

ROSEMONDE_VOLANGES_MARQUIS

(The three are playing cards. It is Rosemonde's turn but she is lost in thought)

Marquis: Madame.

Rosemonde: Forgive me. At my age, it seems reasonable to hope to be spared any further personal tragedies, but two in the space of a few days ...

Marquis: Of course, Madame.

Volanges: And I was just thinking: when we were last in Paris a year ago, do you remember that conversation we had? We were trying to decide who was the happiest and most enviable person we knew; and we both agreed it was Madame de Tourvel.

Marquis: You were with her, were you not, when she died?

Volanges: I was with her from the day after she ran away to the convent. I shall never forget those terrible sights. When she kept ripping away the bandages after they bled her. The delirium and the convulsions. How she wasted away.

All the same, I think she might have recovered if that unfortunate young man hadn't somehow managed to let her know your nephew was dead. After that, she simply lost the will to live. Apparently, as he was dying, the Vicomte managed to convince Danceney that Madame de Tourvel was the only woman he'd ever loved.

Marquis: That's enough! *(Regaining composure, indicating Rosemonde)* I think we should respect the sensibilities of our friend.

Rosemonde: Oh no, I firmly believe that was the truth.

Marquis: Well, perhaps, I can't see how we shall ever know. *(beat)* And Cecile?

Volanges: She seems quite adamant. I've appealed to her and pleaded with her but she won't budge. I did want to ask your advice about this, both of you. Monsieur de Gercourt is expected back any day now. Is there nothing to be done? Must I really break off such an advantageous match?

Marquis: Oh surely not.

Rosemonde: I'm afraid you must.

Volanges: But why?

Rosemonde: I'd rather you didn't ask.

Marquis: I think you must provide a reason, Madame, if you ask our friend to sacrifice so glorious a future.

Volanges: To be honest with you, Madame, and in spite of his crime, I'd rather marry Cecile to Danceny than see my only child become a nun.

Rosemonde: As a matter of fact, I've heard from Danceny. He sent me a very strange letter. From Malta.

Volanges: Oh, that's where he's run away to?

(Marquis understands that Rosemonde knows everything that's happened)

Marquis: On second thought, my dear, I suppose it might be best to defer to Madame's wisdom and experience. Perhaps you should leave Cecile in the convent.

Volanges: But there must be a reason?

Marquis: *(steering the conversation)* These have been a terrible few weeks, but time passes quickly. A new year tomorrow and more than halfway through the eighties already. I dare say we would not be wrong to look forward to whatever the nineties may bring. Meanwhile, I suggest our best course is to continue with the game.

END