

LA MAUPIN - (EXCERPT)

FADE IN:

1. INT. 1691. PARIS. THE HOME OF A DUKE. DUSK. 1.

We move through groups of wealthy party-goers, the sound of laughter and clinking glasses, plus a beautiful soprano voice soaring over the din. We eventually come to the source - it is **JULIE D'AUBIGNY** (21), a flame haired, magnetic, self-assured woman. She finishes singing to an appreciative audience, and **THE DUKE** (50s), ruddy-faced and half-cut, steps up and taps his glass with his signet ring. During his speech **THE DUKE'S WIFE** (50s) discreetly tries to realign his wig, which is slipping from his sweating head.

DUKE

Ladies and Gentlemen, thank you once again for joining us in celebrating the engagement of Jacques D'Harcourt, to my lovely daughter Béatrice Potâge!

A cordial smattering of applause. JULIE claps politely and looks over, catching sight of the beautiful soon-to-be bride. They lock eyes. **BÉATRICE** (20), innocent and insipid, blushes and looks away. She's intrigued.

DUKE (CONT'D)

I hope you are all enjoying the soirée! Please continue to eat, drink...

The men cheer.

DUKE (CONT'D)

...And be merry.

The music, by way of a harpsichord, resumes. JULIE slowly makes her way toward **BÉATRICE**, but is intercepted by her friend **D'ALBERT** (late-20s), debonair and playful.

D'ALBERT

Now Little Bird, I know that lascivious look all too well. What are you plotting?

JULIE widens her eyes and shakes her head in mock innocence.

D'ALBERT (CONT'D)

Don't do anything objectionable... Or at least try not to get caught.

She laughs and walks off.

D'ALBERT (CONT'D)
Gone. God help us all.

He takes a big swig of wine and greets a group of friends.

CUT TO:

2. INT. A GATHERED CROWD BY A LOCKED DOOR. AN HOUR LATER

A bewildered **JACQUES** (mid-20s) - pompous, twitchy, probably breast fed into his teens - is moving through the crowd.

He reaches D'ALBERT, who has been peering through the key-hole. On seeing JACQUES he leaps up and kicks the door surreptitiously.

D'ALBERT
(Overly loudly)
The library, Jacques? Nothing in there worth seeing!

A female orgasmic groan is heard from inside the room.

JACQUES
Get out of my way!

He pushes D'ALBERT aside and tries the door. It is locked. The DUKE arrives.

DUKE
What the hell is going on here?

Another groan is heard from inside the room.

JACQUES
Beátrice!

DUKE
How do you know?

JACQUES
Beátrice, come out this instant!

A **SERVANT BOY** arrives with a huge ring of keys. He fumbles, searching for the right one.

JACQUES (CONT'D)
Come out now, before I break down this fucking door!

Gasps from the crowd at his language. He glances behind him at two **SCOWLING WOMEN**. He clears his throat and leans closer to the door.

JACQUES (CONT'D)
Dearest one, you can read your
books anytime...

The SERVANT BOY has found the key. Shaking, he struggles to open the door.

JACQUES (CONT'D)
Give me that!

JACQUES opens the door.

CUT TO:

3. INT. THE LIBRARY.

The open door reveals BÉATRICE and JULIE against one of the bookshelves toward the back of the room. They are kissing passionately, and JULIE has her hand up BÉATRICE's skirts.

JACQUES (CONT'D)
What in the name of...
Unhand her!

JACQUES stumbles clumsily over to them. JULIE removes her hand from under BÉATRICE's skirts and, in one motion, offers the same hand to shake JACQUES'.

He refuses.

JULIE
Congratulations, Monsieur! Your
bride-to-be is quite lovely.

D'ALBERT sniggers into his glass as the DUKE tries, unsuccessfully, to usher everyone away. The throng is watching with horrified fascination. SCOWLING WOMAN 1 faints to the floor, providing a clearer view for SCOWLING WOMAN 2 behind.

BÉATRICE
Jacques, please! Forgive me! I
don't even understand how it
happened! One minute we were
discussing the music and the
next...

JACQUES
 You were being fucked between De
 Bergerac and the Molière? I'll have
 you quiet!

BÉATRICE straightens her skirts, sulking.

JACQUES (CONT'D)
 And as for *you*...

JULIE
 (Unmoved)
 Yes?

JACQUES
 (Flabbergasted and
 bumbling)
 You know, if you were a man - I
 would challenge you to a duel.

JULIE
 Don't let my being a *woman* stop
 you.

JACQUES
 I couldn't possibly...

JULIE
 I assure you, I am just as good at
 handling a sword as I am at
 handling...

Her gaze shifts over to BÉATRICE, who smiles and shrugs
 apologetically at JACQUES.

D'ALBERT hands his glass to SCOWLING WOMAN 2 and claps
 enthusiastically.

D'ALBERT
 Oh Bravo! Bravo little bird!

JACQUES draws a rapier from his cane, accidentally ripping a
 huge tear in a wall tapestry with the tip.

Beat.

He'll worry about that later.

JACQUES
 Well then, let's 'to it'.

JULIE glances around for something to arm herself with.

JULIE

D'Albert, be a pal and toss me that rapier above your head.

D'ALBERT looks up at the excessively adorned decorative sword hanging near the doorway.

D'ALBERT

Don't get me involved in your outrageous shenanigans!

He goes to reclaim his drink from SCOWLING WOMAN 2, but one stare from JULIE and he concedes.

D'ALBERT (CONT'D)

Oh, alright.

He unhooks the rapier and tosses it to JULIE, who deftly catches it and assumes her position.

JACQUES and JULIE begin circling each other.

JULIE

Are we going to start this at any point or...?

JACQUES

(Visibly nervous)
Ladies first.

JULIE

Quite.

She lunges forward and JACQUES stumbles backwards into a bookshelf - books dropping onto his head.

JULIE (CONT'D)

Come now Jacques, I'll use my left hand. My right is pretty tired anyway.

JACQUES charges at her, and with three swift and impressive moves she has stabbed him in the arm.

She goes to D'ALBERT at the doorway, as a few guests run to attend JACQUES' (minor) wound. He is weeping.

D'ALBERT

I warned you, Little Bird.

JULIE

You knew damn well I would see that as a challenge.

She takes his glass, drains it, and hands it back.

JULIE (CONT'D)
Lunch tomorrow? Good.

She exits.

SCOWLING WOMAN 1 lifts her head from the floor where she fainted.

SCOWLING WOMAN 1
Who was that?

D'ALBERT
That, you wretched old thing, is La
Maupin...

He steps over her and heads off for more wine.

CUT TO:

4.EXT. THE MANOR GROUNDS. A MINUTE LATER.

BÉATRICE stands at the door and sighs wistfully, watching her fleeting and mysterious lover as she walks away.

With red hair billowing, JULIE crosses the forecourt - sword trailing in hand, as the title 'LA MAUPIN' appears on screen.

DISSOLVE TO:

5. EXT.- DAY. A COURT TRAINING GROUND - 1679

A small rapier is trailing along the ground, dragged by a clumsy **PIERRE** (11), buckling under the weight of the sword. He has arrived for fencing training with **GASTON D'AUBIGNY** (45) - high-functioning alcoholic, his love of ale matched only by the love he has for his daughter.

Gaston's daughter, a **YOUNG JULIE** (9) - already measured and confident - watches the scene from behind a book. GASTON holds his own sword in one hand and an ale in the other.

GASTON
Late, Pierre!

PIERRE
Pardon Monsieur.

GASTON
Hurry, you're up next. You can duel
Serannes.

PIERRE turns to see the nimble and good natured teenage fencing assistant, **SERÁNNES** (14), idly removing his foot from the belly of his last opponent and helping him to his feet.

He turns to PIERRE.

SERÁNNES

En garde.

PIERRE shakily lifts his rapier and cumberously attempts to fight, while a bored looking SERÁNNES easily holds him off.

GASTON

It's your footwork Pierre! It's
always your footwork.

(Aside to Julie)

He's about as nimble as Madame
Nanette.

He nods in the direction of a robust woman, **MADAME NANETTE**
(40)

CUT AWAY

MADAME NANETTE bustles a line of well-dressed and regimented young girls across the courtyard.

BACK TO:

YOUNG JULIE sniggers and returns to her reading. PIERRE, persevering, executes a clumsy lunge and drops his sword.

SERÁNNES

(Frustrated)

Monsieur d'Aubigny, can I
please...!

GASTON

Yes Seránnes?

SERÁNNES

Nothing Monsieur, forgive me.

GASTON

Ah, the young Seránnes would like a worthy adversary. It takes patience to be an instructor, boy. Pierre, sit down. Julie will show you how it's done.

YOUNG JULIE

I'm reading, Papa.

GASTON

Fair enough.

(Beat)

You'd probably lose to Seránnes
anyway.

She slams her book shut, gets up and takes PIERRE's sword from off the ground. With rapier in one hand and her skirts bundled up in the other she faces Seránnes.

SERÁNNES

Julie.

YOUNG JULIE

Seránnes.

They start to fight but her skirts keep getting in the way. As she stumbles and trips, SERÁNNES grows ever more frustrated.

SERÁNNES

I wanted a worthy adversary and he
sends me a girl.

YOUNG JULIE stops and holds her rapier down. She looks around.

GASTON

Julie, never let your guard down!

YOUNG JULIE

One moment, Papa.

Her gaze settles on PIERRE, whose eyes dart about frantically. She marches up to him.

YOUNG JULIE (CONT'D)

Your breeches, Pierre.

PIERRE

What?

She holds the rapier to his stomach.

YOUNG JULIE

Your breeches. Give them to me.

PIERRE

I most certainly will not!

CLOSE ON
PIERRE'S FACE

We hear three quick strokes of the rapier, and the sound of PIERRE's trousers falling to his ankles. He looks down then back up, horrified.

CUT TO:

YOUNG JULIE is in the middle of an impressive duel with SERÁNNES. She is wearing the breeches.

CUT TO:

PIERRE is sat meekly, trying to pull hay over his lap to hide his modesty.

CUT TO:

SERÁNNES and YOUNG JULIE continue to duel. As they circle each other the young duo are replaced by their older selves.

DISSOLVE TO:

6. EXT. - DAY. A COURT TRAINING GROUND. 1686

JULIE is now 16 and SERÁNNES 21 (now lithe with a gentle charm). They are sparring.

JULIE

Touché!

SERÁNNES

Not bad.

CUT TO:

The **COMTE D'ARMAGNAC** (30), wealthy and influential, has appeared on the balcony above them. He is whispering to a **COURTIER** and looking down upon the training ground.

CUT TO:

SERÁNNES (CONT'D)

(Motioning with his head)

The Comte is sniffing around again.

JULIE

I'm not looking, you're trying to put me off.

SERÁNNES

I hear he wants to marry you.
Touché!

They pause for a brief second before JULIE resumes fighting with more aggression.

JULIE

Piss off.

(Beat)

And in any case, he is betrothed to Lady Beaufort.

SERANNES

Ah but you don't understand boys, little Julie. You underestimate their will.

JULIE holds her rapier at SERANNES' neck.

JULIE

On the contrary, Serannes. Boys often underestimate mine.

SERANNES

Touché.

CLOSE ON JULIE'S
FACE:

JULIE looks up toward the COMTE with intent.

FADE TO:

7. INT. A CHAPEL. DAY. COMTE D'ARMAGNAC'S WEDDING DAY. 1688.

The COMTE and **LADY BEAUFORT** (22) - a wealthy young debutante - are kissing at their wedding. Their heads part to reveal an 18 year-old JULIE watching proceedings with a wry smile.

The congregation cheer as the newlyweds walk back up the aisle. The COMTE pauses as he sees JULIE.

JULIE bows her head in reverence, lifting her eyes to meet his.

CUT TO:

8. INT. THE COMTE'S BEDROOM. COMTE D'ARMAGNAC'S WEDDING DAY. LATER THAT EVENING. 1688.

JULIE and the COMTE are having sex. JULIE is on top.

JULIE
Congratulations on your wedding,
Monsieur. I hope you'll be very
happy together.

FADE OUT.: