a draper by profession, approaches. His clothes is of a similar condition, but he is stouter and shorter than Mr. Morrisot.

The two men eye each other and do a double take. They look at each other for what seems like an eternity, but in reality is only a few seconds. A flash of recognition, followed by smiles.

MORRISOT  
Monsieur Sauvage?

SAUVAGE  
Monsieur Morrisot?

They shake hands, cordially. But, after a short pause and suddenly overcome with emotion, they decide to hug. A great big bear hug. They smile warmly at each other through water-glazed eyes.

EXT. PARIS STREET 1869 - DAY

Summer 1869. The same street. But this time alive with buzzing crowds. All the shops are overflowing with produce and commodities. The windows and balconies are lined with colourful flowers. Birds are chirping, children are playing, not killing small animals. It is a lovely day.

Mr. Morrisot and Mr. Sauvage approach each other on the street. Big smiles on their faces and fishing poles in their hands.

MORRISOT  
Monsieur Sauvage!

SAUVAGE  
Monsieur Morrisot!

The two men clap each other on the back and head off together in the same direction.

EXT. PARIS STREET 1871 - DAY

Morrisot and Sauvage walk down the street. One man's tummy grumbles, and the other man's tummy grumbles in reply. The men smile at the absurdity of their communicating bellies.

SAUVAGE  
En voilà des événements! (These are sad times)

Morrisot nods mournfully in agreement. He looks up the sky. It is a chilly blue, quite cloudless.

MORRISOT  
Le premier beau jour de l'année...  
(The first fine day of the year...)

EXT. PARIS STREET 1869 - DAY

Morrisot and Sauvage walk happily down the street with fishing rods in their hands, avoiding bumping into all the crowds.

MORRISOT (V.O.)  
Et la pêche? (And the fishing?)...  
Quel bon souvenir! (What good times we used to have?)

EXT. PARIS STREET 1871 - DAY

Sauvage looks at Morrisot.

SAUVAGE  
Quand y retournerons-nous?(When shall we be able to fish again?)

Morrisot remains silent. There is no good answer. They pass a café that is open. The men look at each other, make little gestures, and decide to enter.

INT. CAFE 1871 - DAY

We see two glasses of absinthe deftly prepared. The green colour is very vivid, the reflective surface of the glass glistens. The eyes of the two men glow.

They are handed the absinthe, and they down it in one go.

EXT. CAFE 1871 - DAY

The men exit the café, and stand outside the door. They look at each other and smile. They gesture to each other with their heads: shall we have another? Yeah! They reenter the café.

INT. CAFE 1871 - DAY

Another two glasses of absinthe are prepared. The colour is entrancing, the gloss of the glass magical. The two men down the absinthe again. They exhale sharply and smile at each other.

EXT. CAFE 1871 - DAY

The men exit the café wobbily, there is a bright flush of red to their cheeks and a definite glaze to their eyes. They feel the mild breeze on their faces and close their eyelids. However, this unsettles them and almost makes them lose their balance and topple over. They laugh.

Sauvage looks at Morrisot, suddenly quite serious through slurred speech.

SAUVAGE

Si on y allait? (Suppose we go there?)

MORRISOT

Où ça? (Where?)

SAUVAGE

A la pêche, donc. (Fishing.)

MORRISOT

Mais où? (But where?)

SAUVAGE

Mais à notre île... (Why, to the old place...)

EXT. PARIS OUTPOST/GATES 1871 - DAY

## SAUVAGE (V.O.)

... Les avant-postes français sont  
auprès de Colombes. Je connais le  
colonel Dumoulin; on nous laissera  
passer facilement. (... The French  
outposts are close to Colombes. I know  
Colonel Dumoulin, and we shall easily  
get leave to pass.)

Morrisot and Sauvage, with fishing rods in their hands,  
are let out by a Parisian officer who murmurs something  
to them. The men repeat the words and nod. They  
continue beyond the gates, which are shut ominously  
behind them. They stare at the open landscape before  
them, rather barren, and set off, their balance  
somewhat off kilter.

## EXT. FIELD OUTSIDE PARIS 1871 - DAY

Before the two friends lay the village of Argenteuil,  
apparently lifeless. The heights of Orgement and  
Sannois dominates the landscape. The great plain,  
extending as far as Nanterre, is empty, a waste of dun-  
colored soil and bare cherry trees.

## EXT. FIELD OUTSIDE PARIS 1869 - DAY

The same landscape, but now alive with colour and  
gilded rays of sunshine. The men walk along with their  
fishing rods, laughing.

## EXT. FIELD OUTSIDE PARIS 1871 - DAY

Sauvage stops. He looks at the ridge.

## SAUVAGE

Les Prussiens sont là-haut! (The  
Prussians are up there!)

The two friends fall silent with the realisation of the  
possible danger that lay before them.

Morrisot looks light-heartedly at Sauvage.

## MORRISOT

Allons, en route! Mais avec  
précaution! (Come, we'll make a start;  
only let us be careful!)

And they make their way, through a vineyard, bent over  
and creeping along the ground, obscured by the vines,  
with their eyes and ears alert, yet still somewhat  
wobbly from the absinthe.

EXT. RIVERBANK 1871 - DAY

A strip of bare land lays between the two men and the riverbank. They run across this, and as soon as they reach the water's edge, they conceal themselves among the reeds.

Morrisot places his ear to the ground and listens for a while. He then looks at Sauvage, shakes his head and smiles. Sauvage smiles back.

The men prepare their fishing tackle with the enthusiasm of children.

Before them, the deserted Ile Marante conceals them from the farther shore. The little restaurant located on the small isle is closed, and looks as if it has been deserted for years.

Sauvage catches the first fish, a gudgeon. He laughs.

Morrisot's turn follows soon after. Another gudgeon, another laugh.

EXT. RIVERBANK 1869 - DAY

The same riverbank, but this time families sit by little tables outside the restaurant on Ile Marante, and children play in the sun.

Morrisot and Sauvage fish by the riverbank, their mesh bag already quite full with catch.

EXT. RIVERBANK 1871 - DAY

More gudgeons fill the mesh bag, it is starting to look like they will be able to fill it as well as they did in the old days.

The sun shines from a clear, but cold, blue sky. The men blow shapes with the steam that emanates from their breath when exhaling. Their fishing floats bob on the water surface.

Morrisot and Sauvage close their eyes.

EXT. RIVERBANK 1869 - DAY

Morrisot and Sauvage sit in the exact same manner, eyes closed. It is only the landscape around them that is different.

EXT. RIVERBANK 1871 - DAY

KABOOM!

A rumbling sound, coming from the bowels of the earth, shakes the ground beneath the two friends. The Prussian cannons have resumed their thunder.

The men look beyond the riverbanks, towards the outline of Mont-Valerien, from whose summit a white puff of smoke rises.

KABOOM!

Another detonation.

Sauvage shrugs his soulders.

SAUVAGE

Voilà qu'ils recommencent. (They are at it again.)

MORRISOT

Faut-il être stupide pour se tuer comme ça! (What fools they are to kill one another like that!)

KABOOM! The cannons keep firing. Sauvage nods. Morrisot catches a bleak.

MORRISOT (CONT'D)

Et dire que ce sera toujours ainsi tant qu'il y aura des gouvernements! (And to think that it will be just the same so long as there are governments!)

KABOOM!

The earth trembles.

SAUVAGE

La République n'aurait pas déclaré la guerre. (The Republic would not have declared war.)

MORRISOT

Avec les rois on a la guerre au dehors ; avec la République on a la guerre au dedans. (Under a king we have foreign wars; under a republic we have civil war.)

Sauvage nods. He remains in deep thought.

KABOOM! The white smoke emanating from Mont-Valerien has grown thick.

After a pause, Sauvage utters:

SAUVAGE  
C'est la vie. (Such is life.)

KABOOM!

Another detonation.

MORRISOT  
Et c'est la mort! (And such is death!)

He laughs.

Unbeknownst to the men, there is movement in the reeds behind them.

Unknown POV: gliding through the reeds, the backs of the men become visible.

A rifle comes into shot next to Morrisot's head, followed by a rifle next Sauvage's head.

The two friends freeze.

Behind them another two rifles. They are surrounded by four Prussian soldiers.

The fishing rods drop from the hands of the two friends and float away down the river.

A second of calm.

Then the two friends are seized and bound.

Thrown into a boat.

And taken across the river...

EXT. RESTAURANT. ILE MARANTE 1871 - DAY

... to Ile Marante.

Behind the supposedly deserted restaurant are a score of Prussian soldiers.

The commanding Prussian officer, a giant with shaggy hair and a fierce face, sits front to back on a wooden chair, smoking a long clay pipe. He addresses them in perfect French.

PRUSSIAN OFFICER  
Eh bien, messieurs, avez-vous fait  
bonne pêche? (Well, gentlemen, have  
you had good luck with your fishing?)



The two friends remain silent. A soldier deposits the mesh bag of fresh catch before the officer's feet. The giant smiles.

PRUSSIAN OFFICER (CONT'D)

Pas mal. (Not bad.)

He walks up close to the two friends, his face in their faces. His expression changes.

PRUSSIAN OFFICER (CONT'D)

Pour moi, vous êtes deux espions envoyés pour me guetter. Je vous prends et je vous fusille. Vous faisiez semblant de pêcher, afin de mieux dissimuler vos projets. Vous êtes tombés entre mes mains, tant pis pour vous ; c'est la guerre. (You must know that, in my eyes, you are two spies sent to spy on me and my movements. Naturally, I capture you and I shoot you. You pretended to be fishing, the better to disguise your real errand. You have fallen into my hands, and must take the consequences. Such is war.)

The two friends remain silent and stern, only a slight fluttering of their hands betray their real emotions.

PRUSSIAN OFFICER (CONT'D)

Mais comme vous êtes sortis par les avant-postes, vous avez assurément un mot d'ordre pour rentrer. Donnez-moi ce mot d'ordre et je vous fais grâce. (But as you came here through the outposts you must have a password for your return. Tell me that password and I will let you go.)

The two friends stay quiet.

PRUSSIAN OFFICER (CONT'D)

Personne ne le saura jamais, vous rentrerez paisiblement. Le secret disparaîtra avec vous. (pause) Choisissez! (No one will ever know. You will return peacefully to your homes, and the secret will disappear with you. Choose!)

The two friends stand motionless, their lips shut tight.

The Prussian officer continues calmly, his hand pointing to the water.

PRUSSIAN OFFICER (CONT'D)

Songez que dans cinq minutes vous serez au fond de cette eau. Vous devez avoir des familles? (Just think that in five minutes you will be at the bottom of that water. You have relations, I presume?)

KABOOM! Mont-Valerien still thunders.

The two friends remain silent.

The giant turns and gives an order by gesture with his head.

He then moves his chair a little away.

A dozen soldiers step forward, rifles in hand.

They line up, twenty paces off.

PRUSSIAN OFFICER (CONT'D)

Je vous donne une minute, pas deux secondes de plus. (I give you one minute, not a second longer.)

The two friends remain silent. A minute passes.

The giant rises quickly. He takes Morrisot by the arm and pulls him aside.

PRUSSIAN OFFICER (CONT'D)

Vite, ce mot d'ordre! Votre camarade ne saura rien, j'aurai l'air de m'attendrir. (Quick! the password! Your friend will know nothing. I will pretend to relent.)

Morrisot answers not a single word.

POV Morrisot: The giant then takes Sauvage by the arm and pulls him aside. He whispers to him. Sauvage, too, answers not a single word.

Again, the two friends stand side by side.

The giant gestures to the twelve soldiers with a nod of his head.

The rifles are raised and aimed.

Morrisot gazes upon the quivering fish in the mesh bag. They glisten like silver in the sunlight. His heart sinks.

He looks at Sauvage, through teary eyes.

MORRISOT

Adieu, Monsieur Sauvage. (Goodbye, Mr. Sauvage.)

SAUVAGE

Adieu, Monsieur Morissot. (Goodbye, Mr. Morrisot.)

They shake hands.

The giant raises his arm in the air.

The twelve rifles are aimed.

The giant's arm comes down in one swift move.

The twelve rifles are fired as one.

Sauvage falls forward instantly, his body riddled with holes. Morrisot sways, turns and falls backwards, landing across his friend, face turned skywards, eyes open and dead, blood oozing from multiple orifices.

The giant raises his arm in the air again.

The twelve rifles take aim.

The giant lowers his arm rapidly.

Another twelve shots are fired as one.

The bodies of Morrisot and Sauvage stir and bounce upon impact with the twelve bullets. But the two friends themselves are dead.

KABOOM! Mont-Valerien thunders again.

The soldiers tie up the feet of Morrisot and Sauvage with large stones.

They then carry the bodies to the riverbank.

KABOOM! Another detonation from Mont-Valerien.

Two soldiers lift up Morrisot, one by the head, another by the feet. Two other soldiers do the same to Sauvage.

KABOOM! Mont-Valerien is shrouded in white smoke.

The bodies of the two friends are swung, lustily by strong arms, and cast, in a lovely curve, into the river stream.

The water splashes high, foams, then settles, rings receding and tiny waves lap the shore.

The water is calm and silent again, its dark surface impenetrable to the human eye.

The giant grimaces.

PRUSSIAN OFFICER

C'est le tour des poissons maintenant,  
mes messieurs! (It's the fishes' turn  
now, gentlemen!)

KABOOM! Mont-Valerien still thunders away.

The giant catches sight of the gudgeons in the mesh  
bag, still quivering and holding on to dear life.

He picks up the bag, smiles and calls:

PRUSSIAN OFFICER (CONT'D)

Wilhelm!

A man in a white apron emerges from the derelict  
restaurant, hastily approaches and stops, head bowed,  
before the giant officer. He is handed the net of fish.

PRUSSIAN OFFICER (CONT'D)

Haben Sie diese Fisch auf einmal  
gebraten für mich, während sie noch am  
Leben sind! (Have these fish fried for  
me at once, while they are still  
alive!)

The white-aproned man nods, grabs the net of fish and  
hastily returns to whence he came, inside the  
restaurant.

The giant resumes puffing on his long clay pipe.

KABOOM! A final detonation from Mont-Valerien.

The giant looks at the still water. He smiles.

The other soldiers quietly stand and look at the still  
water, too. However, they do not smile.

The giant officer turns and walks towards the  
restaurant...

CROSS FADE TO:

EXT. RIVERBANK 1869 - DAY

The two friends, fishing.

FADE OUT.