

THE PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

adapted by David Ives

from Madame de Lafayette's novel

princessdeclèves
12/11 revision

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THE CHARACTERS:

Mademoiselle de Chartres, afterwards Princess de Clèves, 25
 Madame de Chartres, her mother, 50
 The Vidame de Chartres, the princess's uncle, 50's
 The Prince de Clèves, 25-30
 The Duke de Nemours, 30
 King Henry II of France, 45
 Queen Catherine, 45
 The Dauphine, Mary Stuart, Henry and Catherine's daughter-in-law, 25
 The Duchess de Valentinois, formerly Diane de Poitiers, the King's mistress, 60

PLACE AND TIME:

Paris and environs, 1559

PRONUNCIATIONS:

de Chartres:	duh <i>shart</i>
de Clèves:	duh <i>klev</i>
de Nemours:	duh nuh- <i>moor</i>
Dauphine:	doe- <i>feen</i>
Vidame:	vee- <i>dahm</i>
Valentinois:	val- <i>on-teen-WAH</i>
Lignerolles:	leen-yair- <i>oal</i>
Coulommiers:	koo-lum- <i>yeh</i>
Martigues:	mar- <i>teegh</i> (hard g)
Thémines:	tay- <i>meen</i>
d'Anville:	daw(n)- <i>veel</i>
Tournon:	toor- <i>no(n)</i>
Lorraine:	lor- <i>enn</i>
Nevers:	nuh- <i>vair</i>

NOTE: "Princess" is always pronounced with the accent on the final syllable: prin-*sess*.
 "Madame" with an "e" is muh-*damm*. "Madam" (without an e) is *madd-um*.

ACT ONE

Scene One.

(Paris, 1559. The royal palace. Enter KING HENRY, speaking with MADAME DE CHARTRES; after them, QUEEN CATHERINE, speaking with the VIDAME DE CHARTRES; the DAUPHINE, speaking with MADEMOISELLE DE CHARTRES; and the DUCHESS DE VALENTINOIS, speaking with the PRINCE DE CLÈVES.)

KING

It's a terrible loss. It's a tragedy!

MME DE CHARTRES

Hardly a tragedy, sire.

KING

But think, Madame de Chartres. Think what your daughter's missed being away from court. The finest stage in all the world for talk, for sport, for fashion, and for love! Why nurture this pearl, then lock her away from Paris?

MME DE CHARTRES

To protect her, Your Majesty – from Paris, *and* the court, and what you men call love.

KING

My daughter-in-law's already taken her under wing.

MME DE CHARTRES

Mary Stuart is hardly protection against men, sire.

KING

True. But the Dauphine can help your daughter to a splendid place when my son is king.

MME DE CHARTRES

The only place my daughter needs is by a husband, preferably one a thousand miles from here.

KING

Did you have any particular, distant man in mind?

MME DE CHARTRES

The Prince de Montpensier, if Majesty would lend a word.

KING

For an old friend like you, madame, I'll see what I can do.

(A burst of loud conversation from the other group.)

KING

Now ladies, ladies, what are you discussing so fervently?

DAUPHINE

Astrology, sire. And whether it's a science.

KING

It seems to have bitten my otherwise level-headed wife.

QUEEN

Henry's making fun of me. But two years ago a Tarot reader told me I'd find a faithful friend and here I have the Vidame de Chartres doing my slightest bidding.

DUCHESS DE VALENTINOIS

I hate to differ with our level-headed Queen. But madam, your Tarot reader might as well have predicted that a hungry dog would somewhere find his bone.

KING

Thank you, Duchess, for that pungent analogy. Dauphine?

DAUPHINE

I always read my horoscope and always laugh, no matter what disaster is foretold me.

KING

Listen, my wife had some Gypsy here who predicted I'd be killed in a duel. Which is not very likely, given my, what.

DUCHESS DE VALENTINOIS

Your chosen profession?

KING

My *chosen profession*, thank you, Duchess. What about you, Vidame?

VIDAME

My nature forbids my contradicting any woman, but I side with the Queen.

KING

What about our bright new acquisition? Mlle de Chartres?

MLLE DE CHARTRES

I've never had my fortune told, Your Majesty. But it's only pagan superstition.

KING

Really? How do you know?

MLLE DE CHARTRES

My mother told me. She says if all our fates were in the stars our lives would be irrelevant. And what but a stupid God would allow such a thing to happen?

KING

You trust your mother automatically?

MLLE DE CHARTRES

I trust her logic. And her knowledge of God.

VIDAME

My sister and He are very tight, you know.

DAUPHINE

I'll tell this lady's future. I predict she'll be pursued by many men, desired by all, and won by only the most passionate and magnificent of suitors – of whom, by the way, she will have many.

MME DE CHARTRES

Excuse me, madam. I predict she will marry a virtuous man and be good and faithful to him all his days. That she will raise her children as lovingly as I have her and will go to God blameless.

DAUPHINE

A happy fortune.

MME DE CHARTRES

Can you name a better?

DUCHESS DE VALENTINOIS

In this world she'd need some very lucky stars.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

What need has Mlle de Chartres for stars when so many shine in her eyes? What need of zodiacs when her own gaze makes destiny itself bow down?

KING

I think Monsieur de Clèves is moved!

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

I think Gibraltar would be moved before this lady.

MME DE CHARTRES

That's quite enough, monsieur. I'm speaking as her guardian – and as Gibraltar.

DAUPHINE

Too bad Nemours's not here.

QUEEN

He'd have something to say about astrology.

DUCHESS

And about this lady.

KING

Nemours's horoscope is about to change in a major way. Which reminds me, Duchess...

(He draws the DUCHESS aside. The QUEEN EXITS with VIDAME.)

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

(kissing Mlle de Chartres's hand)

Mademoiselle, it has been a profound honor.

MME DE CHARTRES

Go away, Monsieur de Clèves. I've heard enough from you today, thank you.

(PRINCE DE CLÈVES EXITS.)

DAUPHINE

Princess, I'll send my jeweler around about matching those stones of yours.

MLLE DE CHARTRES

Thank you, madam.

DAUPHINE

Congratulations on your paragon, Madame de Chartres. I want your daughter as my guardian angel.

(DAUPHINE EXITS.)

MLLE DE CHARTRES

The Dauphine was so kind to me, Mama.

MME DE CHARTRES

Of course she was – you're a weapon against the Duchess.

MLLE DE CHARTRES

A weapon...?

MME DE CHARTRES

When the King dies, Mary Stuart's brothers will take power. Till then she has to defer to the Duchess, and you, whom the King seems to like, can be a shield.

MLLE DE CHARTRES

The King seems very fond of the Duchess.

MME DE CHARTRES

He should. She's been his mistress for 20 years – as she was his father's for 20 years before him, when she was just as faithless as she is now.

MLLE DE CHARTRES

Yet I saw her speaking with the Queen again and again.

MME DE CHARTRES

To mitigate the poison Queen Katrina de Medici would put in her drink. The same poison the Duchess would use on your uncle for filling Katrina's bed every night.

MLLE DE CHARTRES

And this Nemours they spoke of?

MME DE CHARTRES

The Duke de Nemours is most dangerous man in France.

MLLE DE CHARTRES

Because he's so evil?

MME DE CHARTRES

Because he's so beautiful. The lodestone for every loose woman at court, which basically means everyone.

MLLE DE CHARTRES

And Monsieur de Clèves?

MME DE CHARTRES

A foreign affairs grind. The second son of a man allied to the Duchess and hence your enemy, so put him out of your head. Besides, you're going to marry the Prince de Montpensier.

MLLE DE CHARTRES

I'm sorry. I'm going to marry...?

MME DE CHARTRES

Montpensier, the moment the King arranges it. Why else do you think I brought you here? Daughter, listen to me. Thanks to your father you are a woman of property. Thanks to me you are a woman of principle. The property will buy you any man in France, the

principles bring you a load of misery anywhere on earth. Your only hope is marriage as soon as possible and a home far away from court.

MLLE DE CHARTRES

What Monsieur de Clèves said was so beautiful.

MME DE CHARTRES

At least it seemed spontaneous. You'll report to me anything any man says to you about love?

MLLE DE CHARTRES

Of course, Mama.

MME DE CHARTRES

Good. Now kiss me and go home to your prayers.

(MLLE DE CHARTRES EXITS as the KING ENTERS.)

KING

Mme de Chartres, I'm afraid I can't help you in that little matter we talked about.

MME DE CHARTRES

May an *old friend* ask why?

KING

Well, the Duchess has a few reservations...

MME DE CHARTRES

The Duchess hates my brother so thoroughly, she'd quash my daughter's marriage? Make it impossible for any man to dare approach my daughter? Well, thank you, Majesty.

KING

But really, if there's anything at all that I can do...

(DUCHESS DE VALENTINOIS ENTERS.)

DUCHESS DE VALENTINOIS

If you'll excuse us, Mme de Chartres. Henry, the Duke has arrived.

KING

Thank you, Diana.

(MME DE CHARTRES EXITS.)

DUCHESS DE VALENTINOIS

You dispatched that wedding business?

KING

I did.

DUCHESS DE VALENTINOIS

Good boy.

(DUCHESS EXITS as NEMOURS ENTERS.)

NEMOURS

Your Majesty.

KING

Welcome home, Nemours. Success, I hope?

NEMOURS

(presents a paper)

It's all agreed. Your daughter can marry Don Carlos of Spain whenever she likes.

KING

Which she *will* like, being in love with the boy – thus putting father Phillip right in our pocket. Which reminds me, I have a proposal for you.

NEMOURS

Not a wedding proposal, I hope.

KING

You *will* hope when you hear it. Lignerolles's just arrived from greeting Elizabeth and apparently the fresh-made Queen of England, on the basis of your portrait, wants you for a husband. Well? Do you want a crown and a queen, and England for the mere taking?

NEMOURS

Maybe a second opinion would be in order, given the gravity of the operation.

KING

Good thought. I'll have Lignerolles do some more probing. De Clèves can take on Spain.

NEMOURS

If I might also beg for secrecy in this matter...?

KING

Because of all the women you'd have to alert?

NEMOURS

Because Elizabeth Tudor not only looks like a weathercock, she acts like one. In affairs of the heart, at least.

KING

Lignerolles says she has great personality.

NEMOURS

Which tells me everything.

KING

You just missed quite a young beauty. And one you've never set eyes on, since she's been off in Coulommiers.

NEMOURS

Not the famous phantom princess, Mademoiselle de Chartres...? Well-guarded by her Gorgon Momma, isn't she?

KING

Don't you get that glint in your eye. Save it for England.

NEMOURS

My glint stands at your bidding, sir, as always.

KING

A game of tennis?

NEMOURS

Only if I can beat you.

KING

We'll toss for it. Come on.

(THEY EXIT.)

Scene Two.

(The home of Mme de Chartres, the next day. MLLE DE CHARTRES and the PRINCE DE CLÈVES.)

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

I don't see how your mother could mind my being here. I think there were some stones you wanted matched...?

(Unfolds a silk, revealing several glittering gems.)

MLLE DE CHARTRES

Oh, they're beautiful! How did you pick them without seeing the necklace?

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

By contemplating your beauty and looking for gems to match. Who'd even notice these when your eyes out-dazzle any diamond?

MLLE DE CHARTRES

Monsieur de Clèves, I'm afraid this is a language I don't speak.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

It's made up of a single sentence, endlessly varied.

MLLE DE CHARTRES

Which is...?

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

"I love you." No, please, listen to me. Mademoiselle, you are the ideal that every man esteems in his heart the moment he learns anything of love. That he feels by nature, in his soul, before he's even born.

MLLE DE CHARTRES

You know my mother has certain plans for me.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

Have some for yourself. Are you to be sold off like beef to some dull country gentleman because your mother wants it? Wouldn't you rather choose and give yourself freely – as a human being, out of the fire of your own free will?

MLLE DE CHARTRES

I don't know what to say.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

Say that you'll love me. Say that you'll marry me.

MLLE DE CHARTRES

But isn't your father allied with the Duchess...?

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

I'll talk him over, and the Duchess can mind her own affairs.

(MME DE CHARTRES ENTERS.)

MME DE CHARTRES

Monsieur de Clèves, what are you doing here?

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

Showing your daughter these stones, madam.

MME DE CHARTRES

So you're a Turkish merchant now?

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

I also brought some personal words for the Princess.

MME DE CHARTRES

Take them elsewhere, please. And your stones. Goodbye.

(PRINCE DE CLÈVES EXITS.)

Well?

MLLE DE CHARTRES

He says he loves me and wants to marry me.

MME DE CHARTRES

I gathered that. I mean how do you feel toward him?

MLLE DE CHARTRES

I don't love him. I mean, I don't think I do.

MME DE CHARTRES

But as a prospective husband? Could you respect him? And he you?

MLLE DE CHARTRES

I think so. Yes.

MME DE CHARTRES

What about his father?

MLLE DE CHARTRES

He says he'll talk him over.

MME DE CHARTRES

If I give my consent.

MLLE DE CHARTRES

Of course, Mama.

MME DE CHARTRES

If.

MLLE DE CHARTRES

What was all that noise downstairs?

MME DE CHARTRES

The Duke de Nemours came visiting. You seem to have made an impression on him sight unseen via all those chattering jackdaws at court. But never mind him. We have some facts to face, first of them being that no man will take you as a wife except for sentiment. Monsieur de Clèves seems ardent enough that way. You realize the gratitude you owe him, when no man else will consider you?

MLLE DE CHARTRES

Yes, Mama.

MME DE CHARTRES

So you do want him? Would you have the Prince de Clèves?

MLLE DE CHARTRES

Should I mind that I don't love him? Mama?

MME DE CHARTRES

No, darling. I wouldn't bother my head about it.

MLLE DE CHARTRES

Then I'll have him, if you'll let me.

MME DE CHARTRES

You know I only want your welfare. I'm only looking toward your good.

MLLE DE CHARTRES

Of course, Mama.

MME DE CHARTRES

Then I consent. May the Lord shower down tranquility on you both. And if it comes to that – love as well.

(THEY EXIT.)

Scene Three.

(A ballroom. The Dauphine and Nemours.)

NEMOURS

This Amazon mother has done a fine job, locking up the daughter till the night before.
Where is the young bitch?

DAUPHINE

Don't think you're going to get anywhere with this one. And aren't you out of circulation?

NEMOURS

What does that mean?

DAUPHINE

Elizabeth of England?

NEMOURS

Someone's been starting rumors.

DAUPHINE

You know, you might start a rumor about *me*. My only concern is all those other women I'd be sharing your rumors with.

NEMOURS

What about Elizabeth of England...?

DAUPHINE

She can get in line.

(KING ENTERS, with QUEEN, VIDAME and DUCHESS DE VALENTINOIS.)

KING

Ladies and gentlemen, I have a wonderful announcement. Elizabeth Tudor has accepted receiving Monsieur de Nemours as a potential husband. He leaves for London immediately.

NEMOURS

I'm very grateful, sir.

KING

Don't thank me. Thank Elizabeth. And here's our other almost-happy couple.

(MLLE DE CHARTRES and PRINCE DE CLÈVES ENTER. Applause.)

DAUPHINE

Beautiful. Just beautiful.

VIDAME

Congratulations, darling.

KING

Mademoiselle, may you always blush on your husband's arm as you do now.

QUEEN

So how does marriage look, one day before the deed?

MLLE DE CHARTRES

Like a dark and rather forbidding jungle, Madam.

QUEEN

I'm glad betrothal hasn't impaired your candor. The standard answer is "thrilling."

MLLE DE CHARTRES

It's thrilling, madam.

DAUPHINE

If I might steal you from your spouse-to-be, this gentlemen wants to dance with you. Do you know who he is?

MLLE DE CHARTRES

No.

DAUPHINE

Good. Then dance with a mystery. Music, strike up!

(MUSIC. MLLE DE CHARTRES dances with NEMOURS. MME DE CHARTRES ENTERS while they do so, and observes.)

NEMOURS

Are those your colors, mademoiselle? I'll wear them next time I joust.

MLLE DE CHARTRES

I have no colors.

NEMOURS

Let me devise you some. Yellow and gold, to reflect your radiance.

MLLE DE CHARTRES

I never wear yellow or gold. They don't suit me.

NEMOURS
 So you don't know who I am?

MLLE DE CHARTRES
 You must be the Duke de Nemours.

NEMOURS
 Why so?

MLLE DE CHARTRES
 By your looks.

NEMOURS
 Because I'm so unbelievably handsome?

MLLE DE CHARTRES
 No, because you act like a man with a birthmark known to every woman in France.

NEMOURS
 I'm sorry to tell you you're wrong. I'm not Nemours.

MLLE DE CHARTRES
 Who are you?

NEMOURS
 You can't guess?

MLLE DE CHARTRES
 No...

NEMOURS
 I'm amazed you didn't have it in one.

MLLE DE CHARTRES
 Please, monsieur. Who are you?

NEMOURS
 Your lover.
 (MLLE DE CHARTRES stops dancing.)
 Dance, mademoiselle. What would your almost-husband think?
 (She resumes dancing.)
 Did that interruption imply I'm not fated to be your lover?

MLLE DE CHARTRES
 You're fated to be ignored.

NEMOURS

I swear by all that's holy that I will be your lover – and will be it for life.

MLLE DE CHARTRES

You speak of what's holy, with the life you lead?

NEMOURS

I look at you and comprehend the holy.

MLLE DE CHARTRES

What's holy to me is the integrity of my immortal soul.

NEMOURS

It belongs by destiny to me.

MLLE DE CHARTRES

Along with the souls of a thousand other women?

NEMOURS

You make me forget every woman I've ever loved – and every woman I've ever made love with.

(MUSIC ENDS.)

Thank you for the dance, Princess.

DUCHESS DE VALENTINOIS

Did you discover your partner's identity, mademoiselle?

MLLE DE CHARTRES

Oh, yes. He betrayed his nature in no time.

KING

Nemours, I look forward to good news from London.

NEMOURS

Don't forget, sir, I'll have to assemble a suitable retinue and apparel myself.

KING

Well, don't apparel too long.

MME DE CHARTRES

Refreshments are in the other rooms, Your Majesties.

(The KING and his retinue EXIT. To the PRINCESS:)

What was all that with Nemours?

MLLE DE CHARTRES

He insulted me.

MME DE CHARTRES

Wait for me before you go in.

(MME DE CHARTRES EXITS.)

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

You looked beautiful, dancing.

MLLE DE CHARTRES

But what's the matter? Are you unhappy, darling?

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

What man on earth should be happier than I? But no. I have to say I'm not terribly blissful tonight.

MLLE DE CHARTRES

Is it something I've done?

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

No, no. It's me. Or rather...

MLLE DE CHARTRES

What can I do? Tell me.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

Well... You could love me. I mean instead of respect me, or be grateful to me.

MLLE DE CHARTRES

Don't I show you love?

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

You show me courtesy. Exquisite courtesy but courtesy all the same.

MLLE DE CHARTRES

I do feel for you. Deeply.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

Do you realize what new emotions you've taught *me* to feel? Helplessness? Hopelessness? Powerless rage for what I can't help, which Almighty God can't help. The odd thing is, fume as I sometimes do, I don't love you any the less. I can't.

MLLE DE CHARTRES

Maybe when you've possessed me, physically possessed me, things will be different and I'll come to love you.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

I certainly don't possess you now. Even after I've, as you say, physically possessed you, I don't know that I'll have grasped you in any sense. Could any man?

MLLE DE CHARTRES

Maybe you should forbid me seeing other men. Maybe we should move to the house at Coulommiers and live there by ourselves.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

With you, my love, I know I will never have cause for jealousy.

MLLE DE CHARTRES

Darling, I will try to love you.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

Is "darling" a word you mean or just a word you've picked up?

MLLE DE CHARTRES

It's a word I feel for you. Because you are so darling.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

Like a pet Spaniel.

MLLE DE CHARTRES

No, you're so sweet. And you're so sweet to me.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

Well, come along. We should be pouring people's punch.

MLLE DE CHARTRES

My mother wants me for a moment.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

Kiss me.

MLLE DE CHARTRES

Happily.

(They kiss. The PRINCE EXITS as MME DE CHARTRES ENTERS.)

MME DE CHARTRES

Now what was all that with the Duke de Nemours? Daughter...?

MLLE DE CHARTRES

I can't even speak the words. He said he was my lover, and would be all his life.

MME DE CHARTRES

Maybe you ought to see less of the Dauphine, the Duke being there so much.

MLLE DE CHARTRES

But mother, Marie's my friend.

MME DE CHARTRES

Do you want people to think you're their go-between?

MME DE CHARTRES

Why? Are they having an affair? Is he in love with her?

MME DE CHARTRES

Sweetheart, tomorrow after the ceremony I suggest this: that the two of you, without looking back, without packing, without so much as a goodbye, go to Coulommiers and take up existence there. Have twenty children, stare out on the lake, and be happy.

MLLE DE CHARTRES

I proposed Coulommiers. The Prince said no.

MME DE CHARTRES

The Prince is a man being married and therefore knows nothing. Your guests want you. Go along.

(MLLE DE CHARTRES EXITS, and then, a moment later, her mother.)

Scene Four.

(The Dauphine's chambers at the palace, some weeks later. The DAUPHINE embracing Mlle de Chartres, who is now Princess de Clèves.)

DAUPHINE

Princess! It feels like the longest time. Good Lord, you look fantastic. So grown up. Your mother's well?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

Actually she's ailing a bit, since I married.

DAUPHINE

Well, give her my absolute best. So? How does marriage agree with you, and vice versa?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

Marriage is wonderful.

DAUPHINE

Really? *I'm* married. Tell me how.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

I don't know... To live moment by moment with someone and feel so loved?

DAUPHINE

And so loving.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

And loving. To learn a person's quirks and moods and habits. Reading aloud in front of the fire at night...

DAUPHINE

Sounds cozy. But listen, I have some news. You remember Nemours? Well, since you saw him he's completely changed! Those countless mistresses of his – he's dropped them, every one.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

Really.

DAUPHINE

And he's so *earnest*, all of a sudden. We never see him at tennis, or tilting. He's changed beyond recognition.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

Really.

DAUPHINE

Really, really. Don't you wonder *why*?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

Why?

DAUPHINE

Well, mustn't it mean he's in love? Real love? I don't mean with that English prune.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

He's still going to marry Elizabeth?

DAUPHINE

Yes, though he's taking his sweet time doing it. But don't you wonder who the mystery woman is? Whom the Duke is so besotted with he's dropping all her competition?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

Whom do you think?

DAUPHINE

Well – myself, of course! Whom did *you* think?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

It would take you to make him do that – and stall the Queen of England.

DAUPHINE

Exactly! And why else has he been showing up here twice a day? He's always asking about you. *Where's your friend, the Princess de Clèves?* Are you coming to the Maréchal's ball tonight? *I* think the Maréchal's a bit in love with you. As is my brother Chevalier.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

My husband is in love with me.

DAUPHINE

Princess, you can't be completely immune to the charms of another man. Or to those passions. That joy. Well?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

I think I could feel those passions. And that joy.

DAUPHINE

And so you'd love the man who'd caused them.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

No, I'd hate him for the pain my joy had caused me.

DAUPHINE

I knew you were deep, but not that deep. Well, I'm going to wrinkle out the truth about the Duke and his dark lady. Your uncle's his good friend, I'll get the truth from him.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

I should go...

(QUEEN ENTERS with NEMOURS, the DUCHESS DE VALENTINOIS, and the VIDAME.)

QUEEN

The Duke here has just been making the most outrageous argument, excuse us for barging in. Princess, how good to see you again. You remember Nemours?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

Of course.

DAUPHINE

Stop stop stop. Nobody speak until I've satisfied myself of something with the Vidame. In private, please. Vidame...?

(DAUPHINE goes aside to speak privately with the VIDAME.)

DUCHESS DE VALENTINOIS

It must be very urgent for the Dauphine to be so rude.

NEMOURS

How are you, Princess? Besides married, I mean.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

I'm very well, thank you. Besides being married.

NEMOURS

Are you blissful and everything?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

And everything. Thank you.

NEMOURS

Congratulations.

DAUPHINE

(returning)

I'm back, I'm back. Now what's this argument? Only so I can add my own inspired opinion, of course.

QUEEN

Nemours maintains it actually distresses a man to see his mistress at a ball.

VIDAME

I almost think he believes it.

DAUPHINE

You mean you wouldn't want your mistress at a ball where you were present?

NEMOURS

Never.

DUCHESS DE VALENTINOIS

I can understand a husband not wanting his wife there. But a lover...? Why?

NEMOURS

Because there she is, gorgeously bedecked, possibly for, or to attract, some other man. Her mind's not where it should be – on *you* – but on her clothes, and jewels, and hair. The only worse affliction than being a ball with one's mistress is *not* being there.

DAUPHINE

Well, it's a day for paradoxes. The Princess was just trying one on me. What was it? Oh, yes. How loving a man other than one's husband makes one hate the man for the pain brought on by joy. If I have it right. Can anyone follow that?

NEMOURS

I can.

DAUPHINE

You two are soulmates, then. For me, joy is joy.

DUCHESS DE VALENTINOIS

Nemours, is there no exception to this rule of yours?

NEMOURS

Yes, when the man is throwing the ball. For then he's made a jewel box for his mistress to shine in.

QUEEN

You threw that wonderful ball last year on your then-mistress's behalf.

VIDAME

So many ladies there had claim to the title, if they hadn't attended, the place would've been deserted.

DUCHESS DE VALENTINOIS

I want the Vidame's view, since he has a fresh woman in his life.

QUEEN

I beg your pardon?

DUCHESS DE VALENTINOIS

You haven't heard?

QUEEN

Is that true, Vidame? A woman in your life?

VIDAME

Someone's been spreading some canard.

QUEEN

Really? About you and specifically whom?

DUCHESS DE VALENTINOIS

Madame de Martigues is what *I* hear.

QUEEN

Then it is a lie. The Vidame wouldn't waste a breath on a vulgar conniver like Martigues. And forfeit my friendship? For Martigues?

DUCHESS DE VALENTINOIS

I'm so sorry, I forgot that the Vidame was your special friend.

QUEEN

Speaking of balls, Monsieur de Nemours, are you going to the Maréchal's tonight?

NEMOURS

No, I won't.

VIDAME

Because *some woman* will be there?

DAUPHINE

I'll be there.

NEMOURS

I'm not in a dancing mood.

DAUPHINE

You see how changed he is? All the ladies out of your past will be there. And the Princess will be there.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

I won't be going, actually.

DAUPHINE

Oh, no, Princess, I need you at the ball!

QUEEN

No doubt you'll spare some man a great deal of pain by not showing up. But then you're always kind.

NEMOURS

The Princess spares no man but her husband, being no man's mistress but her husband's.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

Eternally.

NEMOURS

Eternally. So why not go to the ball, if you're safe?

DAUPHINE

Maybe she's avoiding the Maréchal, or my brother.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

My mother's not well and I'm attending her tonight. But if you'll all excuse me I need a word with the Dauphine...

(PRINCESS DE CLÈVES pulls the DAUPHINE aside.)

DUCHESS DE VALENTINOIS

Even your niece is rude today.

VIDAME

The natural side effects of marriage.

QUEEN

(exiting)
Nemours?

NEMOURS

I think I'll stay.

(QUEEN, VIDAME and DUCHESS EXIT.)

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

(in private, with the DAUPHINE)
Did my uncle tell you what you wanted to know? About this unknown woman?

DAUPHINE

How unlike you to wonder. Apparently he's asked, but Nemours won't tell.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

It must be you, Marie. It has to be.

QUEEN (O.S.)

Dauphine!

(DAUPHINE EXITS.)

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

Good day, monsieur.

NEMOURS

No, stay, please. And thank you.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

For...?

NEMOURS

The favor you've done me.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

By?

NEMOURS

Not going to the ball.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

I swear, monsieur...

NEMOURS

Swear that you've done me no favor and I'll call you a liar. Something I doubt you've ever been called. But madam, will you forgive my crude words the last time we spoke?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

If you sincerely regret them. The Dauphine says she hardly recognizes you these days.

NEMOURS

I hardly recognize myself. Being the opposite now of all I have been.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

Marie is worth the transformation.

NEMOURS

It isn't she who's caused it. I'm happy to let people think I come here for the Dauphine. But madam, I come here because of you. Because I'm in love you. Now I have the torture of knowing you love me but won't confess it.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

How do you know that?

NEMOURS

Because you're not going to the ball.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

I have my mother to attend.

NEMOURS

Yes, so you said.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

I don't love you.

NEMOURS

Liar.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

Monsieur, I love my husband.

NEMOURS

Liar.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

I love my husband.

NEMOURS

Does he have any time for you, with all this Hispanic madness? Phillip of Spain disallowing the marriage he approved so he can marry his son's fiancée?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

It's disgusting.

NEMOURS

It's wonderful. It's passion, it's drama. You wouldn't care to steal me away from Elizabeth of England, would you? You have the power. Or should I get on my knees and beg? Shall I?

(PRINCE DE CLÈVES ENTERS.)

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

Princess, I'm glad I found you. I'm afraid your mother's taken a turn for the worse.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

Oh, no. Goodbye, monsieur.

(PRINCESS DE CLÈVES hurries out.)

NEMOURS

Is it that bad?

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

Very bad. I don't know what my wife will do without her.

NEMOURS

A wonderful woman you have there, Clèves.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

The best in all the world.

NEMOURS

Cherish her. Or rather, thinking of her mother: cherish her while you have her.

(THEY EXIT.)

Scene Five.

(The home of Madame de Chartres, the same evening. The PRINCESS and her mother.)

MME DE CHARTRES
Have you been here long?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES
No, not very.

MME DE CHARTRES
Is the door shut?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES
Yes, Mama. Did you sleep well? Was there any pain?

MME DE CHARTRES
Of course there was pain.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES
What did the doctor say?

MME DE CHARTRES
Never mind me. Princess, where were you when I sent for you?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES
At the Dauphine's.

MME DE CHARTRES
Who was there?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES
Marie, The Queen, the Duchess. Uncle was there, and the Duke de Nemours. Don't you want one of your women...?

MME DE CHARTRES
I've sent my women away. Come here. Now are you listening to me? Are you listening?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES
Yes, Mama.

MME DE CHARTRES
My child, tonight you and I must part for a time.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES
Oh, God, oh, God, oh, God.

MME DE CHARTRES

I have no doubt we'll meet again in a better world. My only sorrow is that I'm leaving you just when you need my help.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

Help for what? And I have a husband...

MME DE CHARTRES

Princess, you stand at the brink of a great abyss. You've fallen in love with the Duke de Nemours. I have no time for lies, don't even try to deny it. I should have spoken about this before, but stupidly didn't want to make things worse.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

Mama, what should I do?

MME DE CHARTRES

Retire from the court and go away. Anywhere. Italy, America, Coulommiers. But do not enmesh yourself in an affair. You owe it to your husband, and to yourself, and to your reputation.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

The Prince has duties at court...

MME DE CHARTRES

Your husband adores you and will do what you ask. If he doesn't then you have to force him, or you have to go away yourself. Good God, girl, what are you a woman for if not to make men do your will? Or would you have me go into eternity knowing you've fallen to the level of other women?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

No, Mama.

MME DE CHARTRES

I've looked forward all my life to bliss with God. Would you spoil it?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

No, Mama.

MME DE CHARTRES

And yet I see that this misfortune is fated to occur. I can read it in your face.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

No. I swear to you.

MME DE CHARTRES

Well, then you're perjuring yourself.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

Mama, I swear.

MME DE CHARTRES

I've said all I had to say. I die happy in that I shall not have to witness your disgrace.
Farewell, daughter. Kiss me.

(They kiss.)

Let me go. Let me go. Now call my women.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

I can't leave you. Not like this.

MME DE CHARTRES

I'm for God now. May he be with you.

(She turns and leaves.)

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

Talk to me. Listen to me. Please, Mama. Please, please, listen. I'm here, Mama. *Please.*

(But MME DE CHARTRES has exited. THE PRINCESS EXITS the other way.)

Scene Six.

(The palace. The KING, the DUCHESS DE VALENTINOIS, NEMOURS. This last reading a LETTER.)

KING

You've read that letter through?

NEMOURS

Yes, Your Majesty.

KING

Do you think Lignerolles is a fool, or a liar?

NEMOURS

No, sir.

KING

Read the last paragraph.

NEMOURS

"I can no longer defend Monsieur de Nemours to the English Queen, whose nobles are pressing her to break this matter off. The Duke's tardiness in arriving here is all the talk, and she, being easily offended, adds the scandal to her very vocal grievances."

KING

Well?

NEMOURS

I'm sorry her nobles have nothing better to talk about. Or that their Queen is so desperate for a bedmate.

KING

Goddamit, this is no time for wit, Nemours. The ship sails tomorrow. Will you go, or won't you?

NEMOURS

They're still preparing my retinue...

KING

To hell with your retinue! Will you go?

DUCHESS DE VALENTINOIS

Maybe the Duke's mystery lady prevents him.

KING

Mystery lady? What's this, another one of your hourly affairs?

DUCHESS DE VALENTINOIS

No, this is serious. Apparently the woman – whoever she is – won't have him.

KING

Well, will you have *this* lady? Have all the women you want or don't have them. Sweet Jesus, sir, you won't have a crown? You'd rather stay here and shame your King? Your nation?

NEMOURS

You know Elizabeth's moods. She's flirted with a dozen of her nobles only to cast them off. This is a diplomatic cloud that will pass.

KING

Am I a king?

NEMOURS

Yes, Your Majesty. And were you she, I would certainly marry you.

KING

God damn it! What use is it to be a King if no one listens? God damn it, God damn it, God damn it!

(KING EXITS.)

DUCHESS DE VALENTINOIS

You'll be sorry you didn't please him better.

NEMOURS

Madam, my only concern is the good of France.

DUCHESS DE VALENTINOIS

Liar.

(DUCHESS EXITS, then NEMOURS.)

Scene Seven.

(The house of the Prince and Princess de Clèves. The PRINCE and PRINCESS.)

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

You can't turn people away from the door. Darling, yes – mourn for your mother, mourn for her to the end of your days. But don't cut yourself off. Nemours came for the tenth time today to pay his condolences.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

I'll send him a note. The Duke will understand.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

Did this artist come?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

I didn't want my portrait painted.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

You sent him off, too?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

You already have a miniature of me.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

Yes, which I cherish but now that we're married I want a portrait. Darling, you have to take up daily life again. *Your* life.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

Actually, I've had an idea. I want us to go to Coulommiers.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

I'm in the middle of negotiations...

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

I mean permanently. The moment you're done with Spain, we'll move out of Paris.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

You're joking. What about your friends here, the Dauphine?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

That's partly it, you see? The social scene. All these people coming and going, crowding us apart. It's exhausting. And Coulommiers is beautiful, it's enormous. We'd have time to read and walk and think and talk. To make love. All day long, if we wanted. Do you really care if Spain marries France, or Belgium or Russia?

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

I think that grief has fogged your mind.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

No, grief has cleared it once for all.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

Well, we're not moving to Coulommiers. I *said*, we are not moving to Coulommiers.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

Then I'll move there myself.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

What, and leave me? Why? By God, I've said that you don't love me. At least do me the justice to admit it.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

And I swear you're unjust to say it.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

Listen to me. Here's what we're going to do. I'm going to have this artist back. *Listen*. When he's finished we're going to invite some people to celebrate the portrait.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

No...

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

Yes. To bring you back to life. We'll make supper for a hundred. Why not? Darling. Look at me. Why not?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

I have something to tell you. I've been wanting to say this for a long time.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

What? What? God, my heart is pounding.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

I love you. I do love you.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

Oh, sweetheart.

(Embracing her.)

Thank you.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

But will you think about Coulommiers?

I'll think about Coulommiers.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

For me?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

For you. I promise.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

(THEY EXIT.)

Scene Eight.

(The house of the Prince and Princess de Clèves. Evening. The DAUPHINE, the QUEEN, VIDAME and NEMOURS.)

DAUPHINE

...just look at her father. Wife, wife, wife, wife, wife, wife, wife – did I get them all or is that one spouse too many? Katherine of what's-her-name, Anne Boleyn, Something Seymour. I'm amazed one of them didn't kill *him*. In any case, there you have Henry of England's life summed up: a) he married twelve or fifteen times, b) he killed them all, c) he sired the professional virgin Elizabeth, and d) he died piggishly fat. Oh yes and he left the true faith, condemning his whole nation to hell for all eternity.

QUEEN

I didn't know you were religious, Dauphine.

DAUPHINE

Only when contemplating a toasted Englishman. Is it any wonder his homely daughter can't decide whether to marry her suitors or execute them? Anyway, we're shut of Elizabeth the Ambivalent. And good riddance.

QUEEN

(to NEMOURS)

Henry's very cross with you, about the way that fell out.

NEMOURS

It was fate, madame.

QUEEN

Yes, fate, with a little push from you.

NEMOURS

Isn't that our duty in this vale of tears? To re-fashion destiny? Give it a push?

(The PRINCE and PRINCESS ENTER. He brings with him a PAINTING.)

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

Here it is. Still a bit wet at the edges.

DAUPHINE

Let me see. Oh, isn't that darling?

QUEEN

Wonderful. Ravishing. Congratulations, my dear.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

I had nothing to do but sit.

QUEEN

Sit and be beautiful. What do you think, Nemours?

NEMOURS

It's hard to believe the Princess, or any Princess, could look more lovely.

DAUPHINE

Prince, where's that wonderful miniature you have of her?

QUEEN

Oh, I adore that piece.

DAUPHINE

Let me see it so I can compare. Before-and-after marriage portraits.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

It's right next door...

(PRINCE DE CLÈVES EXITS.)

NEMOURS

I doubt there'll be a contest. The Princess is far more beautiful since her marriage.

QUEEN

Your mother, God rest her soul, would be so happy to see you blooming again.

DAUPHINE

Or blushing again, as you have been all evening. Nemours, what does that mean, according to your rule about mistresses and social functions? Was her lover here or was he absent? Or was he throwing the party?

NEMOURS

I'd say he was here. I'd say he was definitely here.

DAUPHINE

No doubt you could anatomize whatever complicated internal pain he was in.

NEMOURS

Down to the tiniest agonized flutter.

(PRINCE DE CLÈVES ENTERS.)

It's gone.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

What?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

It's gone. The miniature. It's always on the mantel in the parlor except when I carry it in my vest, and it's not there.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

You're sure?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

Absolutely. It sits on a gold stand I purposely had made for it. On which I put the miniature today, having taken it out of my pocket. The stand is there but not the portrait.

DAUPHINE

Maybe one of the servants...?

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

Out of the question.

QUEEN

You don't mean one of your guests stole it? Just crept in there tonight and took it?

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

What else can I think?

VIDAME

Incredible.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

That was my absolute prized possession. The princess gave it to me the day we were betrothed.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

Really, darling. It doesn't matter...

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

Yes, it matters. Of course it matters.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

You have the new one.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

It's not the same. I wouldn't have lost that portrait for all the world.

DAUPHINE

Well I'd say your thief is definitely a man – some guest who's secretly smitten with the Princess and had to have her portrait to carry by his heart. What do you think, Your Grace?

NEMOURS

He would've had to be very bold.

DAUPHINE

Or very smitten.

QUEEN

Maybe the Maréchal. Or your brother.

DAUPHINE

What do you think, Princess?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

If it's true I think it's despicable, no matter what the reason. I think the man's a beast.

DAUPHINE

Do you have any idea who it was? Call the man out on it. Really. Everybody's still in the house. Call him in and accuse the bastard to his face.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

Really, darling. Have you any idea?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

Who could have been so petty? For a mere picture?

DAUPHINE

It's not just any picture. It's you.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

I'm going to speak to my valet.

(PRINCE DE CLÈVES EXITS.)

DAUPHINE

Bizarre.

QUEEN

Vidame, you seemed preoccupied at supper.

VIDAME

Pardon me.

QUEEN

You wouldn't have taken it.

VIDAME

Only if it had been your portrait, madam.

DAUPHINE

Well, let's not break our heads about it. Your Grace, what colors will you be wearing at the wedding tournament?

NEMOURS

You won't recognize them. Yellow and gold.

DAUPHINE

The mystery deepens. Unless you've forgotten those aren't my colors.

QUEEN

I'm going to take my leave. Vidame?

DAUPHINE

I'll wait. I have something to tell the princess.

(QUEEN, VIDAME, NEMOURS EXIT with ad lib "good nights.")

DAUPHINE

Princess, I have something *so wonderful*. Listen. My woman saw a letter drop from the sleeve of one of your guests and *thinks* it was Nemours. Here it is. [*Takes out LETTER.*] A love letter from some woman, and apparently a scorcher. Isn't that a prize?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

It's not addressed, and it's unsigned...

DAUPHINE

Obviously from the woman for whom he's dropped all his mistresses. Take it and see if you recognize the handwriting and come to me tomorrow morning. Good night, darling. Wonderful party.

(DAUPHINE EXITS.)

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

"My darling, my tormentor. How could I ever dream you loved me? Well, now your mask is off. The change in you is all too clear. You love another woman. Do you think last

night in my bed I didn't know whose face you pictured even as you possessed me? Whose hair you stroked, whose eyes you gazed in, into whose ear you whispered into? I would warn the lady but only wish to see her as miserable as I am. I who loved alone and loved too deep. Yet you will always be my love, my universe, my all..."

(PRINCE DE CLÈVES ENTERS.)

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

What's that?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

Nothing. Some letter.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

What's wrong?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

You didn't find the picture?

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

No, it's definitely gone.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

I'm so sorry. Poor darling. It was a wonderful party. Everybody loved it.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

Well, I hope it will be the beginning of a new life for you – for both of us.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

Will you still think about what I said about Coulommiers?

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

Yes, I'll think about it. I promise. Now come to bed.

(PRINCE DE CLÈVES EXITS.)

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

(alone)

So Nemours's deceived me just as he deceived this lady – toying with me to satisfy his vanity. And tonight by not speaking up I revealed myself, by not accusing him I showed him that I loved him. Gave him that advantage when all along he's loved somebody else. But do I love him...? This rage is the proof. This jealousy, since jealousy's what it must be. Well, be calm, Princess. You know everything now. And that's your cure...

(SHE EXITS.)

Scene Nine.

(Nemours's house, late that night. KNOCKING HEARD. NEMOURS ENTERS.)

NEMOURS

Let them in, whoever it is, let them in!

(VIDAME ENTERS.)

Vidame, what are you...

VIDAME

Save my life, Nemour. Save my life, for God's sake!

NEMOURS

Do you want some wine?

VIDAME

I've had enough. Christ, I'm half-drunk already.

NEMOURS

Tell me. What.

VIDAME

A letter. Tonight at dinner, a letter dropped from my sleeve. I'll tell you in short, it's from Madame de Martigues, accusing me about another lady. I know from my man that the Duchess knows. I also know the Queen's been told because I just was summoned to her presence to explain. If that note gets into the Queen's hands I'm a dead man.

NEMOURS

Who got the letter?

VIDAME

The Dauphine, but she gave it to my niece.

NEMOURS

I don't see what I can do.

VIDAME

Simple. You can say the letter was to you. Yes of course you have a mistress. You have ten of them. And this could estrange you from her or them but you wouldn't *die* for it. I swear Nemours, on my head, I would intervene in person with her for you. Tell her everything. In secret we'd know everything. In public, the letter has to have been to you. What do you say?

NEMOURS

I say you deserve whatever befalls you for being such a fool.

VIDAME

Just help me, will you? Go to the Princess and ask for your letter.

NEMOURS

I don't see how I can claim it's mine if it fell from your sleeve.

VIDAME

She probably thinks it's yours already. Someone told the Dauphine *you* dropped the letter.

NEMOURS

Good God.

VIDAME

As I say, I can square things between you and your mistress, you and the Dauphine, whoever. Who is she? I'll speak to her. I'll write to her.

NEMOURS

All right. Then what I need from you is a note addressed to the Prince and Princess, signed by you, swearing that the letter's yours.

VIDAME

Anything. Anything.

NEMOURS

Then you're going to go to the Queen and deny everything. I'll send you word.

(THEY EXIT.)

Scene Eleven.

(The house of the Prince and Princess, next morning. The PRINCE and PRINCESS ENTER.)

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

Why is he here so early?

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

Darling, I want you to listen to him. He's brought some news that touches you closely.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

Touches me...?

(NEMOURS ENTERS.)

NEMOURS

Princess, good morning. I hope you'll pardon me if I don't stand on ceremony. I need your help. Yours and the Prince's.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

Now listen to him, darling.

NEMOURS

I believe the Dauphine gave you a compromising letter last night. That letter was from a certain lady to your uncle.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

I don't understand...

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

Here's a note from him attesting as much.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

My uncle...? And you're here why?

NEMOURS

I'm going to claim that letter is mine.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

To clear your uncle, lest he have to pay the extreme penalty for his idiocy. And you see, darling, you can take the letter back to the Dauphine and support that story.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

Yes, but – I don't have the letter. I burnt it last night.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

Burned it? Why?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

I don't know. I found it so horrible. Now you say it was to my uncle...

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

Well, this came from the Dauphine an hour ago.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

“Princess: I expected you here at first light. Now the Queen is on me as she is convinced that note was written to the Vidame. Bring it to me as soon as possible. Mary.”

NEMOURS

She'll be furious when she finds out it's been destroyed. The Queen will spontaneously combust.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

Nothing to be done, if it's destroyed.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

Yes there is. I could make a copy.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

You remember the letter well enough?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

Word for word. And I'm sure I could imitate the handwriting.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

You're an angel. I'll go to the palace and put off the Dauphine.

NEMOURS

Do you mind if I stay for this?

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

Stay, please!

(PRINCE DE CLÈVES EXITS.)

NEMOURS

You thought that letter was to me.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

It must have grieved you, believing the Dauphine thought you unfaithful.

NEMOURS

No, it grieved me that you might think so.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

Well, I'll go to my room and start...

NEMOURS

No, write it here, with me. It's my so-called letter, isn't it? I'll have to know what I'm talking about when the Dauphine interrogates me.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

Then stand over there and don't disturb me while I write.

NEMOURS

Excellent. I can gaze on you in fond tranquility.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

Monsieur, stop that, please. [*She prepares to write.*]

NEMOURS

I'm not disturbing you now, am I? Or now? I'm sorry. Go ahead. But let me hear these wicked words.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

"My darling, my tormentor."

NEMOURS

Excellent opening.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

Because it sounds like something a woman might write to you?

NEMOURS

Because it's poetry. "My darling, my tormentor." The history of love summed up in a single phrase.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

"How could I ever dream you loved me."

NEMOURS

But I *do* love you... I'm sorry, I thought you were speaking to me.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

Your Grace, I haven't given you liberty to speak to me like that.

NEMOURS

You have and you know you have.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

“Well, now your mask is off. The change in you is all too clear. You love another woman.”

NEMOURS

Never! – Sorry.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

“Do you think last night in my bed I didn’t know whose face you pictured even as you possessed me?”

NEMOURS

You’re glorious.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

“Whose hair you stroked...”

NEMOURS

You remember that moment?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

“...whose eyes you gazed in, whose ear you whispered into?”

NEMOURS

Do you remember what I whispered?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

“I would warn the lady but only wish to see her as miserable as I am. I who loved alone and loved too deep. Yet you will always be my love, my universe, my all...”

NEMOURS

What she says there is nothing to what I feel for you. Do you hear me?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

You have to go now.

NEMOURS

Is there another man? Is that why you disdain my bed – because you’re busy in someone else’s? Someone besides your husband’s, I mean? Tell me his name and I’ll kill him.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

You’re revolting.

NEMOURS

You know how much I love you, don't you?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

In God's name, sir, leave me in peace!

NEMOURS

Don't forget to fold the note exactly as it was given you. It's the little things that give us away. Princess. What a pleasure to collude with you.

(He EXITS.)

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

Hateful man. And now there's some unspoken bond between him and me, an understanding born of these words, of my having written them, of receiving him, allowing him to stay. And only an hour ago I was in agony, feeling betrayed when I had no right to. Could a man of his nature ever truly love? Could a woman of my nature enter into an affair? Fail Monsieur de Clèves and fail myself, fail my mother, fail God, fail everything that's right and just and true?

(PRINCE DE CLÈVES ENTERS.)

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

Have you finished?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

Yes, it's finished.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

Darling, I know your scruple. That you'll have to lie, claiming the letter is Nemours's. Just think of the consequences. To your uncle, to you. Well, aren't you going to go?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

I have something to tell you.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

That you love me, yes. But you have to take the letter to the...

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

I have to tell you something. Please.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

Princess... What is it?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

Would you send away the servants?

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

They're all busy in the kitchen. What is this? Tell me.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

You know I've wanted to move to Coulommiers.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

This is hardly a time to discuss Coulommiers...

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

You have to listen to me. And consider something. Consider... a woman of my youth, a woman who's considered attractive, a woman who has her freedom just as I do, who's married and free to move about as she likes and see whom she likes, receive whom she likes, just as I am – do you know the dangers that threaten such a woman in this city? The moral dangers? And how it might be in such a woman's interest to separate herself from other people? Specifically from men other than her husband? Can you see such a woman's reasons? *My* reasons? Why such a woman might want to move to Coulommiers?

(NEMOURS ENTERS, unnoticed, then stops and listens in.)

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

You force me to imagine *one* reason. To put it in plainer words would risk insulting you.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

Then as you see, we have to move out of the city, and immediately. Please – *please*, don't make me go into greater detail.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

What other people, what other *man* do you want to separate from?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

I don't want to speak about it.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

You've spoken already. Sufficiently to guess my suspicions. Either confirm them or erase them. What should I know?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

So be it, then. And I say all of the following, believe it or not, to reassure you, and to show my faith in you. To beg your forgiveness, not for my actions but for my feelings. Yes, I have a reason to leave Paris. Yes, I am beset by dangers from a certain man. But believe me, and I swear by Almighty God, I'm innocent and I've done nothing, *nothing*, no matter what my feelings.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

Which are what? What are your feelings? Do you love this man?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

Please don't ask me that.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

Do you? Do you love him?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

I think I do. Yes, yes, I do. I love him.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

I see. Or think I see...

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

If you won't let me live at Coulommiers, let me live here quietly and receive no one. Let me live in peace. Let *us* live in peace. Please. Darling, think how deeply I must love you to have said all this. Pity me. Guide me. Love me, if you still can.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

I'm blessed with the best of wives down all of history – yet find myself the unhappiest of husbands. Made unhappy by the greatest proof of fidelity any wife has ever given a husband. Princess, I have loved you passionately and nothing has extinguished my passion. Not even the knowledge that I could never inspire that passion in you. And now you tell me you feel it for someone else. Who is the man?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

I will not name him.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

I won't abuse your confidence, I won't love you any the less. Just tell me who he is.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

I'm sorry.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

What is his name?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

Why say it? Why know it?

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

Is it the Maréchal? Is it Nemours? The Chevalier de Guise?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

If I was strong enough to confess my feelings, do you think I'm not strong enough to conceal his name?

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

After all that, *you* expect *me* to be satisfied? When your feelings are so strong you'd move house, bag and baggage, and hide yourself in the country? Yes, we could move, we could move to China but this man would always be there. Because your feelings would always be there. And I *will* find out his name.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

May I also remind you I've done nothing you could take offense at? That I have nothing to reproach myself with?

(NEMOURS slips away, still unnoticed by them)

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

You expect me to believe that?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

Yes!

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

You haven't given this man a sign? A gesture? A look that told him all? Some gift?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

Never.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

What about the miniature? Did you give him the miniature?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

No.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

That portrait, my dearest possession, you gave to your lover?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

No!

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

He has it, doesn't he? Does he have it? Well?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

Yes, he has it but I didn't give it to him.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES
 How does he have it?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES
 He took it!

PRINCE DE CLÈVES
 Yes – from your hand.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES
 Not from my hand. Behind my back.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES
 But with your leave. With your permission.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES
No.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES
 So it's only your modesty that's preserved your virtue. How close have you gotten to giving *that* away?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES
 If I didn't conceal this, why would I conceal anything else? I did not give away that picture.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES
 Does he know you love him?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES
 I've never said so.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES
 You've never said you love him?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES
 No!

PRINCE DE CLÈVES
 What sign has *he* given? He must have given some sign or why would you be leaving Paris for all parts of the world?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES
 Sir, would you have me tell in detail what I'm ashamed to merely think of?

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

So he has given you signs. Has he? Has he?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

Yes!

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

Told you he loved you?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

Yes.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

Well. Well...

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

Do you know what I've risked in saying all this to you?

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

Yes, and don't you regret now having risked it?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

This is why we have to move away. Take me away, darling. Come with me. Live with me. Please.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

You have to take the letter to the Dauphine.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

You know my feelings for you.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

No. I don't know them.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

Nothing has changed.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

Fine. Nothing has changed. Well, thank you for telling me. Thank you for trusting me.

(The PRINCESS embraces him.)

Go to the Dauphine. Go.

(The PRINCESS EXITS.)

CURTAIN
END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWOScene One.

(The Dauphine's chambers, later the same morning. The DAUPHINE alone, then joined by the PRINCESS.)

DAUPHINE

Princess, where have you been? It's bedlam here! The Duchess coming in and screaming at me, then the Queen coming in and screaming at me. I couldn't tell her I gave the letter to you so I had to come up with some idiot story about it being locked in a wardrobe and losing the key and I don't know what. Then the King comes in screaming at me because the Queen has been screaming at *him*. What happened? Where were you?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

I'm so sorry. I felt rather ill and hardly slept last night.

DAUPHINE

So you slept in while I've been calling for you every hour. Do you have the letter?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

Yes. Here.

DAUPHINE

(taking the LETTER)

Thank God, I was afraid something happened... Wait a moment. This isn't it.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

Yes it is.

DAUPHINE

No, this isn't the letter. It's different somehow.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

That is the letter.

DAUPHINE

It doesn't look at all as I remembered. Princess, what is this?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

I swear, that is the letter you handed to me.

DAUPHINE

Are you my friend or aren't you?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

Yes, of course. Marie, of course.

DAUPHINE

I don't see why you would have exchanged it. Have you read it? Do you have any idea who it's from?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

I know to whom it was written.

DAUPHINE

Who?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

The Duke de Nemours claims it was written to him.

DAUPHINE

You know it definitely?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

I know he claims it.

DAUPHINE

And you know this how?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

He came to speak to us early this morning – afraid of how the letter might be interpreted or used. Worried how you might take the letter. That it might compromise your friendship.

DAUPHINE

Princess, if I didn't know you were so scrupulously truthful I would suspect some subterfuge. Something's wrong here. Something is definitely wrong.

(QUEEN ENTERS with DUCHESS DE VALENTINOIS.)

QUEEN

Do you have it?

DAUPHINE

Yes, right here. I found the key to that wardrobe...

QUEEN

Never mind the wardrobe. I'll take that, thank you.

DAUPHINE

The Princess says it was to the Duke de Nemours.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

He claims it as his.

QUEEN

It's not addressed to anyone, far as I can see. How do you know?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

Everyone knows his reputation with women...

QUEEN

I'm asking, *how do you know it's the Duke's?*

DUCHESS DE VALENTINOIS

Let me see it.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

He came to us early this morning, afraid of how the letter might be interpreted or used.

DAUPHINE

I thought you were asleep.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

I was awake when he arrived.

QUEEN

Why would he go to you?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

He and my husband have known each other since childhood. They're friends.

QUEEN

The Duke says it's his?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

He claims it as his.

DUCHESS DE VALENTINOIS

But obviously this is to the Vidame. It's from Martigues. It fits their situation to a T, now that he's deceiving her – *and* you – with Madame de Thémines.

QUEEN

I spoke with him this morning and he denies it on oath.

DUCHESS DE VALENTINOIS

Of course he denies it, to save his neck. The man's the rankest of liars on the best of days.

QUEEN

Madam...

DUCHESS DE VALENTINOIS

A born, base and persistent liar and you know it – best of all of us, being his *good friend*.

QUEEN

But the Duke does say it's his. Princess, am I wrong?

PRINCESS

He claims the responsibility. Why would he lie?

QUEEN

If this were coming from anyone but you I wouldn't believe it.

DUCHESS DE VALENTINOIS

The Blessed Virgin would lie to save an uncle.

QUEEN

No, madam, *you* would lie for less than that if it sacrificed *her* uncle. We know your venom. Go find another way to break the back of the Vidame de Chartres.

DAUPHINE

Perhaps using less antiquated weapons.

DUCHESS DE VALENTINOIS

Don't think I'll forget this. Any of you!

(KING ENTERS.)

KING

What's all this shouting, what is all this? Has this damned letter gotten sorted out?

DAUPHINE

Yes, Majesty. I think so.

KING

Good. Because I won't have all this noise. If you want to advertise our differences why not just post them in the Place Royale? If this business is settled, it's settled. Give me that. I'm going to burn it. Enough! Now come, the both of you.

(KING EXITS with QUEEN and DUCHESS.)

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

Not a completely happy ending, but an ending.

DAUPHINE

And yet, and yet... I see a slightly different story here than what you painted. You say the Duke came to you early this morning...

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

Worried about how this letter might be interpreted...

DAUPHINE

...or used. Yes. But wasn't he worried how it might be interpreted – by *you*?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

By me?

DAUPHINE

The other woman in the letter? Who'd stolen his heart away from the lady who wrote it?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

I'm not having an affair with the Duke.

DAUPHINE

Princess, do you think I haven't noticed his tender feelings for you? You, who've obsessed him these many weeks?

(PRINCESS DE CLÈVES says nothing.)

Well, fine. So be it. The Duke and you.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

No, madam. Not the Duke and me. Not in the past, not in the future. Nor would I let anything as inane as love interrupt my friendship with you.

DAUPHINE

Yes, well. Leave me, please. I have some things...

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

Don't you believe me, Marie?

DAUPHINE

Just leave me. Go!

(The PRINCESS EXITS one way, then the DAUPHINE.)

Scene Two.

(The palace. The VIDAME and NEMOURS.)

NEMOURS

It's all settled! Trust me, you're safe.

VIDAME

The Queen grilled me for hours.

NEMOURS

Better than the grilling and chopping La Medici *might* have given you.

VIDAME

I doubt she'll ever trust me again.

NEMOURS

And why should she? But look. Your neck and your name are intact. The apple trees are blooming, the world is good!

VIDAME

You're in a cheery mood.

NEMOURS

Why shouldn't I be?

VIDAME

What is it, a new woman at last? And not your mystery woman – one who actually returns your favor?

NEMOURS

No, it's not a woman. It's a story about a woman. About an act unparalleled in human, or *woman*, history. About a woman greater than all her sex. And what it proves, Vidame, is that one can never plumb the depths and possibilities of passion.

VIDAME

Tell me.

NEMOURS

No.

VIDAME

Tell the story, for God's sake! I need some cheering up. Didn't I trust you with my life's secret?

NEMOURS

Well, listen. The story isn't about *me*.

VIDAME

No, of course not.

NEMOURS

It's about this woman – let's call her X.

VIDAME

A lady of Paris?

NEMOURS

Of Paris. You understand this is all in confidence.

VIDAME

Yes, fine fine fine. So...?

NEMOURS

Lady X of Paris. Young. Rich. Beautiful. Not long married. And to an excellent man, a superb man, call him Y. Totally besotted by her. Upon which she, Lady X, realizes that she is the object of the attentions of Monsieur Z. Another excellent man, absolutely smitten, who lets her know in no uncertain way.

VIDAME

Tells his love.

NEMOURS

Outright.

VIDAME

And she acts upon it. Sleeps with him.

NEMOURS

No. This is what's wonderful. Lady X, fearing for her virtue, fearing for her marriage and her excellent husband, tells him.

VIDAME

She tells her husband?!

NEMOURS

Tells her husband.

VIDAME

No!

NEMOURS

Everything. Confesses that there is a Z, confesses her feelings about Z. *Pity me, guide me, love me*, she says.

VIDAME

When nothing has happened?

NEMOURS

When nothing has happened.

VIDAME

But why?

NEMOURS

Love, you idiot! Love in all its fermentive power.

VIDAME

But how do you know all this? Did she tell?

NEMOURS

No.

VIDAME

Did the husband tell?

NEMOURS

No.

VIDAME

Who did? A servant, a passing parrot? They couldn't have had this conversation in a public square. How did anyone know? You can't just leave me hanging!

NEMOURS

I'm sorry I've told you as much as I have.

VIDAME

And did the lover, did "Z" find out? Come on, Nemours!

NEMOURS

He did.

VIDAME

Which made him despair.

NEMOURS

Not at all. He's happy in having inspired such strong sentiments. Says he wouldn't change places with the most gratified lover on earth. Says her confession only made him love her more. A woman capable of *that*? What else might lie in her power?

VIDAME

But she'd closed off his approach. How was he ever to win a woman capable of that?

NEMOURS

You mean win her physically?

VIDAME

Didn't he want to?

NEMOURS

Well, yes of course. But don't you see, you clod? He'd won the heart of a woman unique in all womankind!

VIDAME

Had he?

NEMOURS

Yes!

VIDAME

How did he know? Had she ever told him she loved him?

NEMOURS

Well, no. But she'd given him certain signs.

VIDAME

"*Signs.*" More to the point, was he sure she was speaking of *him* when she told all to her husband? Did she name your friend specifically?

NEMOURS

She refused to name the man involved.

VIDAME

Why? Out of love, you'll say. But not love for the lover. Love *for her husband*. To spare him pain. I grant you it's an amazing story. Worthy of Boccaccio, Dante, one of them. But if I were Monsieur Zed I would be in paradiso and inferno at the same time.

VIDAME

But listen, Vidame. You can't tell anyone.

VIDAME

Of course not.

NEMOURS

I want you to swear.

VIDAME

I swear, I swear!

(KING ENTERS with the PRINCE and the QUEEN.)

KING

Gentlemen, we've just had some news. Phillip of Spain is sending the Prince of Alba as his proxy to marry my daughter. I've just assigned Clèves the job of bringing him here.

VIDAME

Congratulations.

NEMOURS

Well deserved.

QUEEN

You look distracted, Monsieur de Clèves.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

Not at all. I'm very honored. And the journey will give my wife a nice rest from court.

KING

Nemours, I thought you might take over the wedding tournament.

NEMOURS

Nothing would please me more, sire.

KING

I'm going to compete myself, so I want something good. Something magnificent, for the history books.

NEMOURS

It will be that, I promise you.

(KING EXITS with the PRINCE and NEMOURS.)

VIDAME

Your Highness, if I might have a word. Please.

(The QUEEN stays back.)

That I could have lost your favor in any way...

QUEEN

Lost my favor? Lost my bed, you mean. And don't think you're going to win or buy or wheedle it back. No gift on earth is good enough.

VIDAME

But madam, I have something better than any gift: a story worth its weight in pearls touching some persons here at court. A lady and two gentlemen.

QUEEN

What lady? What gentlemen?

VIDAME

The lady – unknown. One of the gentleman – the Duke de Nemours. I just had the story from his own mouth. “Anonymously,” of course. And you will only be the second one to hear it...

(THEY EXIT.)

Scene Three.

(The Dauphine's chambers. The DAUPHINE and the PRINCESS.)

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

I was so happy to get your note. I was afraid our friendship had suffered a blow.

DAUPHINE

You mean the letter and all that? Ancient history, totally forgotten. I have something new and much juicier. A story.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

Some gossip, you mean.

DAUPHINE

Facts, Princess! News! Because now we know for certain Nemours's in love.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

That's hardly news.

DAUPHINE

No, *that's* not news, nor that the lady's rich and beautiful. What is surprising is that a) she has never given in to him (can you imagine?), b) has never confessed her love to him, but c) *has told her spouse*. Not only that but d) has asked him – her husband – to take her away from court so that she not be sullied by her illicit feelings. Or that their marriage not be sullied, I forget. You get the idea. Well? Princess?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

Who told you this?

DAUPHINE

Nemours. Well, not the Duke himself. I had it from Madame d'Anville via Madame de Marck via the Queen via your uncle, who had it in confidence from Nemours's own lips. I'm sure it's everywhere by now. *Pity me, guide me, love me*. Apparently the lady's own immortal words. So? What do you think?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

The story sounds highly improbable.

DAUPHINE

Just improbable enough to sound true.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

The Duke named himself?

DAUPHINE

Not as such, but left little doubt the tale was about him. Let's ask the man in person.

(NEMOURS ENTERS.)

Your Grace...

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

(pulling the DAUPHINE aside)

But Marie... Marie, if he told my uncle in confidence, you'd come between them.

DAUPHINE

(aside)

Trust me, darling, I'm an expert in these things.

NEMOURS

I gather from this pantomime the Dauphine wants to tell me something but the Princess advises against.

DAUPHINE

And usually I defer to this lady's genius. But not today. So tell us: is it true you're in love with a woman who's too shy to tell you of her love but not too shy to tell her husband? This lady's uncle says so.

(NEMOURS says nothing.)

Just look at him! Look, and tell me he's not the man!

NEMOURS

Madame, I stand amazed at the Vidame's betrayal.

DAUPHINE

Betrayal? For telling a tale that reflects so well on you?

NEMOURS

I did tell the Vidame about a certain friend of mine. I also specifically said the tale was not about me – no matter how you smile. I also admit that I'm in love.

DAUPHINE

Oh, never mind *you*. Who's the woman "your friend" loves?

NEMOURS

He never named her.

DAUPHINE

And who's the friend?

NEMOURS

A man who deserves more mercy than any man in creation.

DAUPHINE

Why? Because he's loved?

NEMOURS

Because he told.

DAUPHINE

You told the tale yourself.

NEMOURS

Then I deserve equal mercy.

DAUPHINE

What does he hope for, your friend? From the lady, I mean?

NEMOURS

He hopes for nothing.

DAUPHINE

Then he can't be you. The Princess here disbelieves the whole story.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

I just wonder how your friend could have learned about this lady's supposed confidence.

DAUPHINE

Oh, Princess. A jealous husband is capable of any atrocity. Don't look at me like that. Doesn't it have to be her husband who told? Wouldn't any husband kill to discover his wife's lover's identity? Even if it meant broadcasting the tale to find it out?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

If you'll excuse me, I'm sorry. I don't feel very well.

NEMOURS

I'll go call your coach.

(NEMOURS EXITS.)

DAUPHINE

Deny it's you. Just try to deny it!

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

I'm sorry, madam. I really do not feel well.

(PRINCESS DE CLÈVES EXITS.)

DAUPHINE

Yes. I don't wonder.

(DAUPHINE EXITS.)

Scene Four.

(The home of the Prince and Princess, a while later. The PRINCE and PRINCESS ENTER.)

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

What have you done, what have you done?

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

I, madam?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

You betrayed me. You of all men. Why would you tell? Why? Wasn't it in your own interest to keep the secret I confessed to you? Were you that curious to find out a name? A name which I rightly refused to reveal, and still refuse to reveal? But no – you had to break my trust, you had to confirm your own suspicions. Do you realize the consequence, do you realize the catastrophe you've caused? To yourself, to me, to us?

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

I swear I have no idea what you're talking about.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

It's out. It's public knowledge. All that I poured out to you from the depths of my heart. Trusting – insanely – that you would never repeat it. But you did. Why? *Why?*

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

I'm not going to stoop to defending myself. I can see you wouldn't believe me.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

You mean you didn't tell?

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

I did not. Are you sure this wasn't somebody else's story, some gossip you've applied to yourself?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

I have people quoting my own words back at me! Do you think there are two such cases in all the world? What other fool could have done what I've done? Who could have thought of this but me in all my innocence?

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

Where did you hear it?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

From the Dauphine, who as good as accused me of being the lady in this tale. Who had it via everyone in Paris from Monsieur de Nemours.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

So Nemours is the man?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

Oh, God...

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

And now he knows you love him, and that I know it?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

Why, why, why must you think it's Monsieur de Nemours?

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

Because he's the man I fear the most, and *should* fear the most.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

I said I won't reveal the name of the man. No man's name was mentioned in the telling. Nor mine either. No woman's name was mentioned.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

But this man you love – by now he's heard this tale? And knows you love him?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

Perhaps he's heard, perhaps he knows. But *I* am not responsible.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

Where did Nemours hear all this?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

Are you implying it was me? You standing there acting so blameless.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

I'm asking you.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

He said he had it from a friend. No doubt some friend of yours whom you couldn't forbear telling.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

A friend whom *I* told?! What friend would any husband tell such a thing to? For fear that *friend* was the man concerned? So let me ask you, madam: to whom have *you* been speaking?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

I?

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

You're a more likely source for this than I.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

Why? Because I'm a woman?

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

Because *I* could not console you sufficiently. Not wanting to suffer alone you went to some confidante and poured out your heart. *Help me, help me*. Because I, your too-loving husband, could not.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

Oh, please don't search for pity.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

Do you think I don't deserve it? Could any husband, ever, be as understanding as you want me to be? The best man on earth would resort to cruelty, not understanding.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

You're cruel enough to accuse me of what you've done yourself.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

I did not. I did not. I did not tell. I swear it on everything I believe.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

Well, nor did I.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

Fine. Then neither of us did it. No one did it. Nobody knows about it. My honor and my name are not in tatters. This never happened. And you and I are not advertised to the entire universe!

(A pause.)

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

What do we do?

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

I don't know. I don't know.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

Well, at least we're off to Spain...

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

No, we're not. After this? I'll go alone. Together we'd only look wretched and create more talk than there already is. You can stay here and counteract this rumor. In time we can hope the whole thing will blow over.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

You're not afraid to leave me – and this man?

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

Princess, I know you. By giving you your freedom I'm putting you into a prison stronger than the Bastille.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

What of Coulommiers?

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

We'll discuss it when I return.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

You really think that we'd look wretched together?

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

You in all your wisdom – you don't think so?

(PRINCE DE CLÈVES EXITS, then SHE EXITS.)

Scene Five.

(Nemours's house. NEMOURS ENTERS.)

NEMOURS

She'd never see me. Nor receive a letter from me. What could I say anyway? Just blurt out everything I feel for her – after this? It would only seem as if this whole imbroglio had given me cause for taking liberties. Well, she wanted to defend herself against me and now she has good reason to. I've thrown away the gift of her love and put myself into her hands. But it's the harm I've done her, the blow I've dealt her. Hurting her – that's the worst. Well, time still might take my side.

(NEMOURS EXITS.)

Scene Six.

(A reception room at the palace. The PRINCE ENTERS and addresses us.)

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

My lords and ladies, the wedding tournament has been just as splendid as King Henry dreamed, a spectacle destined for eternal remembrance on a day marked out for joy. And so, my friends, it grieves me to announce to you: our King is dead. For as some of you know, late this afternoon King Henry decided to compete in one last round. Three times the Queen from apprehension asked him to desist. Three times he graciously refused. And thus he went into the lists against the Count Montgomery, where in the charge Montgomery's lance splintered against the King's breastplate, an arrow of it piercing his eye and throwing him from his steed. Surrounded by his loving nobles, our King lingered some time in perfect consciousness and generously forgave the mishap, but then, my friends, our great and so beloved Majesty succumbed. Upon which some of us recalled the prophecy that he would die in a duel, though no one had believed it. My lords and ladies, King Henry is dead. Long live King Francis and Mary Stuart our Queen, and may peace be on France, and on us all.

(The PRINCE EXITS.)

Scene Seven.

(The palace. The DUCHESS DE VALENTINOIS and the QUEEN.)

DUCHESS DE VALENTINOIS

I have as good a right as you or anyone, and I demand to see him.

QUEEN

I'd say apply to him, but he's dead now and can't help you.

DUCHESS DE VALENTINOIS

I demand to see the body.

QUEEN

Madam, you may screech all you like.

(DUCHESS DE VALENTINOIS starts out.)

If you try to see him you'll be stopped by the Lord Constable. You may attend the funeral with all the rest of France. I only hope you find a place. In the meantime you'll vacate your rooms at the palace and return any of the crown jewels in your keeping.

DUCHESS DE VALENTINOIS

No one can make me surrender what the King himself gave me.

QUEEN

In point of fact the bailiff can make you. Shall I send him to your door? Would you be reduced to that?

DUCHESS DE VALENTINOIS

Send him, and see what I surrender.

QUEEN

As you wish.

(The DAUPHINE ENTERS, now QUEEN MARY.)

Your Highness – good – I wanted to discuss the funeral arrangements.

QUEEN MARY

Yes, yes, let's do that, please.

QUEEN

The Cardinal de Tournon will say the Mass, of course. The King's mantel...

QUEEN MARY

Excuse me, madam, but I've already asked the Cardinal de Lorraine to do the honors at Mass – since my brother did so love your husband.

QUEEN

Yes, but Tournon will naturally expect it.

QUEEN MARY

Alas, the King and I have already reached out to Lorraine. As for the King's mantel – you're exactly right, my brother the Chevalier should carry it.

QUEEN

I was going to suggest my son Charles.

QUEEN MARY

Too bad, for as I say, the King and I have reached out to my brother. Duchess, I'm sorry, did you have some business here?

(DUCHESS DE VALENTINOIS EXITS.)

It's so tiresome when people hang about with no purpose.

QUEEN

My good friend the King of Navarre just arrived post-haste.

QUEEN MARY

Navarre. Yes, well, I'd suggest he return post-haste, what with this letter going around.

QUEEN

A letter?

QUEEN MARY

Implicating him in some very nasty business. I don't know the details, but I doubt Paris would be pleased to see Navarre taking part in the King's funeral.

QUEEN

A forged letter, no doubt.

QUEEN MARY

I'm not a handwriting expert.

QUEEN

All right. Then Navarre will take my daughter to Spain.

QUEEN MARY

And supplant Monsieur de Clèves?

QUEEN

She is my daughter. I say the King of Navarre will head the wedding train.

QUEEN MARY

Well, good. I presume you'll accompany them – this being your daughter?

QUEEN

How dare you, madam.

QUEEN MARY

How dare I what, specifically?

(PRINCE DE CLÈVES ENTERS.)

Monsieur de Clèves, I'm afraid the Queen Mother here is going to supplant you in the wedding train.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

As you wish, madam.

QUEEN MARY

Did Nemours find you? He was headed for your house, last I heard.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

We must have crossed paths.

QUEEN MARY

The story of life. My best to your lovely bride.

(The PRINCE EXITS.)

Where was I? Yes. I was thinking the Chevalier could take command of the army and Lorraine be given finance. What do you think...?

(THEY EXIT.)

Scene Eight.

(House of the Prince and Princess. THEY ENTER.)

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES
What are you doing home so early?

PRINCE DE CLÈVES
I'm not disturbing you, am I?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES
No, it's wonderful.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES
There's no one here?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES
Everybody's gone.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES
So you had some visitors today.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES
Madame de Nevers. Madame de Martigues.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES
Any other visitors?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES
Other visitors...? No.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES
Nobody?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES
No one.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES
I heard Nemours was here.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES
He did come to the house. I told my maid to send him away.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES
Why?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES
I was tired by then.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES
Saying to him...?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES
I had her say that I was indisposed.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES
Why were you indisposed for him but not for others?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES
Oh, God...

PRINCE DE CLÈVES
Why is Nemours different from other visitors?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES
This is absurd...

PRINCE DE CLÈVES
Are you afraid to see him? You don't mind *showing* him you're afraid to see him. Or do you think he didn't know your refusal meant more than indisposition? Do you think he didn't know you were showing a favor by snubbing him, that you were *flattering* him by showing your supposed dislike? And can you tell me why would you give him such power if you weren't in love with him?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES
You realize this is insanity.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES
Yes, and I realize I was insane to think you could withstand your feelings.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES
I knew your suspicions about the Duke, yet you reproach me for not receiving him?

PRINCE DE CLÈVES
I suspect him with good reason, madam.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES
I can't bear to talk about this anymore.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES
You began this talk, so talk you will.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

Have I ever said it was the Duke?

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

No, and I'm sure you never will, knowing you'd regret it as you regret having told what you did.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

And don't I have good reason to regret it? I thought that you, of all men, would be reasonable. I thought that you of all men could trust me.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

Well, madam, I can *not!* Being just a man like every other man! Do you realize the emotions at battle in me? One moment there's the conviction that I'm unworthy of you, the next moment the equally strong conviction that you're unworthy of me. I venerate you and I hate you. Suspect you and trust you. Knowing, *knowing* that this man, whoever he is, can't feel the tiniest fragment of the love I feel for you. And so I have no peace, not day or night. My reason is gone. All reason. I don't know how mountains remain untoppled or how the sun stays up in the sky. I don't know how I lived beyond the moment you spoke to me that day. Have no idea how that got bruited about, have no idea what's passed between you and the Duke. I know nothing. Nothing nothing nothing. You've broken my heart, do you understand? You're torturing me with your perfect love! So leave me! Go to Coulommiers! Leave!

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

Then please know this: that in my life it is you who keeps the sun up in the sky. You who prevents mountains from toppling on our heads.

(He embraces her)

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

Will you ever forgive me? Listen. After the coronation I'm giving up my duties at court. Society, dinners, everything. We're moving to Coulommiers.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

Do you mean it? Let me go there now. Before the coronation. I can prepare the house, make all the arrangements. All you'll need to do is arrive.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

The sun won't tumble from the sky if we're separated?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

I'll hold it up myself, with this one hand.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

And I with this. And we'll never be separated again.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

I'll take my uncle along as company. It'll keep him out of scrapes with the ladies.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

Good idea. Good. Go to Coulommiers.

(THEY EXIT.)

Scene Nine.

(Notre Dame. NEMOURS ENTERS alone.)

NEMOURS

What do I care for all this pomp? Or who gets crowned or who's been banished from the court? *I've* been banished – by her. Being turned away from her door was one of the sweetest cruelest moments of my life. Now she's gone and barricaded herself at Coulommiers... While her husband's here being dutiful around the throne. Well, then... Maybe I'll slip away and take a small vacation. They're supposed to be beautiful – the grounds around Coulommiers...

(NEMOURS EXITS.)

Scene Ten.

(Coulommiers. Evening. The PRINCE and the VIDAME.)

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

You're sure you've had no guests?

VIDAME

None. It's been ourselves and the servants. The Princess expressly gave an order, no visitors of any kind. Didn't even want to know who'd applied at the door.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

Did anyone apply?

VIDAME

Not that I heard of.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

And you've been here the whole time?

VIDAME

I haven't left the grounds. Why?

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

Has the Princess seemed distracted, nervous?

VIDAME

I've never seen her so content. Positively ebullient.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

You know this from having been in her presence continually.

VIDAME

Good God, one doesn't live 24 hours in another's presence. She'd go off walking, or she'd read in her rooms out in the pavilion. I went out hunting a couple of mornings.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

So she's been staying in the pavilion.

VIDAME

While her rooms in the house were being finished. What's this all about?

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

One of my men followed a certain person out of Paris. A member of the court who rode here to Coulommiers. Who climbed the wall the evening he arrived and climbed back over the following day at sunrise.

Who is this man?
VIDAME

A mutual friend.
PRINCE DE CLÈVES

Well nothing in the world would convince me my niece had done anything wrong.
VIDAME

Nor me. Yet here I am reduced to paying servants to spy on her.
PRINCE DE CLÈVES

I'm sorry I couldn't be a better chaperone. Clèves, I had no idea...
VIDAME

Yes, thank you, Vidame. Goodbye, then.
PRINCE DE CLÈVES

You will tend yourself? You'll take care of yourself?
VIDAME

(VIDAME EXITS. The PRINCE stands in a long silence. The PRINCESS ENTERS.)

Darling? Darling, what is it? What can I do? *Lisette!*
PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

No. Don't do anything.
PRINCE DE CLÈVES

She'll bring a doctor. *Lisette!*
PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

There's no point. No. Stop. Princess. Princess – why did you tell me your feelings if you knew you couldn't resist this man?
PRINCE DE CLÈVES

I have resisted him, since the beginning.
PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

What about the night you spent here with Nemours?
PRINCE DE CLÈVES

I haven't spent a moment here with him or anybody else.
PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

Then how did one of my men follow him here?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

I swear. I swear. I swear.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

How did my servant follow him to where you were staying?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

Ask Lisette. She slept in my room and was with me every second. My women haven't been out of my company. Do you hear me? Do you hear?

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

You know, I don't want to believe you. I guess I don't want a reason to live anymore. I just want this over and done with. I'm only sorry I'll die knowing that you're fated to marry him. If only I could die knowing you'd wanted to feel for me what you did for him.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

Dear dear dear man. I love you. *You*.

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

Enough.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

Will you never understand?

PRINCE DE CLÈVES

Enough, princess. I've had enough.

(THEY EXIT.)

Scene Eleven.

(The Vidame's house in Paris. Morning. Months later. The VIDAME and NEMOURS.)

VIDAME

It was hell getting her to come to town. I came up with a ruse about an agent in Carrara marble. You know this tomb she's building him out there. But why was this so urgent?

NEMOURS

Vidame, I have a confession. I've loved your niece since the moment I beheld her.

VIDAME

I see. Was she the lady of that story? The husband, and so on...?

NEMOURS

She was.

VIDAME

And you were the man in question.

NEMOURS

You see a man by love, Vidame. By sacred, holy love. The kind she alone could inspire.

VIDAME

Well, the Princess is free to do as she likes. Maybe you can raise her out of this solitude. Do you have any sense of her feelings for you?

NEMOURS

Not at this point.

VIDAME

Why don't you slip out of sight while I greet her.

(NEMOURS goes aside. The PRINCESS ENTERS, wearing mourning.)
Good morning, Princess.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

How are you, uncle?

VIDAME

The trip was satisfactory and so on?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

Yes, very easy.

VIDAME

Can I offer you something? There's lunch...

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

Nothing, thank you.

VIDAME

You're looking very healthy. How is life at Coulommiers?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

Very tranquil. And Paris?

VIDAME

The opposite of tranquil. Queen Mary continues to ask after you.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

Well, send her my regards and I'll continue not to answer her letters. So about this agent.

VIDAME

Yes, the marble. Actually, Princess, it was another matter I wanted to address...

(NEMOURS steps into view.)

NEMOURS

I am the agent in Carrara marble.

VIDAME

I'm going to leave you two. Princess – hear him out.

(VIDAME EXITS.)

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

So you couldn't even respect my grief.

NEMOURS

I respect your grief profoundly.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

But not my feelings.

NEMOURS

Your feelings have been my constant regard. Forgive me having to employ a subterfuge to meet you. You know the reason I wanted to.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

You love me.

NEMOURS

Love you. Have always loved you. Will love you. Hasn't it ever touched you, that love?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

Judge that from my behavior.

NEMOURS

No. Tell me. I need to hear.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

Very well, monsieur. My husband is dead and I'm going to speak as frankly as I can, which as you know is more frankly than many other women. Yes. I love you. I have loved you. I will always love you.

NEMOURS

God!

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

I'm only telling you what you know.

NEMOURS

But to hear it from you – here and now...

(Takes her in his arms and kisses her.)

So it's really true. You love me.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

Yes. The problem is, you see, it doesn't matter.

NEMOURS

Doesn't matter? What doesn't?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

Whether I love you or not. My feelings for you.

NEMOURS

But you just said you'd always love me...

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

And so I will. Those are my feelings. They only dictate my words.

NEMOURS

I don't understand.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

My future *actions* will be dictated by my duty. To my husband, to myself.

NEMOURS

Duty...

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

He'd be alive today if not for you. My duty's no different than if you'd stabbed him through the heart.

NEMOURS

Of course it is! And what is this phantom duty? Aren't I the only man who's inspired those feelings in you?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

You are.

NEMOURS

Well, then...? Doesn't that add up to happiness?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

Yes – for you. Unhappiness for me.

NEMOURS

I, with all my love, would consign you with all *your* love – to unhappiness?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

You asked me for my feelings.

NEMOURS

This is madness!

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

You know, don't you, what's bound to happen: that in time your love for me will fade.

NEMOURS

Never.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

It's inevitable. And to me, loving you as I do, that would be the worst of fates. Why expose myself to that misery? So I shall remain free, and you shall remain free.

NEMOURS

Merciful Christ! When I would love you for life? Eternally?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

Eternally until you fall in love with someone else. Or should I expect a miracle? That God would make me an exception again? For I have been an exception, marrying one of those few men on earth whose passion could survive marriage. Even that brought me no

happiness, thanks to you. So should I want you and then stand by, witnessing the death of the very love – your love – that’s been all my joy?

NEMOURS

A love that’s survived all the obstacles you’ve put up?

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

Maybe it was those obstacles that kept you true.

NEMOURS

So you’re cruel enough to tell me you love me and then tell me this.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

Open your eyes, monsieur. See what you are. A man born to succeed with women where all other men would fail. With me for example. I think I would have loved you and wanted you even if you’d never noticed me. As things are, if I ever saw you with another woman I’d suspect you, be racked with jealousy – an emotion I never knew till you. And knowing myself know I would not complain. How could I reproach a husband who doesn’t love me anymore when he’s already loved a multitude and I of my own will, in full knowledge, gave myself to him? So I would accommodate myself to you and to the situation and to the loss of your love. But with the ghost of Monsieur de Clèves reproaching me all the while, pointing up the difference between his love, which truly was eternal, and yours. And that is why, monsieur, after today we shall never meet again.

NEMOURS

You’ll never hold out against me.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

You know the convent near Coulommiers. I’ve applied for a room. So any efforts to see me, I promise you, will be in vain.

NEMOURS

But you’re *free!* Princess, you can do anything you like.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

Yes, in my situation another woman would marry you. I am not she.

NEMOURS

Please don’t. Princess, I beg you.

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

Why couldn’t I have met you before I met the Prince? Or only met you now that I’m, as you say, free? Why all these barriers when we two know we love?

NEMOURS

There *are* no barriers! None, except in your imagination! You, madam, *you're* the barrier!

PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

Maybe you're right. But please know this before I leave: that my love for you will never weaken, never change. You have inspired in me feelings I never new before, feelings whose strength I couldn't guess or even dream of. You created love in a woman who might never otherwise have known it. I thank you for that. It's why I will always love you. As you say: for life. Adieu, monsieur.

(The PRINCESS EXITS. NEMOURS stands alone.)

CURTAIN**END OF PLAY**