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Contempt

By Alberto Moravia

It's based on the novel by Alberto Moravia.
It features Brigitte Bardot and Michel Piccoli.
Jack Palance and Giorgia Moll, too.
And Fritz Lang.
Raoul Coutard did the photography.
Georges Delerue wrote the score.
The sound was recorded by William Sivel.
Agnes Guillemot did the editing.
Philippe Dussart and Carlo Lastricati were unit managers.
It's a film by Jean-Luc Godard.
It was shot in CinemaScope and printed in color by GTC Labs.
Georges de Beauregard and Carlo Ponti produced it
for Rome-Paris Films, Films Concordia and Compagnia Cinematografica
Champion.
"The cinema," said Andre Bazin, "substitutes for our gaze
a world more in harmony with our desires. "
Contempt is a story of that world.
I don't know.
Maybe I'll go to Mom's. I don't know what I'll do later.
Come pick me up if you want.
Around 4 o'clock.
At Cinecitta.
I have to see that American.
Maybe I will.
See my feet in the mirror?
Think they're pretty?
Very.
You like my ankles?
And my knees, too?
I really like your knees.
And my thighs?
Your thighs, too.
See my behind in the mirror?
Do you think I have a cute ass?
Really.
Shall I get on my knees?
No need to.
And my breasts. You like them?
Yes, tremendously.
Gently, Paul. Not so hard.
Sorry.
Which do you like better,
my breasts,
or my nipples?

I don't know. I like them the same.
You like my shoulders?
I don't think they're round enough.
And my arms?
And my face?
Your face, too.
All of it?
My mouth, my eyes, my nose, my ears?
Yes, everything.
Then you love me totally.
I love you totally, tenderly, tragically.
Me too, Paul.
- Hello. How are you? - Fine, thanks.
Say, what's going on here? The place is empty!
Jerry fired nearly everybody.
Italian cinema is in trouble.
- Where is he? - Over there.
Where?
It's the end of cinema.
I don't think cinema will ever die.
- It's doing good business in N.Y. - Fair to middling.
Your film with Fritz Lang?
He's not working out.
Producers never know what they want.
In '33, Goebbels asked Lang to head the German film industry.
That very night, Lang left Germany.
That's Minerva, isn't it?
She's Ulysses' protector.
And that's Neptune, his mortal enemy.
Say, that's Homer.
That's art, but will the public understand?
Who's that?
Penelope.
"O my brothers, who braved 1 00,000 perils
to reach the west,
choose not to deny experience
of the unpeopled world.
Think of the seed of your creation.
You were not born to live as brutes,
but to follow virtue and knowledge."
Know it?
Sure, it's very famous. Dante.
"Night then saw all the stars.
We were filled with gladness, which soon turned to tears

until the sea closed in upon us."
I'm PaulJaval. Mr. Prokosch told you...
I'm perfectly aware.
It looks swell. I really like CinemaScope.
It wasn't made for people.
It's only good for snakes and funerals.
What's the matter, Miss Vanini? Is it about the script?
Oh, he's says it's not the same on screen as on paper.
My wife's meeting me here. I'll go see.
The Italians used to say "revolver"
instead of "checkbook."
"But Man, when he must,
Can stand fearless and alone before God
His candor is his shield
He needs neither arms nor wile
Until such time as God's absence helps him."
Fine.
That's Holderlin, isn't it?
"The Poet's Vocation."
The final line is obscure. Holderlin originally wrote...
"So long as God is not absent."
And then...
"So long as God is close to us."
Yes. The way the last lines are written,
when you've read the other two,
is no longer about God's presence.
It's God's absence that reassures Man.
Strange, but true.
How do you say "strange" in Italian?
Meet Mr. Prokosch. Camille, my wife.
I'd like you to meet my wife, Camille.
He's the one who did that western with Dietrich.
It was terrific!
I prefer M.
Your M?
We just saw it on TV. I really liked it.
Thank you. That's kind of you.
I love the scene
when Ferrer leans on the scale.
Thank you. When I finish The Odyssey...
Me?
I'll phone you.
We'll go if you want.
Sit down, ma'am.

I'll meet you there.
I'll grab a taxi.
Let him go on ahead. We can both take a cab.
Make up your mind.
What's the address?
What did he say?
I know as much English as you do.
We've been waiting a half hour. What kept you?
Nothing. I had an accident...
I was in the cab, and just at the corner...
the "corner" of the street...
Two cars, you know...
The entire fender was torn off.
The two drivers started trading insults...
So I found another cab. That's why...
That's why, what?
What? Why I got here late.
I had to walk God knows how long...
From S. Angelo to Piazza Venezia to find a cab.
Anyway, I don't give a damn. I'm not interested in your story.
Still, it took me 20 minutes.
You don't believe me. - We'll discuss it later.
I'm going for a walk.
All right.
Why don't you say something?
Friday we shoot in Capri. Come with us.
Answer her. Why don't you speak up?
What were you doing before I arrived?
Nothing special.
Why? Did he come on to you?
- Why ask me that? - Just because.
I'll go wash my hands.
- Where can I wash? - Upstairs, right.
What's the matter? You look down.
Nothing.
Have you been crying?
Your boss is tough.
He is.
Known him long?
What did he do before movies?
I don't want to talk about it.
I was just asking.
It's a drag to be so cute and so sad.
Haven't you anything more amusing to say?

More amusing...

Ajoke.

Which one?

Sure, the one about Rama Krishna and his disciple.

Rama Krishna is a Hindu sage.

He has this disciple

who doesn't believe in his master's teachings.

He decides to study on his own.

So he goes away.

After 15 years, he comes back and says: "I've found it!"

Found what?

He tells the sage: "I'll show you."

He takes him to the riverbank.

The disciple walks back and forth across the water.

And he says:

Now I know!"

So Rama Krishna replies:

"You fool! I did that 10 years ago with a rupee and a rowboat!"

Feel better now?

That's good.

What?

Call that washing your hands?

As you can see.

I was just telling her the joke...

I believe you already.

You're being an idiot.

Where can I pee?

Tell them we're leaving.

It's my husband who decides.

Like in the United Artists days.

He's crazy!

See that? He kicked her!

You change your mind fast. Monday you thought he was terrific.

Now I think he's a jerk.

I have a right to change my mind.

What happened in the past hour?

Nothing.

If you're happy, so am I.

Rio Bravo is playing in town.

So is Nicholas Ray's Bigger Than Life.

I'm not interested.

- I wrote it. - I know.

I phoned your mom's at lunchtime. There was no answer.

We ate here. I didn't feel like going out.
I prefer it here.
It's better than a hotel.
See? I was right.
What are they paying for the script?
\$1 0,000. Six million lire.
We can finish paying off the flat. Isn't that great?
Yes, it's great.
When will you call your friend about the curtains?
I've about had it!
Once he's back from Spain.
Roberto said he'd be back Friday.
Red velvet. It's that or nothing.
Okay.
Set the table while I take a bath?
I wanted to take a bath, too.
You go first. I can do some work.
No, I'll go later, while it's cooking.
Is there any faggiolini left?
Don't like it? That's tough.
I can set the table.
I was just doing it.
I bought something today.
You'll tell me what you think.
What thing?
What thing?
Don't look yet.
You want to go to Capri?
What?
You want us to go to Capri?
I won't say no, but I won't say yes either.
It would be a vacation.
Besides, he didn't invite me.
What?
He invited you.
Not me.
Where'd we put the mirror?
Not at all. We were both invited.
Look.
Doesn't it suit me?
No, I prefer you as a blonde.
And I prefer you without a hat and cigar.
It's just to look like Dean Martin in Some Came Running.
- What a laugh! - What is?

You may want to look like Dean Martin,
but it's more like Martin's Ass.

Who's that?

Never read the adventures of Martin's Ass?

One day he goes to Baghdad to buy a flying carpet.

He finds this really pretty one,
so he sits on it, but it doesn't fly.

The merchant says: "Not surprising."

Are you listening?

"Not surprising.

If you want it to fly, you mustn't think of an ass."

So Martin says:

But automatically he thinks of one, so the carpet doesn't fly.

What's that got to do with me?

Exactly what I was saying.

Well, I don't get it.

That's enough. Are you finished?

No need to change the water. I didn't use soap.

You've been acting weird today. What's wrong?

Nothing at all.

I knew you'd say that.

There is something. Is it that girl?

It's nothing, I tell you. I simply said you were an ass.

Not the same sound all over.

Why don't you want us to go to Capri?

Because you're an ass.

You frighten me, Paul.

It's not the first time.

Why didn't you answer instead of standing there?

Why'd I marry a 28-year-old typist?

It's true...

I'm sorry.

So am I.

Go to Capri if you want. I don't feel like it.

Besides, I don't like that Jeremy Prokosch. I told you.

Why? He do something to you?

Not a thing.

Why the thoughtful air?

Maybe because I'm thinking of something.

That surprise you?

No. Why?

An idea.

Come with me. I don't want to go alone.

You've been acting funny since we met that guy.
No, I'm not funny.
I wonder why you say that.
Just because.
We were fine this morning.
And now we're fighting over nothing.
What's going on, sweetie?
I want to have fun. Nothing's going on, Paul.
I'm afraid I'll get bored there.
I'm not going.
I'm not going.
Seen the house being built across the way?
It's a real horror.
If you love me, just be quiet.
A husband has the right to know why his wife's sulking.
I'm sure it's that girl.
Drop dead!
No, Camille isn't here.
I thought you'd lunched out and gone shopping.
She just walked in the door! Your mom.
I'll call you tomorrow.
You're out of your mind, old man!
Why tell Mom I was out?
I don't know why.
I know why.
To find out if we really went out to lunch
and if I wasn't lying earlier.
That's it.
Try that again and I'll divorce you.
Get up!
What are you doing?
I'm sleeping on the couch.
When, tonight?
Every night, starting tonight.
Don't be angry.
I just can't sleep with the window open.
We'll close the window.
You always say you can't breathe. No, we'll sleep apart.
Thousands of couples do it.
They still get along fine.
What did I do wrong? Tell me.
I'm sorry I said you were out. Is that it? Forgive me.
Let me by.
Is that why you're in a bad mood?

Yes, but I'm not anymore.
I'll be just fine here.
I really wonder what I did.
You're so mean all of a sudden!
Me?
I'm the same as always.
You're the one who's changed.
Ever since you've been with movie people.
You used to write crime novels.
We didn't have much money,
but everything was fine.
What's this? - Give me that.
"Partito Comunista Italiano. "
You never said you joined.
That was two months ago in Paris.
Give me that. - Let go! You'll bruise me.
- Don't talk to me like that! - And don't you either!
I'm working for you. This place is for you, not just for me!
Please, Paul, I don't want to argue.
I don't want to go to Capri, either.
Why not? Don't be stupid. Go.
Paul, come here.
What?
No, I've lost interest.
Tell Prokosch when he calls. I won't talk to him.
Come here.
Why won't you do the script now?
I'd have done it out of love for you.
But you don't love me anymore.
That's news!
"I hosted a skin contest among three beauties.
They asked me to be the judge.
They showed me their dazzling nudity.
The first had a gently curving back
with round dimples.
The second parted her legs, her snow-white skin
grew cherry-red, not crimson.
The third was as still as a quiet sea.
Her delicate skin rippled gently,
shivering involuntarily."
We'll just mortgage the flat when we run out of money.
Something makes you think I've stopped loving you?
Yes.
What?

Everything.

But what, for instance?

First tell me if it's true.

No, you tell me first.

What makes me think you've stopped loving me?

The way you've begun to talk to me.

You weren't like that this morning.

Or yesterday.

It's the way you look at me, too.

"The problem, in my opinion,
is in our conception of the world.

A positive view or a negative one.

Greek tragedy was negative

in that it made Man a victim of Fate,
as embodied by the Gods,

who abandoned him to a hopeless destiny."

Why'd you say it was the open window?

There's something else.

I think so.

"Man can rebel against things that are bad, false.

We must rebel when we're trapped by circumstances, conventions.

But I don't think murder is a solution.

Crimes of passion serve no purpose.

I love a woman, she cheats on me, I kill her.

What's left for me?

I lost the one I love, since she's dead.

If I kill her lover, she hates me, and I still lose her.

Killing is never a solution."

Look, Camille...

I'm telling you, I give you my word,

I can't sleep with the window open.

I need peace and quiet and darkness.

I swear it's true.

And you move around too much. You keep waking me.

I want to sleep alone from now on.

You don't want to make love?

Listen to the jerk.

Is that a mocking smile or a tender smile?

A tender smile.

So, answer me!

If it were true, I'd tell you.

A woman can always find an excuse not to make love.

But you're really a jerk.

Vulgar language doesn't suit you.

It doesn't suit me?

Listen to this...

Asshole.

Cunt.

Shit.

Christ almighty.

Craphole.

Son of a bitch.

Goddamn.

So,

still think it doesn't suit me?

Why don't you want to make love anymore?

All right.

Let's do it, but fast.

I'd been thinking Camille could leave me.

I thought of it as a possible disaster.

Now the disaster had happened.

We used to live in a cloud of unawareness,
in delicious complicity.

Things happened with sudden, wild, enchanted recklessness.

I'd end up in Paul's arms, hardly aware of what had happened.

This recklessness was now absent in Camille, and thus in me.

Could I now, prey to my excited senses, observe her coldly,
as she could undoubtedly observe me?

I deliberately made that remark
with a secret feeling of revenge.

She seemed aware that a lie could settle things.

For a while, at least.

She was clearly tempted to lie.

But on second thought, she decided not to.

Paul hurt me so much.

It was my turn now, by referring to what I'd seen,
without really being specific.

At heart, I was wrong.

She wasn't unfaithful, or she only seemed to be.

The truth remained to be proven, despite appearances.

I've noticed that the more we doubt,
the more we cling to a false lucidity,
in the hope of rationalizing what feelings have made murky.

I thought Camille could leave me.

I thought of it as a possible disaster.

Now the disaster had happened.

We used to live in a cloud of unawareness,
in delicious complicity.

Don't be like that.
Don't be like what?
You know very well.
It's your fault!
You seem to be searching my expression to decide...
the appropriate attitude to take with me.
"The private plane awaited in the blue sky.
Rex remembered something about Paula...
Her harmonious features...
Her harmonious features, now indecisive, seemed contorted now.
Rex knew this trait of hers,
for it seemed that whenever Paula...
Whenever Paula had to make a decision...
that went against her nature..."
What's got into you, Paul?
I love you exactly as before.
What would you do if I stopped loving you?
I already told you.
I forgot what you said.
I wouldn't do the script and we'd sell the flat.
But I love you.
I find this all so idiotic.
When Prokosch calls, tell him you'll go to Capri.
What about you?
I love you. Don't make me repeat it.
I want to keep the flat.
If you don't want to do the script, don't do it.
If you think I've stopped loving you, you're wrong.
Kiss me.
We were just talking about you.
About your movie.
Yes, The Odyssey.
About that guy who travels.
In Capri,
can we go swimming?
I don't know.
Here's Paul. I'll put him on.
We eating out?
I don't feel like going down for groceries.
Fine.
We're supposed to meet Prokosch and Lang at a movie theater.
They want to see a singer in the stage show.
We can eat after.
It'll be late if there's a movie first.

It might give me some ideas.

Why not look for ideas in your head, instead of stealing them?

What's got into you?

Let's get going!

- I knew it. - What?

Since I said yes to Prokosch, so long tenderness!

Right, no more caresses.

What was the phone call about?

- Our going to Capri. - What did you say?

That it was up to you.

Are you nuts?

You know that it's up to you, not me!

Then come to Capri.

Is there something between you and Prokosch?

You're pathetic.

I have to talk to you.

What, about the movies?

Listen, I have to talk to you.

All right, I'm listening.

I have

to talk to you.

Earlier, before the phone rang,

I said I didn't want to take this job

if I couldn't be sure of your love.

You said you loved me

and that I should take it.

I'm sure you lied.

Why? I don't know.

Out of pity, self-interest...

What self-interest?

To hold on to this flat.

How can you know what I think?

In fact, I couldn't care less.

Sell the flat, see if I care.

Earlier you said it was better than a hotel.

Not at all.

I said that to make you happy.

That's beside the point.

I want to know why you lied.

Who said I lied? Stop it!

You did.

I can tell you've stopped loving me.

What's the use of knowing the truth?

See? You admit I'm right.

I don't admit a thing. Leave me alone.
It's true. I don't love you anymore.
There's nothing to explain. I don't love you.
Why?
Yesterday you still loved me.
Yes, very much.
Now it's over.
There must be a reason.
There must be.
What is it?
I don't know.
All I know is I don't love you anymore.
Since we were at Prokosch's?
When you saw me pat Francesca Vanini's behind?
Let's say it was that.
Now it's over. Let's not talk about it.
Something happened today.
It changed your mind about me,
hence, your love for me.
You're crazy, but you're smart.
Then it's true.
I didn't say that.
I said you're bright.
Was it something I said or did today that you took the wrong way?
Maybe.
Don't talk to me that way! I forbid you!
I despise you!
That's really what I feel for you.
That's why the love's gone. I despise you.
And you disgust me when you touch me.
You're going too far.
Forget what I said, Paul. Act as though nothing happened.
You okay?
They say Ulysses came home to Penelope,
but maybe Ulysses had been fed up with Penelope.
So he went off to the Trojan war,
and since he didn't feel like going home,
he kept traveling as long as he could.
Do you think it was an idea of his or...?
- Why do you despise me? - Leave me alone!
Coming to Capri with us, Mr. Lang?
"Each morning, to earn my bread
I go to the market where lies are sold
and, hopeful, I get in line with the other sellers."

- What's that? - Hollywood.
From a ballad by poor B.B.
Bertolt Brecht?
Homer's world is a real world.
And the poet belonged to a civilization
that grew in harmony, not in opposition,
with nature.
And the beauty of The Odyssey
lies precisely in this belief
in reality as it is.
Thus in reality as it appears objectively.
Exactly,
and in a form that cannot be broken down,
and is what it is.
Take it or leave it.
Because I have nothing to say.
I don't know if I'll go to Capri. Where would we stay?
Wherever he likes.
Producers are something I can easily do without.
Don't come if you don't want to. I'm not forcing you.
It's not you that's forcing me.
It's life.
What are you doing?
What are you doing?
Looking.
Don't stay by yourself. Join us.
What were you talking about?
The Odyssey.
I agree with Prokosch's theory.
What theory's that?
That Ulysses loves his wife, but she doesn't love him.
You really think that?
I'm sure you don't.
Please, you're in frame.
Places, everyone!
Will they undress?
Of course.
Aren't movies great!
You see women in dresses,
in movies, you see their ass!
Not at all. Go on, Camille.
Go on.
I don't mind, go on.
I'll walk back with Mr. Lang to discuss The Odyssey.

The girls are in the water.
It won't take long. First a scene in which we see
the Council of the Gods discussing man's fate.
Aproducer can be a friend to a director.
But Prokosch isn't a real producer. He's a dictator.
I think it's stupid to change the character of Ulysses.
He's not a modern-day neurotic,
but a simple, clever and robust man.
I find the idea interesting.
It takes Ulysses 10 years to return home
because he doesn't want to. It's logical.
It's logical,
and the illogical borrows from the logical.
Your Corneille said it in his preface to Surena.
Ulysses doesn't rush home to Ithaca
because he was unhappy with Penelope,
even before he went off.
Had he been happy, he'd have stayed home.
He used the Trojan war to get away from his wife.
He killed her suitors, didn't he?
That can be justified...
by the fact that Ulysses had told Penelope
to give in and accept the gifts.
He didn't see the suitors as serious threats.
He didn't throw them out, to avoid a scandal.
Knowing Penelope to be faithful,
he told her to be nice to the suitors.
I think that's when Penelope,
who at heart is a simple woman,
began to despise him.
She stopped loving Ulysses because of his conduct
and she told him so.
Ulysses then realized too late he'd lost Penelope's love
because he'd been overly cautious.
The only way to win her back
was to murder the suitors.
Death is no resolution.
I found this on the boat.
Children mustn't play with firearms.
I was there, outside.
Nothing.
I'm a playwright.
I'm not a screenwriter.
Even if it's a fine script... I'm being frank,

I'd do it only for the money!
That's why I'm in a bad mood.
We all have an ideal. Mine's writing plays. I can't. Why?
In today's world, we have to accept what others want.
Why does money matter so much in what we do,
in what we are, in what we become?
Even in our relationships with those we love.
Mr. Prokosch already said it: You're wrong.
You aspire to a world like Homer's.
You want it to exist, but unfortunately it doesn't.
Why not? It does!
You may be right,
but when it comes to making movies, dreams aren't enough.
When do we eat?
In an hour.
I'm going for a walk.
Mr. Prokosch wants to speak with you.
Is that an order or a request?
A request.
One must suffer.
That's for sure.
It's me, Paul.
I've been watching you as if I were seeing you for the first time.
Mind if I stay?
Stay if you like.
Why didn't you speak up earlier?
I don't get you! You always said you loved that script.
Now you tell the producer it's for the money,
that your ideal's the theater.
He's no fool. Next time, he'll think twice before asking you.
How can you not understand something so simple?
I bet you'll do it anyway.
You'll see.
I know you.
I know you.
If I do, it'll be for you. To pay for the flat.
I'll let you decide whether I do the script or not.
If you say no, we'll leave.
Very clever!
Not at all. Why?
If you regret it later, you can blame it on me.
Not at all! I'm asking you to decide.
You really want me to tell you what to do?
Yes.

Then do the script!
You signed a contract and you bore me.
I saw him kiss you earlier.
I know you did.
Why don't you love me anymore?
That's life.
Why do you despise me?
I'll never tell you, even if I were dying.
- Tell me or I'll hurt you. - Why hurt me on top of it?
I have to know why you despise me.
This is crazy! How can you expect me to accept it?
We need the money to pay for the flat.
I quit my typing job.
I can't accept that after what happened.
So, of course, you despise me.
You see us kiss but you're ready to change your mind anyway.
I turned the job down for you. So you'd change your mind about me.
Don't touch me. I don't love you anymore.
There's no way I'll ever love you again.
Even if I turn it down, you'll despise me?
- Yes, I will. - Why?
Tell me why! There must be a reason.
You're the reason.
What do you mean, me?
I don't know. You're not a man.
Anyhow, it's too late.
I've changed my mind about you.
I know why you despise me.
When I took the taxi the other day,
you thought I let you go with him on purpose.
Same thing on the boat earlier. Don't be stupid!
I have faults, but that's not one.
I'll never forgive you.
I loved you so much.
Now it's impossible.
I hate you because you're incapable of moving me.
I can! You're on the verge of tears.
We're leaving! We'll pack up and go.
I'm staying. Go if you like.
Come on, Camille!
Then I'm staying, too.
But Prokosch will throw us out.
- Don't start! - I will!
Dear Paul,

I found your revolver and took the bullets out.
If you won't leave, I will.
Since Prokosch has to return to Rome,
I'm going with him.
Then I'll probably move into a hotel alone.
Take care. Farewell.
Camille.
Typist.
Me?
Typist.
What do you think...
of me?
Get into your Alfa, Romeo. We'll see about that later.

TAKE CARE:

FAREWELL:

Good-bye, then.
Mr. Lang, I've come to say good-bye.
Good-bye. What will you do?
Go back to Rome, finish my play.
And you?
I'll finish the film. Always finish what you start.
What shot are you doing?
Ulysses' gaze when he first sees his homeland again.
Ithaca.
Good-bye, Mr. Lang.
I hope we'll meet again.
We're ready, Mr. Lang.
Quiet on the set!