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Dangerous Liaisons

By Christopher Hampton

Sequence.

Well, my dear...

So how are you adapting
to the world outside?

Very well, I think.

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

So we must see what we can devise
for your amusement.

Valmont is here.

You receive him, do you?

Yes.

So do you.

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.

Then why do you receive him,
maman?

Everyone receives him.

Madame.

What a pleasant surprise.

Madame de Volanges.

How delightful to see you.

You remember my daughter, Ccile?

Well, indeed, but who could have
foretold she would flower so gracefully?

I wanted to call on you
before leaving the city.

Oh...

I'm not sure we can allow that.

Why should you want to leave?

Paris in August, you know...

...and it's time I paid a visit on my aunt.

I've neglected her disgracefully.

Madame de Rosemonde

has been good enough...

...to invite us to stay at the chateau.

Won't you please give her
our warmest regards?

I shall make a point of it, Madame.
I think it's time we took you home.
I'm used to being in bed
by nine at the convent.
So I should hope.
Your aunt?
That's correct.
I thought she'd already made
arrangements to leave you all her money.
Do you know why I summoned you
here this evening?
I'd hoped it might be for
the pleasure of my company.
I need you...
...to carry out an heroic enterprise.
You remember when Bastide left me?
Yes.
And went off with that fat mistress
of yours whose name escapes me.
Yes, yes.
No one has ever done that to me before.
Or to you, I suspect.
I was quite relieved to be rid of her,
frankly.
No, you weren't.
For some years now,
Bastide has been searching for a wife.
He was always unshakably prejudiced
in favour of convent education.
And now he's found the ideal candidate.
Ccile Volanges.
Very good.
And her 60,000 a year.
That must have played some small part
in Bastide's calculations.
None whatsoever.
Bastide's priority, you see...
... is a guaranteed virtue.
I wonder if I'm beginning to guess
what it is you're intending to propose.
Bastide is with his regiment in Corsica
for the rest of the year.
That should give you plenty of time.
You mean to...?

- She's a rosebud.

- You think so?

And he'd get back from his honeymoon...

...to find himself the laughing stock
of Paris.

- Well...

- Yes.

Love and revenge. Two of your favourites.

No, I can't.

What?

Oh really, I can't.

- Why not?

- Oh, it's too easy.

It is.

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.

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

- Of course you are.

- Yes.

My aunt is not on her own
just at the moment.

She has a young friend staying with her.

Madame de Tourvel.

You can't mean it.

To seduce a woman famous
for strict morals...

...religious fervour and the happiness
of her marriage...

What could possibly be more prestigious?

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 Monsieur de Tourvel anyway?

Presiding over some
endless case in Burgundy.

I don't think you can hope

for any actual pleasure.

Oh, yes.

You see, 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 the excitement of watching her...

...betray everything that's
most important to her.

Surely you understand that.

I thought "betrayal"

was your favourite word.

No, no...

..."cruelty. "

I always think that has a nobler ring to it.

- How is Belleruche?

- I'm very pleased with him.

And is he your only lover?

Yes.

I think you should take another.

I think it most unhealthy, this exclusivity.

You're not jealous, are you?

Of course I am.

Belleruche is completely undeserving.

I thought he was one
of your closest friends.

Exactly, so I know what I'm talking about.

No,

I think you should organise an infidelity.

With me, for example.

You refuse me a simple favour...

...then you expect to be indulged?

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.

All right then.

Come back when you've succeeded
with Madame de Tourvel.

Yes.

And I will offer you...

...a reward.

My love.
But I shall require proof.
Certainly.
Written proof.
Not negotiable.
I don't suppose there's
any possibility of an advance?
Goodnight, Vicomte.
Where have you been?
Time has no logic when I'm not with you.
An hour is like a century.
I've told you before,
we shall get on a great deal better...
...if you make a concerted effort
not to sound like the latest novel.
It's such a beautiful day,
I believe we'll walk.
You didn't take the sacrament today.
No.
May I ask why?
I have this appalling reputation,
as you may know.
Yes, I have been warned about you.
You have? By whom?
A friend.
The fact is 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.
- And now?
- Now...
...what I most often feel is unworthiness.
But it is precisely at such moments
that you start to become worthy.
I certainly believe one should
constantly strive to improve oneself.
Chevalier...
...I don't believe you know my cousin,
Madame de Volanges.
This is Chevalier Danceny.
And Madame's daughter, Ccile.
Tell us what we should think of the opera.

It's sublime, don't you find?
Monsieur Danceney is one
of those rare eccentrics...
...who come here to listen to the music.
I do look forward to our next meeting.
Charming young man...
...penniless, regrettably.
He's one of the finest
music teachers in the city.
Perhaps you should employ him.
How are you getting on
with Madame de Tourvel's maid?
Julie, to tell you the truth, sir,
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, what else is there to do
in the country?
It wasn't so much the details
of your intimacy I was after...
...it's whether or not she's agreed
to bring me Madame de Tourvel's letters.
- She won't steal the letters, sir.
- She won't?
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 gives you a headache.
And them, as often as not.
I need to know who's
writing to her about me.
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.
That is a terrible noise he's making.
He should get the news back
to her twice as quickly.
I don't think we should make it

too easy for him.
What exactly do you think you're doing?
I am impounding these effects, sir.
Has it not been explained to you?
Monsieur Armand is not well.
I don't make the laws, sir.
I just do what I'm told.
Everybody has to pay his taxes.
How much does he owe?
How much?
Fifty-six
livres.
- Pay him.
- Yes, my lord.
Monsieur Armand...
Excuse me, you don't know me.
Of course I do, Monsieur le Vicomte.
Please, don't get up.
- I have to. They're taking the bed.
- No, not at all.
No one's taking anything.
Just to tide you over. I insist.
Me, sir...
Fifty-six livres to save
an entire family from ruin.
That seems a genuine bargain.
These days, my lord,
you can find half a dozen like that...
...in any village in the country.
Really?
I must say the family was
very well chosen.
Solidly respectable...
...gratifyingly tearful,
no suspiciously pretty girls. Well done.
I do my best for you, sir.
And all that humble gratitude.
It was most affecting.
Certainly brought a tear to my eye.
That's from her husband.
This must be from
that officious friend of hers.
Tell me, where do you and Julie meet?
In my room, sir.

- And is she coming tonight?
- Afraid so.
I think I may be forced to burst in on you.
See if blackmail will succeed
any better than bribery.
About two o'clock suit you?
I don't want to embarrass you.
Will that give you enough time?
Ample, sir.
Is this true about Monsieur Armand?
I don't believe I know anyone
of that name.
You may as well own up, Monsieur.
My footman happened to be passing...
...when you were in the village
this morning.
I don't think you should pay too much
attention to servants' gossip.
It is true, isn't it?
Well...
...yes.
It is.
You dear boy,
come and let me give you a hug.
I can't understand how someone
whose instincts are so generous...
...could lead such a dissolute life.
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...
Since I don't...
...let me make a confession.
I'm afraid the key to the paradox lies
in a certain weakness of character.
I can't see how so thoughtful an act
of charity could be described as weak.
Because it was simply a response...
...to a strong new influence in my life.
Yours.
You see how weak I am?
I promised myself
I was never going to tell you.

It's just that looking at you...
You needn't worry...
...I have no illicit intentions.
I would not dream of insulting you.
But I do love you.
I adore you.
Please, help me.
- I rang a number of times.
- Didn't hear, sir.
- I require some hot water.
- Right away, sir.
Don't move.
- Azolan...
- Sir?
Wait for me in my room.
You know I can't condone
this sort of behaviour, Julie.
I know, sir.
- But, you may rely on my discretion.
- Thank you, sir.
Providing, of course,
that you agree to my price.
No. Nothing like that.
No, all I want is to get
to see every letter...
...that Madame de Tourvel
has received since her arrival here...
...and every letter that she writes
from now on.
But sir, I can't-
Deliver them to Azolan
by midnight tomorrow.
For your trouble.
Would it be very wrong of me
to answer Monsieur Danceney's letters?
- In the circumstances, yes.
- In what circumstances?
It's not my place to
tell you this, my dear...
...if I hadn't become so fond of you...
Go on, please.
Your marriage has been arranged.
- Who is it?
- Oh, someone I know slightly.

Monsieur le Comte de Bastide.

- What's he like?

- Well...

You don't like him?

Oh, it's not that. He's a man
of somewhat erratic judgement.

- And rather serious.

- How old is he?

- Thirty-six.

- Thirty-six! He's an old man.

Do you know when?

In the new year, I believe.

Maybe there's a way to let you
write to Monsieur Danceney.

Oh, Madame.

If you were to let me see both sides
of the correspondence...

...I could reassure myself.

But I can't show the letters

I've already sent him.

I trust you slept well, Madame.

I wish I could say that I had.

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

But I do, of course I do!

You've offended me deeply.

It's unforgivable.

This confirms everything

I've been told about you.

I'm beginning to think you may
have planned the whole exercise.

I had no idea you were staying here.

Not that it would have disturbed me
in the slightest if I had known.

You see, until I met you,

I had only ever experienced desire.

Love, never.

- That's enough.

- No, no...

...you've made an accusation.

You must allow me the opportunity
to defend myself.

I'm not going to deny

that I was aware of your beauty...

...but the point is,
this has nothing to do with your beauty.
As I got to know you, I began to realise...
...that beauty was the least
of your qualities.
I became fascinated by your goodness.
I was drawn in by it.
I didn't understand
what was happening to me.
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.
...but that didn't matter to me.
It's not that I want to have you,
all I want is to deserve you.
Tell me what to do.
Show me how to behave.
I'll do anything you say.
Very well, then.
I would like you to leave this house.
I don't see why that should be necessary.
Let's just say you've spent
your whole life making it necessary.
And if you refuse,
I shall be forced to leave myself.
Well then, of course, whatever you say.
Thank you.
Perhaps I might be so bold
as to ask a favour in return?
I think it would only be
just to let me know...
...which of your friends
has blackened my name.
If friends of mine have warned me
against you...
...I could hardly reward them
with betrayal.
I must say,
you devalue your generous offer...
...if you want to use it
as a bargaining point.
Very well, I withdraw the request.

I hope you won't think I'm bargaining
if I ask you to let me write to you.
- Well-
- And pray that you will do me...
...the kindness of answering my letters.
I'm not sure a correspondence with you...
...is something a woman of honour
could permit herself.
You're determined to refuse
my suggestions, however respectable.
- I didn't say that.
- And you'd rather be unjust...
...than risk showing me
a touch of kindness?
I would welcome the chance
to prove to you...
...that what lies behind this
is not hatred or resentment but-
But what?

Listen to this:

"He knows exactly how far
he may venture without risk...
"... and guarantees his own security...
"... by tormenting only the safest kind

of victim:

Madame de Volanges...
- Goodbye, Aunt.
- Goodbye, dear boy.
- Monsieur, please...
- I'll write soon.
My dear Madame de Tourvel...
...I have just come...
- Don't move, I said. -
...to my desk...
...in the middle of a stormy night...
...during which...
...I have been...
...tossed...
... from exultation...
... to exhaustion...
... and back again.
Y et, despite these torments...

... I guarantee that at this moment...
... I am far happier than you.
We'll finish it later, shall we?
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.
Well...
...yes.
I told Danceny you would act
as his confidant and advisor.
I need you to stiffen his resolve,
if that's the phrase.
I thought if anyone could help him-
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.
I take it he hasn't been a great success.
He's been disastrous.
Like most intellectuals,
he's intensely stupid.
I often wonder how you managed
to invent yourself.
I had no choice, did I? I'm a woman.
Women are obliged to be
far more skillful than men.
You can ruin our reputation and our life
with a few well-chosen words.
So, of course,
I had to invent not only myself...
...but ways of escape
no one has ever thought of before.
And I've succeeded because...
...I've always known I was born
to dominate your sex and avenge my own.
Yes, but what I ask was, how?
When I came out into society I was 15.

I already knew that the role
I was condemned to...
...namely, to keep quiet
and do what I was told...
...gave me the perfect
opportunity to listen and observe.
Not to what people told me,
which naturally was of no interest...
...but to whatever it was
they were trying to hide.
I practised detachment.
I learnt how to look cheerful
while under the table...
...I stuck a fork into the back of my hand.
I became...
...a virtuoso of deceit.
It wasn't pleasure I was after,
it was knowledge.
I consulted the strictest moralist
to learn how to appear.
Philosophers, to find out what to think.
And novelists,
to see what I could get away with.
And in the end I distilled everything
to one wonderfully simple principle...
...win or die.
So, you're infallible, are you?
If I want a man, I have him.
If he wants to tell, he finds that he can't.
That's the whole story.
And was that our story?
I wanted you before we'd ever met.
My self-esteem demanded it.
Then when you began to pursue me...
...I wanted you so badly.
It's the only time I have ever been
controlled by my desire.
Single combat.
Madame de Volanges...
Your note said it was urgent.
It's days now. I haven't been able
to think of anything else.
Please, sit down.
I have reason to believe...

...that a... how should I describe it...
...that a dangerous liaison
has sprung up between your daughter...
...and the Chevalier Danceny.
Oh, no, that's completely absurd.
Ccile is still a child.
She understands nothing of these things.
And Danceny is an entirely
respectable young man.
Tell me...
...does Ccile have a great
many correspondents?
Why do you ask?
I went to her room
at the beginning of this week.
I simply knocked on the door and entered.
She was stuffing an envelope...
...into the top right-hand drawer
of her bureau...
...in which I couldn't help noticing...
...there seemed to be a large number
of similar letters.
I am most grateful to you.
Would you think it impertinent
if I were to make another suggestion?
No, no.
If my recollection is correct...
...I overheard you saying
to the Vicomte de Valmont...
...that his aunt invited you and Ccile
to stay at her chateau.
She has, yes, repeatedly.
A spell in the country
might be the very thing.
Thank you.
You asked for hindrances.
You are a genuinely wicked woman.
And you wanted a chance
to make my cousin suffer.
I can't resist you.
I made it easy for you.
But, all this is most inconvenient.
The Comtesse de Beaulieu
has invited me to stay.

Well, you will just have to put her off.
Well, the Comtesse has promised me
extensive use of her gardens.
It seems her husband's fingers are
not as green as they once were.
Maybe not.
But from what I hear,
all his friends are gardeners.
Is that so?
You want your revenge, I want my revenge.
I'm afraid there's only
one place you can go.
Back to Auntie?
Back to Auntie.
Where you can also pursue
that other matter.
You have some evidence to procure,
have you not?
Don't you think it would
be a generous gesture...
...to show the proper confidence
in my abilities...
...if we were to take
that evidence for granted?
I need it in writing, Vicomte.
- Now you must leave me.
- Must I? Why?
- Because I'm hungry.
- Yes?
I have quite an appetite myself.
Then go home and eat.
In writing.
You'll be pleased to hear,
my dear that Armand is on his feet again...
...and back at work.
Who?
Monsieur Armand!
Whose family you helped so generously.
Oh, yes!
When my nephew was last here
we discovered, quite by chance...
...that he had gone into the village-
Are you feeling all right, Madame?
I'm sorry to interrupt, Aunt.

It seemed to me, all of a sudden...
...that Madame de Tourvel
didn't look at all well.
- No, I'm quite all right.
- Perhaps you need some fresh air.
Do you feel constricted in any way?
I feel sure Madame de Volanges is right,
as usual.
A turn around the grounds, perhaps.
Yes, a little walk in the garden.
It's not too cool, I think.
Fresh air will do you the world of good.
That meal was somewhat heavy, perhaps.
I can't believe that was the cause.
Come back for it.
Mademoiselle!
I've no wish to arouse suspicion,
so I'll be brief.
The letter is from the Chevalier Danceny.
- Yes, I thought-
- Now, the handing over of such letters...
...is a far from easy matter to accomplish.
I cannot be expected to create
a diversion every day.
So...
This key resembles your bedroom key.
I happen to know it is kept
in your mother's room...
...on the mantelpiece,
tied with a blue ribbon.
Take it,
go up and attach the blue ribbon to it...
...and put it in the place
of your bedroom key.
Bring it to me and I will get
a copy cut within two hours.
Then I can collect your letters
and deliver Danceny's...
...without any complications.
Now, in the cupboard by your bed...
...you'll find a feather
and a small bottle of oil...
...so that you may oil the lock
and hinges on the ante-room door.

Are you sure, Monsieur?

Trust me.

Believe me, Mademoiselle...

...if there's one thing I can't abide,
it's deceitfulness.

I trust you are feeling a little better,
Madame.

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

You can't mean me, do you?

- You promised to leave here.

- And I did.

Would you excuse me, Madame?

Quick, your mother.

What are you doing?

I just came in to fetch your shawl.

Why are you so angry with me?

All I can offer you is my friendship.

Can't you accept it?

I could pretend to,

but that would be dishonest.

The man I used to be would have been
content with friendship...

...and then set about trying
to turn it to his advantage.

But I have changed now.

I can't conceal from you that

I love you tenderly, passionately...

...and above all, respectfully.

So how am I to demote myself
to the tepid position of friend?

Not that you are even
pretending to show friendship.

- What do you mean?

- Well, is this friendly?

Why must you deliberately
destroy my peace of mind?

You were wrong to feel threatened by me,
Madame.

Your happiness is far more
important to me than my own.

That is what I mean

when I say that I love you.

I think we should end this conversation.

I shall leave you in
possession of the field.
But look...
We are to be living under the same roof,
at least for a few days.
Surely we don't have to try
to avoid each other?
Of course not.
Provided you adhere
to my few simple rules.
I shall obey you in this as in everything.
Monsieur...
What?
Nothing.
Nothing to worry about.
Have you brought a letter?
No.
Then what...?
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 will believe me.
What do you want?
Well, I don't know...
What do you think?
No!
All right.
I just want you to give me a kiss.
- A kiss?
- That's all.
- Then will you go?
- Then I'll go.
- Promise?
- Whatever you say.
All right?
Very nice.
No, I mean, will you go now?
Oh, I don't think so.
But you promised.
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.

And if I give you a kiss...?
Let's just get ourselves more comfortable,
shall we?
I had better go and see what's wrong,
if you will excuse me.
Of course, my dear.
I shouldn't worry, Madame.
The young have such miraculous
powers of recuperation.
I'm sure she will soon
be back in the saddle.
Who else can I turn to in
my desperation, Madame?
And how can I write
the necessary words?
There's something going on,
and Ccile will not tell me.
You must speak to her at once.
Tell me...
...you resisted him, did you?
Of course I did...
...as much as I could.
- But he forced you?
- No...
...not exactly.
But I found it almost
impossible to defend myself.
Why was that? Did he tie you up?
No, he just has a way of putting things.
You can't think of an answer.
Not even "no"?
I kept on saying no all the time.
But somehow,
that was not what I was doing.
I am so ashamed.
You'll find the shame is like the pain.
You only feel it once.
You really want my advice?
Please.
Allow Monsieur de Valmont...
...to continue your instruction.
Convince your mother
you've forgotten Danceny.
And raise no objection to the marriage.

With Monsieur de Bastide?
When it comes to marriage,
one man is as good as the next.
And even the least accommodating
is less trouble than a mother.
Are you saying, I'm going to have to do...
...that, with three different men?
I am 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...
...as often as you like...
...in as many different ways as you like.
Our sex has few enough advantages,
so make the best of those you have.
Now, here comes your
maman...
...so remember what I've said,
and above all, no snivelling.
How are you feeling now, my dear?
Much better, thank you,
maman.
I think you look tired.
I think you should go to bed.
No, I-
I think you should do
as your mother suggests.
We can arrange to have
something brought to your room.
I'm sure it will do you good.
Well, perhaps you are right, Madame.
You have such a very good
influence on her.
I don't think I have congratulated you
on your revenge.
- So, you know.
- Oh, yes.
And I believe from now
you will find her door unbolted.
Where is she?
I can't see her at the moment.
Surely I have explained to you before
how much I enjoy watching the battle...

...between love and virtue.
What concerns me is that
you seem to enjoy watching it...
...much more than you used
to enjoy winning it.
All in good time.
The century is drawing to its close.
Isn't it a pity that our agreement...
...does not relate to the task you set me...
...rather than the task I set myself?
I am grateful, of course.
But that would have been
almost insultingly simple.
One does not applaud the tenor
for clearing his throat.
As with every other science,
the first thing you must learn...
...is to call everything by its proper name.
I don't see why we have to talk at all.
Without the correct polite vocabulary...
...how would you indicate
what you would like me to do...
...or make an offer of something
I might find agreeable.
Surely you just-
You see, if I do my work adequately...
...I would like to think that
you will be able to...
...surprise Monsieur de Bastide
on his wedding night.
- Would he be pleased?
- Of course.
He'll merely assume your maman
has done her duty and fully briefed you.
Maman couldn't possibly
talk of anything of that sort.
I can't think why.
She was, after all, one of the most
notorious young women in Paris.
- Maman?
- Certainly.
More noted for her enthusiasm
than her ability...
...if I remember rightly.

There was a famous occasion
before you were born...
This would have been...
...when your mother 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.
I can't believe that.
No, no, I assure you, it's true.
How do you know?
The third party was myself.
You asked me if Monsieur de Bastide
would be pleased with your abilities.
And the answer is...
...education is never a waste.
Now...
...I think we might begin...
...with one or two Latin terms.
We go for a walk together
almost every day.
A little further every
time down the path...
... that has no turning.
She has accepted my love...
... I have accepted her friendship.
We are both aware of how little
there is to choose between them.
I wish you knew me well enough
to recognize...
...how much you have changed me.
My friends in Paris remarked on it at once.
I have become the soul of consideration...
...conscientious, charitable...
...more celibate than a monk.
More celibate?
Well,
you know the stories one hears in Paris.

I feel she is inches from surrender.

Her eyes are closing.

Madame.

Where are you going, Monsieur?

- To the salon.

- There is no one there.

The others have all decided

on an early night.

- I very much missed our walk today.

- Yes.

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

- This heavy rain is surely exceptional.

- Yes. May I?

Of course.

But, you see, within a week

I shall have concluded my business.

- I see.

- Even so, I am not sure...

...I will be able to bring myself to leave.

Oh, please. You must.

Are you still so anxious to be rid of me?

You know the answer to that.

I rely on your integrity and generosity.

I want to be able to be grateful to you.

Forgive me if I say

I do not want your gratitude.

What I want from you

is something altogether deeper.

I know God is punishing me for my pride.

I was so certain this could never happen.

Nothing like what? Do you mean love?

- Is love what you mean?

- You promised not to speak of it.

Yes, of course, I understand,

but I must know.

I can't, don't you understand?

It's impossible.

You don't have to speak. Just look at me.

Yes...

For God's sake, you must leave
me if you don't want to kill me.

You must help...

Fetch Madame,

Madame de Tourvel has been taken ill.
I heard something as I was passing.
She seemed to be having
difficulty breathing.
- Oh, my dear, whatever is it?
- I am all right now.
I shall leave her
in your capable hands, Aunt.
We must send for a doctor, my dear.
No, no, please.
I don't need a doctor. I just...
Sit with me for a moment.
I must leave this house.
I am most desperately in love.
To leave is the last thing in the world
I want to do, but...
...I'd rather die than
to live with the guilt.
My dear girl,
none of this is any surprise to me.
The only thing that might surprise
one is how little the world changes.
What should I do? What is your advice?
If I remember rightly in such matters...
...all advice is useless.
I have never been so unhappy.
I'm sorry to say this but...
...those who are most worthy of love
are never made happy by it.
But why? Why should that be?
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 are 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 am devoted to my nephew.
But what is true of most men...
...is doubly so of him.
And yet...

...he could have, just now...
...he took pity on me.
If he has released you...
...my dear child, you must go.
Get up, sir, quick.
Sir!
Over here.
What is it?
- Madame de Tourvel.
- What?
I want you to follow her, right now.
Stay close to her.
I want to know everything.
Where she goes. Who she sees.
What she eats. If she sleeps.
Everything.
That's for bribes. Yours will come later.
- Yes, sir.
- Now, go.
Go!
Dear Father Anselme...
... try as I may, I cannot see...
... the necessity for the interview
you suggest.
However, since you insist...
... I propose you bring him to see me...
... on Thursday, the
This is excellent.
Make sure Father Anselme receives it.
What news?
No visitors.
There still has not been
a single visitor since she got back.
A bite of soup last night,
didn't touch the pheasant.
Afterwards, a cup of tea.
Nothing else to report.
Oh yes, sir, there is.
You wanted to know
what she was reading.
The book by her bed is
"Christian Thoughts...
"... Volume Two. "
How is Julie?

She seems a bit keener than
she was in the country.
And yourself?
Talk about devotion to duty.
Off you go.
Keep it up.
- Madame...
- Vicomte...
Well...
...what a pleasant surprise.
Danceney...
Thank you, Monsieur, for everything.
Well, I was afraid I had been
a sad disappointment to you.
On the contrary.
It is you I have to thank
for keeping our love alive.
Well, as to love, Ccile
thinks of little else.
She and her mother are coming
back to Paris in two weeks...
...and she is longing to see you.
I have had the most
wonderful letter from her.
Really?
Not like any of her other letters,
somehow...
...quite a different tone of voice.
My dearest...
...Danceney...
...I swear to you...
...on my chastity...
...that even if my mother forces me
to go through with this marriage...
...I shall be yours completely.
Your friend, the Vicomte de Valmont...
... has been very active on your behalf.
I doubt if you could do more yourself.
I don't know how I could bear to go
another two weeks without seeing her.
We shall have to do our very best
to provide some distraction for you.
If you would be so kind
as to wait in the carriage.

There's a matter I must discuss
with the Vicomte in private.
Of course.
I don't know how I can ever repay you.
Don't give it another thought.
It's been delightful.
Poor boy, he's quite harmless.
Sometimes, Vicomte,
I can't help, but adore you.
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.
What can you mean?
Ccile is two weeks late.
Aren't you pleased?
I'm not sure.
Your aim was to revenge yourself
on Bastide.
I have provided him with a wife trained
by me to perform, quite naturally...
...services one would hesitate
to request from a professional...
...and very likely pregnant as well.
What more do you want?
All right, Vicomte, I agree.
You have more than done your duty.
Shame you let the other ones
slip through your fingers.
I let her go.
But why?
I was moved.
Oh, well then, no wonder you bungled it.
I have an appointment
to visit her on Thursday...
...and this time I shall be merciless.
I am pleased to hear it.
Why do you suppose we...
...only feel compelled to chase
the ones who run away?
Immaturity?
I shan't have a moment's peace
until its over.

I love her, I hate her...
...my life is a misery.
Well, I think I may have kept
our young friend waiting long enough.
I shall call on you
sometime soon after Thursday.
Only if you succeed, Vicomte.
I am not sure I can face
another catalogue of incompetence.
I shall succeed.
I hope so.
Once upon a time you were
a man to be reckoned with.
I understand that Father Anselme...
...has explained to you
the reason for my visit?
Yes, he said you wished
to be reconciled with me...
...before beginning instruction with him.
That is correct.
But I see no need for formal reconciliation,
Monsieur.
No.
When I have, as you said, insulted you...
...and when you have treated me
with an unqualified contempt.
Contempt?
You ran 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.
I am sure you understand me better
than you pretend to, Monsieur.
It was me you ran away from, wasn't it?
I had to leave.
And do you have to keep away from me?
I am as unhappy as you could
ever have wanted me to be.
I have only ever wanted your happiness.

How can I be happy without you?
I must have you, or die.
Death it is.
I'm sorry, Madame.
All I wanted from this meeting
was your forgiveness...
...for the wrongs that you think
that I have done you.
So that I may end my days
in some peace of mind.
I understood you approved of the choice
my duty has compelled me to make.
Yes.
And your choice has determined mine.
Which is what?
The only choice capable of
putting an end to my suffering.
What do you mean?
I love you.
You have no idea how much.
Just remember I have made
far more difficult sacrifices...
...than the one I am about to make. Now...
- ... goodbye.
- No.
You must listen to me!
No!
Why should you be so upset
by the idea of making me happy?
You are right. I cannot live
either unless I make you happy.
So I promise...
...no more refusals...
...and no more regrets.
Success!
Well...
...I arrived at about six.
Yes, I think you may omit
the details of the seduction.
They are never very enlivening.
Just describe the event itself.
It was, unprecedented.
Really?
It had a kind of charm that

I don't think I have experienced before.
Once she'd surrendered,
she behaved with perfect candour.
Total mutual delirium.
Which, for the first time ever with me,
outlasted the pleasure itself.
She was astonishing.
So much so, that I ended by falling on
my knees and pledging her eternal love.
And do you know that at that time...
...and for several hours afterwards
I actually meant it.
I see.
It's extraordinary, isn't it?
Is it?
- It sounds to me perfectly commonplace.
- Oh, no...
...I assure you.
But of course, the best thing about it is...
...I am now in a position
to be able to claim my reward.
You mean to say you persuaded her
to write a letter as well...
...in the course of
this awesome encounter?
I didn't necessarily think you were
going to be a stickler for formalities.
In any case, I may have to declare
our arrangement null and void.
What do you mean?
I am not accustomed
to be taken for granted.
But there is no question of that.
You are misunderstanding me.
And I have no wish to tear you away
from the arms of someone so astonishing.
We have always been
frank with one another.
And as a matter of fact,
I have also taken a new lover...
...who at the moment,
is proving more than satisfactory.
- Who is that?
- I am not in the mood for confidences.

Don't let me keep you.
You can't seriously imagine
I prefer her to you?
You may genuinely be unaware of this.
But I can see quite plainly
that you are in love with this woman.
No.
Not at all.
Have you forgotten what it is like
to make a woman happy?
And to be made happy yourself?
I?
Of course not.
We loved each other once, didn't we?
I think it was love.
And you made me very happy.
And we could again.
We just untied the knot.
It was never broken.
Illusions of course,
are by their nature sweet.
I have no illusions.
I lost them on my travels.
Now...
...I want to come home.
As for this present infatuation,
it won't last...
...but for the moment,
it is beyond my control.
My dear Vicomte, I'm obliged
to go away for a couple of weeks...
... but I am well aware
of our arrangement.
On my return you and I will spend
a single night together.
We shall enjoy it enough
to regret it is 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.
It shall be done!
But, Paris is so tedious without you.

And I am living like a medieval hermit.
All right, give me a moment.
Drink up.
What is it?
Someone who may well
not appreciate your presence.
- You mean a woman?
- A lady, we might even say.
It is not the one we wrote that letter to?
- The very one.
- I enjoyed that.
You proved a most talented desk.
I'd like to see what she looks like.
- Well, you can't.
- Oh...
On second thoughts,
I don't see why you shouldn't.
Tell me,
do you have plans for this evening?
A few friends round for dinner.
- And after dinner?
- Nothing firm.
Well...
I will be there.
This is an unexpected pleasure.
- I know that woman.
- Are you sure? I would be surprised.
She has been pointed out
to me at the opera.
Yes, well, she is striking.
She is a courtesan, isn't she?
Yes, I suppose, in a manner of speaking.
Well I am sorry to have disturbed you.
Of course you have not disturbed me.
I'm overjoyed to see you.
You will never be received
at my house again.
I don't want your lies and excuses.
Sit down. Just hear me out.
That is all I ask.
Then you can judge.
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 Emilie...
...in common with many others
of her character and profession...
...is kind-hearted enough
to take an interest...
...in those less fortunate than herself.
In short...
...she has the 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 a small
contribution to her purse. That's all.
Is that true?
My relations with Emilie...
...have been, for some years now,
quite blameless.
I mean, she has even done a little
secretarial work for me on occasion.
Why did she laugh?
I have no idea.
Does she know about me?
No doubt she made what,
in view of my past...
...must be regarded as a fair assumption.
I want to believe you.
I knew you were coming up.
You were announced.
I am sorry.
But no...
...no, it's I who must apologize.
It was most insensitive of me.
I didn't think it was possible
for me to love you more.
But your jealousy...
I love you so much.
When will you start writing to me again?

My dear Vicomte...
... I don't believe this self-denial
can be good for you.
I hope it does not mean you are
neglecting your little pupil.
But where can Danceney be?
I told you,
I have all my people out looking for him.
There is no trace of him.
It is only the wind.
Where are you?
There is nothing to be frightened about.
Yes, there is.
I am bleeding.
Your porter seems to be
under the impression...
...that you're still out of town.
I have in fact only just returned.
Without attracting the attention
of your porter?
I think it may be time to review
your domestic arrangements.
I am exhausted.
Naturally, I instructed the porter...
...to inform any casual callers
that I was out.
And you here as well...
...my dear, young friend.
The porter appears to be having
a somewhat erratic evening.
Yes.
As a matter of fact,
it is you that I am looking for.
Is it?
Mademoiselle Ccile returns to Paris
after an absence of over two months.
Now what do you suppose
is uppermost in her mind?
Answer, of course, the longed-for
reunion with her beloved Chevalier.
Vicomte, this is no time to make mischief.
Nothing could be further
from my mind, Madame.
Go on.

Imagine her distress and alarm when
her loved one is nowhere to be found.
I have had to do more improvising
than an Italian actor.
How is she? Is she all right?
Oh, yes. Well, no, to be quite frank.
I'm sorry to tell you she has been ill.
- Ill!
- Calm yourself, my friend.
The surgeon has declared her
well on the road to recovery.
But you can well imagine how
desperate I have been to find you.
Of course, I...
My God, how could I have
been away at such a time?
How can I ever forgive myself?
But look, all is well now with Ccile,
I assure you.
And I shan't disturb you further.
It is only that I have a little
something to show the Marquise.
Wait in my dressing room.
- It is through there.
- I know where it is.
I see she writes as badly as she dresses.
Is it really true the little one's been ill?
Not so much an illness,
more a refurbishment.
What do you mean?
Miscarriage.
Vicomte, I am so sorry.
Your son and Bastide's heir.
Isn't there something else
that we should be discussing?
I do hope you are not going
to be difficult about Danceney.
I know Beller Roche was pretty limp...
...but I do think you could have found
a livelier replacement...
...than that mawkish schoolboy.
Mawkish or not,
he's completely devoted to me.
And, I suspect,

better equipped to provide me with...
...happiness and pleasure than you are...
...in your present mood.
I see.
If I thought you would be
your old charming self...
...I might invite you to visit me
one evening next week.
Really?
I still love you, you see...
...in spite of all your faults
and my complaints.
Are you sure you are not going
to impose some new condition...
...before you agree
to honour your obligation?
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?
I feel sure you are about to tell me.
He went round to see his mistress and
bluntly announced he was leaving her.
Well, as you can expect,
she protested vociferously.
But to everything she said...
...to every objection she made...
...he simply replied:
"It's beyond my control. "
Good night.
You're only five minutes late,
but I get so frightened.

I become convinced I'm never
going to see you again.

- My angel.

- Is it like that for you, too?

Yes.

At this moment, for example,

I'm quite convinced...

...I am never going to see you again.

What?

I'm so bored, you see.

It's beyond my control.

What do you mean?

Well, after all, it has been four months.

So, what I said:

It's beyond my control.

Do you mean you don't love me anymore?

My love had great difficulty
outlasting your virtue.

It's beyond my control.

- It is that woman, isn't it?

- You are quite right.

I have been deceiving you with Emilie,
among others.

It's beyond my control.

Why are you doing this?

There's a woman.

Not Emilie, another woman.

A woman I adore.

And I am afraid she is insisting
that I give you up.

It's beyond my control.

Liar! Liar!

You are quite right, I am a liar.

And it's like your fidelity, a fact of life.

No more nor less irritating.

- Certainly beyond my control.

- Stop it!

Don't keep saying that!

Sorry. Beyond my control.

Why don't you take another lover?

Whatever you would like.

It's beyond my control.

Do you want to kill me?

Listen. Listen to me.
You have given me great pleasure.
But I simply cannot bring myself
to regret leaving you.
It is the way of the world.
Quite beyond my control.
- Tomorrow morning, early.
- Yes, my Lord.
This is not your appointed night.
That story you told me, how did it end?
I am not sure I know what you mean.
Once this friend of yours had taken
the advice of his lady-friend...
...did she take him back?
Am I to understand?
The day after our last meeting,
I broke with Madame de Tourvel...
...on the grounds that it was
"beyond my control. "
You didn't!
I certainly did.
But how wonderful of you.
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 that it sets a new standard.
Only one thing could possibly
bring me greater glory.
What is that?
To win her back.
You think you could?
I do not see why not.
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.
- Is that so?
- Oh, yes.
I am also inclined to see this
as one of my greatest triumphs.
There is nothing a woman enjoys
so much as victory over another woman.
Except you see, Vicomte,

my victory wasn't over her.
Of course it was, what do you mean?
It was over you.
You loved that woman, Vicomte.
What's more, you still do.
Quite desperately.
If you had not been so ashamed of it...
...how could you have
treated her so viciously?
You could not bear even the vague
possibility of being laughed at.
And this has proved something
I have always suspected.
That vanity and happiness...
...are incompatible.
Whatever may or may not be the truth
of these philosophical speculations...
...the fact remains,
it is now your turn to make a sacrifice.
Is that so?
- Danceney must go.
- Where?
I have been more than patient with this
little whim of yours. Enough is enough.
One of the reasons that I never remarried...
...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.
She is ill, you know.
I have made her ill for your sake.
So the least you can do is
get rid of that colourless youth!
Haven't you had enough of
bullying women for the time being?
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.
I am sorry.
I have made other arrangements.

Yes, I knew there was something.
What?
Danceney isn't coming. Not tonight.
What do you mean. How do you know?
I know, because I have arranged
for him to spend the night with Ccile.
Come to think of it,
he mentioned he was expected here.
But, when I put it to him that he would
really have to make a choice...
...I must say, he did not hesitate.
He is 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 is entirely devoted to you.
That is enough, Vicomte.
You are absolutely right.
Shall we go up?
Shall we, what?
Go up.
Unless you prefer this,
if memory serves, rather purgatorial sofa.
- I think it is time you were leaving.
- No, I do not think so.
We made an arrangement.
I really don't think I can allow myself...
...to be taken advantage of
for a moment longer.
Remember,
I am better at this than you are.
Perhaps. But it is always
the best swimmers who drown.
Now, yes or no?
It is up to you, of course.
I will merely confine myself to remarking...
...that a "no" will be regarded
as a declaration of war.
A single word is all that is required.
All right.
War!
My dear Chevalier Danceney...
... I understand you spent

last night with Ccile Volanges.
I learnt this from her
more, regular lover...
... the Vicomte de Valmont.
I am dying because
I would not believe you.
Fetch the surgeon.
No, no.
Do as I say.
A moment of your time.

Two things:

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...
...as I believe her
letters to me will prove.
When you have read them,
you may decide to circulate them.
And the request?
I want you somehow...
...somehow...
...to get to see Madame de Tourvel.
I understand she is very ill.
That is why this is most important to me.
I want you to tell her
that I cannot explain...
...why I broke with her as I did.
But that since then,
my life has been worth nothing.
I pushed the blade in deeper
than you just have my boy...
...and now I need you
to help me withdraw it.

Tell her it is lucky for her
that I have gone...
...and I am glad not to have
to live without her.
Tell her, her love was the only
real happiness that I have ever known.
Will you do that for me?
I will.
It is all very well feeling sorry now.
Let him be.
He had good cause.
I don't believe that's something anyone
has ever been able to say about me.
Enough...
Draw the curtains.
Get out! Get out of here!