

# #7 Valmont & TOURVEL

**VALMONT.** I trust you're feeling a little better, Madame.

**TOURVEL.** If I had felt ill, Monsieur, it would not be difficult to guess who was responsible.

**VALMONT.** You can't mean me. Do you?

**TOURVEL.** You promised to leave here.

**VALMONT.** And I did.

**TOURVEL.** Then how can you be insensitive enough to return uninvited and without warning?

**VALMONT.** I find myself obliged to attend to some urgent business in the area: in which, moreover, my aunt is crucially involved.

**TOURVEL.** I only hope it can be dealt with promptly.

*(MME DE TOURVEL cautiously moves closer to the center of the room. As the conversation continues, VALMONT contrives, imperceptibly, to maneuver himself between her and the door.)*

**VALMONT.** Why are you so angry with me?

**TOURVEL.** I'm not angry. Although, since you gave me a solemn undertaking not to offend me when you wrote and then in 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 you only three times. Since I was quite unable to think about anything but you, some might say I showed heroic restraint.

**TOURVEL.** Not in so far as you persisted in writing about your love, despite my pleas for you not to do so.

**VALMONT.** It's true: I couldn't find the strength to obey you.

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**TOURVEL.** You claim to think there's some connection between what you call love and happiness: I can't believe that there is.

**VALMONT.** In these circumstances, I agree. When the love is unrequited...

**TOURVEL.** As it must be. You know it's impossible for me to reciprocate your feelings; and even if I did, it could only cause me suffering, without making you any the happier.

**VALMONT.** But 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.

*(Silence, as VALMONT searches for a way forward, momentarily at a loss.)*

**TOURVEL.** I've offered you my friendship, Monsieur. It's the only thing I can give you: why can't you accept it?

**VALMONT.** I could pretend to, but that would be dishonest.

**TOURVEL.** You're not answering my question.

**VALMONT.** The man I used to be would have been content with the friendship; and set about trying to turn it to his advantage. But I've changed now: and I can't conceal from you that I love you tenderly, passionately and above all, respectfully. So how am I to demote myself to the tepid position of friend?

*(VALMONT's strategy has paid off, because at this moment MME DE TOURVEL decides to leave the room and finds the way blocked.)*

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**VALMONT.** And in any case, you are no longer even pretending to show friendship.

**TOURVEL.** What do you mean?

**VALMONT.** Well, is this friendly?

**TOURVEL.** You could hardly expect me to stay here and listen to the expression of sentiments you know very well I can only find insulting.

**VALMONT.** I think you're misunderstanding me: I know you can bestow on me nothing more than your friendship, for which, by the way, I am profoundly grateful. In the same way, I can feel nothing less for you than love. We both know this is the true position: can't we simply acknowledge it? I don't see why recognition of the truth should lose me your friendship. Openness and honesty scarcely deserve to be punished, don't you agree?

**TOURVEL.** You are adept, Monsieur, at framing questions which preclude the answer no. Your honesty or otherwise is not at issue. The point is, surely, that I was weak enough to be persuaded to grant you a favor you should never have obtained; and furthermore I did this under certain conditions, not a single one of which you have observed. Naturally, I feel you've exploited my good faith.

**VALMONT.** What can I say to reassure you? How can you be afraid of me when, because I love you, your happiness is far more important to me than my own? You've made me a better person: you mustn't now undo your handiwork.

**TOURVEL.** I've no wish to: but I must ask whether you're going to leave the room or let me pass.

**VALMONT.** But why?

**TOURVEL.** Because I find this conversation distressing. I can't seem to make you understand what I mean; and I have no wish to hear what you invariably get round to saying.

**VALMONT.** Very well, I shall leave you in possession of the field.