

# #1 VALMONT & Merteuil

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

**MERTEUIL.** Of course you are.

**VALMONT.** Yes. Well. My trip to the country to visit my more or less immortal aunt. The fact of the matter is that it's the first step towards the most ambitious plan I've ever undertaken.

**MERTEUIL.** Well, go on.

**VALMONT.** You see, my aunt is not on her own just at the moment. She has a young friend staying with her. Madame de Tourvel.

**MERTEUIL.** Yes.

**VALMONT.** She is my plan.

**MERTEUIL.** You can't mean it.

**VALMONT.** Why not? To seduce a woman famous for her strict morals, religious fervor and the happiness of her marriage: what could possibly be more prestigious?

**MERTEUIL.** I think there's something very degrading about having a husband for a rival. It's humiliating if you fail and commonplace if you succeed. Where is he, anyway?

**VALMONT.** He's presiding over some labyrinthine case in Burgundy, which I'm reliably informed will drag on for months.

**MERTEUIL.** I can't believe this. Apart from anything else, she's such a frump. Bodice up to her ears in case you might catch a glimpse of a square inch of flesh...

**VALMONT.** You're right, clothes don't suit her.

**MERTEUIL.** How old is she?

# #1 VALMONT & Merteuil

**VALMONT.** Twenty-two.

**MERTEUIL.** And she's been married...?

**VALMONT.** Two years.

**MERTEUIL.** Even if you succeed, you know what?

**VALMONT.** What?

**MERTEUIL.** All you'll get from her is what she gives her husband. I don't think you can hope for any actual pleasure. They never let themselves go, those people. If you ever make her heart beat faster, it won't be love, it'll be fear. I sometimes wonder about you, Vicomte. How could you make such a fool of yourself over a complete nonentity?

**VALMONT.** Take care, now, you're speaking of the woman I...

**MERTEUIL.** Yes?

**VALMONT.** I've set my heart on. (*Silence. VALMONT smiles at her.*) I haven't felt so strongly about anything since you and I were together.

**MERTEUIL.** And you're going to pass up this wonderful opportunity for revenge?

**VALMONT.** If I have to.

**MERTEUIL.** You don't have to. I won't tell anyone about this bizarre aberration of yours.

# #1 VALMONT & Merteuil

**VALMONT.** I think you'll have to wait at least until I've had her before I can allow you to insult her. And I can't agree with your theory about pleasure. You see, I have no intention of breaking down her prejudices. I want her to believe in God and virtue and the sanctity of marriage, and still not be able to stop herself. I want passion, in other words. Not the kind we're used to, which is as cold as it's superficial, I don't get much pleasure out of that any more. No. I want the excitement of watching her betray everything that's most important to her. Surely you understand that. I thought betrayal was your favorite word.

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