



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

6 Continued

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.

7 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.

8 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.

9 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.

10 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, guiding 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.

11 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.

12 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.

13 EXT. COURTYARD DUSK

CÉCILE'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.

14 INT. GRAND SALON DUSK

CLOSE ON CÉCILE, 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 CÉCILE's profile. Eventually she speaks.

MERTEUIL

Well, my dear...

CÉCILE 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?

CÉCILE

Very well. I think.

VOLANGES

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

MERTEUIL looks CÉCILE 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 MAJORDOMO, carrying a silver tray, advances unhurriedly across the room.

14 Continued

At the table, the large playing cards slap down on one another. MERTEUIL glances up at her MAJORDOMO and reaches for the card on his tray. She replaces the card, looks up at him and nods. The MAJORDOMO 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 MAJORDOMO 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?

14 Continued

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.

14 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.



18 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.

18 Continued

MERTEUIL  
You can't mean it.

19 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.

20 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.

20 Continued

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.

21 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 Belleruche?

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. Belleruche is completely undeserving.

MERTEUIL

I thought he was one of your closest friends.

21 Continued

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.

22 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.

22 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.

23 INT. CORRIDOR OF MIRRORS DUSK

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

24 INT. SPIRAL STAIRCASE DUSK

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

25 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.

26 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.

26 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.

27 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.

28 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.

31 INT. MERTEUIL'S BOX EVENING

MERTEUIL lowers her opera-glasses, pensive.

32 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.

33 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, Cecile.

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 mid-  
yawn.

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?

36 Continued

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.

40 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.

## 41 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.

## 42 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.

43 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.

43 Continued

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.

44 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!

44 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.

45 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 CECILE'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.

46 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.

46 Continued

CÉCILE

Would it be very wrong of me  
to answer M. Danceney'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 galvanises 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 collar-  
bone.

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...

47 Continued

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.

52 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.

53 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.

53 Continued

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...

56 Continued

He releases her hand and adds, in a murmur.

VALMONT  
I'll write soon.

57 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.



57 Continued

VALMONT

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

ÉMILIE 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...'

58 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.

59 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?

60 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:

60 Continued

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, Viconte, I've arranged a little scene I hope you may find entertaining.

VALMONT frowns at her, puzzled.

60 Continued

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.

60 Continued

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 MAJORDOMO has returned 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 MAJORDOMO.

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 MAJORDOMO. 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.

60 Continued

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;

63 Continued

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 CECILE and stares for a moment at TOURVEL. When she looks up at him, he looks away quickly, this time at CECILE, 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 CECILE. 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?



63 Continued

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.

63 Continued

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.

64 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.

64 Continued

VOLANGES

Oh? I thought she had her shawl.

65 INT. MME DE VOLANGES'S BEDROOM DAY

CÉCILE grapples with the blue ribbon, experiencing the greatest difficulty in disentangling it.

66 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.

67 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.

67 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.

68 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.

69 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.

69 Continued

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 negligée, 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.)  
'She's accepted my love; I've accepted her friendship; we're both aware how little there is to choose between them. Her eyes are closing.'

MERTEUIL looks up from the letter, thoughtful.

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.

74 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 CECILE. 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 CECILE 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 writhes 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.

74 Continued

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....?



74 Continued

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.

75 INT. DINING-ROOM DAY

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 TOURVEL. 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

75 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.

VOLANCES

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.

76 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.

77 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.

78 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  
desparation, Madame? And how can  
I write the necessary words?

79 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.

79 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.

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

MERTEUIL sits on a chaise-longue not far from an open French window. CÉCILE 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?

80 Continued

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.

80 Continued

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 something 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.

81 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.

82 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...

Continued

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.

CÉCILE 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.

82 Continued

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.

83 INT. GRAND SALON EVENING

MME DE ROSEMONDE 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



83 Continued

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?

83 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.

84 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 eyeline.

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.

85 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.

86 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.

87 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.

88 INT. VALMONT'S BEDROOM NIGHT

VALMONT straightens up and saunters out of his room.

89 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...

89 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.

90 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.

90 Continued

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.

90 Continued

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.

92 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.

93 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'  
room, and she turns away, strangely confused and abashed.

94 INT. VALMONT'S BEDROOM NIGHT

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

95 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?

95 Continued

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.



96 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.

97 EXT. MAIN ENTRANCE NIGHT

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

98 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.

98 Continued

the shock beginning to show.

FADE

99 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.

100 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.

101 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.

VALMONT

101 Continued

AZOLAN sighs, shaking his head gloomily.

AZOLAN

Talk about devotion to duty.

VALMONT's MAJORDOMO 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 MAJORDOMO 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.

101 Continued

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.

101 Continued

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.

103 Continued

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?

TOURVEL

I do.

VALMONT

For ever?

TOURVEL

I must.

103 Continued

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?



103 Continued

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.

103 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.

104 INT. LANDING EVENING

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

105 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.

106 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.

110 Continued

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.

111 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.

112 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.

112 Continued

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.

113 INT. CORRIDOR OF MIRRORS DAY

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

114 INT. MERTEUIL'S BEDROOM DAY

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

115 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.

116 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.

117 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 turns away from him as she speaks.



123 Continued

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.

123 Continued

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 Emilie, 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 Emilie 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 Emilie, 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.

124 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?

125 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.

126 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.

127 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.

127 Continued

VALMONT

Where are you?

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

VALMONT

Nothing to worry about.

CÉCILE

Yes there is. I'm bleeding.

128 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.

129 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 applies pressure to one, opening it to reveal the stone spiral staircase.

130 INT. SPIRAL STAIRCASE NIGHT

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

131 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.

131 Continued

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 cater-

131 Continued

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.

132 Continued

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 Belleruche 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.

134 Continued

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 out-  
lasting 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.

134 Continued

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 escritorio, 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.

139 Continued

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.

139 Continued

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.

139 Continued

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

Danceney 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.

139 Continued

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.

143 INT. PRIVATE ROOM IN THE CONVENT DAY

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

144 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.

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

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

146 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.

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

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

148 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.

148 Continued

DANCENY  
Fetch the surgeon.

VALMONT  
No, no.

DANCENY  
Do as I say!

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

VALMONT  
A moment of your time.

DANCENY reluctantly approaches.

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

DANCENY  
Go on.

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

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

VALMONT  
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.

VALMONT  
As I believe her letters to me  
will prove.

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

DANCENY  
And the request?

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

148 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 waxen 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.

154 Continued

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.

155 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.

156 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.

157 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

157 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.

158 CAPTION ON BLACK SCREEN

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

23rd April, 198