

The Flight of Icarus

Raymond Queneau

Translated by Barbara Wright



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To Barbara Wright

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Translator's Note

(Adapted from 'Letter to Andrée Bergens', published in the Queneau number of the French magazine, *L'Herne*.)

You ask me some very simple, very clear questions about translating Queneau, and I will try to answer them equally simply and clearly.

Why I embarked on translating Queneau, and what difficulties he presents to the translator.

I started translating Queneau by accident, because I was lucky enough to be asked to translate two of his short stories. Having done so, I was hooked.

All translation, without exception, is difficult, and I am never quite sure why people imagine that Queneau is more difficult to translate than anyone else. Is it because of his puns? But many other writers make puns, and they are rarely such amusing ones as Queneau's. You'll notice that I don't say such *good* ones – because Queneau is, of course, the master of the intentionally awful pun. The exercise of trying to match them in English is in itself amusing, and challenging, and on the occasions when one feels one has more or less succeeded, the satisfaction is great.

Or is Queneau considered difficult to translate because of his use of popular language? Pinget says of his own writing that his basic problem is to find a *tone*. It isn't until he has found the tone of the book he is hatching that he is able to go ahead and write it. The same applies to translation. The most important thing is to try and match your author's tone, and the difficulty is only one of degree when that tone includes neologisms, original syntax, recondite allusions, popular language, etc.

The problem for the translator with the latter is, of course, that he has to invent, or use a synthesis of, an equivalent popular language which the reader will accept as modern, but which is not that of

any particular English or American group – Cockney or Bronx, say. Queneau’s characters are French, they live in a French environment and they must stay there: to make them speak any specific English dialect would be to situate them where they don’t belong. If you read, as I did in a recent translation, one French peasant supposedly saying of another: “He would never set the Thames on fire”, you are immediately jerked out of context, and out of your illusion. The man in the street takes it that when he reads a book in translation he is simply reading an exact replica of the original in a language he happens to understand. The ideal translation sustains him in this illusion.

With *The Flight of Icarus*, of course, there is no question of a “modern” popular language. Here, the thing is to use a language that the modern reader can accept as being more or less that of Queneau’s 1895 characters. Not forgetting, as always, the occasional flagrant anachronism that Queneau puts in to amuse himself (and us), as well as for other artistic reasons. “How extremely Pirandellian,” says Morcol, at the very beginning of the book.

Given that finding the appropriate “tone” is the basic necessity for a translation, the difficulty must surely be less when the translator is in sympathy with the author. I hope I will not be thought presumptuous if I say that I feel that I am somewhere, somehow, on Queneau’s wavelength – but this is why, in translating him, I think less of the difficulties and more of the fun and the (spiritual) reward.

Another point on difficulties: it is much less difficult to translate a good writer than a bad one; it is much less difficult to translate an author who has something to say, and who says it, than one who never seems to be quite sure what he is trying to say. When one has translated what we in England irreverently call “French Art Critics’ Prose”, one can only, by comparison, consider Queneau simplicity itself. The translator is often, perhaps, the only person who really knows how a writer writes. He has to analyse everything *à fond*, strip all these pages of black marks on white paper down to their bare bones of semantics, overtones, undertones, euphony, rhythm, “internal rhyme” – everything – and then try and recover the skeleton with new flesh and blood, which nevertheless resembles the original so closely that it might be its twin brother. Now with Queneau, every word is there for a purpose – no other word could be substituted for it. Every phrase, every chapter he writes is there for a purpose and plays its precise, complicated part in

the whole. In translating Queneau, there is always a solution waiting somewhere to be found, and all the translator has to do (all he has to do!) – is to find it. With some other writers, though, often there *can* be no real solution: where is the satisfaction, when something has originally been sloppily thought out and sloppily expressed, in finding the exact (sloppy) equivalent?

In what way is Queneau different from other writers?

I seem to have more or less answered this question above. There is also the fact that “what he is writing” and “what he is writing about” are the same thing. It is just beginning to be fashionable for people to say that nothing serious can be written without humour. Well, Queneau has always known that, and he has always put it into practice. It may be because his writing is such an intricate mixture of so many apparently disparate elements that one can read him again and again – and again – perhaps each time unconsciously approaching the Quenellian kaleidoscope from a different angle, but each time discovering something new.

How do I go about translating Queneau?

Every translator presumably finds a way of translating that suits himself, but which would not necessarily be valid for anyone else. However: first, I ask the publisher to give me plenty of time. Then I read the book several times, possibly making notes, either of difficulties or of spontaneous solutions. Then, first draft, longhand, in pencil, in an exercise book, with a separate notebook for queries of all sorts, as there are always some points on which I have to consult encyclopedias or French friends. Often my French friends don't know the answers, and while this is very good for my ego, it obviously doesn't get me any further. There usually remain some irreducible points which defeat everyone and on which I have to consult Monsieur Queneau, though naturally I try to bother him as little as possible.

After I have gone over the first draft, I have it typed. Then I make further corrections on the typescript. With *Zazie*, I am amazed to remember that at this point I gave the typescript to three separate friends, all of whom knew Queneau's work well, and asked them for

their comments. I suppose that I had the effrontery to do this because it was the first Queneau novel that I had translated, and I was scared. Nowadays I simply don't have the cheek, because I realize how much work is involved. But to get such opinions *at this stage*, is invaluable. In theory, of course, this sort of advice is the job of the publisher's reader but, in my experience, publishers either have practically nothing to say, or else argue over trifles, and press me to change things that I am sure are right. I reckon to know exactly why I have done whatever I have done, but to remain open to suggestions for improvements from someone who is seeing the work with a fresh eye.

A final confession. Quite often, when I am looking for some reference in one of my Queneau translations, I find myself reading on, as if I had never seen it before, and I feel quite pleased. But one Christmas, with a French friend, we tried an experiment. We read each other passages from my translation of *Zazie*, and then tried to translate it back into French. All we got was a very, *very* pale imitation of the original.

– Barbara Wright

The Flight of Icarus

*“Icare,” dixit, “ubi es? Qua
te regione requiram?”**

Ovid

1

ON THE PAPERS – no sign of Icarus: between them – ditto.
He looks under the furniture, he opens the cupboards, he goes and looks in the privy: no Icarus.

So he takes his hat and stick, he's in the street, he hails a fly.

“Cabman, drive to number 47 Rue Bochart de Saron, and don't spare the horses!”

The fly flies, in no time at all they're at number 47 Rue Bochart de Saron. The fare gets out, says “wait for me”, dashes into the house, climbs up four floors, the door opens.

SURGET: My dear fellow! What a pleasant surprise!

HUBERT: None of your eburnean courtesies! After what you've done to me!

SURGET: I? What?

HUBERT: I have a bone to pick with you. Follow me.

(He leads SURGET into his own study, sits down in his place and rakes through the papers on the table.)

SURGET: Careful! Don't make hay of my forthcoming novel!

HUBERT: Come on! Admit it! Admit that he's here.

SURGET: He? Who's *he*?

HUBERT: *(reading)* Étienne was secretly in love with Victorine... blah blah blah... her hair was as yellow as ripe corn... blah blah blah... Georges, her fiancé, was a graduate of the École Polytechnique... blah blah blah...

SURGET: Nosey!

HUBERT: (*thoughtfully*) He doesn't seem to be here.

SURGET: He? Who's *he*?

HUBERT: You remember, the other day, I read you the first few pages of my new book...

SURGET: No reason to come and turn mine upside down!

HUBERT: You were good enough to think highly of my chief character, though I had only barely begun to outline him. You complimented me on him.

SURGET: Perhaps.

HUBERT: He was called Icarus.

SURGET: I remember.

HUBERT: Well – he's disappeared!

SURGET: He can't have! What a joke!

HUBERT: It's no laughing matter. It would be an irreparable loss for me if I couldn't find him.

SURGET: Yes, but you don't really think...

HUBERT: It isn't a question of thinking, but of knowing. Where is he?

SURGET: I've no idea.

HUBERT: Swear it!

SURGET: Yes, but you're not really going to suspect me of having stolen him from you, are you?

HUBERT: That was precisely my unspoken thought.

SURGET: But... zounds! You insult me; you offend me!

HUBERT: Swear!

SURGET: You can see for yourself... Étienne... Victorine... Georges... they've nothing in common with your Icarus. And then there are a Durand, a Duvel and a Dupont... and a concierge whom I call – and I must say, rather drolly, I think – Pipelet.

HUBERT: You could have given him a pseudonym.

SURGET: I detest that. I only recognize real names.

HUBERT: And what if he were to adopt one, without your knowledge?

SURGET: The identity of my characters is no mystery to me.

HUBERT: And what about your flat? He may be hiding somewhere. I'm going to have a look.

(He inspects the whole flat, opens the cupboards, looks under the furniture, goes and examines the privy.)

HUBERT: What luxury. A real English one, with water.

SURGET: Thanks to a small legacy my wife came into. It costs the earth but, as the saying goes, money has no smell.

HUBERT: And still no sign of Icarus.

SURGET: So far as Icarus is concerned, I swear...

HUBERT: What do you swear? And what are the oaths of a blackguard like you worth?

SURGET: On my word of honour... As the saying goes: silence is of silver and the word of honour.

HUBERT: Your word of honour isn't enough.

SURGET: Perhaps he's with one of our colleagues?

HUBERT: You don't really expect me to traipse around to all our colleagues, do you?

SURGET: Particularly as novelists are such liars.

HUBERT: How true. Except you, of course. Then you swear?

SURGET: On my honour, I swear that Icarus is not here – and I may add that I don't know where he is.

HUBERT: I believe you, this time, but that doesn't get me any further. What will I do? What will I do?

SURGET: If I may be allowed to make a suggestion – why don't you engage a detective?

HUBERT: Ridiculous idea. He won't understand a thing.

SURGET: Don't you know Morcol – the subtle shadowing specialist? The man who follows adulterous women and finds lost sheep. He has appeared in many novels under different names. A second Vidocq. A second Lecoq.* As the saying goes: there are times when it's ridiculous to fight against a shadow. He'll find your Icarus for you.

HUBERT: I've no great confidence.

(He goes to see him, all the same.)

(He stops at the door; an enamelled plate: Morcol, Discretion, 2nd floor.)

(A venomously nauseating corridor leads to a similar type of staircase. Lubert pulls a cord; a bell rings.)

MORCOL: Monsieur: I am at your disposition.

HUBERT: Mine is a very unusual case.

MORCOL: All my cases are unusual, Monsieur.

HUBERT: Mine is very particularly so.

MORCOL: That is for me to judge.

HUBERT: I hesitate... because it is such a strange business...

MORCOL: I hear the most widely varied stories.

HUBERT: Well then. Let me introduce myself: Hubert Lubert, a novelist by profession, by vocation, even, and I might add, of some renown. Since I am a novelist, then, I write novels. And since I write novels, I deal with characters. And now one of them has vanished. Literally. A novel I had just begun, about ten pages, fifteen at the most, and in which I had placed the highest hopes, and now the principal character, whom I had barely begun to outline, disappears. As I obviously cannot continue without him, I have come to ask you to find him for me.

MORCOL: (*dreamily*) How extremely Pirandellian.

HUBERT: Pirandellian?

MORCOL: An adjective derived from Pirandello. It's true, though; you couldn't understand.*

HUBERT: A client?

MORCOL: Ssh! Let's get back to the point. What did your fellow look like?

HUBERT: Difficult to say. I had only a rather sketchy knowledge of him. Ten or fifteen pages, you understand, I hadn't got any farther than the exposition...

MORCOL: The *Exposition Universelle*? The Universal Exhibition?

HUBERT: That is not foreign to my theme, but I was in fact referring to the exposition of my subject matter. The modern novel, as you are aware, does not begin by exhibiting the principal character, it leads up to him gradually...

MORCOL: All right, all right. Obviously you haven't got a photograph.

HUBERT: Obviously not.

MORCOL: Allow me to ask you a few questions. Age?

HUBERT: Young, as I saw him.

MORCOL: Can't you be more precise?

HUBERT: Let's say about twenty.

MORCOL: (*ironically*) You aren't one of those people who like to compete with the Registrar General?

HUBERT: That is indeed not my style.

MORCOL: Let's get on to his physical characteristics, then. Height?

HUBERT: One metre seventy-six centimetres precisely.

MORCOL: But you do compete with the metric system?

HUBERT: Ha ha.

MORCOL: Let us continue. Nose?

HUBERT: Straight, no doubt.

MORCOL: Hair?

HUBERT: Dark-brown, I think.

MORCOL: Special peculiarities?

HUBERT: I haven't given him any.

MORCOL: Residence?

HUBERT: I intended him to live in the Rue Bleue.

MORCOL: What number?

HUBERT: An odd number.

MORCOL: Which one? There are quite a lot.

HUBERT: I haven't decided yet.

MORCOL: None of this helps me very much.

HUBERT: As I told you, I'd only just begun him.

MORCOL: Has he any relations? Any friends?

HUBERT: I haven't thought about that yet, but I have a very pure fiancée
in mind for him.

MORCOL: Does he like her?

HUBERT: We haven't reached that point yet.

MORCOL: Have you perhaps had some disagreement?

HUBERT: I don't think so. I am preparing a melancholy existence for him which could hardly displease him because he knows no other. I want him to like moonlight, fairy roses, the exotic types of nostalgia, the languors of spring, fin-de-siècle neuroses – all things that I personally abhor, but which go down well in the present-day novel.

MORCOL: Perhaps he hates all that, too.

HUBERT: He doesn't know anything about it.

MORCOL: He may have some inkling...

HUBERT: You worry me.

MORCOL: I imagine that your bird has flown.

HUBERT: There's certainly a fly in the ointment somewhere. Don't you think it's more likely that he's been stolen?

MORCOL: I will start with the flight hypothesis, and with an advance of ten louis.

HUBERT: The deuce.

MORCOL: You are hardly making things easy for me. Your data are extremely vague...

HUBERT: I'm doing my best. Here – take these ten louis, and see that you find him soon. I won't be able to write a word until the mystery's solved and Icarus comes back.

MORCOL: I acknowledge receipt of the ten louis; I'll make a note of his name.

(He writes "Dicky Ruscombe" in his notebook while Hubert hands him his card. MORCOL is to let him know the moment he has the slightest lead. He takes his departure, while MORCOL reflects.)

MORCOL: Less than nothing, the clues this gentleman has given me, and I am supposed to do something with this less than nothing. I must work out what method to use in this particular case. I have several strings to my bow but the first that comes to hand is that of argument by analogy. Supposing that I were this Dicky Ruscombe who lives in the Rue Bleue and that I had taken to flight. I shouldn't go back to the Rue Bleue. Where would I go? As I shouldn't have much experience of life, being only some ten or fifteen pages old, I should naively go to a street with an analogous name. Not knowing Paris very well, I should find myself in the Rue Blanche. This is a line of argument which I consider impeccable.

(He goes out, dressed in his grey paletot and universal top hat.)

MORCOL: To the Rue Blanche!

2

AT THE GLOBE and Two Worlds Tavern in the Rue Blanche there was only one free table, which seemed to be waiting for Icarus. It was in fact waiting for him. Icarus sat down, a slow but sure waiter came and asked him what he wished to partake of. Icarus didn't know. He looked at the nearby tables; their occupants were drinking absinthe. He pointed to that milky liquid, believing it to be harmless. In the glass he was brought, the beverage appeared to be green; Icarus might well have thought this an optical illusion had he known what an optical illusion was; he was also brought a strangely shaped spoon, a lump of sugar and a carafe of water.

(ICARUS pours the water on the absinthe, which assumes the colour of milk. Exclamations from the neighbouring tables.)

FIRST DRINKER: Disgraceful! It's a massacre!

SECOND DRINKER: The fellow's never drunk absinthe in his life!

FIRST DRINKER: Vandalism! Pure vandalism!

SECOND DRINKER: Let's be indulgent; let's simply call it ignorance.

FIRST DRINKER: (*to ICARUS*) My young friend, have you never drunk absinthe before?

ICARUS: Never, Monsieur. I didn't even know that it was called absinthe.

SECOND DRINKER: Where've you come from, then?

ICARUS: Er...

FIRST DRINKER: What does it matter! My young friend, I'm going to teach you to prepare a glass of absinthe.

ICARUS: Thank you, Monsieur.

FIRST DRINKER: In the first place, do you know what absinthe is?

ICARUS: No, Monsieur.

FIRST DRINKER: She is our comforter, alas, our consolation, she is our only hope, she is our aim, our goal, and like an elixir – which she is, of course – the source of our elation, it is she who lends us strength to reach the end of the road.

SECOND DRINKER: What's more, she is an angel whose magnetic fingers hold the gifts of blessed sleep, of ecstatic dreams untold.

FIRST DRINKER: Kindly don't interrupt me, Monsieur. That is precisely what I was about to say and, I may add, with the poet: she is the glory of the gods, the mystic crock of gold.

ICARUS: I'd never dare drink that.

FIRST DRINKER: Not that, no! You've ruined it by slopping all that tap water over it in such barbaric fashion! Never! (*to the waiter*) Bring Monsieur another absinthe.

(The waiter brings another absinthe. ICARUS stretches his hand out towards his glass.)

FIRST DRINKER: Stop, idiot! *(ICARUS rapidly withdraws his hand.)* You don't drink it like that! I'll show you. You place the spoon on the glass in which the absinthe already reposes, and then you put a lump of sugar on the aforementioned spoon, whose singular shape will not have escaped your notice. Then, very slowly, you pour the water over the sugar lump, which will start to dissolve and, drop by drop a fecundating and sacchariferous rain will fall into the elixir and cause it to become cloudy. Once again you pour on a little water which beads, and beads, and so on, until the sugar has dissolved, but the elixir has not acquired too aqueous a consistency. Observe it, my young friend, watch the operation taking effect... an inconceivable alchemy...

ICARUS: Isn't it pretty?

(He stretches his hand out towards his glass.)

THIRD DRINKER: And now pour the contents on the floor.

THE TWO OTHERS: Blasphemy!

THIRD DRINKER: It's poison.

ENSEMBLE OF DRINKERS: Blasphemy!

CHORUS OF WAITERS: Blasphemy!

THE PROPRIETOR: Hell and damnation!

ICARUS: *(bewildered)* What am I to do?

ALL MINUS ONE: Drink it!

THIRD DRINKER: Don't drink it!

(Ter, quater, quinquies...)

(This continues until the door of the tavern opens and a young woman comes in.)

CHORUS OF DRINKERS (FIRST HALF): LN! You couldn't have come at a better time.

CHORUS OF DRINKERS (SECOND HALF): LN! She couldn't have come at a better time.

FIRST HALF OF THE CHORUS: You will be the judge!

SECOND HALF: You will be the arbiter!

FIRST HALF: You will be our Solomon!

SECOND HALF: You will be our Balqis!*

LN: What's going on?

THIRD DRINKER: I don't see why this whore—

LN: That's what I am, and I'm proud of it. Whore I am and whore I remain. But why a judge, an arbiter, a Solomon?

FIRST DRINKER: Come over here. Look at this young man.

LN: Isn't he handsome!

SECOND DRINKER: Should he drink his absinthe?

THIRD DRINKER: Or shouldn't he? But I don't see why this whore—

ICARUS: Mademoiselle...

LN: Monsieur.

ICARUS: I will do what you tell me to do, Mademoiselle.

THIRD DRINKER: So young, and already a lost soul... Absinthism and grisette...

(He disappears abruptly.)

LN: *(Sitting down at the table of one of the other customers and indicating ICARUS)* Who is he?

FIRST DRINKER: I don't know him, and you can see he's not an habitué. Just a beginner. He didn't even know how to prepare his absinthe...

CHORUS OF DRINKERS: Well! Will he drink it or won't he?

LN: *(to ICARUS)* Drink it, young man!

(ICARUS wets his lips and makes a grimace.)

FIRST DRINKER: Nothing seek, nothing find. Try again.

SECOND DRINKER: Go on, try again.

ICARUS: *(putting down his glass)* I will only try it again if Mademoiselle tells me to.

LN: Mademoiselle does tell you to. Have another sip.

(ICARUS drinks a mouthful. He smiles politely, and then imbibes another mouthful.)

SECOND DRINKER: Well, what do you think of it?

ICARUS: *(after a third, a fourth, a fifth mouthful, pensively)* How far away my nurse's milk seems... how the heavenly bodies are increasing and multiplying... how the night fades into the pale nebulae. It is already blue, the opalescent sea is hushed... how far away I seem from all that... in the vicinity of the star called Absinthe...

FIRST DRINKER: Drunk already!

LN: (*moving over to ICARUS's table*) Well, pet, is it good?

ICARUS: I don't know whether it's good or not, but I do wonder what people would say if they saw me under the influence of this drink.

LN: But they do see you. We all do. And it doesn't particularly surprise us.

ICARUS: Just as well.

LN: It's odd, but you make me feel shy.

ICARUS: I'm certainly shyer than you, Mademoiselle. I'm not used to the world – the great world – and this is the first time I've been out on my own.

LN: Were you at boarding school?

ICARUS: My goodness no.

LN: In prison?

ICARUS: Not that, either.

LN: Tell all.

ICARUS: The stove is unlit, for spring is here. The ink flows on the white paper in shallow, fertile rivulets from which friends, relations and enemies are born, as well as indoor plants, in the corners of apartments furnished with rep and velvet, mahogany and Córdoba leather. The quill conducts a little world of objects and names towards a destiny which escapes me. I am standing in the middle of all this, near an armchair, and waiting. Every so often, I move. I watch the housekeeper bring in the mocha coffee or the English tea. Madame de Champvaux calls at five o'clock; I have never seen her, he shuts me in at this moment, I hear them going into the adjoining

bedroom and then I hear no more. The apartment is extremely soundproof. At other times, various gentlemen come and chat; their cigars, with lengthening ash and chewed-up ends, burn down in the ashtrays. I still can't really properly see the people round me... a girl, perhaps... her father... The winter's over, spring is here...

FIRST DRINKER: All of which is of no great interest.

ICARUS: That's exactly what I think. My humble self, as I am well aware, is not of the slightest interest.

LN: Nonsense, pet, nonsense. You don't want to take any notice of the general opinion of every lo—

FIRST DRINKER: Me? Low!

LN: (*imperturbably*)... of every locality you happen to be in.

FIRST DRINKER: Ha ha! Well, I'll stand another round.

SECOND DRINKER: Me too.

LN: Be reasonable. You'll make the young man ill.

ICARUS: But I'm quite all right; my head feels hot and my liver feels cold, which at the moment isn't at all unpleasant.

FIRST DRINKER: You see! Waiter, another round!

ICARUS: I don't know how to thank you.

LN: You can thank him later.

SECOND DRINKER: He must be able to appreciate the third round.

LN: (*to ICARUS*) Will you be able to hold out until then?

ICARUS: I'm floating a little.

(The third round is brought.)

FIRST DRINKER: (*observing ICARUS preparing his absinthe*) Not too bad.
He's improving.

SECOND DRINKER: He still pours the water rather too quickly.

LN: You're always criticizing! (*to ICARUS*) A very good beginning, pet.

MORCOL: (*entering*) (*to MORCOL*) This is the third tavern in the Rue Blanche that I have visited. Which of these customers could possibly be Dicky Ruscombe? (*to the waiter*) Waiter, have you by any chance seen a young man one metre seventy-six tall, with dark-brown hair, a straight nose...

WAITER: Have a look over there.

MORCOL: There does seem to be some resemblance... but he's probably more like one metre seventy-seven. Never mind, let's go and see, anyway.

(He goes over to ICARUS'S table.)

MORCOL: Monsieur, excuse me if I excuse myself, but I have a message for Monsieur Dicky Ruscombe. You are not, by any chance, he?

ICARUS: No, Monsieur. Thus am I nowise named.

MORCOL: Are you quite sure?

ICARUS: Even though I am beginning to take wing under the influence of a strong drink, I can be quite categorical that that is not my name.

MORCOL: I not only have a message for Monsieur Dicky Ruscombe, but also a considerable sum of money for him. A very considerable sum. Are you quite sure that you do not bear that name?

ICARUS: Absolutely certain.

MORCOL: In that case, Monsieur, I will withdraw.

(In the street)

MORCOL: The lure of easy money: an infallible trap. So he wasn't Dicky Ruscombe, then. And yet he must have been one metre seventy-seven. Let us continue to pursue our inquiries from tavern to tavern.

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LN: You were quite right to deny it. It was a trap.

ICARUS: The fact is that my name isn't Ruscombe.

LN: And what *is* your name?

ICARUS: I'm not very sure any more... I've stopped soaring, I'm swimming, now... in deep water. And you, Mademoiselle... Hélène?

LN: No, LN in two letters. I am of cruciverbal origin.

ICARUS: Cruciverbal?

LN: It's true, you couldn't understand. Aren't you hungry?

ICARUS: Indeed I am, since this thing I'm drinking is called an aperitif.

LN: Then we'll go and have dinner. Are you going to invite me?

ICARUS: I'll have to see how much money I have, first.

WAITER: And, even before that, pay for your drinks.

ICARUS: *(spreads out some small change on the table)* Here you are.

(WAITER picks up seventy-five centimes, under LN'S watchful eye.)

LN: (*stands up. To the people at the nearby tables*) Messieurs.

FIRST DRINKER: I hope you are not dissatisfied with your first experience?

ICARUS: Delighted, but all this disturbs me a little, and I have a feeling that I'm eluding the forces of gravitation. Messieurs...

(*He bows to them and goes out, followed by LN.*)

(*In the street*)

ICARUS: And now, how are we going to manage to eat?

LN: We'll go to a little place I know where you can eat for one franc fifty. Don't worry. I won't ruin you.

ICARUS: Come on, then. I'd like another absinthe.

LN: laughs.

(*In the restaurant*)

WAITER (a different one): What a pleasure! Please sit down.

(*ICARUS sits down, so does LN, next to him. She picks up the menu with determination.*)

(*They eat.*)

(*ICARUS pays and they leave.*)

(*Her room*)

LN: How d'you like my place?

ICARUS: Nice. I can't think of any other word: nice.