LES LIAISONS DANGEREUSES
BY
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Based on the novel by
Pierre-Ambroise-Francois
Choderlos De Laclos

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REV. FINAL DRAFT

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1 CAPTION ON BLACK SCREEN

If the adventures here portrayed have any basis whatsoever in truth, I feel sure that they can only have occurred in some other place and at some other time.

- Choderlos de Laclos.

2 INT. MADAME DE MERTEUIL'S DRESSING-ROOM  DAY

The gilt frame around the mirror on the MARQUISE DE MERTEUIL's dressing-table encloses the reflection of her beautiful face. For a moment she examines herself critically, but not without satisfaction. Then she begins to apply her make-up.

ANOTHER ANGLE shows the whole large room, the early afternoon light filtering through gauze curtains. MERTEUIL's CHAMBERMAID stands behind her, polishing her shoulders with crushed mother-of-pearl. Three or four other female SERVANTS wait, disposed around the room. It's midsummer in Paris in 1788.

3 INT. VICOMTE DE VALMONT'S BEDROOM  DAY

VALMONT is an indistinct shape in his vast bed. His valet-de-chambre, AZOLAN leads a troupe of male SERVANTS into the room. One raises the blind and opens enough of a curtain to admit some afternoon light, another waits with a cup of chocolate steaming on a tray, a third carries a damp flannel in a bowl. As VALMONT stirs, his face still unseen, AZOLAN takes the flannel, leans over and begins a perfunctory dry wash.

4 INT. MERTEUIL'S DRESSING-ROOM  DAY

A steel hook moves to and fro, deftly tightening MME DE MERTEUIL's corset.

5 INT. VALMONT'S DRESSING-ROOM  DAY

VALMONT's face is swathed in hot towels, his head tilted back. A young MANICURIST, on his knees, attends to VALMONT's nails. Several other SERVANTS wait gravely to play their part in the elaborate ritual of dressing VALMONT. The BARBER produces a pair of tweezers and delicately plucks a hair from one of VALMONT's nostrils.

6 INT. MERTEUIL'S DRESSING-ROOM  DAY

A second dressing-table is covered with extravagant numbers of perfume boxes. MERTEUIL, now in corset, chemise and underskirt sits, surrounded by her MAIDS. Eventually she makes a choice
and indicates a box. A MAID opens the box and begins to apply the perfume (in the form of a cream) to MERTEUIL's neck, lightly massaging it in. Meanwhile, MERTEUIL smells the contents of another box and hands it to a second MAID, who begins applying it to MERTEUIL's armpit.

INT. VALMONT'S DRESSING-ROOM  DAY

AZOLAN opens a walk-in closet, which contains innumerable rows of boots and shoes. He and another SERVANT choose a couple of pairs of shoes each and bring them out. VALMONT's hand comes into shot, indicating a black pair with red heels. AZOLAN hands them to a BOOTBOY, who hurries away, breathing on them as he goes.

INT. MERTEUIL'S DRESSING-ROOM  DAY

MERTEUIL'S MAID makes a final adjustment to the bamboo side panniers hanging from MERTEUIL's waist, then motions two other MAIDS to cover them with an embroidered petticoat.

INT. ANTE-ROOM TO VALMONT'S DRESSING-ROOM  DAY

VALMONT's PERRUQUIER waits attentively as VALMONT, seen from behind, stands in front of the three tiers of featureless wooden heads which carry his collection of wigs. Eventually, he points to one.

INT. MERTEUIL'S DRESSING-ROOM  DAY

MERTEUIL's stomacher is now in position and she stands, arms outstretched, as two MAIDS move forward with her dress, guidin her arms into it as if it were an overcoat. This done, MERTEUIL's SEAMSTRESS approaches and begins the delicate process of sewing her into her dress.

INT. ANTE-ROOM TO VALMONT'S DRESSING-ROOM  DAY

A bizarre metal cone with gauze-covered eyeholes conceals VALMONT's face as the PERRUQUIER blows powder at his wig. As the powder drifts away, VALMONT slowly lowers the cone and we see for the first time his intelligent and malicious features.

ANOTHER ANGLE shows the complete magnificent ensemble; or not quite complete, for AZOLAN now reaches his arms round VALMONT's waist to strap on his sword.
INT. GRAND SALON IN MME DE MERTEUIL'S TOWN-HOUSE  DUSK

A panoramic view of the great room. In one corner MERTEUIL is playing piquet with her cousin MME DE VOLANGES; in the centre of the room, the huge chandelier has been lowered to within a foot of the floor and two FOOTMEN with tapers are lighting its candles; and at the window itself is a demure 15-year-old blonde: CECILE VOLANGES.

The CAMERA closes in on her, as ON SOUND we hear the arrival of a carriage, clattering into the paved courtyard below.

EXT. COURTYARD  DUSK

CECILE'S P.O.V.: below, the handsome black carriage comes to a halt. The FOOTMAN clinging to the back jumps down, runs back, opens the door, lowers the step and stands back. Presently the VICOMTE DE VALMONT emerges, resplendent.

INT. GRAND SALON  DUSK

CLOSE ON CECILE, as she looks down at VALMONT, curious.

The chandelier is fully lit now and one of the FOOTMEN begins to raise it.

MME DE MERTEUIL's perfect, mask-like face gradually becomes fully-lit as the chandelier rises. She's looking not at her cards but across the long expanse of the room at CECILE's profile. Eventually she speaks.

MERTEUIL

Well, my dear...

CECILE doesn't at first realise it's she who's being addressed: then she starts and half-turns.

MERTEUIL

So how are you adapting to the outside world?

CECILE

Very well. I think.

VOLANGES

I've advised her to watch and learn and be quiet except when spoken to.

MERTEUIL looks CECILE up and down, frankly appraising her.

MERTEUIL

We must see what we can devise for your amusement.

The mirrored double-doors open and MERTEUIL's MAJOROMO, carrying a silver tray, advances unhurriedly across the room.
At the table, the large playing cards slap down on one another. MERTEUIL glances up at her MAJOR DOMO and reaches for the card on his tray. She replaces the card, looks up at him and nods. The MAJOR DOMO departs and MERTEUIL speaks quietly to VOLANGES.

MERTEUIL
Valmont is here.

VOLANGES reacts with a trace of alarm.

VOLANGES
You receive him, do you?

MERTEUIL
Yes. So do you.

VOLANGES turns to her daughter, whose interest has been caught by this exchange.

VOLANGES
Monsieur le Vicomte de Valmont, my child, whom you very probably don't remember, except that he is conspicuously charming, never opens his mouth without first calculating what damage he can do.

CÉCILE
They why do you receive him, Maman?

VOLANGES
Everyone receives him.

She breaks off as the MAJOR DOMO reappears, escorting VALMONT, who crosses to bow formally to MERTEUIL in a gesture which also takes in the others.

VALMONT
Madame.

MERTEUIL
Vicomte.

VOLANGES
What a pleasant surprise.

VALMONT
Madame de Volanges. How delightful to see you.

VOLANGES
You remember my daughter, Cécile?
VALMONT
Well, indeed, but who could have foretold she would flower so gracefully?

CÉCILE simpers, blushing and looking away. VALMONT turns back to MERTEUIL.

VALMONT
I wanted to call on you before leaving the city.

MERTEUIL
Oh, I'm not sure we can allow that. Why should you want to leave?

VALMONT
Paris in August, you know: and it's time I paid a visit on my old aunt, I've neglected her disgracefully.

VOLANGES
Madame de Rosemonde has been good enough to invite us to stay at the château. Will you please give her our warmest regards?

VALMONT
I shall make a point of it, Madame.

VOLANGES puts down her cards and rises decisively, addressing CÉCILE.

VOLANGES
I think it's time we took you home.

CÉCILE responds, still nervously aware of VALMONT's unwavering stare.

CÉCILE
I'm used to being in bed by nine at the convent.

VALMONT
So I should hope.

She breaks away, mysteriously alarmed, and hurries across to VOLANGES. MERTEUIL has summoned a FOOTMAN. VALMONT bows and we watch from his P.O.V. as the FOOTMAN shows out VOLANGES and CÉCILE. When they've gone, MERTEUIL crosses back towards VALMONT, speaking in an entirely different tone of voice.
Continued

MERTEUIL

Your aunt?

VALMONT

That's right,

MERTEUIL

I thought she'd already made arrangements to leave you all her money.

He smiles without answering. She arrives beside him.

MERTEUIL

Do you know why I summoned you here this evening?

VALMONT

I'd hoped it might be for the pleasure of my company.

MERTEUIL

I need you; to carry out a heroic enterprise. You remember when Bastide left me?

VALMONT feigns a sympathetic expression.

VALMONT

Yes.

MERTEUIL

And went off with that fat mistress of yours whose name escapes me.

VALMONT

Yes, yes.

MERTEUIL

No one has ever done that to me before. Or to you I imagine.

VALMONT

I was quite relieved to be rid of her, frankly.

MERTEUIL

No, you weren't.

Silence. She now has his undivided attention.

MERTEUIL

For some years now, Bastide has been searching for a wife. He was always unshakeably prejudiced in favour of convent education. And now he's found the ideal candidate.
15 INT. CONVENT DAY

CÉCILE, superintended by a couple of NUNS, waits inside an enclosure, her face framed between the bars of a wooden partition.

VALMONT (V.O.)
Cécile Volanges.

MERTEUIL (V.O.)
Very good.

16 EXT. CONVENT DAY

MME DE VOLANGES’s magnificent carriage, silhouetted against the walls of the convent.

VALMONT (V.O.)
And her sixty thousand a year, that must have played some part in his calculations.

ANOTHER ANGLE. A FOOTMAN helps MME DE VOLANGES down from the carriage.

MERTEUIL (V.O.)
None whatsoever. His priority, you see, is a guaranteed virtue.

17 INT. CONVENT DAY

MME DE VOLANGES hasn’t seen CÉCILE in years. She advances uncertainly towards her and they exchange a tentative embrace through the partition.

VALMONT (V.O.)
I wonder if I’m beginning to guess what it is you’re intending to propose.

A NUN opens the half-door to release CÉCILE.

MERTEUIL (V.O.)
Bastide is with his regiment in Corsica for the rest of the year.

18 INT. GRAND SALON DUSK

MERTEUIL
That should give you plenty of time.

VALMONT
You mean to...?

MERTEUIL
She’s a rosebud.
Continued

VALMONT
You think so?

MERTEUIL
And he'd get back from honeymoon to find himself the laughing-stock of Paris.

VALMONT
Well...

MERTEUIL
Yes. Love and revenge: two of your favourites.

Silence. VALMONT considers for a moment. Finally, he shakes his head.

VALMONT
No, I can't.

MERTEUIL
What?

VALMONT
Really, I can't.

MERTEUIL
Why not?

VALMONT
It's too easy. It is. What is she, fifteen, she's seen nothing, she knows nothing, she's bound to be curious, she'd be on her back before you'd unwrapped the first bunch of flowers. Any one of a dozen men could manage it. I have my reputation to think of.

MERTEUIL frowns, displeased. VALMONT hesitates, looking at her.

VALMONT
I can see I'm going to have to tell you everything.

MERTEUIL
Of course you are.

VALMONT
Yes. Well. My aunt is not on her own just at the moment. She has a young friend staying with her: Madame de Tourvel.
Continued

MERTEUIL
You can’t mean it.

EXT. FORMAL GARDENS OF MME DE ROSEMONDE’S CHÂTEAU  DAY

MME DE TOURVEL’s strong, beautiful, untroubled face, as she moves through the gardens. She’s accompanied by VALMONT’s 80-year-old aunt, MME DE ROSEMONDE, who chooses flowers, which MME DE TOURVEL then cuts and lays in a basket.

VALMONT (V.O.)
To seduce a woman famous for strict morals, religious fervour and the happiness of her marriage: what could possibly be more prestigious?

MERTEUIL
I think there’s something degrading about having a husband for a rival. It’s humiliating if you fail and commonplace if you succeed. Where is M. de Tourvel anyway?

VALMONT (V.O.)
Presiding over some endless case in Burgundy.

INT. GRAND SALON  DUSK

MERTEUIL frowns at VALMONT, shaking her head.

MERTEUIL
I don’t think you can hope for any actual pleasure.

VALMONT
Oh, yes. And I have no intention of breaking down her prejudices. I want her to believe in God and virtue and the sanctity of marriage and still not be able to stop herself. I want passion, in other words. I want the excitement of watching her betray everything that’s most important to her. Surely you understand that. I thought betrayal was your favourite word.

MERTEUIL
No, no, cruelty: I always think that has a nobler ring to it.

VALMONT smiles; but MERTEUIL turns on him, her expression serious.
MERTEUIL
I'm surprised at you. You might just as well be in love.

VALMONT
I haven't felt so strongly about anything since you and I were together. That's why I intend to have her, to rescue myself from this ridiculous position.

MERTEUIL
Love is something you use, not something you fall into, like quicksand, don't you remember? It's like medicine, you use it as a lubricant to nature.

He returns, a little uneasily, her challenging gaze.

INT. CORRIDOR OF MIRRORS  DUSK

The first-floor landing in MERTEUIL's house is an immense gallery of mirrors. She and VALMONT pass down the corridor, their images shifting and multiplying in the candle-light.

VALMONT
How's Belleroche?

MERTEUIL
I'm very pleased with him.

VALMONT
And is he your only lover?

MERTEUIL pretends to give this a moment's consideration.

MERTEUIL
Yes.

VALMONT
I think you should take another. I think it most unhealthy, this exclusivity.

MERTEUIL
You're not jealous, are you?

VALMONT
Of course I am. Belleroche is completely undeserving.

MERTEUIL
I thought he was one of your closest friends.
VALMONT
Exactly, so I know what I'm talking about. No, I think you should organise an infidelity. With me, for example.

MERTEUIL
You refuse me a simple favour and then you expect to be indulged?

VALMONT
It's only because it is so simple. It wouldn't feel like a conquest. I have to follow my destiny. I have to be true to my profession.

INT. MAIN STAIRCASE  DUSK

VALMONT pauses at the top of the broad and imposing staircase which leads down to the entrance of the house. MERTEUIL watches him for a moment, amused: then she comes to an unexpected decision.

MERTEUIL
All right, then: come back when you've succeeded with Madame de Tourvel.

VALMONT
Yes?

MERTEUIL
And I will offer you...a reward.

VALMONT
My love.

MERTEUIL
But I shall require proof.

VALMONT
Certainly.

MERTEUIL
Written proof.

VALMONT
Ah.

MERTEUIL
Not negotiable.

VALMONT recovers quickly.
Continued

VALMONT
I don't suppose there's any possibility of an advance?

MERTEUIL
Goodnight, Vicomte.

He kisses her hand and hurries down the stairs.

INT. CORRIDOR OF MIRRORS DUSK

MERTEUIL stops in front of one of the mirrors. It turns out to be a door, which she opens.

INT. SPIRAL STAIRCASE DUSK

A candle at the top sheds a dim light; MERTEUIL begins to ascend her secret staircase.

INT. MERTEUIL'S BEDROOM DUSK

BELLEROCHÉ, a beautiful blockhead of about 30, springs to his feet as MERTEUIL emerges from what is ostensibly a cupboard door. He hurries over to embrace her.

BELLEROCHÉ
Where have you been? Time has no logic when I'm not with you: an hour is like a century.

MERTEUIL
I've told you before: we shall get on a good deal better if you make a concerted effort not to sound like the latest novel.

He looks hurt; she kisses him affectionately.

INT. PRIVATE CHAPEL IN MME DE ROSEMONDE'S GROUNDS DAY

The sound of the little silver bell which summons the congregation to take Communion: CLOSE ON MME DE TOURVEL as her hands part to reveal her face. MME DE ROSEMONDE kneels next to her and is now being helped to her feet by VALMONT.

VALMONT escorts ROSEMONDE up the stairs to the altar-rail, TOURVEL remaining on the other side of her. The rest of the congregation consists of ROSEMONDE's domestic staff, in a segregated portion of the chapel; and they file up towards the altar, respectfully waiting their turn.
Continued

TOURVEL kneels at the altar-rail as VALMONT helps ROSEMONDE to kneel beside her. Then TOURVEL looks up, slightly surprised, as VALMONT moves off to one side, instead of taking his place at the rail. By now, the elderly CURÉ, intoning the Latin mass, is approaching TOURVEL with the large Communion wafer. VALMONT watches intently.

VALMONT'S P.O.V.: the wafer is placed on TOURVEL's lower lip and slowly vanishes into her mouth. She looks up at him.

TOURVEL'S P.O.V.: VALMONT, his expression respectful, his demeanour humble.

EXT. CHAPEL DAY

Beautiful summer's day. The chapel is in the grounds of MME DE ROSEMONDE's château, the turrets of which are visible in the distance. Her open carriage stands waiting, as the congregation emerges into the sunlight. The COACHMAN jumps down, but MME DE ROSEMONDE dismisses him with a gesture.

ROSEMONDE
It's such a beautiful day, I believe we'll walk.

AZOLAN attends to VALMONT, taking his prayer-book and handing him his cane; while MME DE TOURVEL's chambermaid, JULIE, is helping her mistress with her bonnet.

EXT. WOODLAND PATH DAY

MME DE ROSEMONDE and the CURÉ lead the way, deep in conversation, followed at a distance by VALMONT and MME DE TOURVEL. AZOLAN and JULIE bring up the rear.

TOURVEL
You didn't take the sacrament today.

VALMONT
I felt I couldn't.

TOURVEL
May I ask why?

VALMONT
I have this appalling reputation as you may know...

TOURVEL
Oh, yes, I have been warned about you.
28 Continued

VALMONT
You have? By whom?

TOURVEL
A friend.

VALMONT
Yes, well, I suppose a warning might be justified. I've spent my life surrounded by immoral people; I've allowed myself to be influenced by them and sometimes even taken pride in outshining them.

TOURVEL
And now?

VALMONT
Now what I feel most often is unworthiness.

TOURVEL
But it's precisely at such moments you start to become worthy.

VALMONT appears to give this assertion his serious consideration. He glances back over his shoulder and notices that AZOLAN is murmuring with some intimacy into JULIE's ear. Then he turns back to MME DE TOURVEL.

VALMONT
I certainly believe that one should constantly strive to improve oneself.

LONG SHOT of the two of them, strolling along the dappled path, as, on SOUND, the passionate climax of a Gluck aria begins to swell.

29 INT. MERTEUIL'S BOX AT THE OPERA EVENING

The aria continues, the opera is in progress. MME DE VOLANGES and CECILE, in the box, stare down at the stage. MME DE MERTEUIL, however, opera-glasses pressed to her face, is scanning the audience.

30 INT. OPERA HOUSE EVENING

MERTEUIL'S P.O.V., as her gaze comes to rest on the face of a handsome young man of not more than twenty, listening intently, tears streaming down his face: the CHEVALIER DANCENY.
INT. MERTEUIL’S BOX   EVENING

MERTEUIL lowers her opera-glasses, pensive.

INT. OPERA HOUSE   EVENING

The interval, and the fashionable audience goes about its principal business of the evening: gossip and celebrity-spotting. DANCENY moves through the auditorium, still in something of a trance; and is startled by the arrival of a uniformed FOOTMAN, who hands him a note on a silver tray.

INT. MERTEUIL’S BOX   EVENING

A knock at the door and DANCENY, charmingly shy and uncertain, bows deeply to MERTEUIL.

MERTEUIL
Chevalier, I don’t believe you know my cousin, Madame de Volanges. This is Chevalier Danceny. And Madame’s daughter, Cécile.

All this has taken place very quickly and now DANCENY becomes aware of CECILE for the first time: he looks at her, tongue-tied, obviously smitten, eventually managing to utter a strangled greeting. MERTEUIL observes him shrewdly.

MERTEUIL
Tell us what we should think of the opera.

DANCENY
Oh, it’s sublime. Don’t you find?

MERTEUIL
Why do these composers keep choosing identical subjects?

DANCENY
But this is infinitely the better version. Piccini is a mere opportunist.

MERTEUIL
Monsieur Danceny is one of those rare eccentrics who come here to listen to the music.

DANCENY
I do look forward to our next meeting.

He bows to CECILE, blushing deeply and leaves the box. CECILE’s eyes are shining. MERTEUIL is watching her closely.
33 Continued

MERTEUIL
Charming young man. Penniless, regrettably. He's one of the finest music-teachers in the city.

CLOSE on CÉCILE: the idea occurs to her at the very moment MERTEUIL expresses it.

MERTEUIL
Perhaps you should employ him.

34 EXT. GROUNDS OF THE CHÂTEAU  DAWN

VALMONT and AZOLAN, who carries a long musket over his shoulder, crunch across the gravel. As they pass, a PAN reveals MME DE TOURVEL's footman, GEORGES, following them, huddled in an angle of the building.

35 INT/EXT. MME DE TOURVEL'S BEDROOM  DAWN

MME DE TOURVEL stands, a corner of the curtain raised, looking down at VALMONT and AZOLAN.

36 EXT. WOODS  DAWN

VALMONT speaks abruptly to AZOLAN, surprising him in midyawn.

VALMONT
How are you getting on with Madame de Tourvel's maid?

AZOLAN
Julie? Tell you the truth, it's been a bit boring. If I wasn't so anxious to keep your Lordship abreast, I think I'd have only bothered the once. Still, you know, what else is there to do in the country?

VALMONT
Yes, it wasn't so much the details of your intimacy I was after, it was whether she's agreed to bring me Madame de Tourvel's letters.

AZOLAN
She won't steal the letters, sir.

VALMONT
She won't?
AZOLAN
You know better than me, sir, it's easy enough making them do what they want to do; it's trying to get them to do what you want them to do, that's what gives you a headache.

VALMONT
And them, as often as not. I need to know who's writing to her about me.

AZOLAN
I shouldn't worry if I was you, sir. She told Julie she didn't believe you went hunting in the mornings. She said she was going to have you followed. So I'd say it was only a matter of time.

They carry on through the woods. Behind them, GEORGES blunders incompetently from tree to tree.

37 EXT. BOUNDARY OF MME DE ROSEMONDE'S LAND DAY

AZOLAN unlocks a gate in the wall enclosing ROSEMONDE's property to let VALMONT through. The latter hesitates, looking back.

VALMONT
Terrible noise he's making.

AZOLAN
He'll get the news back to her twice as quickly.

VALMONT
I don't think we should make it too easy for him.

He takes the musket from AZOLAN and suddenly fires it into the undergrowth.

38 EXT. UNDERGROWTH DAY

GEORGES, panic-stricken, hurls himself to the ground as the echoes of the shot die away.

39 EXT. BOUNDARY OF MME DE ROSEMONDE'S LAND DAY

VALMONT hands the musket back to AZOLAN and closes the gate behind them. The wall stretches away as far as the eye can see. The two men grin at each other and hurry on.
EXT. VILLAGE SQUARE  DAY

The village consists of half-a-dozen wattle-and-daub huts, disposed around a muddy clearing; where pigs graze and bare-foot children wander. The poverty is as stark and absolute as that of a village in India. A small crowd is gathered around one of the huts, out of which a couple of MEN, supervised by the BAILIFF are carrying out a plain deal table, which they dump down next to three wooden chairs. A gaunt WOMAN follows them, miserably wringing her hands.

GEORGES hurries across the square, reaching the fringes of the crowd just as VALMONT steps forward to confront the BAILIFF.

VALMONT
What exactly do you think you're doing?

BAILIFF
I am impounding these effects, sir.

VALMONT
Has it not been explained to you? M. Armand is not well.

BAILIFF
I don't make the laws, sir, I just do what I'm told. Everybody has to pay his taxes.

VALMONT
How much does he owe?

BAILIFF
Well...

VALMONT
How much?

BAILIFF
Fifty-six livres.

VALMONT takes a large, jingling purse out of his pocket and hands it to AZOLAN.

VALMONT
Pay him.

AZOLAN
Yes, my lord.

Gasps from the crowd; even a ripple of applause. VALMONT marches forward and vanishes into the hut.
INT. ARMAND'S HUT  DAY

Standing on the straw spread over the mud floor, in the
heat of the more or less unventilated, dingy hut, looking
down at M. ARMAND, (a man of not more than 50, who looks
ancient, gnarled and battered by work, with long, thick
white hair), VALMONT has to make an effort not to be
overcome by the fetid atmosphere.

VALMONT
You don't know me...

ARMAND
Of course I do, M. le Vicomte.

VALMONT
Ah. No, please, don't get up.

ARMAND is struggling up out of his large pallet bed
covered with sacking.

ARMAND
I have to, sir. They're taking
the bed.

VALMONT
Not at all, M. Armand. No one is
taking anything.

EXT. ARMAND'S HUT  DAY

The crowd scatters as VALMONT emerges from the hut. He
approaches the BAILIFF.

VALMONT
Kindly instruct your men to
replace M. Armand's furniture.

The gaunt WOMAN approaches VALMONT; she's accompanied by
a toil-worn younger COUPLE and a pair of thin, sickly-
looking CHILDREN.

WOMAN
You're an angel sent from heaven.

Suddenly, all of them are on their knees to VALMONT.
Genuinely touched, he looks across at AZOLAN, then manages
to free a hand to reach for his purse. AZOLAN passes it
to him and he fetches out a handful of gold, pressing it
into the WOMAN's reluctant hand.

VALMONT
Just to tide you over. I insist.

Again the crowd bursts into spontaneous applause. GEORGES
watches thoughtfully.
EXT. BOUNDARY OF MME DE ROSEMONDE'S LAND  DAY

AZOLAN unlocks a compartment in one of the brick gateposts and takes out a wooden mailbox with a slot in the top. Then he takes a pin from his wig and begins delicately to probe the lock of the mailbox as they talk.

VALMONT
Fifty-six livres to save an entire family from ruin, that seems a genuine bargain.

AZOLAN
These days, my lord, you can find half-a-dozen like that, any village in the country.

VALMONT
Really? I must say the family was very well chosen. Solidly respectable, gratifyingly tearful, no suspiciously pretty girls. Well done.

AZOLAN
I do my best for you, sir.

VALMONT
And all that humble gratitude. It was most affecting.

AZOLAN
Certainly brought a tear to my eye.

The lock yields to his manipulations, the mailbox opens and after a brief inspection he hands two letters to VALMONT, who glances at the postmarks and hands one of them straight back to AZOLAN.

VALMONT
Dijon. That's from her husband.

He holds the other letter which is in a distinctive, somewhat pretentious envelope, up to the light.

VALMONT
I'm sure this must be from that officious friend of hers.

He passes it back to AZOLAN, who returns it to the mailbox and closes it. They move off, back in the direction of the house.

VALMONT
Tell me, where do you and Julie meet?

AZOLAN
Oh, in my room, sir.
VALMONT
And is she coming tonight?

AZOLAN
Afraid so.

VALMONT
Then I think I may have to burst in on you. See if blackmail will succeed better than bribery. About two o'clock suit you? I don't want to embarrass you, will that give you enough time?

AZOLAN
Ample, sir.

In the background GEORGES has come through the gate. He unlocks the mailbox and takes out the letters it contains.

INT. GRAND SALON IN THE CHÂTEAU DAY

VALMONT looks up from his book, as MME DE ROSEMONDE bustles into the room, followed by MME DE TOURVEL. He rises to greet them.

ROSEMONDE
Is this true about M. Armand?

VALMONT
I don't believe I know anyone of that name...

TOURVEL
You may as well own up, Monsieur. My footman happened to be passing when you were in the village this morning.

VALMONT
I don't think you ought to pay too much attention to servants gossip.

ROSEMONDE
It is true, isn't it?

VALMONT
Well, I...it's simply...Yes.

He looks up, ostensibly deeply embarrassed, to catch MME DE TOURVEL's admiring gaze. MME DE ROSEMONDE spreads her arms.

ROSEMONDE
You dear boy, come and let me give you a hug!
Continued

VALMONT crosses to her and they embrace. Then VALMONT turns and advances towards MME DE TOURVEL. Before she can escape, he's embraced her and, for a second, she's in his arms. Meanwhile MME DE ROSEMONDE's STEWARD has entered, with the mail laid out on a salver. As MME DE TOURVEL escapes from VALMONT's arms, she finds the STEWARD at her elbow. Ashen, she shakily reaches out her hand for the two letters.

INT. GRAND SALON IN MME DE MERTEUIL'S HOUSE DAY

CÉCILE is playing the harp and singing a song, accompanied by DANCENY on the harpsichord. On the far side of the room are MERTEUIL and VOLANGES, paying far more attention to their murmured conversation than to the music. After a time, DANCENY breaks off, hitting a note several times to indicate where CÉCILE's voice has gone wrong. They resume a few bars back; this time CÉCILE gets it right and DANCENY nods in approval. They proceed until CÉCILE makes a mistake with the harp. DANCENY stops and comes over to join her. He plays the complicated little phrase. CÉCILE tries it, but can't manage it. He takes her hands and adjusts them to the correct position. She almost plays the phrase correctly, looks up at him smiling.

DANCENY
Try it again.

She does so and gets it right.

DANCENY
Very good.

As he turns away, he slips a piece of paper between the harp strings. CÉCILE frowns, then, as he arrives back at the harpsichord, she snatches it and unfolds it. On it is a message written in pencil: I LOVE YOU.

Blushing furiously, she crumples the piece of paper and stuffs it into her pocket. Then she darts an angry glance at DANCENY.

DANCENY
This is very difficult, I'm afraid. Can we start again?

He begins to play and CÉCILE, with a great effort, manages to come in almost on cue.

INT. MERTEUIL'S BOX AT THE OPERA EVENING

The opera is in full swing. MERTEUIL and CÉCILE murmur to one another in the darkened box, neither paying the slightest attention to the stage below.
CÉCILE
Would it be very wrong of me
to answer M. Danceny's letters?

MERTEUIL
In the circumstances, yes.

CÉCILE
In what circumstances?

MERTEUIL pretends to reflect before answering.

MERTEUIL
It's not my place to tell you
this, my dear...if I hadn't become
so fond of you...

CÉCILE
Go on, please!

MERTEUIL
Your marriage has been arranged.

CÉCILE gapes at her: but this has not come as a total
surprise and her curiosity quickly overcomes her alarm.

CÉCILE
Who is it?

MERTEUIL
Someone I know, slightly.
M le Comte de Bastide.

CÉCILE
What's he like?

MERTEUIL
Well...

CÉCILE
You don't like him.

MERTEUIL
It's not that. He's a man of
somewhat...erratic judgment.
And rather serious.

CÉCILE
How old is he?

MERTEUIL
Thirty-six.

CÉCILE
Thirty-six? He's an old man!
46 Continued

MERTEUIL smiles, as another thought galvanizes CÉCILE.

CÉCILE
Do you know when?

MERTEUIL
In the new year, I believe.

She stares, unseeing, at the stage, lost in thought. MERTEUIL leans in closer to her.

MERTEUIL
Perhaps there is a way to let you write to M. Danceny...

CÉCILE
Oh, Madame!

She's caught hold of MERTEUIL's hand, her eyes shining.

MERTEUIL
If you were to show me both sides of the correspondence, I could reassure myself...

CÉCILE throws herself into MERTEUIL's arms and embraces her. MERTEUIL's eyes glitter in the darkness. Then CÉCILE looks up at her.

CÉCILE
I can't show you the letters I've already sent him...

She breaks off, realising she's given herself away, her expression apprehensive. But MERTEUIL's smile is indulgent. As the impassioned love-duet on stage reaches a climax, she stretches out a hand to caress CÉCILE's neck and collarbone.

47 INT. GRAND SALON IN THE CHÂTEAU NIGHT

VALMONT is reading and MME DE TOURVEL is looking over her letter from Paris, the one with the distinctive envelope. Eventually, she looks up at him and breaks the silence.

TOURVEL
I can't understand how someone whose instincts are so generous, could lead such a dissolute life.

VALMONT
I'm afraid you have an exaggerated idea both of my generosity and of my depravity. If I knew who'd given you such a dire account of me...
MME DE TOURVEL folds up her letter, her expression sheepish.

VALMONT
The truth is, the key to the paradox lies in a certain weakness of character.

TOURVEL
How could so thoughtful an act of charity be described as weak?

VALMONT
Because it was performed purely in response to your influence.

TOURVEL
I have tried to set you a good example these last two weeks.

VALMONT
And you've succeeded. What I did today was nothing more than an innocent tribute to your goodness.

MME DE TOURVEL looks away. VALMONT sighs.

VALMONT
You see how weak I am? I promised myself I was never going to tell you. It's just, looking at you...

TOURVEL
Monsieur.

VALMONT
You needn't worry, I have no illicit intentions. I wouldn't dream of insulting you. But I do love you. I adore you.

The letter slips from MME DE TOURVEL's fingers. VALMONT is across the room in an instant, on his knees in front of her, handing her the letter and then taking her hand in his.

VALMONT
Please help me.

As MME DE TOURVEL wrenches her hands free, a door opens to admit MME DE ROSEMONDE's STEWARD. In the ensuing confusion, TOURVEL gets up, snatches a candlestick, and hurries out of the room, leaving VALMONT momentarily floundering.
48 INT. MAIN STAIRCASE NIGHT

MME DE TOURVEL hurries up the vast, wide staircase.
Below, VALMONT, in pursuit, emerges into the hallway.

49 INT. CORRIDOR NIGHT

MME DE TOURVEL's back recedes down the corridor.
Presently, VALMONT comes into frame, catching her up.
But TOURVEL disappears into her room and there's the
sound of a heavy bolt. VALMONT arrives at her door and
drops to his knees, pressing his eye to her keyhole.

50 INT. MME DE TOURVEL'S BEDROOM NIGHT

KEYHOLE SHOT: MME DE TOURVEL crosses to the window and
stands looking out into the night, her expression troubled.

51 INT. CORRIDOR NIGHT

VALMONT stands up. There's a look of satisfaction on his
face as he begins to tiptoe away.

52 INT. AZOLAN'S BEDROOM NIGHT

AZOLAN is in bed with JULIE, they're asleep in each other's
arms. Suddenly the door bursts open. VALMONT stands in the
doorway in his dressing gown, holding a candlestick. In its
flickering light, AZOLAN and JULIE wake, JULIE genuinely
terrified and AZOLAN (since this has been prearranged)
convincingly dismayed.

    VALMONT
    I rang a number of times.

    AZOLAN
    Didn't hear, sir.

    VALMONT
    I require some hot water.

    AZOLAN
    Right away, sir.

He jumps out of bed, uncovering JULIE. She reaches for the
sheets but VALMONT speaks sharply, stopping her in her tracks.

    VALMONT
    Don't move.

As AZOLAN puts on a dressing gown and hurries to the door,
VALMONT settles himself on the end of the bed, his eyes
burning into JULIE.
Continued

VALMONT
Azolan.

AZOLAN
Sir.

VALMONT
Wait for me in my room.

AZOLAN hurries out. VALMONT continues to stare at JULIE, who is becoming increasingly uncomfortable.

VALMONT
I can't condone this sort of behaviour, you know, Julie.

JULIE
I know, sir, I'm sorry...

VALMONT
But you may rely on my discretion...

JULIE
Oh, thank you, sir.

VALMONT
... providing, of course, that you agree to my price.

There's a silence, during which JULIE thinks she understands what he means. Her expression changes as she tries to work out how best to react. But VALMONT shakes his head.

VALMONT
No, no, nothing like that. No, all I want is to see every letter Mme de Tourvel has received since her arrival here and every letter she writes from now on.

JULIE
But, sir...

VALMONT
Deliver them to Azolan by midnight tomorrow.

He stands, continuing to look at her for a moment, until she snatches at the sheet and covers herself. He brings a handful of gold coins out of his dressing-gown pocket and bangs them down on the dresser.

VALMONT
For your trouble.
EXT. GARDENS OF THE CHÂTEAU  DAY

MME DE TOURVEL rounds the right-angle of a manicured hedge and stops dead in her tracks. Bearing down on her is VALMONT. She turns in confusion, but there's evidently no escape and in a moment he's with her, bowing deep.

VALMONT
I shouldn't have spoken to you like that yesterday, I'm sorry.

TOURVEL
I thought the least I could hope for was that you would respect me.

VALMONT
I don't want you to think this has anything to do with your beauty. I know now that beauty is the least of your qualities. I've become fascinated by your goodness. I couldn't understand what was happening to me and it was only when I began to feel actual physical pain every time you left the room, that it finally dawned on me: I was in love, for the first time in my life.

TOURVEL
I really will have to leave you, Monsieur.

VALMONT
No, no, please, tell me what to do, show me how to behave, I'll do anything you say.

MME DE TOURVEL has turned away from him; now, after a moment's thought, she turns back.

TOURVEL
There's only one thing I would like you to do for me.

VALMONT
What? What is it?

TOURVEL
I'm not sure I want to put myself in the position of being beholden to you.

VALMONT
Oh, please, I insist.

TOURVEL
Very well, then, I would like you to return to Paris.
VALMONT
I don't see why that should be necessary.

TOURVEL
Let's just say you've spent your life making it necessary.

By now VALMONT has recovered his equilibrium and thought very fast.

VALMONT
I shall find something in my mail tomorrow morning which obliges me to return to Paris.

TOURVEL
Thank you, I'd be very grateful.

She begins to move away. VALMONT lets her go two or three steps before speaking.

VALMONT
Perhaps I might ask a favour in return?

MME DE TOURVEL frowns, hesitating.

VALMONT
I think it would only be just to let me know which of your friends has blackened my name.

TOURVEL
You know very well that's impossible, Monsieur. If friends of mine have warned me against you, they've done so purely in my own interest. I could hardly reward them with betrayal!

VALMONT
Very well, I withdraw the request. Will you at least allow me to write to you?

TOURVEL
Well...

VALMONT
And hope that you will do me the kindness of answering my letters?

TOURVEL
I'm not sure a correspondence with you is something a woman of honour could permit herself.
53 Continued

VALMONT
So you're determined to refuse my suggestions, however respectable?

TOURVEL
I would welcome the chance to prove to you that what motivates me in this is not hatred or resentment but...

VALMONT
But what?

MME DE TOURVEL seems unable to find a satisfactory answer to this.

54 INT. AZOLAN'S BEDROOM NIGHT

There's a knock at the door: AZOLAN makes a wry face and lets in JULIE. He embraces her; but what has immediately caught his interest is the bundle of letters in her hand. As soon as he decently can, he extricates himself from the embrace and takes the letters from her.

55 INT. VALMONT'S BEDROOM DAWN

VALMONT sits at a bureau, inspecting the letters, his expression indignant. AZOLAN stands to one side, looking complacent.

VALMONT
Listen to this: 'Just as every good man has his weaknesses, every criminal has his virtues. So be doubly careful of the Vicomte de Valmont.'

He turns the letter over and reads out the signature, nodding grimly.

VALMONT
Madame de Volanges.

56 EXT. MAIN ENTRANCE TO THE CHÂTEAU DAY

VALMONT embraces MME DE ROSEMONDE as his big black carriage waits at the foot of a flight of outside steps. MME DE TOURVEL waits, a little to one side. VALMONT crosses to her, takes her hand and kisses it, taking her by surprise. She tries to withdraw her hand but he holds on to it. She speaks in an undertone.

TOURVEL
Monsieur, please...
He releases her hand and adds, in a murmur.

VALMONT
I'll write soon.

INT. ÉMILIE'S BEDROOM    NIGHT

VALMONT is making energetic love to ÉMILIE, a strikingly attractive courtesan, in her luxurious canopied bed. After a while, he sighs with pleasure and pulls away from her. Outside, there are occasional rumbles of thunder and flashes of lightning. He looks down at her for a moment, leaning on one elbow.

VALMONT
Now.

ÉMILIE
Yes?

VALMONT
Turn over.

ÉMILIE hesitates, looking up at him for a moment. Then she breaks into a smile.

ÉMILIE
All right.

She turns over and looks up at him expectantly. He twitches away the bedclothes and contemplates her briefly, before speaking, very businesslike.

VALMONT
Do you have pen, ink and writing paper?

ÉMILIE
Yes, over there, in the bureau. Why?

Puzzled, she watches him as he gets up, crosses the room, finds what he's looking for and brings it back to the bed. He puts down the pen and inkwell carefully, then climbs on to ÉMILIE, spreads a sheet of paper across the small of her back, arranges himself comfortably and reaches for the pen.

VALMONT
Now, don't move.

ÉMILIE is still puzzled, but she submits graciously enough. VALMONT begins to write.
Continued

VALMONT
'My dear Madame de Tourvel...
I have just come...to my desk...'

EMILIE understands now. She turns her head to smile up at him.

VALMONT
Don't move, I said. '...in the middle of a stormy night, during which I have been tossed from exaltation to exhaustion and back again. The position in which I find myself as I write has made me more than ever aware of the power of love...'

INT. MME DE TOURVEL'S BEDROOM AT THE CHÂTEAU DAY

MME DE TOURVEL sits at her bureau, reading VALMONT's letter.

VALMONT (V.O.)
'...I can scarcely control myself sufficiently to put my thoughts in order; but despite these torments, I guarantee that at this moment I am far happier than you...'

The letter: a teardrop falls on to the paper, smudging the ink.

INT. ÉMILIE'S BEDROOM NIGHT

ÉMILIE is reaching back to caress VALMONT as he writes.

VALMONT
'...I hope one day you may feel the kind of disturbance afflicting me now: meanwhile please excuse me while I take steps to calm what I can only describe as a mounting excitement.'

He moves aside paper, pen and inkwell and lies forward to murmur in ÉMILIE's ear.

VALMONT
We'll finish it later, shall we?
INT. GRAND SALON IN MME DE MERTEUIL'S HOUSE   DAY

It's September now and there's a hint of Autumn in the afternoon light. VALMONT is taking tea with the MARQUISE DE MERTEUIL.

VALMONT
Your damned cousin, the Volanges bitch, wanted me away from Madame de Tourvel: well, now I am and I intend to make her suffer for it. Your plan to ruin her daughter, are you making any progress, is there anything I can do to help, I'm entirely at your disposal.

MERTEUIL
Well, yes, I told Danceny you would act as his confidant and advisor. I want you to stiffen his resolve, if that's the phrase.

VALMONT frowns, not at all pleased.

MERTEUIL
I thought if anyone could help him...

VALMONT
Help? He doesn't need help, he needs hindrances: if he has to climb over enough of them, he might inadvertently fall on top of her.

He shakes his head dismissively, gets up and moves over to flop down on a chaise-longue.

VALMONT
I take it he hasn't been a great success.

MERTEUIL
He's been disastrous. Like most intellectuals, he's intensely stupid.

VALMONT enjoys this: he looks at MERTEUIL, shaking his head in admiration.

VALMONT
I often wonder how you managed to invent yourself.

MERTEUIL
I had no choice, did I, I'm a woman. When I came out into society, I was fifteen, nobody had taught me anything.
MERTEUIL (Cont)
and it wasn't pleasure I was after, it was knowledge. So I practised detachment. I learned how to smile pleasantly while, under the table, I stuck a fork into the back of my hand. I became not merely impenetrable, but a virtuoso of deceit. Women are obliged to be far more skilful than men. So of course I had to invent: not only myself, but ways of escape no one else has ever thought of. And I've succeeded, because I always knew I was born to dominate your sex and avenge my own. I operate on a wonderfully simple principle: win or die.

VALMONT
Does that make you infallible?

MERTEUIL
When I want a man, I have him; when he wants to tell, he finds he can't. That's the whole story.

VALMONT
And was that our story?

MERTEUIL pauses before answering: the air is becoming increasingly charged with eroticism.

MERTEUIL
I wanted you before we'd even met. My self-esteem demanded it. Then, when you began to pursue me, I wanted you so badly. It's the only one of my notions has ever got the better of me. Single combat.

VALMONT
Thank you.

A heavy silence is broken by the sudden opening of the mirrored double-doors. MERTEUIL's MAJORDOMO moves over and murmurs to her. She nods in acknowledgement. The MAJORDOMO sets off again, back towards the door. MERTEUIL indicates a screen, which stands in a distant corner of the room.

MERTEUIL
If you'd care to go behind the screen, Vicome, I've arranged a little scene I hope you may find entertaining.

VALMONT frowns at her, puzzled.
MERTEUIL

Well, hurry.

VALMONT rises and moves swiftly across the room. He's in place behind the screen just in time to avoid being seen by MME DE VOLANGES, who hurries in looking slightly flustered, accompanied by the MAJORDOMO. MERTEUIL, who has assumed a grave expression, rises to greet her, kissing her on both cheeks.

VOLANGES

Your note said it was urgent...

MERTEUIL

It's days now, I haven't been able to think about anything else, I couldn't decide what to do for the best. Please, sit down.

VALMONT listens behind the screen, bemused. VOLANGES takes a seat, thoroughly alarmed.

MERTEUIL

I have reason to believe that a, how can I describe it, a dangerous liaison has sprung up between your daughter and the Chevalier Danceny.

Behind the screen, VALMONT is dumbfounded by this; he shakes his head, at a loss to understand MERTEUIL's tactics. Meanwhile, VOLANGES is confidently dismissing the suggestion.

VOLANGES

No, no, that's completely absurd. Cécile is still a child, she understands nothing of these things; and Danceny is an entirely respectable young man.

MERTEUIL

Tell me, does Cécile have a great many correspondents?

VOLANGES

Why do you ask?

MERTEUIL

I went into her room at the beginning of this week, I simply knocked and entered; and she was stuffing a letter into the left-hand drawer of her bureau; in which, I couldn't help noticing, there seemed to be a large number of other letters.
Silence. Behind the screen, VALMONT's mouth is open in admiration and amazement. VOLANGES rises to her feet.

VOLANGES
I'm most grateful to you. I'll see myself out.

MERTEUIL rings. VOLANGES stands up, still in a state of mild shock.

MERTEUIL
Would you think it impertinent if I were to make another suggestion?

VOLANGES
No, no.

MERTEUIL
If my recollection is correct, I overheard you saying to the Vicomte de Valmont that his aunt had invited you and Cécile to stay at her château.

CLOSE ON VALMONT. His eyes narrow and a smile begins to spread across his face.

VOLANGES
She has, yes, repeatedly.

MERTEUIL
A spell in the country might be the very thing.

The MAJOR is returning and MERTEUIL beckons him over. She gestures urgently and VALMONT suddenly realises he is visible in the mirrored door. He takes evasive action just in time, as MERTEUIL is speaking to the MAJOR.

MERTEUIL
Show Madame de Volanges to her carriage.

She embraces VOLANGES warmly, checking that VALMONT is no longer visible.

Bowed down with care, VOLANGES shuffles out of the room after the MAJOR. VALMONT emerges from behind the screen as MERTEUIL settles on the chaise-longue. He's lost in admiration.

MERTEUIL
You asked for hindrances.

VALMONT
You are a genuinely wicked woman.
MERTEUIL
And you wanted a chance to make
my cousin suffer.

VALMONT
I can't resist you.

MERTEUIL
I've made it easy for you.

VALMONT
But all this is most inconvenient;
the Comtesse de Beaulieu has invited
me to stay.

MERTEUIL
Well, you'll have to put her off.

VALMONT
The Comtesse has promised me
extensive use of her gardens. It
seems her husband's fingers are
not as green as they once were.

MERTEUIL
Maybe not. But from what I hear,
all his friends are gardeners.

VALMONT
Is that so?

MERTEUIL
You want your revenge. I want my
revenge. I'm afraid there's really
only one place you can go.

VALMONT
Back to Auntie, eh?

MERTEUIL
Back to Auntie. Where you can also
pursue that other matter. You have
some evidence to procure, have you
not?

VALMONT doesn't answer for a moment. He approaches, reverting
to the tone of just before MME DE VOLANGES's arrival.

VALMONT
Don't you think it would be a
generous gesture, show a proper
confidence in my abilities, to take
that evidence—for granted...

MERTEUIL
I need it in writing, Vicomte.
60 Continued

He's close to her now, giving her his most charming smile. She leans her head back, unmoved. Their voices are intimate, his persuasive, hers amused.

MERTEUIL
And now you must leave me.

VALMONT
Must I? Why?

MERTEUIL
Because I'm hungry.

VALMONT
Yes, I've quite an appetite myself.

MERTEUIL
Then go home and eat.

He leans in to kiss her, but she turns aside, offering him her cheek.

MERTEUIL
In writing.

He gives up, smiling at her, still in admiration.

61 INT. CÉCILE'S BEDROOM IN MME DE VOLANGE'S HOUSE DAY

CÉCILE looks up with a start as MME DE VOLANGES storms into the room, goes straight to her bureau and opens the left-hand drawer. Her eyes widen in horror as MME DE VOLANGES brings out a handful of letters.

62 INT. DRAWING ROOM IN VALMONT'S HOUSE DAY

DANCENY is in the process of sealing a letter, when he is overcome by emotion: he puts down the sealing-wax and sobs, burying his face in his hands. VALMONT grunts understandingly, takes the seal from between DANCENY's limp fingers and applies it to the wax. Then he puts an arm round DANCENY, who buries his face in VALMONT's chest. VALMONT passes a fastidious hand lightly over DANCENY's hair and picks up the letter.

63 INT. GRAND SALON IN MME DE ROSEMONDE'S CHÂTEAU DAY

The edge of the letter protrudes from VALMONT's pocket as he moves around the large room. The Autumn sun streams in through the French windows. A WIDER ANGLE shows the four women disposed around the room: MME DE TOURVEL, stretched out on a chaise-longue, ashen, staring at a book; MME DE VOLANGES, in a window-seat, staring out at the grounds; CELINE, in a corner, working at her embroidery;
and MME DE ROSEMONDE, playing solitaire at the card-table. The latter looks up as VALMONT drifts by.

ROSEMONDE
You'll be pleased to hear, my dear, that Armand is on his feet again and back at work.

VALMONT
Who?

ROSEMONDE
Monsieur Armand, whose family you helped so generously.

VALMONT
Oh, yes.

He finds a seat, equidistant between TOURVEL and CÉCILE and stares for a moment at TOURVEL. When she looks up at him, he looks away quickly, this time at CÉCILE, who presently becomes aware of his gaze and embarrassed by it. VALMONT turns very quickly back to TOURVEL and is gratified to catch her still looking at him, though she immediately turns away. ROSEMONDE meanwhile turns to address VOLANGES.

ROSEMONDE
When my nephew was last staying here, we discovered quite by chance...

VALMONT interrupts her, suddenly rising to his feet, still staring at TOURVEL.

VALMONT
Are you feeling all right, Madame? I'm sorry to interrupt you, Aunt, it seemed to me all of a sudden that Madame de Tourvel didn't look at all well.

TOURVEL
I'm...no, I'm quite all right.

By now, ROSEMONDE and VOLANGES are on their feet, converging on TOURVEL. As they bear down on her, VALMONT steps back, slips the letter out of his pocket and holds it behind his back, waving it at CÉCILE. She's very slow to react, but eventually she grasps the significance of VALMONT's impatient gestures, tosses her embroidery aside and stuffs the letter in her pocket. Meanwhile, to the others, MME DE TOURVEL continues to be the centre of attention.

VOLANGES
Perhaps you need some air. Do you feel constricted in any way?
TOURVEL
No, really...

VALMONT
I feel sure Madame de Volanges
is right, as usual. A turn
around the grounds perhaps.

ROSEMONDE
Yes, yes, a little walk in the
garden, it's not too cool, I
think.

TOURVEL frowns in puzzlement as VOLANGES wraps a shawl
round her shoulders and propels her in the direction of
the French windows.

ROSEMONDE
Fresh air will do you the world
of good.

VOLANGES
The meal was somewhat heavy,
perhaps...

ROSEMONDE
I don't believe that can be the
cause...

During this exchange, CÉCILE has gathered up her shawl and
made to follow the others. As she's spreading it across
her shoulders, however, she's startled to find it tugged
away from her by VALMONT, who drops it on a chair, murmuring
between clenched teeth.

VALMONT
Come back for it.

She frowns at him for a moment, then follows the still-
clucking ladies out into the garden. VALMONT watches with
satisfaction as she stops, says a word to her mother and then
comes hurrying back into the room. VALMONT sits her down,
hands her her shawl and sits opposite her, talking very fast.

VALMONT
I don't want to arouse suspicion,
Mademoiselle, so I must be brief.
The letter is from the Chevalier
Danceny.

CÉCILE
Yes, I thought so, Monsieur.

VALMONT
Now the handing-over of such letters
is a far from easy matter to accomplish.
I can't very well create a diversion
every day.
At this point VALMONT produces a large key from his waistcoat pocket.

VALMONT
So, this key resembles the key to your bedroom, which I happen to know is kept in your mother's room, on the mantelpiece, tied with a blue ribbon. Take it, go up now, attach the blue ribbon to it and put it in place of your bedroom key, which you will then bring to me. I'll be able to get a copy cut within two hours. Then I'll be able to collect your letters and deliver Danceny's without any complications.

He drops the key into CÉCILE's lap.

VALMONT
Oh, and in the cupboard by your bed, you'll find a feather and a small bottle of oil, so that you can oil the lock and hinges on the ante-room door. Off you go.

CÉCILE
Are you sure, Monsieur, I'm not sure it would be right...

VALMONT
Trust me.

CÉCILE
Well, I know Monsieur Danceny has every confidence in you...

VALMONT
Believe me, Mademoiselle, if there's one thing I can't abide, it's deceitfulness.

She hesitates for a moment and then hurries away.

EXT. TERRACE  DAY

VALMONT steps out of the French windows on to the terrace, where ROSAMONDE, VOLANGES and TOURVEL are waiting.

VOLANGES
Do you know where my daughter is, Vicomte?

VALMONT
I believe she went up to get her shawl.
Continued

VOLANGES
Oh? I thought she had her shawl.

INT. MME DE VOLANGES'S BEDROOM  DAY
CÉCILE grapples with the blue ribbon, experiencing the greatest difficulty in disentangling it.

EXT. TERRACE  DAY
VALMONT, his expression a little tense, has moved away from the group of waiting women. He's startled when he looks up to see MME DE TOURVEL bearing down on him, speaking in a fierce undertone.

TOURVEL
If I did feel ill, Monsieur, it would not be difficult to guess who was responsible.

VALMONT is too surprised to answer.

TOURVEL
You promised to leave here.

VALMONT
And I did.

TOURVEL
Then how can you be insensitive enough to return without warning?

VALMONT is only too aware that MME DE VOLANGES is now heading purposefully back into the house.

VALMONT
Would you excuse me, Madame?

He breaks away from her and sets off towards a different entrance into the house.

INT. MME DE VOLANGES'S BEDROOM  DAY
CÉCILE has almost finished tying the blue ribbon on to the second key, when it slips from her fingers and drops into the grate. She falls to her knees and tries to fish it out. She can't reach it. Suddenly, the creak of the ante-room door makes her look up in terror. It's VALMONT. He hurries across the room.

VALMONT
Quick. Your mother.
Continued

CÉCILE indicates the key in the grate. VALMONT's fingers are long enough to reach the ribbon. He fishes the key out and drops it on the mantelpiece. Then he catches sight of VOLANGES's shawl, picks it up, thrusts it at CÉCILE and dives behind the door, just as VOLANGES arrives.

VOLANGES
What are you doing?

CÉCILE
I just came up to fetch your shawl.

She hands her the shawl and they leave the room. VALMONT waits a few seconds before emerging.

INT. MAIN STAIRCASE DAY

As MME DE VOLANGES and CÉCILE arrive at the top of the stairs, so VALMONT arrives at the bottom. They pass on the stairs, VALMONT moving respectfully to one side, and VOLANGES ignoring him. CÉCILE, a pace behind, takes the opportunity to slip the key into VALMONT's hand, almost dropping it as she does so.

EXT. FORMAL GARDENS DAY

MME DE TOURVEL and VALMONT sit at either end of a bench in the rigidly manicured garden.

VALMONT
Why are you so angry with me?

TOURVEL
I'm not angry. Although since your very first letter spoke of nothing but the disorders of love, I'm certainly entitled to be.

VALMONT
I was away almost three weeks and wrote to you only three times. Since I was quite unable to think about anything but you, some might say I showed heroic restraint.

TOURVEL
But you persisted in writing about your love.

VALMONT
It's true: I couldn't find the strength to obey you.
TOURVEL
You must know it's impossible for me to reciprocate your feelings.

VALMONT
What else could I have written to you about, other than my love? What else is there? I believe I've done everything you've asked of me.

TOURVEL
You've done nothing of the sort.

VALMONT
I left here when you wanted me to.

TOURVEL
And you came back.

VALMONT, momentarily blocked by this, casts around for a way forward.

TOURVEL
All I can offer you, Monsieur, is my friendship; can't you accept it?

VALMONT
I could pretend to: but that would be dishonest. The man I used to be would have been content with friendship; and set about trying to turn it to his advantage. But I've changed, thanks to you. You've made me a better person: you mustn't now undo your handiwork.

TOURVEL
I've no wish to. But equally, I have no wish to hear what you invariably get round to saying.

VALMONT
Surely we don't have to try to avoid each other?

TOURVEL
Of course not. Providing you promise not to insult me.

VALMONT
I shall obey you in this as in everything.

Rather to her surprise, he rises to his feet and bows formally.
70 INT. DRESSING-ROOM IN MME DE MERTEUIL'S HOUSE DAY

MERTEUIL sits, en négligée, reading a letter.

VALMONT (V.O.)

'We go for a walk together almost every day: a little further every time down the path that has no turning.'

71 EXT. GROUNDS OF THE CHÂTEAU DAY

VALMONT and MME DE TOURVEL stroll through parklands, the château silhouetted on a ridge behind them, deep in conversation.

VALMONT

I wish you knew me well enough to recognise how much you've changed me. My friends in Paris remarked on it at once. I've become the soul of consideration, charitable, conscientious, more celibate than a monk...

TOURVEL

More celibate?

VALMONT

Well, you know the stories one hears in Paris.

MME DE TOURVEL can't suppress a smile. LONG SHOT: the two of them moving through the autumn landscape.

72 INT. MERTEUIL'S DRESSING-ROOM DAY

MERTEUIL continues to read.

VALMONT (V.O.)

'Her eyes are closing.'

73 INT. ANTE-ROOM TO THE VOLANGES' BEDROOMS NIGHT

The hinges no longer squeak as VALMONT, in his dressing-gown, carrying a dark-lantern, closes the door behind him, produces the key, crosses to another door, inserts the key in the lock, turns it, removes and pockets the key, opens the door and advances.
INT. CÉCILE'S BEDROOM  NIGHT

CÉCILE is fast asleep in the large bed. VALMONT closes the door behind him and crosses silently to the bed. He stands for a moment, contemplating CÉCILE. Then he puts the lantern down carefully, leans forward and very gently eases back the covers. CÉCILE stirs but still doesn't wake. VALMONT passes his hand through the air, tracing the contours of her body. Finally, he puts his hand over her mouth. She wakes with a start, her eyes wide above his hand. VALMONT smiles and speaks in a whisper.

VALMONT

Nothing to worry about.

He removes his hand. She stares up at him, frowning.

CÉCILE

Have you brought a letter?

VALMONT

No.

CÉCILE

Then what...

Instead of answering, he leans forward to kiss her. There's a brief, fierce struggle, in which CÉCILE successfully defends herself from the kiss, but is entirely taken by surprise when VALMONT plunges a hand up inside her nightdress. Her eyes widen in horror, but her cry is instantly stifled as VALMONT's other hand clamps down on her mouth. She writhe determinedly for a moment, succeeds in freeing her head and dives across the bed to reach for the bell-pull. VALMONT leaps on to the bed, grasping her wrist just in time. She grapples with him for a moment.

VALMONT

What are you going to tell your mother? How will you explain the fact that I have your key? If I tell her I'm here at your invitation, I have a feeling she'll believe me.

CÉCILE stops struggling, her eyes wide with fear. He's lying beside her on the bed.

CÉCILE

What do you want?

VALMONT

Well, I don't know, what do you think?

His hand goes back up inside her nightdress.

CÉCILE

No, please, don't. Please.
VALMONT
All right. I just want you to give me a kiss.

CÉCILE
A kiss?

VALMONT
That's all.

CÉCILE
Then will you go?

VALMONT
Then I'll go.

CÉCILE
Promise?

VALMONT
Whatever you say.

CÉCILE flops back on the pillow and closes her eyes.

CÉCILE
All right.

VALMONT leans in and gives her a long kiss, his hands roaming as he does so. After a while he pulls away.

CÉCILE
All right?

VALMONT
Very nice.

CÉCILE
No, I mean, will you go now?

VALMONT
Oh, I don't think so.

CÉCILE
But you promised.

VALMONT
I promised to go when you gave me a kiss. You didn't give me a kiss. I gave you a kiss. Not the same thing at all.

CÉCILE peers at him miserably. He looks back at her, calmly waiting.

CÉCILE
And if I give you a kiss...?
VALMONT
That's what I said.

CÉCILE
You really promise?

VALMONT
Let's just get ourselves more comfortable, shall we?

CÉCILE
Do you?

VALMONT disposes the sheet over him, moving on top of her as he does so. He replaces his hand and CÉCILE reacts with a start.

CÉCILE
Please don't do that.

VALMONT
I'll take it away. After the kiss.

CÉCILE
Promise?

VALMONT
Yes, yes.

CÉCILE
Swear?

VALMONT
I swear. Now put your arms round me.

CÉCILE reaches up and gives him a long, surprisingly intense kiss, her eyes tightly closed. Suddenly she gasps and her eyes open wide with amazement. Slowly VALMONT's hand comes up from under the cover. CÉCILE looks at it, appalled.

VALMONT
See. I told you I'd take my hand away.

MME DE ROSEMONDE sits at the head of the long polished table with MME DE VOLANGES on her right and CÉCILE on her left. Further down, on VOLANGES's side is VALMONT; opposite him, MME DE TOURVEIL. It's breakfast time and the sideboard is groaning with beef and poultry and lamb cutlets. VALMONT is eating heartily; CÉCILE, on the other hand, stares
Continued

unseeingly at her food. She looks up. Across the table, VALMONT catches her eye and gives her an imperceptible wink. Immediately, she bursts into noisy tears, gets up and hurries out of the room. Consternation, except for VALMONT, who, unperturbed, sips at his champagne.

VOLANGES
I'd better to and see what's wrong
if you'll excuse me.

ROSEMONDE
Of course, my dear.

VALMONT
I shouldn't worry, Madame. The young have such miraculous powers of recuperation. I'm sure she'll soon be back in the saddle.

VOLANCES, on her feet already, acknowledges VALMONT with a perfunctory smile, as she hurries out of the room.

INT. ANTE-ROOM NIGHT

VALMONT tip-toes in with his dark-lantern. He reaches CÉCILE's door, brings out his key and turns it in the lock. The door does not yield. VALMONT frowns, puzzled and tries again.

INT. CÉCILE'S BEDROOM NIGHT

The door is bolted on the inside. CÉCILE sits at her bureau, writing a letter, tears rolling down her face. She looks up at the SOUND of the key in the lock, then returns with an even fiercer concentration to her letter.

INT. DRESSING-ROOM IN MME DE MERTEUIL'S HOUSE DAY

MERTEUIL reads CÉCILE's letter, a sardonic smile on her face.

CÉCILE (V.O.)
Who else can I turn to in my desperation, Madame? And how can I write the necessary words?

EXT. MAIN ENTRANCE TO MME DE ROSEMONDE'S CHÂTEAU DAY

A large and elegant carriage draws up outside the château. The HEAD FOOTMAN, a silver-haired veteran, passes down the steps through the ranks of SERVANTS, who wait at attention, opens the carriage door, lowers the steps and remains bowed in anticipation. Presently the MARQUISE DE MERTEUIL emerges from the carriage.
Continued

MME DE ROSEMONDE and MME DE VOLANGES descend between the ranks of SERVANTS, the latter arriving first and muttering urgently to MERTEUIL as they embrace.

VOLANGES
There's something going on,
Cécile won't tell me, you must speak to her at once.

INT. GRAND SALON IN MME DE ROSEMONDE'S CHÂTEAU DAY

MERTEUIL sits on a chaise-longue not far from an open French window. CECILE kneels at her feet, still distraught.

CÉCILE
I thought he'd just come to bring me a letter. But he hadn't.
And by the time I realised what he had come for, it was, well, it was too late to stop him.

MERTEUIL
You mean to tell me you're upset because Monsieur de Valmont has taught you something you've undoubtedly been dying to learn?

CÉCILE
What?

MERTEUIL
And am I to understand that what generally brings a girl to her senses has deprived you of yours?

CÉCILE
I thought you'd be horrified.

MERTEUIL
Tell me: you resisted him, did you?

CÉCILE
Of course I did, as much as I could.

MERTEUIL
But he forced you?

CÉCILE
It wasn't that exactly, but I found it almost impossible to defend myself.

MERTEUIL
Why was that? Did he tie you up?
CÉCILE
No. No, but he has a way of putting things. You just can't think of an answer.

MERTEUIL
Not even no?

CÉCILE
I kept saying no all the time; but somehow that wasn't what I was doing.

She looks up at MERTEUIL.

I'm so ashamed.

MERTEUIL
You'll find the shame is like the pain: you only feel it once.

CÉCILE
What am I going to do?

MERTEUIL
You really want my advice?

CÉCILE
Please.

MERTEUIL
Allow Monsieur de Valmont to continue your instruction. Convince your mother you have forgotten Danceny. And raise no objection to the marriage.

CÉCILE gapes at her, bewildered.

CÉCILE
With Monsieur de Bastide?

MERTEUIL
When it comes to marriage one man is as good as the next; and even the least accommodating is less trouble than a mother.

CÉCILE
So are you saying I'm going to have to do that with three different men?

MERTEUIL
I'm saying, you stupid little girl, that provided you take a few elementary precautions, you can do it, or not, with as many men as you like. It often happens.
MERTEUIL (Cont)
you like, in as many different
ways as you like. Our sex has
few enough advantages, you may as
well make the most of those you have.

CÉCILE is fascinated: she looks at MERTEUIL with a kind of
wild surmise.

MERTEUIL
And now here comes your mama, so
remember what I've said and, above
all, no snivelling.

MME DE VOLANGES arrives from the garden through the
French windows, anxiously looking at CÉCILE.

VOLANGES
How are you feeling now, my dear?

CÉCILE
Oh, much better thank you, Maman.

VOLANGES
You look so tired. I think you
should go to bed.

CÉCILE
No, really, I...

MERTEUIL
I think you should do as your mother
suggests. We can arrange for some-
thing to be brought to your room.
I'm sure it would do you good.

CÉCILE
Well. Perhaps you're right, Madame.

And she leaves the room, turning back once to exchange a
mischievous glance with MERTEUIL. VOLANGES doesn't see this,
having turned gratefully back to MERTEUIL.

VOLANGES
You have such a very good influence
on her.

INT. UPSTAIRS CORRIDOR NIGHT

VALMONT, carrying his dark-lantern, leads CÉCILE along the
corridor. They're both in dressing-gowns. He opens a door
quietly.
INT. VALMONT'S BEDROOM    NIGHT

VALMONT leads CÉCILE into the room; it's much grander than hers, and she looks around, a little awed. Candles burn in strategic emplacements.

VALMONT
Here, you can make as much noise as you like.

He puts the lantern down by the bed and presses down on it.

VALMONT
And the mattress is a little harder.

CÉCILE
Is that good?

VALMONT
Oh, yes, that's very good.

Impulsively, CÉCILE throws off her things and jumps onto the bed. She bounces up and down experimentally and then reaches a hand up to VALMONT.

CÉCILE
Come on.

VALMONT smiles and then lowers himself gently alongside her on the bed. She grabs at his dressing-gown and he takes her wrists, restraining her.

VALMONT
The first thing you must learn is that there is no necessity whatsoever for haste.

He reaches out to caress her.

Now. As with every other science, the first principle is to make sure you call everything by its proper name.

CÉCILE
I don't see why you have to talk at all.

VALMONT
Without the correct polite vocabulary, how can you indicate what you would like me to do or make me an offer of something I might find agreeable.

CÉCILE
Surely you just...
VALMONT

You see, if I do my work adequately, I would like to think you'll be able to surprise Monsieur de Bastide on his wedding night.

CÉCILE

Would he be pleased?

VALMONT

Well, of course, he'll merely assume your mama has done her duty and fully briefed you.

ILE bursts out laughing.

CÉCILE

Maman couldn't possibly talk about anything of the sort.

VALMONT

I can't think why. She was, after all, at one time, one of the most notorious young women in Paris.

CÉCILE

Maman?

VALMONT

Certainly. More noted for her enthusiasm than her ability, if I remember rightly. There was a famous occasion, oh, before you were born, this would have been, when she went to stay with the Comtesse de Beaulieu, who tactfully gave her a room between your father's and that of a Monsieur de Vressac, who was her acknowledged lover at the time. Yet in spite of these careful arrangements, she contrived to spend the night with a third party.

CÉCILE

I can't believe that, it's just gossip.

VALMONT

No, no, I assure you, it's true.

CÉCILE

How do you know?

VALMONT looks down at her, a slow smile spreading.

VALMONT

The third party was myself.
CÉCILE's jaw drops. For a moment she stares at VALMONT, appalled. Then she bursts out laughing, her laughter even more abandoned than before.

VALMONT
Well, we can return to this subject later. During the intervals.

He caresses her thoughtfully.

VALMONT
You asked me if Monsieur de Bastide would be pleased with your abilities; and the answer is that even if he isn't, I don't believe it would be difficult to find others who would. Education is never a waste.

He begins kissing her, his head travelling down her body. He plants a kiss on her stomach and looks up at her.

VALMONT
Now, I think we might begin with one or two Latin terms.

INT. GRAND SALON  EVENING

MME DE ROSEMONEDE is entertaining members of the local nobility and everyone has made an effort to do justice to the occasion. VALMONT and MERTEUIL move through the crowd, resplendent, conversing in an undertone, as they acknowledge the greetings of their acquaintances. VALMONT makes a particularly deep reverence to MME DE VOLANGES and CÉCILE, at which the former smiles in queasy response.

MERTEUIL
So she let you in last night?

VALMONT
Well, yes.

MERTEUIL
Thanks to me, I think you'll find. She seems to be under the impression that your original approach was rather...underhand.

She waves charmingly at some elderly GUEST.

To tell you the truth, the real reason I consented to spend a day at this lugubrious address was that I was hoping to be shown some tear-stained bit of paper.
VALMONT

Ah.

MERTEUIL
But I can only assume that no such document exists.

VALMONT

No.

MERTEUIL
Probably just as well, no doubt you're exhausted.

VALMONT

I think you know me better than that.

MERTEUIL

Where is she?

VALMONT

Can't see her at the moment.

He blows a kiss at a WOMAN, who pretends not to notice.

VALMONT

Surely I've explained to you before how much I enjoy watching the battle between love and virtue.

MERTEUIL

What concerns me is that you appear to enjoy watching it more than you used to enjoy winning it.

VALMONT

All in good time.

MERTEUIL

The century is drawing to its close.

VALMONT

I really don't want to hurry things. Every step she tries to take away from the inevitable conclusion brings her a little nearer to it. And when Bastide and Cécile are married and Madame de Tourvel eventually collapses, we shall tell everyone, shall we not?

MERTEUIL

I wish I could share your confidence, Vicomte. But I'm beginning to have my doubts about you. Do you really deserve your reputation?
Continued

Their travels have brought them back close to MME DE VOLANGES and CECILE, whom VALMONT surreptitiously indicates.

VALMONT
Isn't it a pity that our agreement does not relate to the task you set me rather than the task I set myself?

MERTEUIL
I am grateful, of course: but that would have been almost insultingly simple. One does not applaud the tenor for clearing his throat.

The pure and unearthly SOUND of a soprano VOICE raised in some religious anthem, as VALMONT and MERTEUIL join a reluctant MME DE VOLANGES.

INT. MUSIC-ROOM EVENING

The VOICE belongs to a tall MAN of melancholy aspect: a castrato. He stands on a dais in front of a small baroque orchestra, singing exquisitely, the veins standing out on his temples, to an attentive audience.

VALMONT and MERTEUIL are in the back row, watching. Suddenly, however, VALMONT gives a quite perceptible start, which MERTEUIL notices. She follows his eyeliner.

MME DE TOURVEL, looking frail and beautiful, has entered the room. She makes her way to an isolated seat, quite close to the orchestra and at an angle and begins to listen.

MERTEUIL turns to look at VALMONT. He's transfixed.

Presently, MME DE TOURVEL half-turns to scan the crowd. She's looking for VALMONT; and when she sees him she holds his gaze and smiles shyly.

VALMONT smiles back: MERTEUIL watches him, with a trace of alarm.

MME DE TOURVEL turns back to listen to the music.

VALMONT stares, rapt, at her profile. Then he starts again, as MERTEUIL's hand closes on his wrist. He smiles at her sheepishly, aware of being caught out.

MME DE TOURVEL is moved by the music. There are tears in her eyes.

VALMONT is once again lost in contemplation of her profile. He doesn't notice now that MERTEUIL is looking at him, her expression considerably disturbed.
INT. PRIVATE CHAPEL  DAY

VALMONT arrives late for the service. He's pleased to notice that the seat next to MME DE TOURVEL is empty. Indeed, as she turns and beckons to it, it's clear that she has saved it for him. He arrives, acknowledging her and kneels for a moment's private prayer.

INT. VALMONT'S BEDROOM  NIGHT

VALMONT stands, still fully dressed, in his candle-lit bedroom, his door slightly ajar, his eye to the crack in the door.

INT. CORRIDOR  NIGHT

VALMONT'S P.O.V. through the crack in the door; MME DE TOURVEL, alone, arrives at the top of the stairs.

INT. VALMONT'S BEDROOM  NIGHT

VALMONT straightens up and saunters out of his room.

INT. CORRIDOR  NIGHT

VALMONT stops, as if surprised, and bows to MME DE TOURVEL.

VALMONT
Madame.

TOURVEL
Where are you going, Monsieur?

VALMONT
To the salon.

TOURVEL
There's no-one there. The others have all decided on an early night.

He's following her along the corridor now, on the way to her room.

VALMONT
I very much missed our walk today.

TOURVEL
Yes.

VALMONT
I fear with the weather as it is, we can look forward to very few more of them.

TOURVEL
This heavy rain is murder.
Continued

VALMONT

Oh, yes.

By this time, they've arrived at the door to her bedroom, which she's opened. She hesitates in the doorway and VALMONT decides to take a chance.

VALMONT

May I?

TOURVEL

Of course.

Trying to conceal his astonishment, he follows her into the room.

INT. TOURVEL'S BEDROOM  NIGHT

VALMONT speaks, to cover his entrance into the room, which is similarly appointed to his own, though somehow far more sober in feeling.

VALMONT

But, you see, within a week I shall have concluded my business.

TOURVEL stops in her tracks, clearly affected by this news.

TOURVEL

I see.

VALMONT

Even so, I'm not sure I'll be able to bring myself to leave.

TOURVEL

Oh, please. You must!

It's an involuntary exclamation; VALMONT knows exactly how to capitalise on it.

VALMONT

Are you still so anxious to get rid of me?

TOURVEL

You know the answer to that. I rely on your integrity and generosity. I want to be able to be grateful to you.

VALMONT

Forgive me if I say I don't want your gratitude. I want something altogether deeper.
TOURVEL
I know God is punishing me for
my pride. I was so certain
nothing like this could ever
happen.

VALMONT
Nothing like what?

TOURVEL
I can’t...

VALMONT
Do you mean love? Is love what
you mean?

He takes her hand. She starts, but doesn’t remove it.

TOURVEL
You promised not to speak of it.

VALMONT
But I must know, I need this
consolation at least.

TOURVEL
I can’t... don’t you see... it’s
impossible.

VALMONT
Of course I understand, I don’t
want you to say anything, but I
must know, I must know if you
love me, don’t speak, you don’t
have to speak. I just want you
to look at me. Just look. That’s
all I ask.

Long silence. Finally, slowly, MME DE TOURVEL raises her
eyes to him.

TOURVEL
Yes.

They’re motionless for a moment. Then VALMONT releases
her hand and puts his arms around her. As he does so, her
eyes suddenly go dead and she collapses sideways, obliging
him to catch her. She sways in his arms for a moment, then
comes to and jerks violently away from him, running half-way
across the room. Then she bursts into tears. She stands for
a moment, sobbing wildly, then rushes at VALMONT, falls to
her knees and throws her arms round his legs.
TOURVEL
For God's sake, you must leave
me, if you don't want to kill me,
you must help, it's killing me!

VALMONT, somewhat taken aback at first by her intensity,
collects himself and lifts her to her feet. For a moment,
they sway together in an ungainly embrace; then MME DE
TOURVEL's sobs cease abruptly and give way to chattering
teeth and almost epileptic convulsions. Startled, VALMONT
gathers her up in his arms, carries her over and deposits
her gently on the bed. The convulsions continue, her
teeth are clenched, the blood drained from her face. He
leans forward and loosens her bodice as she stares
helplessly up at him. Slowly, her features return to
normal. He looks down at her, perplexed. Her arms open,
she relaxes, her lips part. He starts to lean towards her,
then suddenly checks himself and looks away, something
almost like shame darkening his expression. Her face begins
to collapse. He looks back at her, gnawing at his lip. She
begins to go into shock again and he straightens up, moves
back across the room and pulls the bell-pull. Her sobs
drive him from the room.

91 INT. CORRIDOR NIGHT
As VALMONT steps into the corridor, ROSEMONDE's maid, ADELE
comes hurrying up, struggling into her dressing-gown.

VALMONT
Fetch Madame. Madame de Tourvel
has been taken ill.

ADELE hurries away and VALMONT steels himself to step back
into the room.

92 INT. TOURVEL'S BEDROOM NIGHT
As VALMONT appears in the doorway, TOURVEL stretches out
her hand to him. He crosses and takes it between both of
his. He stands, massaging her hand, bemused and thoughtful.
He lets go of her hand abruptly as MME DE ROSEMONDE appears,
shepherded by ADELE.

VALMONT
I heard something as I was
passing; she seemed to be
having difficulty breathing.

ROSEMONDE
Oh, my dear, whatever is it?

TOURVEL
I'm all right now.
Continued

VALMONT
I shall leave her in your capable hands, Aunt.
And still looking strangely abashed, he leaves the room.

ROSEMONDE
We must send for a doctor, my dear.

MME DE TOURVEL is roused from her rapt contemplation of VALMONT's departure.

TOURVEL
No, no, please, I don't need a doctor. I just... come and sit by me for a moment.

INT. CORRIDOR  NIGHT

As VALMONT moves back towards his room, lost in thought, he hears a footstep behind him. It's MME DE VOLANGES, on her way to investigate the disturbance. VALMONT makes an authoritative gesture to discourage her from entering TOURVEL's room, and she turns away, strangely confused and abashed.

INT. VALMONT'S BEDROOM  NIGHT

VALMONT closes the door behind him and leans his head back on it, completely mystified.

INT. TOURVEL'S BEDROOM  NIGHT

ROSEMONDE's kindly face looks anxiously down at MME DE TOURVEL. They're holding hands. ADELE has left the room. MME DE TOURVEL speaks very quietly, controlling herself with enormous difficulty.

TOURVEL
I must leave this house. I'm most desperately in love.

MME DE ROSEMONDE bows her head, unsurprised.

TOURVEL
To leave here is the last thing in the world I want to do, but I'd rather die than have to live with the guilt. Can you understand what I'm saying?
ROSEMONDE
Of course. My dear girl. None of this is any surprise to me. The only thing which might surprise one is how little the world changes.

TOURVEL
Well, what should I do? What's your advice?

ROSEMONDE
If I remember rightly, in such matters all advice is useless.

TOURVEL
I've never been so unhappy.

ROSEMONDE
I'm sorry to say this: but those who are most worthy of love are never made happy by it. You're too young to have understood that.

TOURVEL
By why, why should that be?

ROSEMONDE
Do you still think men love the way we do? No. Men enjoy the happiness they feel; we can only enjoy the happiness we give. They're not capable of devoting themselves exclusively to one person. So to hope to be made happy by love is a certain cause of grief. I'm devoted to my nephew, but what's true of most men is doubly so of him.

TOURVEL
And yet...he could have...just now. He took pity on me, I saw it happen, I saw his decision not to take advantage of me.

ROSEMONDE
If he has released you, my dear child, you must go.

TOURVEL looks up at her. Tears begin to cascade from the corners of her eyes.
INT. VALMONT'S BEDROOM NIGHT

AZOLAN leans over VALMONT, shaking him. VALMONT comes up from the bottom of a deep sleep and wakes with a start.

AZOLAN
Get up, sir, quick.

VALMONT
What is it?

AZOLAN
is already over by the window.

AZOLAN
Over here.

VALMONT, spurred by the urgency of his tone, scrambles out of bed and joins him at the window.

EXT. MAIN ENTRANCE NIGHT

Below, a carriage pulls away and speeds down the entrance drive.

INT. VALMONT'S BEDROOM NIGHT

AZOLAN turns to the still slightly befuddled VALMONT.

AZOLAN
Madame de Tourvel.

VALMONT
What?

Suddenly, VALMONT is wide-awake. He issues his orders calmly and decisively.

VALMONT
I want you to follow her, right now. Stay close to her. I want to know everything. Who she sees, where she goes, what she eats, if she sleeps. Everything.

He's fetched what looks like a great deal of money out of his desk.

VALMONT
That's for bribes. Yours will come later.

AZOLAN
Yes, sir.

VALMONT
Or not. Now go.
Continued
the shock beginning to show.

INT. DRAWING-ROOM IN VALMONT'S HOUSE DAY

VALMONT looks up as AZOLAN arrives at speed.

VALMONT
And what treasures do you have in store for me today?

AZOLAN hands him a letter.

AZOLAN
This, which Julie managed to get to before it was sealed up. It's to Father Anselme. She says he can bring you to see her.

VALMONT has run his eye over the letter.

VALMONT
This is excellent. Deliver it. What news?

AZOLAN
No visitors. There still hasn't been a single visitor since she got back.

INT. DRAWING-ROOM IN MME DE TOURVEL'S HOUSE NIGHT

MME DE TOURVEL sits staring sightlessly at an open book; beside her, a tray of food, scarcely disturbed. There are dark circles under her eyes.

AZOLAN (V.O.)
Bit of soup last night but didn't touch the pheasant. Afterwards a cup of tea. Nothing else to report.

INT. DRAWING-ROOM IN VALMONT'S HOUSE DAY

VALMONT, pleased, is handing AZOLAN a fat purse.

VALMONT
How's Julie?

AZOLAN
Seems a bit keener than she was in the country.
AZOLAN sighs, shaking his head gloomily.

AZOLAN
Talk about devotion to duty.

VALMONT's MAJOR DOMO shows MME DE MERTEUIL and DANCENY into the room. VALMONT dismisses AZOLAN, speaking out of the side of his mouth.

VALMONT
Off you go. Keep it up.

AZOLAN and the MAJOR DOMO leave as VALMONT greets his visitors.

VALMONT
Madame. My dear boy.

DANCENY runs over to him and embraces him impulsively.

DANCENY
Thank you, Monsieur, for everything.

VALMONT
I was afraid I'd been a sad disappointment to you.

DANCENY
On the contrary, it's you I have to thank for keeping our love alive.

VALMONT
Ah, as to love, Cécile thinks of little else.

DANCENY
I had so hoped you'd be able to arrange a meeting between us in the country.

VALMONT
Yes. In many respects I found her very open to persuasion; but not, alas, on that issue.

DANCENY
She said in her letter I couldn't do more myself than you've been doing on my behalf.

VALMONT
She's a most generous girl.
DANCENY
I don't know how I can bear to go another two weeks without seeing her.

MERTEUIL
We shall have to do our very best to provide some distraction for you. And now if you'd be so kind as to wait in the carriage, there's a matter I must discuss with the Vicomte in private.

DANCENY
Of course.

He bows to VALMONT and pumps his hand heartily.

DANCENY
I don't know how I can ever repay you.

VALMONT
Don't give it another thought, it's been delightful.

DANCENY leaves the room and VALMONT and MERTEUIL look at one another.

VALMONT
Poor boy. He's quite harmless.

MERTEUIL
I must say I thought Cécile's letter sounded unusually witty.

VALMONT
So I should hope: I dictated it.

MERTEUIL
Ah, Vicomte, I do adore you.

VALMONT
I have a piece of news I hope you might find entertaining: I have reason to believe the next head of the house of Bastide may be a Valmont.

MERTEUIL
What can you mean?

VALMONT
Cécile is two weeks late.
MERTEUIL is startled: she frowns, assessing the implication.

VALMONT

Aren't you pleased?

MERTEUIL

I'm not sure.

VALMONT

Your aim was to revenge yourself on Bastide. I've provided him with a wife trained by me to perform quite naturally services you would hesitate to request from a professional and very likely pregnant as well. What more do you want?

MERTEUIL

All right, Vicomte, I agree, you've more than done your duty. Shame you let the other one slip through your fingers.

VALMONT's expression darkens.

VALMONT

I let her go. Can you imagine?

MERTEUIL

But why?

VALMONT

I was...moved.

MERTEUIL

Oh, well, then, no wonder you bungled it.

VALMONT

I had no idea she was capable of being so devious.

MERTEUIL

Poor woman, what else could you expect? To surrender and not be taken, it would try the patience of a saint.

VALMONT

I have an appointment to visit her on Thursday. And this time, I shall be merciless. I'm going to punish her.

MERTEUIL

I'm pleased to hear it.
101 Continued

VALMONT
Why do you suppose we only feel compelled to chase the ones who run away?

MERTEUIL
ImmatURITY?

VALMONT
I shan't have a moment's peace until it's over, you know. I love her, I hate her, my life's a misery; I've got to have her so I can pass all these feelings on to her and be rid of them.

MERTEUIL is not best pleased by his tone.

MERTEUIL
I think I may have kept our young friend waiting long enough.

VALMONT
I shall call on you sometime soon after Thursday.

MERTEUIL
Only if you succeed, Vicomte. I'm not sure I could face another catalogue of incompetence.

She pecks him on the cheek and hurries away. VALMONT watches her leave, troubled.

102 INT. LANDING AND STAIRCASE IN MME DE TOURVEL'S HOUSE EVENING

A FOOTMAN shows VALMONT and FATHER ANSELME, a stocky Cistercian up the stairs. VALMONT murmurs in FATHER ANSELME's ear and the latter, after a moment's hesitation, peels away to sit down on the landing.

103 INT. DRAWING-ROOM IN MME DE TOURVEL'S HOUSE EVENING

MME DE TOURVEL looks up with a start as her FOOTMAN shows in VALMONT. She stands up, visibly trembling, ethereal with exhaustion. The FOOTMAN waits and is surprised to be dismissed impatiently with a gesture from TOURVEL.

VALMONT
I understand Father Anselme has explained to you the reasons for my visit.
TOURVEL
Yes. He said you wished to be reconciled with me before beginning instruction with him.

VALMONT
That's right.

TOURVEL
But I see no need for formal reconciliation, Monsieur.

VALMONT
No? When I have, as you said, insulted you; and when you have treated me with unqualified contempt.

TOURVEL
Contempt?

VALMONT
You run away from my Aunt's house in the middle of the night; you refuse to answer or even receive my letters: and all this after I have shown a restraint of which I think we are both aware. I would call that, at the very least, contempt.

TOURVEL
I'm sure you understand me better than you pretend, Monsieur...

VALMONT
It was me you ran away from, wasn't it?

TOURVEL
I had to leave.

VALMONT
And do you have to keep away from me?

I do.

TOURVEL
For ever?

VALMONT
I must.
VALMONT moves away from her now, speaking half to himself, it seems.

VALMONT
Well. I'm as unhappy as you could ever have wanted me to be.

TOURVEL
I've only ever wanted your happiness.

VALMONT runs across to her, falls to his knees and buries his face in her lap.

VALMONT
How can I be happy without you?

Cautiously, as if plunging it in boiling water, MME DE TOURVEL allows her hand to rest for a few seconds on VALMONT's head. He looks up at her fiercely.

VALMONT
I must have you or die.

MME DE TOURVEL scrambles to her feet and retreats across the room. VALMONT remains on his knees, his head bowed.

VALMONT
Death it is.

She looks back at him, distraught. He rises to his feet, calmer now.

VALMONT
I'm sorry. I'm not used to passion. At least this is the last time. So be calm.

TOURVEL
It's difficult when you're in this state, Monsieur.

VALMONT
Yes, well, it won't last very long.

TOURVEL
I understood you approved of the choice my duty has compelled me to make.

VALMONT
Yes. And your choice has determined mine.

TOURVEL
Which is what?
VALMONT
The only choice capable of putting an end to my suffering.

TOURVEL's eyes are full of fear.

TOURVEL
What do you mean?

VALMONT puts his hands on her arms and almost shakes her.

VALMONT
Listen. I love you. You've no idea now much. Just remember I've made far more difficult sacrifices than the one I'm about to make. Now goodbye.

He pulls away from her, but she clutches at his wrist.

TOURVEL
No.

VALMONT
Let me go.

TOURVEL
You must listen to me!

VALMONT
I have to go.

TOURVEL
No!

During this exchange they have been struggling, he to free himself, she to hang on to him. Now she collapses into his arms and the struggle resolves into a long kiss. Then he sweeps her up in his arms, carries her across the room and gently sets her down on the ottoman. She bursts into tears and clutches on to him as if she's drowning. Eventually he speaks, his voice unusually tender.

VALMONT
Why should you be so upset by the idea of making me happy?

Gradually she stops crying, looking up at him.

TOURVEL
Yes. You're right. I can't live either unless I make you happy. So I promise. No more refusals and no more regrets.
Continued

He leans in and kisses her gently. Then he looks at her for a second and they begin tearing at one another's clothes, suddenly both equally ravenous.

INT. LANDING EVENING

FATHER ANSELME shifts uneasily, bemused by the unexpected SOUNDS coming from behind the closed doors of the drawing room.

INT. MAIN STAIRCASE AND LANDING IN MERTEUIL'S HOUSE DAY

VALMONT springs up the staircase, easily outpacing the puffing MAJORDOMO.

VALMONT

Success!

MERTEUIL (O.S.)

At last.

INT. GRAND SALON DAY

They're both seated: VALMONT exhilarated, MERTEUIL a trifle frosty.

VALMONT

I arrived about six.

MERTEUIL

Yes, I think you may omit the details of the seduction, they're never very enlivening: just describe the event itself.

VALMONT

It was...unprecedented.

MERTEUIL's facing away from him now, so he's unable to see (or discern from her voice which remains icy calm) that for her, every word is like a dagger.

MERTEUIL

Really?

VALMONT

It had a kind of charm I don't think I've ever experienced before.
107 INT. DRAWING-ROOM IN MME DE TOURVEL'S HOUSE EVENING

VALMONT and TOURVEL entwined on an ottoman, their clothes scattered around.

VALMONT (V.O.)
Once she'd surrendered, she behaved with perfect candour. Total mutual delirium.

108 INT. GRAND SALON IN MERTEUIL'S HOUSE DAY

CLOSE on MERTEUIL.

VALMONT (V.O.)
Which for the first time ever with me outlasted the pleasure itself. She was astonishing.

109 INT. DRAWING-ROOM EVENING

MME DE TOURVEL sits up now; and VALMONT kneels at her feet, his head in her lap. She strokes his hair, her expression a strange mixture of exaltation and sadness.

VALMONT (V.O.)
So much so that I ended by falling on my knees and pledging her eternal love. And do you know, at the time...

110 INT. GRAND SALON DAY

CLOSE on VALMONT, as he realises he's allowed himself, perhaps unwisely, to be carried away.

VALMONT
...and for several hours afterwards, I actually meant it.

MERTEUIL
I see.

VALMONT
It's extraordinary, isn't it?

MERTEUIL
Is it? It sounds to me perfectly commonplace.

VALMONT
No, no, I assure you. But of course the best thing about it is that I am now in a position to be able to claim my reward.
MERTEUIL rises and turns to face him. She considers him coldly for a moment before speaking.

MERTEUIL
You mean to say you persuaded her to write a letter as well, in the course of this awesome encounter?

VALMONT
No, I didn't necessarily think you were going to be a stickler for formalities.

MERTEUIL
In any case, I think I may have to declare our arrangement null and void.

VALMONT
What do you mean?

MERTEUIL
I'm not accustomed to being taken for granted.

VALMONT
But there's no question of that.

MERTEUIL
And I've no wish to tear you away from the arms of someone so astonishing.

VALMONT
We've always been frank with one another.

MERTEUIL
And as a matter of fact, I have also taken a new lover, who, at the moment, is proving more than satisfactory.

VALMONT
Oh? And who is that?

MERTEUIL
I am not in the mood for confidences this evening. Don't let me keep you.

She rises to her feet decisively. VALMONT follows suit, momentarily at a loss.
INT. CORRIDOR OF MIRRORS  DAY

VALMONT follows MERTEUIL, as she moves briskly along the corridor.

VALMONT
You can't seriously imagine I prefer her to you?

MERTEUIL
You may genuinely be unaware of this. But I can see quite plainly that you're in love with this woman.

VALMONT stops in his tracks, shocked by the suggestion.

VALMONT
No. Not at all.

MERTEUIL turns back to him.

MERTEUIL
Have you forgotten what it's like to make a woman happy: and to be made happy yourself?

VALMONT
I...of course not.

MERTEUIL
We loved each other once, didn't we? I think it was love. And you made me very happy.

VALMONT
And I could again. We just untied the knot, it was never broken.

MERTEUIL
Illusions of course, are by their nature sweet.

VALMONT
I have no illusions. I lost them on my travels. Now I want to come home.

She shakes her head, a hint of melancholy in her smile.

INT. GRAND STAIRCASE  DAY

As they reach the top of the stairs, VALMONT takes her in his arms. When they separate, there's tenderness in her eyes.
VALMONT
This infatuation: it won't last.
But, for the moment, it's beyond
my control.

She takes her hands away and turns, her expression hardening
again.

INT. CORRIDOR OF MIRRORS   DAY

MERTEUIL passes along the corridor, her head sunk in
thought. She opens the secret door.

INT. MERTEUIL'S BEDROOM   DAY

MERTEUIL emerges from her secret door and smiles at someone
OUT OF SHOT.

INT. VALMONT'S DRAWING-ROOM   EVENING

VALMONT sits at his desk, writing.

VALMONT (V.O.)
I'd sacrifice anything or anybody
to you, you know that. I genuinely
believe I've never been unfaithful
to you.

INT. MERTEUIL'S GRAND SALON   DAY

MERTEUIL sits at a small escritoire, writing.

MERTEUIL (V.O.)
There's no necessity, my dear
Vicomte, for you to work on me
in this, let's be frank, mechanical
fashion... I'm obliged to go away
for a couple of weeks, but I'm well
aware of our arrangement.

EXT. STREET   EVENING

A large carriage passes, MERTEUIL's pale face at the
window. There's someone next to her in the shadows,
unrecognisable.

MERTEUIL (V.O.)
On my return you and I will spend
a single night together. I'm sure
we shall find it quite sufficient.
118 INT. VALMONT'S BEDROOM  DAY

VALMONT lies in bed, rereading the letter, a half-smile on his face.

MERTEUIL (V.O.)
We shall enjoy it enough to regret that it's to be our last; but then
we shall remember that regret is an essential component of happiness.
All this, of course, providing you are able to procure this famous letter.

119 INT. VALMONT'S DRAWING-ROOM  DAY

VALMONT is pouring some more champagne for ÉMILIE, when AZOLAN hurries into the room and murmurs in his ear. Whatever he says seems to be an unpleasant surprise to VALMONT.

VALMONT
All right, give me a moment.

AZOLAN bows and leaves the room as VALMONT turns to ÉMILIE.

ÉMILIE
A woman?

VALMONT
A lady, we might even say.

ÉMILIE
Oh, well, then.

She swallows her champagne and rises to her feet.

Not the one you wrote that letter to?

VALMONT
The very one.

ÉMILIE
I enjoyed that.

VALMONT
And you proved a most talented desk.

ÉMILIE
I'd love to see what she looks like.

VALMONT
Well, you can't.
120 INT. HALL AND STAIRCASE  DAY
AZOLAN, moving slowly, precedes MME DE TOURVEL on the stairs.

121 INT. VALMONT'S DRAWING-ROOM  DAY
ÉMILIE is about to leave by a side-entrance, when VALMONT suddenly checks her, a strange, reckless excitement in his eyes.

    VALMONT
    Wait a minute. Do you have an appointment for tonight?
    
    ÉMILIE
    Few friends for dinner.
    
    VALMONT
    And after dinner?
    
    ÉMILIE
    Nothing firm.

VALMONT opens a drawer and counts out some money.

122 INT. STAIRCASE AND LANDING  DAY
MME DE TOURVEL pushes past AZOLAN in her eagerness; then stops dead in the entrance to the drawing-room.

123 INT. VALMONT'S DRAWING-ROOM  DAY
MME DE TOURVEL'S P.O.V.: ÉMILIE is taking the money from VALMONT.

    ÉMILIE
    I'll be there.

She walks towards MME DE TOURVEL, staring at her with undisguised fascination. MME DE TOURVEL returns her gaze, miserably confused.

VALMONT watches, plainly fascinated. At the last minute, just as she's leaving the room, ÉMILIE is suddenly convulsed with mirth. She vanishes, helplessly shaking with laughter. VALMONT hurries over to MME DE TOURVEL, who now looks horrified.

    VALMONT
    This is an unexpected pleasure.
    
    TOURVEL
    Evidently.

She will stay away from him as she speaks.
VALMONT.
Take no notice of Emilie; she's notoriously eccentric.

TOURVEL
I know that woman.

VALMONT
Are you sure? I'd be surprised.

TOURVEL
She's been pointed out to me at the Opera.

VALMONT
Yes, well, she is striking.

TOURVEL
She's a courtesan. Isn't she?

VALMONT
I suppose, in a manner of speaking...

But MME DE TOURVEL turns and begins to hurry out of the room. VALMONT catches her arm.

TOURVEL
I'm sorry I disturbed you.

VALMONT
Of course you haven't disturbed me, I'm overjoyed to see you.

TOURVEL
Please let me go now.

VALMONT
No, no, I can't, this is absurd.

TOURVEL
Let go!

She wrenches free and he has to put his arms round her and pinions her to prevent her from leaving. By now, she's sobbing blindly.

VALMONT
Let's sit down...

TOURVEL
And you will never be received at my house again!

She struggles violently and finally goes limp. He helps her over to a sofa and sits her down.
VALMONT
Now listen.

TOURVEL
I don't want your lies and excuses!

VALMONT
Just hear me out, that's all I ask.

She watches VALMONT, transfixed, as he speaks with unruffled calm.

VALMONT
Unfortunately, I cannot unlive the years I lived before I met you and during those years, I had a wide acquaintance, the majority of whom were no doubt undesirable in one respect or another. Now it may surprise you to know that Émilie, in common with many others of her profession and character, is kind-hearted enough to take an interest in those less fortunate than herself. She has, in short, the free time and the inclination to do a great deal of charity work: donations to hospitals, soup for the poor, protection for animals, anything which touches her sentimental heart. From time to time, I make small contributions to her purse. That's all.

TOURVEL
Is that true?

VALMONT
My relations with Émilie have for some years now been quite blameless. She's even done a little secretarial work for me. Since I now know your feelings on the matter, I shall take steps to ensure she is never received here again.

TOURVEL
Why did she laugh?

VALMONT
I've no idea.
123 Continued

TOURVEL
Does she know about me?

VALMONT
No doubt she made what, in view of my past, must be regarded as a fair assumption.

MME DE TOURVEL seems almost convinced.

TOURVEL
I want to believe you.

VALMONT
I knew you were coming up, you were announced. Do you seriously imagine, if I'd felt the slightest guilt about Émilie, I would have allowed you to see her?

TOURVEL
I suppose not.

VALMONT
No.

She looks at him, her eyes clear and candid.

TOURVEL
I'm sorry.

VALMONT flinches, a look of real guilt appearing. He takes her in his arms and she buries her face in his chest, weeping softly.

VALMONT
No, no, it's I who must apologise. It was most insensitive of me.

124 INT. VALMONT'S BEDROOM  DAY

MME DE TOURVEL lies in VALMONT's arms. He looks down at her, profoundly contented.

VALMONT
I didn't think it was possible for me to love you more, but your jealousy...

He breaks off, genuinely moved. MME DE TOURVEL looks up at him, speaks with the utmost simplicity.

TOURVEL
I love you so much.
Continued

VALMONT draws her up so that she's lying on top of him; and kisses her, his expression uncharacteristically tender.

VALMONT
When will you start writing to me again?

---

INT. BEDROOM IN MME DE MERTEUIL'S VILLA DAY

MME DE MERTEUIL, en déshabillé, sits at the dressing-table in her suburban love-nest, reading a letter. In the background a sleeping form, unstirring in the bed.

VALMONT (V.O.)
I have the piece of paper you require and hope I may expect to see you very soon.

---

EXT. COURTYARD OF MME DE VOLANGES'S HOUSE NIGHT

VALMONT, wrapped up against the blustery wind and wintry rain, encounters the CONCIERGE in the courtyard. He hands over a sum of money and the CONCIERGE admits him by a side-door.

MERTEUIL (V.O.)
You'll be the very first to hear when I return. In the meantime, I hope you are not neglecting your little pupil.

---

INT. CÉCILE'S BEDROOM NIGHT

VALMONT lies with CÉCILE in her large four-poster. They speak in whispers.

CÉCILE
But where can Danceny be?

VALMONT
I told you, I have all my people out looking: and no trace of him.

The door suddenly bursts open. CÉCILE suppresses a shriek. VALMONT, who is nearer the door, gets up after a few seconds and tiptoes towards the gaping doorway. No one. He closes the door with a sigh of relief and locks it.

VALMONT
Only the wind.

He turns back to discover that CÉCILE has vanished.
VALMONT
Where are you?

There's a groan from the far side of the bed. Hurrying over, VALMONT discovers that CECILE has jammed herself in her panic into the tiny space between the bed and the wall. He helps her up, smiling: but CECILE looks anguished.

VALMONT
Nothing to worry about.

CECILE
Yes there is. I'm bleeding.

EXT. ENTRANCE AND COURTYARD OF MME DE MERTEUIL'S HOUSE
NIGHT

The same windy and rainy night. MERTEUIL's carriage turns in at the entrance and comes to a stop in the courtyard. The PORTER emerges from his lodge with a large open umbrella as FOOTMEN converge on the carriage.

Lurking in the archway which leads out to the street is AZOLAN. He moves so as to stay out of sight, peering into the courtyard to try to identify the occupants of the carriage. After a while, he reacts, with an expression of surprise and cynical amusement.

INT. CORRIDOR OF MIRRORS IN MME DE MERTEUIL'S HOUSE
NIGHT

The house is deserted. VALMONT moves stealthily down the mirrored corridor, surrounded and apparently pursued by his reflections. He stops and hesitates, looking from one mirror to another. Then he remembers and apply pressure to one, opening it to reveal the stone spiral staircase.

INT. SPIRAL STAIRCASE
NIGHT

VALMONT closes the mirror door behind him. Pitch blackness. He begins to ascend quickly and cautiously.

INT. MERTEUIL'S BEDROOM
NIGHT

Candle-light. DANCENY lies in MERTEUIL's arms. They haven't undressed yet. Suddenly, the cupboard door opens and VALMONT appears, giving DANCENY a hideous shock. MERTEUIL covers her surprise far more effectively.

VALMONT
Your porter appears to be under the impression you are still out of town.
MERTEUIL
I have in fact only just returned.

VALMONT
Without attracting the attention of your porter. I think it may be time to review your domestic arrangements.

MERTEUIL
I'm exhausted. Naturally I instructed the porter to inform casual callers that I was out.

VALMONT checks a retort and turns instead, smiling, to DANCENY.

VALMONT
And you here as well, my dear young friend. The porter would seem to be having a somewhat erratic evening.

DANCENY
Oh, well, I, erm, yes.

VALMONT
As a matter of fact, it's you I'm looking for.

DANCENY
Is it?

VALMONT
Mademoiselle Cécile returns to Paris after an absence of over two months. What do you suppose is uppermost in her mind? Answer, of course, the longed-for reunion with her beloved Chevalier.

MERTEUIL
Vicomte, this is no time to make mischief.

VALMONT
Nothing could be further from my mind, Madame.

DANCENY
Go on.

VALMONT
Imagine her distress and alarm when her loved one is nowhere to be found. I've had to do more improvising than an Italian actor.
DANCENY
But how is she? Is she all right?

VALMONT
Oh, yes. Well, no, to be quite frank. I'm sorry to tell you she's been ill.

DANCENY is horrified.

DANCENY
Ill!

VALMONT
Calm yourself, my friend, the surgeon has declared her well on the road to recovery. But you can well imagine how desperate I've been to find you.

DANCENY
Of course, my God, how could I not have been here at such a time? How can I ever forgive myself?

His voice trails away, as he becomes aware of MERTEUIL's withering glance.

VALMONT
But, look, I hate to be the bearer of bad tidings. All is well now with Cécile, I assure you. And I shan't disturb you further.

He produces a piece of paper from an inside pocket.

VALMONT
It's just that I have something to show the Marquise.

MERTEUIL looks up sharply: he's succeeded in catching her interest.

132 INT. MERTEUIL'S DRESSING-ROOM NIGHT

MERTEUIL finishes reading the letter and hands it back to VALMONT.

MERTEUIL
I see she writes as badly as she dresses.

Before VALMONT can respond, she changes the subject.
MERTEUIL
Is it really true the little one has been ill?

VALMONT
Not so much an illness, more a refurbishment.

MERTEUIL
What do you mean?

VALMONT
A miscarriage.

MERTEUIL
Oh, Vicomte, I am sorry. Your son and Bastide's heir.

VALMONT
Isn't there something else we should be discussing?

MERTEUIL
I do hope you're not going to be difficult about Danceny.

VALMONT
I know Belleroche was pretty limp, but I think you could have found a livelier replacement than that mawkish schoolboy.

MERTEUIL
Mawkish or not, he's completely devoted to me. And, I suspect, better equipped to provide me with happiness and pleasure than you. In your present mood.

VALMONT
I see.

He lapses into an injured silence. Then MERTEUIL smiles coquettishly.

MERTEUIL
If I thought you would be your old charming self, I might invite you to visit me one evening next week.

VALMONT
Really?

MERTEUIL
I still love you, you see, in spite of all your faults and my complaints.
133 INT. GRAND STAIRCASE NIGHT

MERTEUIL leads VALMONT, holding his hand. At the top of the grand staircase, he turns to her.

VALMONT
Are you sure you're not going to impose some new condition before you agree to honour your obligation?

Pause. MERTEUIL considers how best to respond. Finally she speaks with deadly precision and calm.

MERTEUIL
I have a friend, who became involved with an entirely unsuitable woman. Whenever any of us pointed this out to him, he invariably made the same feeble reply: it's beyond my control, he would say. He was on the verge of becoming a laughing-stock. At which point, another friend of mine, a woman, decided to speak to him seriously. She explained to him that his name was in danger of being ludicrously associated with this phrase for the rest of his life. So do you know what he did?

VALMONT
I feel sure you're about to tell me.

MERTEUIL
He went round to see his mistress and bluntly announced he was leaving her. As you might expect, she protested vociferously. But to everything she said, to every objection she made, he simply replied: it's beyond my control. Good night.

She flits away along the landing. VALMONT stands there for quite some time before beginning his descent. He walks down the stairs, his heart heavy and his head bowed.

134 INT. DRAWING-ROOM IN MME DE TOURVEL'S HOUSE DAY

There's a fire burning in the grate. MME DE TOURVEL paces anxiously up and down. The door opens and the FOOTMAN shows in VALMONT. She runs across to him, unable to conceal her delight and, as the FOOTMAN leaves, she buries herself in his arms. He embraces her, his expression strained and weary.
TOURVEL
You're only five minutes late, but I get so frightened. I become convinced I'm never going to see you again.

VALMONT holds her close, his resolution ebbing away. He kisses her lingeringly.

TOURVEL
Is it like that for you?

VALMONT detaches himself from her, turns away, and takes a few paces, steeling himself. Then he turns back to her, his expression icy.

VALMONT
Yes. At this moment, for example, I'm quite convinced I'm never going to see you again.

TOURVEL doesn't understand: but she feels an automatic stab of fear.

TOURVEL
What?

VALMONT
I'm so bored, you see. It's beyond my control.

TOURVEL
What do you mean?

VALMONT
After all, it's been four months. So, what I say. It's beyond my control.

TOURVEL
Do you mean...you don't love me any more?

VALMONT
My love had great difficulty outlasting your virtue. It's beyond my control.

TOURVEL
It's that woman, isn't it?

VALMONT
You're quite right, I have been deceiving you with Emilie. Among others. It's beyond my control.
TOURVEL
Why are you doing this?

VALMONT
There's a woman. Not Emilie, another woman. A woman I adore. And I'm afraid she's insisting I give you up. It's beyond my control.

Suddenly MME DE TOURVEL rushes at him, fists flailing. They grapple silently and grimly for one moment, before she screams at him.

TOURVEL
Liar!

VALMONT
You're right, I am a liar. It's like your fidelity, a fact of life, no more nor less irritating. Certainly, it's beyond my control.

TOURVEL
Stop it, don't keep saying that!

VALMONT
Sorry. It's beyond my control.

MME DE TOURVEL screams in anguish and collapses, falling against the ottoman.

VALMONT
Why don't you take another lover?

She bursts into tears, shaking her head and moaning incoherently.

VALMONT
Just as you like. It's beyond my control.

TOURVEL
Do you want to kill me?

VALMONT strides over to her, takes her by the hair and jerks her head up.

VALMONT
Listen. Listen to me. You've given me great pleasure. But I just can't bring myself to regret leaving you. It's the way of the world. Quite beyond my control.
134 Continued

He lets her go and she collapses full-length, moaning and sobbing helplessly. He hurries from the room. She remains where she is, utterly distraught.

135 INT. LANDING AND STAIRCASE DAY

Outside the door VALMONT has stopped. He can hear the SOUND of MME DE TOURVEL's weeping. He closes his eyes and leans his head back against the door for a moment, his expression tormented and queasy. Then he sets off at a run, leaping down the stairs and out of the front door as fast as he can.

136 EXT. STREET NIGHT

The VICOMTE DE VALMONT's carriage moves through swirling fog.

137 INT. CARRIAGE NIGHT

VALMONT is alone, pale and preoccupied. He taps against the partition and the carriage draws up.

138 EXT. ENTRANCE TO MME DE MERTEUIL'S HOUSE NIGHT

VALMONT jumps down from the carriage and calls up to the coachman.

VALMONT
Tomorrow morning, early.

COACHMAN
My lord.

He flicks his whip and the carriage moves off. VALMONT sets off towards the entrance, a black shape cutting through the fog.

139 INT. GRAND SALON IN MME DE MERTEUIL'S HOUSE NIGHT

The two fires at either end of the great room reflect in the mirrored doors and sparkling chandeliers. Furniture has been drawn up round the fires, forming two islands of objects, leaving the centre of the room a bare arena. MME DE MERTEUIL, alone in the room, sits at a small escritoir, writing. The mirrored doors open and VALMONT appears in the doorway, once again unannounced. MERTEUIL looks up: she's unpleasantly surprised to see him, but overcomes her alarm.
MERTEUIL
This is not your appointed evening.

VALMONT
No, but I wanted to ask you: that story you told me, how did it end?

MERTEUIL
I'm not sure I know what you mean.

VALMONT
Well, once this friend of yours had taken the advice of his lady-friend, did she take him back?

MERTEUIL
Am I to understand...?

VALMONT
The day after our last meeting, I broke with Madame de Tourvel on the grounds that it was beyond my control.

A slow smile of great satisfaction spreads across MERTEUIL's face.

MERTEUIL
You didn't!

VALMONT
I certainly did.

MERTEUIL
But how wonderful of you.

VALMONT
You kept telling me my reputation was in danger, but I think this may well turn out to be my most famous exploit. I believe it sets a new standard. Only one thing could possibly bring me greater glory.

MERTEUIL
What's that?

VALMONT
To win her back.

MERTEUIL
You think you could?

VALMONT
I don't see why not.
MERTEUIL
I'll tell you why not: because when one woman strikes at the heart of another, she seldom misses; and the wound is invariably fatal.

VALMONT
Is that so?

MERTEUIL
Oh, yes: I'm also inclined to see this as one of my greatest triumphs.

VALMONT
There's nothing a woman enjoys as much as a victory over another woman.

MERTEUIL
Except, you see, Vicomte, my victory wasn't over her.

VALMONT
Of course it was, what do you mean?

MERTEUIL
It was over you.

Silence. VALMONT's eyes are suddenly full of fear. MERTEUIL, on the other hand, has never seemed more serene.

MERTEUIL
You loved that woman, Vicomte. What's more you still do. Quite desperately. If you hadn't been so ashamed of it, how could you have treated her so viciously? You couldn't bear even the vague possibility of being laughed at. And this has proved something I've always suspected. That vanity and happiness are incompatible.

VALMONT is very shaken. He has to make an effort to be able to resume, his voice ragged with strain.

VALMONT
The fact remains, it's now your turn to make a sacrifice.

MERTEUIL
Is that right?

VALMONT
Danceny must go.
MERTEUIL
Where?

VALMONT
I've been more than patient about this little whim of yours, but enough is enough.

MERTEUIL
One of the reasons I never re-married, despite a quite bewildering range of offers, was the determination never again to be ordered around. I must therefore ask you to adopt a less marital tone of voice.

VALMONT
She's ill, you know. I've made her ill. For your sake. So the least you can do is get rid of that colourless youth.

MERTEUIL
I should have thought you'd have had enough of bullying women for the time being.

VALMONT's face hardens.

VALMONT
Right. I see I shall have to make myself very plain. I have come to spend the night. I shall not take at all kindly to being turned away.

MERTEUIL
I am sorry. I'm afraid I've made other arrangements.

A grim satisfaction begins to enliven VALMONT's features.

VALMONT
Ah. I knew there was something.

MERTEUIL
What?

VALMONT
Danceny isn't coming. Not tonight.

MERTEUIL
What do you mean? How do you know?

VALMONT
I know because I've arranged for him to spend the night with Cécile.
Silence. VALMONT smiles.

VALMONT
Now I come to think of it, he did mention he was expected here. But when I put it to him that he really would have to make a choice, I must say he didn't hesitate. He's coming to see you tomorrow to explain; and to offer you, do I have this right, yes, I think I do, his eternal friendship. As you said, he's completely devoted to you.

MERTEUIL
That's enough, Vicomte.

VALMONT
You're absolutely right. Shall we go up?

MERTEUIL
Shall we what?

VALMONT
Go up. Unless you prefer this, if memory serves, rather purgatorial sofa.

MERTEUIL
I believe it's time you were going.

VALMONT
No. I don't think so. We made an arrangement... I really don't think I can allow myself to be taken advantage of a moment longer.

MERTEUIL
Remember I'm better at this than you are.

VALMONT
Perhaps. But it's always the best swimmers who drown. Now. Yes or no? Up to you, of course. I merely confine myself to remarking that a no will be regarded as a declaration of war. So. One single word is all that is required.

MERTEUIL
All right.
139 Continued

She looks at him evenly for a moment, almost long enough for him to conclude that she has made her answer. But she hasn't. It follows now, calm and authoritative.

MERTEUIL

War.

140 EXT. BOIS DE VINCENNES DAWN

There's snow on the ground: and the CAMERA PANS past bare trees in the grey dawn light.

MERTEUIL (V.O.)
My dear Chevalier Danceny, there is something, as I bid you farewell, that I feel I should tell you.

The CAMERA comes to rest on DANCENY, who's in his shirtsleeves, pacing impatiently, pulling on a leather gauntlet. Beside him is a man in black, his SECOND, holding an épée. DANCENY takes it from him, his breath rising on the air.

MERTEUIL (V.O.)
It is not only that he betrayed you with Cécile: it's the pleasure he took in making you ridiculous.

ANOTHER ANGLE reveals the whole of the clearing, the snow fresh, if not very deep: and VALMONT, who is calmly making his selection from a case of épées, held open for him by AZOLAN. He weighs now one and now the other in his hand. Eventually he chooses one and lays it on the ground, while AZOLAN helps him off with his coat and on with a black glove. Then he picks up the sword and approaches DANCENY. They take up the en-garde position. At a sign from AZOLAN, the duel begins, fierce and determined, VALMONT's skill against DANCENY's aggression. For some time, they're evenly matched, with VALMONT clearly a talented swordsman, looking the more dangerous. Indeed, quite soon, he seems to have DANCENY at his mercy; but he turns aside at the crucial moment and moves away, looking surprised at himself.

141 INT. VALMONT'S BEDROOM DAY

As in Scene 124, VALMONT draws up MME DE TOURVEL, so that she's lying on top of him.

142 EXT. CONVENT DAY

MME DE VOLANGES and CÉCILE leave their carriage and move through the snow to the entrance of the convent.
INT. PRIVATE ROOM IN THE CONVENT DAY

A NUN shows VOLANGES and CÉCILE into a plain cell, where MMÉ DE TOURVEL lies in a curtained bed, deathly pale.

EXT. BOIS DE VINCENNES DAWN

VALMONT returns to the attack: they cut and parry with immense energy. Then VALMONT skids in the snow and DANCENY, more by luck than good judgment, succeeds in wounding him in whichever is not his sword arm. DANCENY immediately withdraws, according to the rules. VALMONT looks down at the wisp of blood staining his torn sleeve.

INT. MADAME DE TOURVEL'S ROOM IN THE CONVENT DAY

The SURGEON's curved blade cuts at the vein on the inside of MMÉ DE TOURVEL's elbow and dark blood begins to flow into a small silver bowl.

EXT. BOIS DE VINCENNES DAWN

VALMONT shakes his head as if to clear his mind and resumes the en-garde position. The duel continues. This time it's DANCENY who looks to have the initiative. VALMONT seems to have lost heart, or even interest; and at one point when a too-enthusiastic attack by DANCENY leaves him wide open, VALMONT fails to take advantage of a golden opportunity. This seems to revive VALMONT's vigour for a moment and he beats DANCENY back only to relent at the last minute and turns his back on him. He moves back towards the centre of the clearing, closing his eyes briefly.

INT. DRAWING-ROOM IN MMÉ DE TOURVEL'S HOUSE EVENING

As in Scene 109, VALMONT kneels with his face in MMÉ DE TOURVEL's lap.

EXT. BOIS DE VINCENNES DAWN

VALMONT turns back to face DANCENY. Now he hardly seems to be trying at all, simply parrying his thrusts. Then he counter-attacks, but so rashly that he almost seems to run onto DANCENY's blade, which enters him just below the heart. There's a moment of mutual shock, then DANCENY withdraws his sword and VALMONT staggers a couple of steps before collapsing. AZOLAN hurries over to him.

VALMONT

I'm cold.

AZOLAN runs to get his coat. DANCENY turns to his SECOND.
Fetch the surgeon.

No, no.

Do as I say!

The SECOND hurries away as AZOLAN drapes VALMONT's coat around him. DANCENY stands alone, uncertain.

A moment of your time.

reluctantly approaches.

Two things: a word of advice, which of course you may ignore, but it is honestly intended; and a request.

Go on.

The advice is: be careful of the Marquise de Merteuil.

You must permit me to treat with scepticism anything you have to say about her.

Nevertheless, I must tell you: in this affair, we are both her creatures.

Painfully, he reaches into his coat pocket and brings out a bundle of letters.

As I believe her letters to me will prove.

He hands DANCENY the letters. After a moment's thought, DANCENY speaks.

And the request?

I want you to get somehow to see Madame de Tourvel...
Continued

DANCENY
I understand she's very ill.

149 INT. MME DE TOURVEL'S ROOM AT THE CONVENT DAY

MME DE VOLANGES and CÉCILE sit watching over MME DE TOURVEL.

VALMONT (V.O.)
That's why this is most important to me. I want you to tell her I can't explain why I broke with her as I did, but that since then my life has been worth nothing.

During this, to MME DE VOLANGES's horror, MME DE TOURVEL suddenly wrenches at the bandage at her elbow, opening the wound and causing it to bleed again.

150 EXT. CONVENT EVENING

DANCENY rides up to the forbidding walls of the convent and dismounts.

VALMONT (V.O.)
I pushed the blade in deeper than you just have, my boy, and I want you to help me withdraw it.

151 INT. MME DE TOURVEL'S ROOM EVENING

DANCENY leans over MME DE TOURVEL, talking to her, unheard. MME DE VOLANGES and CÉCILE wait in the background.

VALMONT (V.O.)
Tell her it's lucky for her that I've gone and I'm glad not to have to live without her. Tell her her love was the only real happiness I've ever known.

MME DE TOURVEL raises a hand and DANCENY stops speaking.

TOURVEL

Enough.

She looks up at DANCENY.

TOURVEL

Draw the curtains.

DANCENY rises and draws the curtains on her bed.
152 EXT. BOIS DE VINCENNES DAWN

CLOSE on DANCENY: tears are rolling down his cheeks.

VALMONT (O.S.)
Will you do that for me?

DANCENY
I will.

The silence is broken by snatches of birdsong.

153 INT. MME DE TOURVEL'S ROOM EVENING

A NUN is lighting candles at the foot of MME DE TOURVEL's bed. Through the curtains, her motionless shape. She's dead. MME DE VOLANGES is by the bed. In a corner, DANCENY murmurs to CÉCILE.

DANCENY
I've made copies of her letters and sent them to everyone I could think of.

CÉCILE
Letters about me?

DANCENY doesn't answer. CÉCILE shakes her head.

CÉCILE
We made it very easy for them.

DANCENY
I'm sorry. You'll never see me again.

He hurries from the room. The NUN draws back the curtains, as CÉCILE approaches MME DE VOLANGES.

CÉCILE
I went to see the Mother Superior. I asked her to let me come back here. For good.

VOLANGES looks at her aghast. CÉCILE turns away from her and watches as the NUN covers MME DE TOURVEL's waxy face.

154 EXT. BOIS DE VINCENNES DAWN

DANCENY raises a hand to brush away his tears. AZOLAN looks over at him indignantly.

AZOLAN
It's all very well doing that now.

VALMONT
Let him be.
We see VALMONT for the first time in this scene. All around him the snow is red with his blood. He raises a hand towards DANCENY.

VALMONT
He had good cause. It's something
I don't believe anyone has ever
been able to say about me.

Before DANCENY can take his hand, he slumps back. He's dead.

INT. MME DE MERTEUIL'S DRESSING-ROOM    DAY

CLOSE on MERTEUIL's face as she utters a great cry of anger and frustration. She sweeps all her perfume-boxes off the dressing-table. Then she smashes everything in the room she can possibly break, ornaments, mirrors, glass jars. She winces suddenly and looks down. She's cut her finger slightly. The sight of her blood seems to calm her. She looks up at the circle of SERVANTS, cowering around the margins of the room, appalled.

MERTEUIL
Get out. All of you.

They hurry out in something of a stampede. MERTEUIL stands, desolate in a field of glittering debris. Her head comes down again, contorted with misery and rage.

INT. MERTEUIL'S BOX AT THE OPERA    EVENING

It's before curtain-up and MERTEUIL moves to the front of the box to contemplate the house. Three boxes away a distinguished-looking middle-aged COUPLE are doing the same thing. MERTEUIL bows to them. To her surprise, they turn away from her, ignoring her ostentatiously. She turns to look down at the orchestra, frowning; and becomes aware that the crowd below are murmuring to one another and pointing up at her. Gradually, the hum dies and there's silence in the theatre. Everyone in the stalls is looking up at her. Suddenly, there's a hiss and then, growing quickly in volume and intensity, a torrent of hissing and booing. MERTEUIL absorbs it for a moment, then turns on her heel and, moving with deliberation and a certain dignity, leaves the box.

INT. MME DE MERTEUIL'S DRESSING-ROOM    NIGHT

Everything is back exactly as it was, leaving no trace of MERTEUIL's rampage. She, in her négligée, sits at her dressing-table, alone, removing her make-up. As it comes
Continued

off, a new MERTEUIL seems for the first time to be revealed, weary, fragile, vulnerable almost. She looks at her reflection with the anxiety someone feels in the presence of their only friend: and the image slowly FADES TO BLACK.

CAPTION ON BLACK SCREEN

And from then on, her soul was written on her face.

23rd April, 198