

# *The Lady Of The Camellias*

From the novel by Alexandre Dumas *films*

(1848)

An adaptation for the stage

by

**Michael Black**

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[michael@europaproductions.eu](mailto:michael@europaproductions.eu)

01625 429490

07782 987526

[www.mwblack.co.uk](http://www.mwblack.co.uk)

[www.europaproductions.eu](http://www.europaproductions.eu)

Cover illustration:

*Portrait Of Apollonie Sabatier* by Vincent Vidal (1850s)

## A NOTE ON THE ADAPTOR

**Michael Black** was born in 1962, and grew up in south Manchester. He was educated at York University, where he completed a degree in European Literature and History, and then at Cambridge University, where he completed a doctorate in South African anti-apartheid literature.

His plays have been performed in London, Cardiff, Manchester, York and Edinburgh at home, and in Timisoara, Iasi and Bucharest abroad. They include *The Life To Come* (Edinburgh 1984, Cardiff 1985), *Pure Walking Evil* (London 1989, National Theatre of Romania 1990/91, Edinburgh Festival 2004) and *The Amber Room* (London, 1998).

He has been awarded three Arts Council Theatre Writing Bursaries, of which *Madame Polina* represents the last play to be finished.

The second, dating back to 1992, for the play *Panharmonicon*, he completed in 1997, and an option on the script was taken up by the commercial producers P.W. Productions. Moves are afoot to produce the play simultaneously at various European theatres.

*Pure Walking Evil* recently had a rehearsed reading in New York at the Genesis Guild, May 2002.

*The Minotaur*, about Picasso's relationship with his three mistresses, set in Paris in 1945/6, immediately after the liberation from the Nazis, is Michael's most recently completed play and had a reading in Paris at Moving Parts, April 2009.

**Cast (in order of appearance)**

Olympe, a beautiful young woman

Nanine, servant to Marguerite

Marguerite, a Parisian courtesan

Duke de V.

Armand Duval, a young man

Joseph, his servant

Monsieur de N.

Count G.

Prudence Duvernoy, a milliner

Father to Armand

Bailiff

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There are two sets in the play. Marguerite's apartment, stage right, and Armand's apartment, stage left.

In the first and last scene of the play, Olympe stands front centre stage in a spotlight.

Marguerite's apartment occupies more of the stage than Armand's. Both apartments have two exits, one to a bedroom in the wings, the other to the outside world, backstage.

Marguerite's apartment features a chaise-longue, a dressing table with mirror and four chairs.

Armand's apartment features an easel stand with a painting, a mirror on the wall, two chairs, and a table.

## Act One, Scene 1

*(Paris, 1847)*

OLYMPE I am standing in the Cemetery of Montmartre waiting for the disinterment of the grave to begin. The grave of Marguerite was only rented for five years by the old Duke, and Armand wants a more permanent memorial for the one he loved. The new grave is to be for an indefinite time and regularly decorated with camellias, Marguerite's favourite flowers. The Duke obviously thought a five year grave was good enough for Marguerite, but Armand disagrees. Officially I am here to identify the body, but privately I am here to help Armand in his grief. Armand is late, so proceedings cannot begin. His boat from Alexandria must have been delayed into Marseilles, and it is a considerable journey from there. I also have letters for Armand, letters he does not know about, the last letters Marguerite ever wrote, all written to him. I want to tell Armand how much I love him, but it is hardly appropriate to Marguerite's memory, the memory of these letters of love. But when else can I tell him before our destinies go their separate ways?

## Act One, Scene 2

*(Paris. 1842. At Marguerite's apartment. Late morning)*

NANINE *( Knocking on the bedroom door)* Madame, madame, wake up. It's eleven thirty, and the old Duke will call at midday. We must have you washed and dressed, suitable to receive him!

M'G'ITE *(Entering)* What invitations do I have today?

NANINE The Count G. wishes to escort you to the Champs Elysées this afternoon, and Monsieur de N. wishes to escort you to the Opera Comique this evening. He says he has reserved a box

M'G'ITE The first I can abide perhaps, the second I can't. Have there been any other callers?

NANINE No madame

M'G'ITE Then our concern is the pacification of the old Duke. I haven't seen him in three days, but he has called twice

NANINE Be as well to see him today

M'G'ITE He pays the bills

NANINE I'll bring breakfast *(During the following dialogue Marguerite dresses, as Nanine brings breakfast and also helps her dress)*

M'G'ITE I will speak to the Duke only of the truth Nanine. Which perhaps will present difficulties, but I am an honest woman

NANINE I've never doubted it. Who was that man who left here in the early hours mademoiselle? I hadn't seen him before

M'G'ITE An acquaintance of Count G., who was compromised. He had lost a fortune at the gaming table, and I stopped him losing more. After that I

consoled him with love. Or with the illusion of love, but I have come to the conclusion it is one and the same in Paris

NANINE So you are resuming your old ways? Even though the old Duke supports your every need? Even though you looked so radiant having taken the waters at Bagneres?

M'G'ITE I am resuming the ways I am accustomed to. A life of dissipation and pleasure and permissible vice. It is the only life I have ever known since I met Madame Duvernoy, and the only life she has ever known before me. Besides, what the Duke does not force on me is as much a sign of his age as his intention

NANINE I don't think that's fair. You remind him of his lost consumptive daughter, and if you are to resume the life of a kept woman...

M'G'ITE Oh, that we should so conceal the word *courtesan* even to ourselves under my own roof! The apartment 9 rue d'Antin is well known Nanine! I am notorious, as the Duke is gathering. But I will tell him the truth. That I have resumed my life as a *kept* woman, and that I also wish to remain being *kept* by him. What could be more natural?

NANINE It was not the original arrangement

M'G'ITE I remind him of his daughter as you have said. It is to my advantage. And I am a woman who needs one hundred thousand francs a year to survive, and who is also forty thousand francs in debt! Where do you think my luxury comes from? I am not some Duke's daughter myself by birth, but I have become one through charm, beauty and my *frisson* in his presence. I might remind him of his daughter, but the way he behaves sometimes! It would be incest if I were!

NANINE I was hoping we'd see no more of Madame Duvernoy

M'G'ITE She's the only friend I possess

NANINE Then why does she always ask you for money?

M'G'ITE Because she has lost her looks. It is a courtesan's first death. And besides, they are trifling sums...

NANINE The Duke wished to make an honest woman of you

M'G'ITE I am honest. In the manner of my profession. And someone has to fill the theatre boxes and attend the first nights. My life is that of speculation and gossip, and I have a penchant for it. So I have decided that is the way it is to remain. Besides, look at the apartment Nanine! Look at these glittering treasures of Aucoc and Odier! Look at the Persian hangings, the rosewood and buhl cabinets and tables! Look at the Sevres and Chinese vases, Saxe statuettes, look at my clothes. Look at the satin, the lace, look at the cashmere and velvet! I like my life Nanine, and bills have to be paid

NANINE Will you be seeing monsieur from last night again?

M'G'ITE I think it might annoy the Count G. (*Marguerite finishes dressing*) Oh, mademoiselle looks beautiful...

M'G'ITE You were implying it had disadvantages (*the doorbell rings*)

NANINE I wouldn't know what they are. To a plain old soul like me you're poetry (*Nanine goes to answer the doorbell. She returns*) The old... The Duke de V.

M'G'ITE Duke

DUKE (*Entering, carrying a bouquet of camellias*) Mademoiselle Gautier. You look radiant

M'G'ITE      And you have my bouquet of camellias. Thank you. (*She takes the flowers*) I have felt much better ever since my return from Bagneres. Our first meeting was a mutual pleasure...

DUKE          ... and one of lucky chance. I was at the Italiens last night, and could not help overhear the gossip

M'G'ITE      What of it?

DUKE          They say you have taken a new lover

M'G'ITE      I am a kept woman Duke. You keep me. But Paris is alive with possibilities, and I became bored. I admit it. But the man is of no consequence to me and he has gone now. He was invisible to me...

DUKE          The lives of women like you cause much scandal, Mademoiselle Gautier, but your death's cause little attention

M'G'ITE      You miss your daughter. As I miss the father I never had. Our arrangement is not perfect Duke de V., but I will not be too scandalous if you agree to keep me. I will see you in the mornings three times per week, and at other times also provided it is not incompatible with the arrangements of my boudoir

DUKE          I should discard you

M'G'ITE      I don't think you will

DUKE          You will break my heart

M'G'ITE      I am not so cruel. And now, if I may continue my day? (*she places a single camellia in the Duke's lapel*)

### Act One, Scene 3

*(Armand's apartment, morning. Armand is painting at an easel,*

*Joseph enters with breakfast)*

ARMAND Ah, Joseph, I have been up all night, and I went for a walk early this morning before I returned to paint

JOSEPH Where did you walk sir?

ARMAND Practically everywhere. I had breakfast at the Café Anglais. And I saw a woman there at the window in one of the large rooms of the restaurant, pulling flowers from her bouquet one by one. There were two men with her, and one of them was leaning over her shoulder and whispering in her ear. I took up my position at the Maison d'or, in one of the first floor rooms, and did not lose sight of the window for an instance. And at five in the morning, the woman got into her carriage with three friends. I took a cab and followed them

JOSEPH Sir!

ARMAND What in Heaven's name is wrong with that? The carriage stopped, and the woman got out at 9 rue d'Antin. It was no doubt all chance, but the chance filled me with delight. Can you find out who the woman is?

JOSEPH I already know sir. The woman is Marguerite Gautier. She is always present at first nights, and passes every evening at the theatre or at the ball. Whenever there is a new piece she is certain to be seen, and she invariably has four things with her on the edge of her box. Her opera glass, a bag of sweets, a bouquet of camellias, and a man. At the florists, Madame Barjon's, she has become known as "the Lady of the Camellias" and the name has stuck with her

ARMAND It would be fascinating to meet her

JOSEPH You might as well throw perfume to the dogs. And now sir, it is time for breakfast

ARMAND I've already had breakfast. I don't want it

JOSEPH Then it is time to shave

ARMAND I've already shaved

JOSEPH Then it is time to stop painting

ARMAND Joseph. Don't order me about. You are the servant

JOSEPH You father's most trusted servant sir. And I promised him I'd look after you moved to Paris

ARMAND Painting is my vocation Joseph

JOSEPH The law or medicine would be more respectable pursuits. That is your father's intention. You have twenty thousand francs a year, and, live respectably, and secure a position, and that should suffice

ARMAND Do you think Gaston R. would know Marguerite Ga...

JOSEPH ...Gautier sir. Perhaps he might. But he would do well to stay away, save for polite acknowledgements at the opera. Gaston is a lawyer after all. He is a respectable man

ARMAND As am I

JOSEPH You are a respectable youth sir. A man has a profession

ARMAND My profession is painting

JOSEPH Since last week sir. Professions are not whims. They take years to train for

ARMAND Which do you prefer? The romanticism of Delacroix or the precision of Ingres?

JOSEPH I have no opinion. (*Silence*)

ARMAND No opinion?

JOSEPH No opinion. Sir, your father did not send you to Paris from C. to paint. He sent you to Paris to be a lawyer or a doctor, the choice being yours. You have twenty thousand francs a year, which should suffice for a respectable life, once you have acquired training

ARMAND So you keep saying. But I want to paint. Anyway, Marguerite Ga...

JOSEPH ... Gautier...

ARMAND ... was elegantly dressed, I could paint her now if I had the technique. She wore a muslin dress with many flounces, an Indian shawl embroidered at the corners with gold and silk flowers, a straw hat, a single bracelet, and a heavy gold chain

JOSEPH Such women squander many thousands

ARMAND I have twenty thousand

JOSEPH That is not nearly enough

ARMAND How many would I need?

JOSEPH I will not say, nor describe the moral territory of such a woman as this

ARMAND What on earth do you mean by that?

JOSEPH Write to your father. He will inform you of such women, for I am sure she is one. And you should write to your father anyway. I promised him you would write every week

ARMAND But I have nothing to say

JOSEPH That is because you do nothing

ARMAND I paint

JOSEPH        Since last week. And you have been in Paris for two years. You are  
wasting your life

ARMAND       Do you think there's a likeness? Look. Look at my painting

JOSEPH       I have no desire to look at your painting whatsoever. Nor any desire to  
set eyes on Mademoiselle Gautier. Write to your father. And write to  
your sweet sister as well. She is sure to be missing you

## Act One, Scene 4

*(Marguerite's apartment. Morning)*

N You mademoiselle are still in the virginity of vice

M'G'ITE Monsieur de N., I do not follow

N Oh come now. Your firm walk, your supple figure, your rosy cheeks and open nostrils, your large eyes, slightly tinged with blue, indicate an ardent nature which sheds around it a sort of voluptuous perfume, like an Eastern vial. But these things will not last mademoiselle. And you have been ill

M'G'ITE That was some time ago. I am much better now. Thank you

N I didn't offer thanks

M'G'ITE I know. A gentleman would have done so

N I am a businessman Mademoiselle Gautier, and I make no pretensions to be anything else. A duke, a count, and a businessman. That is your situation if I am not mistaken

M'G'ITE The Duke de V. keeps me well. It is true

N And then there is the Count

M'G'ITE Which one?

N The Count G. Does he keep you also? How long will the Duke tolerate that?

M'G'ITE The Count G. is a friend. I have known him almost as long as Madame Duvernoy, my milliner. Sir, perhaps you would care to keep you hands off my ornaments?

N "From the Count G." That's a time piece of three thousand francs most certainly. Quite something from a mere friend

M'G'ITE He can be most generous

N I think you need one hundred thousand every year, and I wager you are also in debt. How much? Twenty thousand? Forty? Sixty perhaps?

M'G'ITE Nonsense. I easily survive on sixty, and debts I have none

N I don't believe you. The Duke is worth perhaps five hundred thousand a year. The Count G. a mere two. I am worth a million a year mademoiselle, and my income grows at four per cent per annum

M'G'ITE To me sir, luxury is a necessity, but mere capital an after thought

N I don't follow

M'G'ITE Perhaps you would care to leave? I have my pride and independence, two sentiments, which, when they are wounded, are the equivalent to a sense of outrage!

N You have mortgaged your face mademoiselle

M'G'ITE Then I have much more to mortgage yet

N I rather doubt it. For this is a city of pleasure, and the pleasure seekers are the men, and there is much pleasure to find

M'G'ITE Nanine! (*Nanine enters*)

NANINE Yes, madame

M'G'ITE Please show Monsieur de N. his way out

N I will have you yet (*he kisses her, she resists*)

NANINE This way sir

M'G'ITE And come straight back Nanine! (*Nanine re-enters*) Oh God, that man is vile! Do you know, he thinks he can buy me with his money alone! No sense of elegance or grace. No surprise in him. No presents or

unexpected picnics in the country, no nights at the opera or springtime walks in the Bois, just cash!

NANINE How much is he worth?

M'G'ITE A million francs a year, or so he says, growing at four per cent

NANINE You'd never want for anything madame

M'G'ITE I'd want for love. I'd want for everything I believe in

NANINE And what do you believe in?

M'G'ITE *(Pause)* I certainly believe I deserve respect. I am neither wife, nor mother, nor maid, nor dancing girl nor actress, but I remain Marguerite Gautier *(the doorbell rings)* Go and see who that is

NANINE Yes, madame *(Nanine exits and re-enters)*. It is Count G. madame

M'G'ITE Ah, so he has returned from London! Send him in!

NANINE Yes madame *(Nanine exits)*

COUNT Mademoiselle Gautier!

M'G'ITE Count G.! How wonderful to see you *(she kisses him)*

COUNT Who was that I just saw leaving?

M'G'ITE A Monsieur de N. He's a millionaire...

COUNT Then you must be expensive for him

M'G'ITE I am neither cheap nor expensive and I have very little to do with him. He calls here regularly however, and I have not had the heart, so far, to refuse him

COUNT He is doubtless in love with you

M'G'ITE If I had to listen to everyone who was in love with me, I shouldn't have time for my dinner

COUNT He is a millionaire...

M'G'ITE I have the Duke

COUNT So that remains the arrangement

M'G'ITE Indeed

COUNT And he knows about me?

M'G'ITE Yes. But he's smitten. What of it

COUNT And my friend?

M'G'ITE A night with me to avoid the gambling tables. But I shan't see him again. My sweet (*she kisses him*)

COUNT I wouldn't go behind the Duke's back. There are rules to these things

M'G'ITE I know. And I shall set them. You're even allowed to see other courtesans in London. But not in Paris. Are we agreed?

COUNT But I don't

M'G'ITE I feel sure you do. And I hope you enjoy it. That is the sentiment of a courtesan

COUNT It certainly isn't that of my wife

M'G'ITE You are scandalous

COUNT I am merely salacious. A scandal must be public, and I keep myself quiet. Besides, my finances are in good order

M'G'ITE Is she as good as me?

COUNT My wife?

M'G'ITE The courtesan

COUNT Now there we must stop

M'G'ITE Oh come now, some details...

COUNT When I am with you I think of you, when with her of her. I am sure that is an honest arrangement

M'G'ITE Quite so. How is Baron de R.?

COUNT Ruining himself in Paris according to those in Madrid, ruining himself in Venice according to those in London. He's an adventurer. I've washed my hands

M'G'ITE It's good to see you. *(Pause)* Three thousand a month

COUNT Two

M'G'ITE It will not profit you to play the businessman. Ask Monsieur de N. And of course presents

COUNT Then I will agree to keep you in jewellery

M'G'ITE Perfect *(she laughs and starts to cough)*

COUNT Are you alright? Here, let me bring you some champagne

M'G'ITE *(She coughs again)* Thank you

COUNT You should take the waters regularly

M'G'ITE I live Paris. And if I take the waters at Bagneres again, I should be stuck totally in the company of the Duke

COUNT Perhaps that must be your compromise

M'G'ITE *(She stops coughing)* Perhaps we should walk out this afternoon. Take me to a pleasant café, and then a walk...

COUNT Why of course mademoiselle *(the doorbell rings)*

NANINE *(Entering)* Madame. Madame Duvernoy is here

M'G'ITE Ah, show her in

NANINE Madame Duvernoy

PRUDENCE Marguerite!

M'G'ITE Prudence! *(They kiss each other)*

PRUDENCE Count G.

COUNT        Madame Duvernoy

M'G'ITE      The Count was just taking me to some pleasant café

PRUDENCE    A word in private. Oh, I am so excited!

COUNT        Should I wait outside...?

M'G'ITE      Yes, if you would. Nanine, entertain the Count (*Nanine and the Count exit*). Now what is it?

PRUDENCE    I have found you a jewel! The prettiest jewel in all Heaven!

M'G'ITE      But procuring jewels for me is not your business

PRUDENCE    Perhaps not. Lend me three thousand francs, and I'll turn a profit in no time!

M'G'ITE      Three thousand? That is a lot

PRUDENCE    To a woman of your expenses, it is very little

M'G'ITE      Very well (*Takes money from a drawer*). There you are

PRUDENCE    Oh, you'll be so surprised and delighted! And freshly arrived in Paris. I found her walking aimlessly around Les Halles

M'G'ITE      I really don't see what it's got to do with me

PRUDENCE    You will

## Act One, Scene 5

*(Armand's apartment)*

ARMAND I have found out about Marguerite Gautier Joseph

JOSEPH Indeed sir. So my suspicions are confirmed?

ARMAND Whatever do you mean? I have been walking the Champs Elysées. And I noticed Madmoiselle Gautier in her carriage. She is the most radiant jewel in Heaven. There are some women who are never seen in the day in the company of other well to do men, and so they travel with other most ancient ladies for their companionship. But this Mademoiselle Gautier is much different. She is always alone when she drives the Champs Elysées, lying back in her carriage, and wearing a very simple dress, adored only with fur if the weather is biting. And though she is often passed by people who smile at her, her smile, when she smiles, is but slight. And she does not drive to and fro, from the Rond-Point to the end of the Champs Elysées. She drives straight to the Bois. There she leaves her carriage, walks for an hour, returns, and then drives rapidly home

JOSEPH Sir, I am becoming concerned

ARMAND Because I paint too much?

JOSEPH Because you are becoming infatuated. And you know so little about this woman

ARMAND I know where she lives. 9 rue d'Antin. I followed her home again. I wanted to knock at the door, but I didn't dare. I thought of leaving my card, but I didn't in all conscience have the courage

JOSEPH Then don't find it sir! Enough of this nonsense

ARMAND     Joseph. Why do you object so? I have written to my father

JOSEPH     Good

ARMAND     And to my sister

JOSEPH     Good again

ARMAND     Perhaps I will enter the law school this Autumn

JOSEPH     At last sir! It would profit you well

## Act One, Scene 6

*(Marguerite's apartment. Afternoon)*

M'G'ITE *(Entering, followed by Nanine)* Oh, what a pleasant walk through the Bois! And so many admirers! But how to take advantage of them? I shall pay off my debts yet

NANINE I don't doubt it madame, but the old Duke called, and he was most annoyed you were not at home

M'G'ITE Perhaps Prudence will turn a profit with her jewel!

NANINE Perhaps the sun will rise in the west

M'G'ITE Nanine!

NANINE I don't like her madame

M'G'ITE She's my friend *(the door bell rings)*

NANINE That will be her now. You've lent her money again haven't you?

M'G'ITE Yes, a mere three thousand. A trifle for a woman like me

NANINE Three thousand!

M'G'ITE For a jewel! Well show her in! *(Nanine exits and re-enters)*

NANINE It's a young man

M'G'ITE Do you know him?

NANINE No. I wouldn't know him from Adam

M'G'ITE Is he good looking?

NANINE He seems presentable enough. And he has a pleasant smile

M'G'ITE What's his name?

NANINE *(Looking at a card)* Monsieur Armand Duval

M'G'ITE Duval, Duval? No. The name brings no recollection. Still, show him in

NANINE Very well. (*She exits and re-enters with Armand*) Monsieur Armand Duval (*Nanine exits*)

M'G'ITE Monsieur Duval

ARMAND Armand, please

M'G'ITE Very well. Armand. I am delighted to know your acquaintance. And what have you brought for me?

ARMAND Brought for you?

M'G'ITE Why yes. Brought for me. You have brought be a present sir?

ARMAND No

M'G'ITE It is the usual custom. Most men bring me camellias

ARMAND I see. Are you offended?

M'G'ITE I don't know yet. And what do you want?

ARMAND I don't know what I want. I don't even know whether I want to be a lawyer, a doctor, or a painter. Last week I made up my mind to enter the law school but now I have changed my mind and I want to be a painter again

M'G'ITE You are young

ARMAND I am twenty four

M'G'ITE My profession makes me much older than that

ARMAND Your profession?

M'G'ITE Yes. My profession

ARMAND I thought perhaps you might be a singing teacher?

M'G'ITE I am not

ARMAND You are not of the descent of aristocrats?

M'G'ITE Heaven's no

ARMAND Are you sure?

M'G'ITE I am most positive

ARMAND Then what are you?

M'G'ITE You don't know sir?

ARMAND Perhaps you are a retired actress. Or a dancer

M'G'ITE I must answer you "no" and "no" again. Although I regularly attend the theatre

ARMAND I know that, and was hoping I could escort you myself

M'G'ITE I see. Sir, it does not have to be camellias, but I think I would wish for a present from you before such an event

ARMAND Very well. What would you like?

M'G'ITE You wish to seduce me sir? I think you do. But you're not even sure of that, are you? And you certainly would not seem to know how. A man must be certain in his ardour (*the door bell rings, Nanine enters*)

NANINE It is Madame Duvernoy madame, with another young lady

M'G'ITE I see. What an intriguing afternoon this is turning into. Show them in. (*Nanine exits*) And as for you sir, normally, I would ask a man to leave, but you seem so... pleasant indeed, I shall ask you to stay

ARMAND I would be delighted

M'G'ITE Please, sit down

ARMAND Thank you. And I repeat. What present would you like? I am an independent young man

M'G'ITE There are degrees of independence sir...

NANINE (*Entering*) Madame Duvernoy, and Olympe (*Nanine exits*)

M'G'ITE Prudence. Please may I introduce you to Monsieur Armand Duval. He has come here without a present for me, and now he wishes to buy one. Except he has asked me what I would like!

PRUDENCE And what would you like?

M'G'ITE From Monsieur Duval? I don't know! That is my dilemma

PRUDENCE Normally Monsieur Duval, the man chooses the lady's present without her knowing

ARMAND I would like the present to be especially pleasing

M'G'ITE And who might this be?

PRUDENCE This is your jewel Marguerite. Her name is Olympe. She's from Normandy and I found her wandering around Les Halles. She is new to Paris, and your gift to me has paid for her costume

M'G'ITE Gift, Prudence? It was a loan

PRUDENCE Pretty as a picture, isn't she? She'll go far

ARMAND Olympe, I am charmed to meet you

OLYMPE Thank you sir

ARMAND What is your surname?

PRUDENCE She hasn't got one yet. We'll have to come up with something really good and classy

M'G'ITE Well Olympe, I am charmed as well. I hope this is the beginning of a long and fruitful friendship. And you are most certainly pretty

PRUDENCE You need more refinement my dear, and Mademoiselle Gautier can teach you all about that

M'G'ITE Oh, can I now?

PRUDENCE I was presuming you'd want to

M'G'ITE I think for the girl's welfare I might have to. But back to you sir. You desire to escort me to the theatre

ARMAND Yes

M'G'ITE Then the first rule of refinement is simplicity. I would like for my present ... a bag of sweets

ARMAND A bag of sweets?

M'G'ITE Yes. Let that be your first challenge. And the sweets must be of a very particular kind. My favourites are *raisins glaces*, and you must be most particular where you buy them. Find out which shop in Paris sells my favourite *raisins glaces*, and I shall come with you to the theatre most willingly

## Act One, Scene 7

*(Armand's apartment. Evening. Joseph on stage, waiting with supper.*

*Enter Armand, throwing his coat onto a stand)*

ARMAND Well, Joseph!

JOSEPH Sir, you are late for your supper

ARMAND What of it! I have an assignment. How exciting it will be!

JOSEPH An assignment?

ARMAND Yes. I have been to see Mademoiselle Gautier Joseph! I finally plucked up the courage

JOSEPH Sir!

ARMAND Yes, and she has told me to return with a bag of sweets. So you see, she is not extravagant as you say! I can afford a bag of sweets Joseph! And she was most particular, because she wants *raisins glaces* from her favourite shop, so I will have to do some investigation. And I have the time

JOSEPH Indeed you do

ARMAND She has set me a challenge Joseph. Find her favourite *raisins glaces*, and then I can escort her to the theatre. But I would like to do something else with her as well I think. How would you entertain a young beautiful woman Joseph? *(Silence)* How would you make her laugh for example? *(Silence)* What conversation would you engage her in? *(Silence)* Joseph! I am asking you for advice and you are not usually slow in giving it, so why refuse now?

## Act One, Scene 8

*(Marguerite's apartment. Evening)*

PRUDENCE *(Presenting Olympe)* Well now, what do you think of her? As pretty as a picture. I've got grand designs for you my girl, and mark my words. Coutured and transformed for a mere three thousand...

M'G'ITE Yes, you look very ... innocent Olympe

PRUDENCE That's the way to start her

M'G'ITE Start her in what?

PRUDENCE You know what

M'G'ITE Oh, do I? Surely she could be your assistant as a milliner

PRUDENCE She's that already

M'G'ITE Then train her well Prudence, and ask no more of her

OLYMPE Madame Duvernoy has been most kind Mademoiselle Gautier

M'G'ITE On my money. Now, you also need training for society. And I have a visitor tonight, so I thought you could "observe". There are rules my dear which you must learn

OLYMPE Thank you Mademoiselle Gautier

M'G'ITE Call me Marguerite from now on

PRUDENCE I thought Duplessis sounded a suitable surname for her

M'G'ITE We will consider such things later *(the door bell rings. Nanine enters with Count G.)*

NANINE Count G.

M'G'ITE Count G. How delightful. *(Nanine exits, Marguerite kisses Count G.)*  
And tonight you shall be entertained by three women not one. Madame Duvernoy, the young Olympe, and myself

- COUNT Charmed I am sure. (*He hands her a bouquet*) Camellias
- M'G'ITE Thank you so much
- COUNT Your soubriquet becomes you
- M'G'ITE I know it. And yet it is insufficient to describe me, hence my mystery.  
Sometimes...
- PRUDENCE How is London Count G.? Do tell us all
- COUNT Teaming with life and verve. But Paris is the city of my heart. London  
is the metropolis of capital, Paris that of *l'amour*
- PRUDENCE Olympe is newly arrived here from Normandy. Don't you think she's a  
pretty young thing
- COUNT Why very. Mademoiselle ...
- PRUDENCE ... Duplessis ...
- COUNT ... Duplessis I am most charmed (*Olympe courtesies*) Ah, a pretty  
young thing indeed with a pretty ankle!
- M'G'ITE Count! Anyone would think she is freely available. Olympe is Madame  
Duvernoy's assistant milliner. It is a respectable trade
- COUNT Nothing is respectable in dress making nor is meant to be. Come now,  
Mademoiselle Gautier, this has erotic possibilities *à deux*
- M'G'ITE It has no such thing. If you want erotic possibilities come to me, if you  
want to employ Olympe, get a dress made for your wife
- COUNT Ah ha!!! Are you jealous or protective?
- PRUDENCE Perhaps one and the same Marguerite. The Lady of the Camellias  
cannot last forever
- M'G'ITE I have my youth, my wit and my beauty still. I will last a long time yet
- COUNT And your coughing?

M'G'ITE It has subsided

COUNT I am delighted to hear it

M'G'ITE Champagne? A glass for everyone. Now how are we going to introduce Olympe to society?

PRUDENCE This is society

M'G'ITE This is my society. She will need her own (*the door bell rings*) Heavens. Who could be visiting at this time of night? I have no other callers arranged Count, I assure you

NANINE (*Entering*) Monsieur de N. madame

M'G'ITE Oh, that man! Well, show him in. (*Nanine exits*) Count, perhaps you could do me the favour of showing him off. He has no grace and talks endlessly about money...

COUNT Very well

NANINE (*Entering*) Monsieur de N. (*Nanine exits*)

M'G'ITE Monsieur de N. I wasn't expecting such a late caller. Allow me to introduce Count G.

N Ah, the one worth two hundred thousand a year

M'G'ITE I assure you Count I have divulged nothing. Monsieur de. N. however, knows the value of everyone

N I am a businessman. My money is all in iron and coal, the industries of the future

COUNT I really have no idea where my wealth comes from. I've always considered it impolite to ask. I rely on my solicitor and my accountant

N And who might this be? Madame Duvernoy I already know. Where does this young beauty fit into the scheme of things?

- M'G'ITE This is Olympe, newly arrived in Paris, and assistant milliner to  
Madame Duvernoy
- OLYMPE I am most pleased to meet you Monsieur de N.
- N Well, now, this does change the equation
- M'G'ITE I'm sorry?
- N But for now, let this be your privilege Mademoiselle Gautier (*he hands  
her a small box*)
- M'G'ITE And what is this?
- N A necklace
- M'G'ITE It is for the Count to keep me in jewellery Monsieur de N. Since you  
seem to know everything else, you must surely know that. I am afraid I  
must refuse
- N Refuse?
- M'G'ITE Yes. Refuse
- N Then perhaps I could offer the necklace to Olympe
- PRUDENCE Well...
- COUNT Monsieur de N. I think Mademoiselle Gautier would like you to leave
- M'G'ITE Thank you Count, for being so sensitive. One has one's obligations  
Monsieur de N., which you don't seem to understand
- N Very well. Until the next time mademoiselle
- M'G'ITE Nanine!
- NANINE (*Entering*) Yes madame
- M'G'ITE Show Monsieur de N. the way out please
- NANINE Yes madame (*N. and Nanine exit*)
- COUNT What a monster of a man

- PRUDENCE He's very rich. There are men to shower you with jewellery yet  
Olympe!
- COUNT I find your tenor offensive also Madame Duvernoy. The rules of love  
and seduction constitute more than money
- M'G'ITE Perhaps it would be best to draw this evening to a close. Count, I am  
so sorry, but I think it would be best if you should leave also
- COUNT Very well
- M'G'ITE I have expressed my loyalty, and am in no mood to express anything  
else (*she places a camellia in his lapel*)
- COUNT Good night Mademoiselle (*he exits*)
- M'G'ITE At least there is one man who knows how to behave
- PRUDENCE You seem fond of him
- M'G'ITE He is a passable suitor. And now ladies, if I may retire?
- PRUDENCE Yes, yes, come along Olympe
- OLYMPE Thank you Mademoiselle Gautier
- M'G'ITE Thank you for what?
- OLYMPE For refusing. I would have done the same
- M'G'ITE Oh, an unpleasant incident, best forgotten. Good night my dear (*she  
kisses Olympe*). Good night Prudence (*she kisses Prudence*)
- PRUDENCE (*together*) Good night
- OLYMPE (*together*) Good night (*Olympe and Prudence exit*)
- M'G'ITE Nanine!
- NANINE (*Entering*) Whatever has happened madame? You seem most upset

- M'G'ITE        The rules have been broken Nanine. It was a very unpleasant incident.  
                  And I do not want for jewellery. I'll tell you more in the morning.  
                  Now, I don't want disturbing until the afternoon, is that understood?
- NANINE        Yes, madame (*the door bell rings*)
- M'G'ITE        Oh, heavens, who on earth could that be?
- NANINE        Shall I send them away?
- M'G'ITE        No, it might be the Count. Perhaps he is upset. And he left with such  
                  politeness. See who it is (*Nanine exits and re-enters*)
- NANINE        It is Monsieur Duval madame
- M'G'ITE        Monsieur Duval?
- NANINE        Yes, madame, the one with pleasant eyes
- M'G'ITE        Oh! Monsieur Armand Duval. What on earth could he want? Still, he  
                  at least is harmless. Show him in
- NANINE        Yes, madame (*Nanine exits and re-enters*) Monsieur Armand Duval  
                  (*Nanine exits*)
- M'G'ITE        Monsieur Duval. It is late. I hope you will be brief
- ARMAND        I waited outside until I had seen everyone else leave. I so wanted to see  
                  you alone
- M'G'ITE        Well you are seeing me alone. What of it?
- ARMAND        I bring you your desire
- M'G'ITE        My desire?
- ARMAND        Yes, your bag of sweets. The *raisins glaces*. And they are indeed your  
                  favourites
- M'G'ITE        Then where did you get them?

ARMAND From the little shop in the passage de l'Opera. Here, taste one. I believe they are delicious...

M'G'ITE Why thank you (*he kisses her passionately. She responds*)

## Act One, Scene 9

*(Armand's apartment. Afternoon. Armand appears through the bedroom door in a dressing gown)*

JOSEPH You were late home sir. You have missed breakfast

ARMAND I was home early

JOSEPH You were home late... If your father arrived home at five o'clock in the morning he would most definitely call that late. And you haven't painted for a week

ARMAND I have decided to concentrate on medicine

JOSEPH Then concentrate on it sir. Where have you been?

ARMAND I am not going to tell you Joseph. You wouldn't like my answer given your prejudice against my intentions, and further, as an independent young man it is none of your business *(the doorbell rings)*. Oh, who on earth can that be? Go and see who it is, but unless it is someone very important, say I am out. *(Joseph exits)* I am in love, I am in love

JOSEPH *(Entering)* Are you in or out sir?

ARMAND Joseph that is for you to decide

JOSEPH I don't think so sir. Not in this instance. I register neither objection nor concur with your judgement, but the person outside is definitely important to you. The question is, how important?

ARMAND Then who is it?

JOSEPH It is Mademoiselle Gautier sir

ARMAND Marguerite! Show her in!

JOSEPH Very well sir. *(Joseph exits re-enters with Marguerite)* Mademoiselle Gautier *(Joseph exits)*

ARMAND Marguerite! (*he kisses her. She is static*)

M'G'ITE Ah, Armand. I was beginning to think your man wouldn't let me in!

ARMAND He's very protective of me

M'G'ITE I am unwell

ARMAND Do you suffer?

M'G'ITE Very little. (*She coughs*) And I am used to it now. Perhaps I should return to Bagneres and take the waters, but I would have to go with the old Duke

ARMAND The old Duke? Who is he?

M'G'ITE You will discover

ARMAND Would you like a drink?

M'G'ITE Perhaps some wine

ARMAND Is your health a concern to you Marguerite? We are lovers now...

M'G'ITE Ah! It is really not worth your while to alarm yourself. See how much notice the others take caring of me. They know there is nothing can be done

ARMAND May I kiss you?

M'G'ITE You already have done. (*Pause*) I have always had a presentiment that I would not live too long... And I have bought you a present. Here. Open it

ARMAND Paints!

M'G'ITE Yes, paints. I hope that you will continue to practice your art

ARMAND Do you think I have talent?

M'G'ITE (*Looking at a painting*) You are, if I may say so, in so many ways such an unremarkable young man (*she kisses him*). I have given you the

paints so that we don't owe each other anything. You gave me the *raisins glaces*, and so I give you the paints. Neither is in the other's debt...

ARMAND But we are lovers now

M'G'ITE What happened between us last night does not mean that

ARMAND But I thought...

M'G'ITE (*Looks in a mirror*) Ah, I look so pale. How much are you worth?

ARMAND I have twenty thousand francs a year

M'G'ITE Do you know what sort of a woman I am? I am a kept woman Armand. I am the kept woman of the Duke de V. I need one hundred thousand francs a year and I am forty thousand francs in debt. Consider that

ARMAND I see. A kept woman?

M'G'ITE Yes. A courtesan

ARMAND I see. Then the Duke de V. is a lucky man

M'G'ITE I have never done what I did last night before Armand. I gave myself to you quite freely, and I do not regret it. But I cannot deceive you, and there it must end. We must owe each other nothing...

ARMAND But I love you

M'G'ITE If you want to call it love, then please do. I am aware of your feelings for me. If you want to call on me from time to time then please do. I shall not reject you. But I would study for the law or medicine Armand, and not ruin yourself on a woman such as I. You can't afford me

ARMAND But your life will kill you!

M'G'ITE What a child you are! You are crying!

- ARMAND I must seem very stupid to you, but I am frightfully troubled by everything you have just said. And what exactly is your condition?
- M'G'ITE The doctors tell me that the blood I spit up comes from my throat; I pretend to believe them; it is all I can do. I believe I am consumptive
- ARMAND Listen Marguerite. There is no one, not even my sweet sister for whom I care for in this world more than I care for you. Give up your life in Paris, and let us live simply in the country together. Let us both escape before your life kills you
- M'G'ITE My life here is all I have. If I took good care of myself I should die immediately. All that supports me is the feverish life I lead! Taking care of one's self is all very well for women with families and friends, but for women like us, the moment we are no longer the vanity and pleasure of our lovers, they leave us, and long nights follow long days. I know it. I was in bed for two months once, and after three weeks no one came to see me at all
- ARMAND I would come every day
- M'G'ITE You love me too much Armand. I am honoured of course, but I am not worth it. Forget me
- ARMAND I will love you like a brother, I will never leave your side, I will cure you. Then, when you are strong again, you can go back to the life you are leading if you choose, but I am sure you will come to prefer a quiet life, which will make you happier and keep your beauty unspoiled
- M'G'ITE Would you really have the patience you pretend to?
- ARMAND Yes
- M'G'ITE And you would not reproach me for my past life?

ARMAND No

M'G'ITE Even if I chose to resume it?

ARMAND But you wouldn't!

M'G'ITE Ah, Armand! You love me, but it is a young love, and you hardly know me. You love a woman standing before you in the Duke's clothes and in Count G's jewellery

ARMAND You don't need these things

M'G'ITE Do you really love me so much?

ARMAND I know what I feel. And I am not so unremarkable. I am just undecided as to my life. But I am not undecided as to you Marguerite. I love you, and I wish to spend my life cherishing you

M'G'ITE You would stand by me for a life time?

ARMAND Yes. I am devoted to you

M'G'ITE You are in love with me. Say it straight out. It is much more simple

ARMAND And what happens then?

M'G'ITE Either I shall not accept, then you will have a grudge against me. Or I shall accept. Then you will have a sorry mistress; a woman who is nervous, ill, sad, or gay with a gaiety sadder than grief, a woman who spits blood and spends one hundred thousand francs a year. That is all very well for an old man like the Duke, but it is very bad for a young man like you. All the young lovers I have had very soon left me

ARMAND Stop! If you came here simply to give me a present of paints, you have spent a long time doing it

M'G'ITE That is true. We are talking childishness, and what happened last night must finish

ARMAND But let it be beautiful in its moment

M'G'ITE That is why I am here. Will you escort me home?

ARMAND I would be honoured

M'G'ITE There, that is better, there's the man in you. Why, you don't know that I spend eight thousand francs a month, and that I could not live without it. You don't know, poor friend, that I should ruin you in no time, and that your family would cast you off if you were to live with a woman like me. Let us be friends, good friends, but no more. Come and see me. We will laugh and talk, but don't exaggerate what I am worth, for I am worth very little. You have a good heart, you want someone to love you, but you are too young and too sensitive to live in a world like mine. Take a married woman, an older respectable woman to take care of you as I cannot. You shall see, I speak frankly, as a friend

## Act One, Scene 10

*(Marguerite's apartment. Morning)*

- DUKE           It is five years since my daughter died Mademoiselle Gautier. Five years spent in the contemplation of lost youth
- M'G'ITE       She was a pretty sweet soul Duke, and I have attempted to console you in every way I can
- DUKE           You are not my daughter. The knowingness of your smile would defeat her innocence. We should go to Bagneres again
- M'G'ITE       I would miss Paris so much Duke. The waters revived me, but I am better now
- DUKE           Are you really? Do not lie to me Mademoiselle. What do the doctors say?
- M'G'ITE       Ask them yourself Duke. They say the mild coughing I suffer from is but a remnant and will soon cease. Do not torment yourself. Your daughter rests in peace
- DUKE           And yet I am not at peace. I am haunted by you mademoiselle. You are the object of my desire, my dream made flesh *(he attempts to kiss her)*
- M'G'ITE       Perhaps we could attend the theatre together this evening
- DUKE           Will you have me?
- M'G'ITE       Duke!
- DUKE           You have other men
- M'G'ITE       This is a salon sir, not a brothel *(the door bell rings. Enter Nanine)*
- Who is it Nanine?
- NANINE       It is Monsieur de N. madame

M'G'ITE        Then send him away

NANINE        Yes madame (*Nanine exits*)

M'G'ITE        I am in no mood for the bourgeois. Duke, the man is just another admirer. I live a very public life, and my address is well known

DUKE            We have an agreement

M'G'ITE        And I honour it

DUKE            It would not seem so

M'G'ITE        I sent the man away!

DUKE            (*Attempting to kiss her*) You will ruin me

M'G'ITE        I think you should go. Nanine!

NANINE        (*Entering*) Show the Duke de V. the way out. You see me three times a week Duke, and I honour it

DUKE            Very well mademoiselle. Until the next time

M'G'ITE        Yes

DUKE            Are you sure?

M'G'ITE        Yes (*the Duke exits with Nanine*). Oh, God, that man! (*Nanine re-enters*) Has he gone? Forever talking about his daughter interspersed with his protestations of obscene love...

NANINE        The Duke has gone madame, but Monsieur de N. remains. I couldn't make him leave

M'G'ITE        Did they see each other?

NANINE        No, no, I kept them in separate rooms. What should I do?

M'G'ITE        Send the man in. Perhaps it is time to speak frankly. And stay here yourself

- NANINE Yes madame (*Nanine exits and re-enters*) Monsieur de N. (*he is holding a vast bouquet of camellias*)
- M'G'ITE Ah, Monsieur de N. Camellias! I must admit, I am beginning to find them boring
- N I'd strongly advise against it. A courtesan loses everything when she loses her soubriquet
- M'G'ITE What is it that you want sir? For me to be your mistress? I have already told you. No. You simply worry me. You might as well go somewhere else. I repeat, I don't want anything to do with you
- N (*Laughing*) Plain talking at last! You are forty thousand francs in debt mademoiselle. Take heed of your situation and listen
- M'G'ITE Please sir, leave
- N No mademoiselle, I have only just arrived, and will not leave until I have made you my offer. I know your every movement mademoiselle. I have made it my business. Your Duke has just called, but he won't live forever, and you are a young woman. He has five hundred thousand a year, I have one million. I am the better arrangement for you
- M'G'ITE Monsieur de N...
- N Let me continue. I find the ways of you and your circle quite unfathomable. I am a businessman and I want to know your price pure and simple
- M'G'ITE I beg your pardon. My price?
- N Yes. How much do you cost?
- M'G'ITE Sir, I...

- N                    Whatever the price, I will better it, and then you will be mine. If you refuse me, then in a matter of years, your career will be over. There are younger women to take your place, and your health is questionable
- M’G’ITE            Then I refuse and damn you!
- N                    Very well then. What are the prices for Olympe?
- M’G’ITE            Olympe? Olympe is no courtesan!
- N                    Of course she’s a courtesan. She’s being trained for the part by Madame Duvernoy on your money. So I presume you set her rates. Beware mademoiselle. For if I chose Olympe, am I likely ever to return to you? She is younger than you, and presumably less expensive. In fact, I would demand a discount given her lack of experience (*N. gives Marguerite the bouquet of camellias*). What do you say? I am an honest man, and I seek an honest arrangement
- M’G’ITE            Honest? You have the temerity to call yourself honest? Seek your arrangements elsewhere sir! Nanine, please show Monsieur de N. the door
- N                    I will have you in the end (*he leaves with Nanine*)
- M’G’ITE            Never in my life have I been so outraged... Nanine! (*Nanine re-enters*)  
Now understand, Nanine, that if that man calls, you are always to say that I am not in, or that I will not see him. I am tired out with seeing people who always want the same thing; who pay me for it, and then think they are quit of me. If those who are going to go in for our hateful business only knew what it really was they would sooner be chambermaids. But no, vanity, the desire of having dresses and carriages and diamonds carries us away, and we are young. One

believes what one hears, and one uses up one's heart, one's body, one's beauty, little by little; one is loved in all the wrong ways by some, scorned like a pariah by others, surrounded by people who always take more than they give, and one fine day one will die like a dog in a ditch, after having ruined others and ruined one's self as well

## **INTERVAL**

## Act Two, Scene 1

*(Marguerite's apartment. Morning. In the second act,*

*Marguerite is paler, walks less freely, and also somewhat thinner)*

COUNT So, you have shown Monsieur de N. the door

M'G'ITE I will have no more to do with him. To think he asked me my price!

COUNT You mean to say you don't have one?

M'G'ITE Oh, I might have a price in kind for those I find appealing, but not for those I don't. There must yet be some attraction to these arrangements, don't you agree?

COUNT And so our arrangement remains the same?

M'G'ITE The Duke has accepted you

COUNT What if I don't accept the Duke?

M'G'ITE My sweet. You are not rich enough to entertain such sentiments

COUNT Then what of your price?

M'G'ITE I don't have one *(she kisses him)*

COUNT Have you any arrangements for this afternoon?

M'G'ITE None. The time is yours

COUNT You want something?

M'G'ITE One of my horses is lame

COUNT I will replace it

M'G'ITE And then there is the carriage itself...

COUNT That is more of the Duke's business

M'G'ITE You do want all afternoon? *(the door bell rings)*

COUNT Whoever that is, tell Nanine to send them away

M'G'ITE It might be the Duke, or a creditor. I must be careful. *(Nanine enters)*  
Who is it Nanine?

NANINE It is Monsieur Duval madame

M'G'ITE Oh. Count, go to my bedroom. This won't take long

COUNT I want to see the man

M'G'ITE There's nothing to see. He's a mere youth. *(To Nanine)* Send him in.  
Count. The bedroom *(Count G. exits to the bedroom)*

NANINE *(Re-entering with Armand)* Monsieur Duval *(Nanine exits)*

ARMAND Is there someone else here?

M'G'ITE Yes. There is someone else here sir, I think you should know that. A  
lover of mine. Now that you know what kind of woman I am I shall be  
quite blunt. But I said you were free to call to see me, and I am as good  
as my word. How are you?

ARMAND I've been gambling

M'G'ITE Did you lose?

ARMAND Remarkably, no

M'G'ITE You are drunk sir

ARMAND *(Pause)* I will not accept your rejection mademoiselle. I love you, and I  
believe you love me

M'G'ITE I did not reject your love. It was framed by a single night. Let it remain  
so

ARMAND And you are entertaining a client?

M'G'ITE If you must put it that way

ARMAND I thought of bringing you another present, but I couldn't think what.  
*(Pause)* I don't want to be a client of yours

M'G'ITE Well you are not one

ARMAND Where is your client?

M'G'ITE In the bedroom

ARMAND What's his name?

M'G'ITE The Count G.

ARMAND So it's not your Duke

M'G'ITE No. If it was the Duke I would ask you to leave

ARMAND I will break the door down!

M'G'ITE (*She restrains him*) Don't be so stupid

ARMAND Aren't you going to ask me to leave?

M'G'ITE No

ARMAND Why not?

M'G'ITE I don't quite know

ARMAND I want you to throw me out and swear to never see me again!

M'G'ITE Whatever for?

ARMAND (*Pause*) The Count G.?

M'G'ITE The Count G. I've known him for years

ARMAND I love you. (*Pause*) How many lovers do you have?

M'G'ITE Armand. Sit down and calm yourself. However do you suppose the kept women of Paris would survive today if they only had one lover? How could that be so to keep them in the style they are accustomed to? No single fortune, however large, could suffice for a woman like me. A fortune of five hundred thousand francs is an enormous sum; well, my dear friend, five hundred thousand would still be too little. For a man with such an income has a large house, horses, servants, carriages;

he shoots, has friends, gambles as well... He has a wife. Such a man cannot give up such things without losing his position and causing a scandal, and from that five hundred thousand, he cannot give a woman like me more than forty or fifty thousand in a year, and that is already a great deal. Well, other lovers make up for the rest of her expenses, but I would not so insult you Armand. I would not be so *convenient* with you

ARMAND Do you enjoy your life? Answer me truthfully

M'G'ITE I have chanced upon my Duke. He has no wife, no nieces or nephews, his daughter is dead, and he takes care of the majority of my expenses. But even with him there are limits and I cannot ask for more. Further, I would not be so free if he was the only one. I told you Armand. My younger lovers leave me. They have what you have. Twenty or thirty thousand francs a year, just enough to live in Paris in polite society, but no more. If they have the vanity to wish to pay for everything they want they get ruined, and go and get killed in Africa or India, or heaven knows where else, leaving debts in Paris of a hundred thousand francs

COUNT (*Entering*) Have you quite finished with this fool? The afternoon is mine mademoiselle and your price is your carriage

## Act Two, Scene 2

*(Armand's apartment. Evening)*

JOSEPH      Where on earth have you been sir?

ARMAND      Pack the bags Joseph. I am returning to C. I have written to my father informing him of my arrival and, oh, to spend time with someone so pure as my sweet sister!

JOSEPH      You will find someone to love sir

ARMAND      I already love Joseph. That is the problem

JOSEPH      Did you go to her?

ARMAND      Yes. And she had a man there

JOSEPH      Well what did you expect?

ARMAND      I don't know. It was the afternoon...

JOSEPH      I shall pack the bags sir *(he exits. The door bell rings)*

ARMAND      I shall answer it myself Joseph

JOSEPH      *(off stage)* Very well sir

*(Armand goes through the door. Enter Marguerite. She is wearing much simpler clothes and no jewellery. Armand follows her back on stage)*

ARMAND      Mademoiselle... Marguerite

M'G'ITE      Well, what was that scene yesterday about? And look at you now. What are you suffering from? Love or terror at the sight of me?

ARMAND      I must apologise

M'G'ITE      I'm not asking you to. May I stay?

ARMAND      How long for?

M'G'ITE I don't quite know. I need to escape my Duke. And Count G. I will be safe here

ARMAND Yes of course. Stay as long as you like. (*Silence. She kisses him passionately*)

M'G'ITE Please. Don't be confused. I am sincere. I love you. But you were jealous yesterday, and that will never do. The green eyed monster

ARMAND And what of the Count?

M'G'ITE My carriage is repaired Armand. A plan has come into my head

ARMAND And what does it consist of?

M'G'ITE I can't tell you yet, but I can tell you what the result would be. The result would be that in a month I would be free, I should have no more debts, and we could go and spend the summer in the country

ARMAND And you can't tell me by what means?

M'G'ITE No, only love me as I love you, and all will succeed

ARMAND And you have made this plan by yourself?

M'G'ITE Yes

ARMAND And you will carry it out by yourself

M'G'ITE I alone shall have the trouble of it, but we shall both partake of its benefits

ARMAND You must permit me, my dear Marguerite, to share only in the benefits of those enterprises which I have conceived and carried out myself

M'G'ITE What does that mean?

ARMAND It means that I have a strong suspicion that Madame Duvernoy is your associate in this pretty plan, of which I can accept neither the cost nor the benefits

- M'G'ITE      What a child you are. I thought you loved me. I was mistaken
- ARMAND      You are not mistaken
- M'G'ITE      Alright. But no more jealousy. Are we agreed?
- ARMAND      You don't know exactly what your plan is, do you?
- M'G'ITE      No. But I know it is to free me. And here I am already having to forgive you for yesterday. I must rely on you to obey me Armand and do whatever I say. I demand blind obedience. You must leave when I ask you to, visit when I command it. If we are seen together in public, you must say what I tell you to say, and repeat whatever I say. And for your own benefit, until my plan has reached its fulfilment, ask no questions that would be to the detriment of your own soul
- ARMAND      And why should I trust you so?
- M'G'ITE      Because you love me. And because I have decided I love you. Here is my key. The key to 9 rue d'Antin. I am yours
- ARMAND      The door has bolts
- M'G'ITE      I shall have them removed. Come, let us reason it all out. You would gladly spend two or three months with me in the country? I too would be glad of this solitude *à deux*, and not only glad of it; my health requires it. But I cannot leave Paris for such a length of time without putting my affairs in order, and the affairs of a woman like me are always in great confusion. Well, I have found a way to reconcile everything, my money affairs and my love for you. Yes you. Don't laugh. So that is my plan. Now, is it agreed?
- ARMAND      I agree to all you wish, as you know

M'G'ITE     *(She hugs him)* So! In a month's time, we shall be in some village, walking by the riverside, holding hands and drinking milk. Does it seem strange that Marguerite Gautier should promise herself so? The fact is that my Parisian life wearies me when it doesn't burn me. I have a wish for a quieter existence

ARMAND     But the Duke...

M'G'ITE     Don't be alarmed. You love me for myself Armand, the others do not, and I am decided. I am a poor country girl at heart and I wish to return to being so. Now, give me a pen. If I am staying here, I must write to Nanine

JOSEPH     *(Entering)* Sir, the bags are packed

ARMAND     Then unpack them. We are not going anywhere yet

## Act Two, Scene 3

*(Marguerite's apartment. Morning)*

PRUDENCE *(Entering)* Where is Marguerite Nanine? No one has seen her in days

NANINE I don't know Madame Duvernoy. All I know is she sent me a letter  
telling me not to be alarmed

PRUDENCE Well I am very alarmed. If she's taken another client, the Duke will be  
furious

NANINE Do you need money?

PRUDENCE Don't be impertinent

NANINE If you need money, all the drawers are locked

PRUDENCE I beg your pardon

NANINE You'll beg no pardon from me

PRUDENCE So where is she?

NANINE I don't know

PRUDENCE You must! Olympe needs dressing after all

NANINE So you do need money

PRUDENCE It's Olympe that needs the money

NANINE And where's she?

PRUDENCE At the milliner's shop

M'G'ITE *(Entering)* Prudence! Nanine, I thought I told you to admit no one

NANINE I thought you meant men

PRUDENCE My dear, you've got no jewellery on. And what a simple dress

M'G'ITE I've found a lover who doesn't appreciate ostentation

PRUDENCE Do I know him?

M'G'ITE No

PRUDENCE Does the Duke know him?

M'G'ITE No. He is my secret. And so it shall remain. Prudence, what are you doing here? I have affairs to attend to, and I intend to retire to the country for a number of months

PRUDENCE I need six thousand francs

M'G'ITE Will that be the end of it? What's it for?

PRUDENCE To dress Olympe

M'G'ITE She works in a milliner's shop. How many clothes does she need?

PRUDENCE My dear, what has come over you?

M'G'ITE I have a plan. I will soon be a courtesan no more

PRUDENCE And how on earth will you manage that? What of the Duke?

M'G'ITE Ah, I can't dispense with him. But I can resist his advances. I intend to get rid of Count G. and persuade the Duke to rent me a cottage in the country on account of my health. Meanwhile I sell the carriage and pawn my jewellery to settle my debts. It's as honest an arrangement as exists in this city

PRUDENCE Oh is it now? So the Duke pays for the life of you and your new lover?

M'G'ITE Yes

PRUDENCE And this new man will accept that?

M'G'ITE I think so

PRUDENCE Then he's no man at all

M'G'ITE He will become one in time

PRUDENCE So he isn't wealthy?

M'G'ITE Not at all

PRUDENCE Marguerite, have you lost your senses? You can't possibly be an honest woman now. Being a courtesan is the only respectability you have

M'G'ITE It's a position of vice

PRUDENCE A position of vice is better than no position at all. And your plan! It doesn't make good sense

M'G'ITE I have found someone to love me. That does make sense

PRUDENCE Monsieur de N. is looking for a courtesan. He's forever visiting the shop

M'G'ITE Really

PRUDENCE If you cease to be a courtesan, Olympe becomes one

M'G'ITE Why so? Because you won't live within your means? Tell the man to leave her alone

PRUDENCE I quite like him

M'G'ITE I do not. Now, I have been away along time, and I have summoned the Duke, so if you don't mind, please leave

## Act Two, Scene 4

*(Armand's apartment)*

- JOSEPH Will Mademoiselle Gautier return here?
- ARMAND Most definitely Joseph. But I don't know when yet
- JOSEPH So there is an intrigue going on?
- ARMAND What business is it of yours?
- JOSEPH It is every business of mine sir. A servant needs to know the affairs of his master's heart. So I am always to let her in?
- ARMAND Yes. And this is no intrigue Joseph
- JOSEPH If it is more than that your father must be informed
- ARMAND My mother left me a house did she not?
- JOSEPH Yes sir
- ARMAND Then find me the deeds. Perhaps I shall sell it
- JOSEPH Sir, whatever for? That would reduce your income considerably
- ARMAND In order to help Mademoiselle Gautier
- JOSEPH Is this wise sir?
- ARMAND You don't understand Joseph. I am in love with a courtesan. It has a unique thrill
- JOSEPH So what are the rules of your situation? Why don't you go and see her?
- ARMAND Because I must wait here for her and obey her. That is my command. And then happiness! We shall be moving to the country Joseph, for a simpler life. In the meantime, I have her key!
- JOSEPH It is an impossible dream sir. And your profession is still undecided
- ARMAND To be truly loved by a courtesan! I shall cherish her soul! The more a chaste woman believes in goodness, the more easily will she give way,

if not to her lover, then at least to love. For being without mistrust she is without force, and to win her love is a triumph that can be gained by any young man aged twenty or twenty five. But to be really loved by a courtesan, that is a victory of infinitely greater difficulty. With them the body has worn out the soul, the senses have burned up the heart, dissipation has blunted the feelings. Marguerite is mine Joseph, and I shall make her love anew

## Act Two, Scene 5

*(Marguerite's apartment)*

- M'G'ITE Duke, I fear my health is failing me again, and I am tired of Paris
- DUKE But you adore Paris
- M'G'ITE Well yes, but every adoration has its limits. Do you remember our time at Bagneres together, how the waters so refreshed me? I am in need of such refreshment again
- DUKE Nothing could bring me greater pleasure than to be with you once more at Bagneres
- M'G'ITE Why yes. But then we would be too isolated from Paris. I was thinking of taking a cottage in the country. I have seen one advertised at Bougival and it would be perfect. I would like to take it for the summer Duke, and avoid this rush of Paris that I have seen so many times before
- DUKE And you still love me?
- M'G'ITE Why yes of course
- DUKE A cottage at Bougival?
- M'G'ITE Why yes
- DUKE It is a considerable extra expense
- M'G'ITE I know so Duke, but my health ...
- DUKE Quite so *(he kisses her. She responds)*. Come let us retire...
- M'G'ITE Where to?
- DUKE The bedroom *(he starts to undress her)*
- M'G'ITE Go to the bedroom Duke. I will follow *(the Duke exits to the bedroom. Enter Armand)*. Armand! What on earth are you doing here!

ARMAND     And what are you doing?

M'G'ITE     What does it look like? It is to secure our cottage!

ARMAND     You haven't been to see me, and you gave me your key...

M'G'ITE     Yes, but you promised me. Blind obedience. I have been busy... And I  
              am busy now Armand. Please leave

ARMAND     There is someone in the bedroom?

M'G'ITE     Yes

ARMAND     Then I shall open the door

M'G'ITE     Don't be so stupid. Leave everything to me and my plan is assured

ARMAND     Is it the Duke?

M'G'ITE     Yes Armand, now please leave

ARMAND     Then I give you this (*hands her an envelope*)

## Act Two, Scene 6

*(Armand's apartment. Evening)*

PRUDENCE Am I in the way?

ARMAND You, in the way?

PRUDENCE Well you might have a woman with you after all, and it would hardly be amusing for her to see us two arrive

ARMAND My dear Madame Duvernoy, you don't know what you are saying

PRUDENCE What a nice place you've got here. May I see the bedroom?

ARMAND Yes of course *(Prudence exits to bedroom)*

M'G'ITE *(Reading Armand's letter, which she takes from her bosom)* "I send you back your key, which I have never used, but which might be useful to you with another man" Really Armand. One thinks such letters, one does not write them! *(She puts the letter back in her bosom)*

ARMAND Why did you bring Prudence with you?

M'G'ITE Because she was at the theatre with me, and when I leave here I want to have someone to walk me home

ARMAND Could not I do it?

M'G'ITE Yes but if you came to my house I was sure you would want to come up, and as I could not let you, I did not wish to let you go away blaming me for saying "no"

ARMAND And why could you not let me come up?

M'G'ITE Because I am being watched, and the least suspicion might do me the greatest harm

ARMAND Is that really the only reason?

- M'G'ITE Yes. There must be no secrets between us from now on. That is why I gave you my key
- ARMAND Then why did you deceive me?
- M'G'ITE I did not. I did not say that from now on I would entertain no more men
- ARMAND But surely...
- M'G'ITE My present project is to get out of debt. If I were the Duchess So and So and had two hundred thousand francs a year, and if I were your mistress and had another lover, you would have a right to object. But that is not the case. I am Mademoiselle Gautier and you know my situation. Your protestations are unnecessary and my reassurances useless
- ARMAND Who is watching you?
- M'G'ITE Monsieur de N. of course. And I went to the theatre only with Prudence. I am not deceiving you Armand
- ARMAND You are right, but I love you so madly
- M'G'ITE Well you must either love me a little less or understand me a little better. Your letter gave me a great deal of pain. And the Duke suspects me now. It will be much more difficult to secure our cottage in the country
- ARMAND I have been thinking about that. And I have a property I could sell...
- M'G'ITE Armand, you have very little. I might have come to you and said "I want twenty thousand francs" and you would have found it for me, but instead I went to the Duke. I have not been unfaithful to you Armand. I have merely slept with him, at the risk of you reproaching me later on.

I am a courtesan. I am sometimes obliged to buy the satisfaction of my soul at the expense of my body, and I suffer still more, when, afterwards, that satisfaction with the one I love truly is denied to me. Armand. We poor creatures have fantastic desires and inconceivable loves. We give ourselves for one thing, now for another. There are men who ruin themselves for us and never receive anything, there are those who obtain us for a bouquet of flowers. But none for a bag of sweets. Your letter undeceived me. I was looking forward to writing to you, to seeing you, to having lunch with you, but your letter showed you jealous again, and this time the jealousy was impertinent. You lack intelligence of the heart, and you have not obeyed me

ARMAND Marguerite. What can I say? I am so, so, sorry. (*Kneeling*) Pardon me please

M'G'ITE Don't let me end up like Prudence, a woman who was once kept and who still has the costly tastes that her age and looks do not allow her to gratify. She borrows money from me which she will never repay. She eats my last night's banquet and steals my shawl. Before I met you Armand I was dying of *ennui*, I might as well have thrown myself into the flames to be asphyxiated with charcoal. Then I met you, young, naïve and happy, and I have tried to make you the man I long for in my noisy solitude. What I love in you is the man you are going to be. You do not accept the position; you reject it as unworthy of you; you are an ordinary lover. Do like the others do; pay me, and say no more about it

ARMAND Marguerite. Pardon me. I understood it all, but wanted to hear it from your own lips. Forget the rest and remember only that we are young

and belong together, and that we love. Do with me what you will. I am your slave, your dog, but in the name of Heaven, tear up the letter I have written to you

M'G'ITE *(She takes the letter from her bosom and hands it to him)* Here it is.  
Have it back *(Armand tears the letter into little pieces and kisses her hands)* And here is the key. Again *(Enter Prudence)* Look Prudence.  
Do you know what he wants?

PRUDENCE He wants you to forgive him

M'G'ITE Precisely

PRUDENCE And do you?

M'G'ITE One has to; but he wants more than that. He wants to have supper with us

PRUDENCE And do you consent?

M'G'ITE What do you think?

PRUDENCE I think you are two children without an ounce of sense between you.  
But I also think that I am very hungry, and that the sooner you consent therefore, the better

M'G'ITE Come then. There is room for the three of us in my carriage. By the way, Nanine will have gone to bed. You must open the door. So you now you have the key, try not to "lose" it again

## Act Two, Scene 7

*(Armand's apartment)*

ARMAND Father!

FATHER You wrote to me saying you were coming to C., but you did not arrive. So I have come to Paris. My dear Armand, we have serious matters to discuss. You promise to be frank

ARMAND Am I not accustomed to being so?

FATHER Is it true that you are continuing relations with a woman called Marguerite Gautier?

ARMAND Yes

FATHER Do you know what this woman was?

ARMAND A kept woman

FATHER And it is for her that you have forgotten to visit your sister and me this year?

ARMAND Yes father, I admit it

FATHER You are very much in love with this woman?

ARMAND You see it father, since she has made me fail in duty towards you

FATHER You realise you cannot always live in this way?

ARMAND Why so? We are to take a place in the country. She is to forsake her other lovers

FATHER But you must realise that I, in all events, could not permit that

ARMAND I have said to myself that as long as I did nothing contrary to the respect which I owe to the traditional probity of the family I could live as I am living, and this has reassured me in respect of any fears I might have

- FATHER      Then I am outraged
- ARMAND     Why father?
- FATHER     Have a mistress if you will. Pay for her as you must pay for a kept woman. By all means. But that you should continue to live with her and not pay for her, and that such a scandal should reach my hearing in the quiet of the countryside and set a blot against my honourable name... It cannot, it shall not be
- ARMAND     Father you have been ill informed. I spend what I can to support Mademoiselle Gautier, who is not to me as she is the name given by you. She is currently settling her affairs in Paris, and then we shall be free
- FATHER     A father is always authorised to rescue his son out of evil paths. I demand that you leave this woman!
- ARMAND     I will not. And there are no longer places where courtesans can be sent into confinement. And even if there were, I would follow her there. I cannot be happy without this woman, whose health is also suspect. That is why we will move to the country
- FATHER     Armand! Open your eyes. It is a father who loves you who speaks to you. Is it honourable to live like a husband and wife with a woman everybody has had?
- ARMAND     What does it matter sir, if no more will
- FATHER     I did not bring you up to be a rescuer of lost women Armand. Do you think God has given such a grotesque aim to your life? In later years you will laugh at this love of yours if you are not too stained by it. In the name of your sainted mother, abandon your intentions, and retire to

the countryside at C. with me and your sister. One step further, and you will no longer be free to escape the mistakes of your youth, which in a mature man is merely his past. Your mistress will console herself, she will take another lover, and when you see what it is for which you have all but broken with your father, and all but lost his love, you will tell me that I have done well to come and seek you out

ARMAND Of any other kept woman you are right sir, but you are wrong about Marguerite. Father, I can promise nothing. What you ask of me is beyond my power, believe me. As I have said sir, Marguerite is sacrificing everything for me

FATHER All of which does not prevent her from accepting the whole of your fortune, for the sixty thousand francs which come to you from the sale of your mother's house, and which you are giving her, are, understand me well, your whole fortune

ARMAND Who told you of this?

FATHER Joseph of course. Thank God I sent him to Paris with you. Could an honest man start to carry out such a procedure without informing me? Well, it is to prevent you from ruining yourself on a courtesan that I am now in Paris. Your mother, when she died, left you enough to live respectably, and not to squander on extravagant mistresses

ARMAND I swear to you father, that Marguerite knew nothing of the transfer

FATHER Why then, did you make it?

ARMAND Because Marguerite, the woman you calumniate, and whom you wish me to abandon, is sacrificing all that she possesses in order to live with me

FATHER       And you accept this sacrifice? What sort of a man are you sir to allow Mademoiselle Gautier to sacrifice everything for you. Come, enough of this. You will leave this woman. Just now I begged you, now I command you. I will have no such scandalous things in my family.  
Joseph! (*Joseph enters*) Pack Armand's things

ARMAND       Joseph. You are my servant not my father's. And pardon me father, I shall not come

FATHER       And why?

ARMAND       Because I am at an age when no one any longer obeys a command

FATHER       Very well. I know what remains to be done. Joseph. Have my things taken to the Hotel de Paris

ARMAND       Promise me father that you will do nothing to cause Marguerite pain

FATHER       I believe you are mad

## Act Two, Scene 8

*(Marguerite's apartment)*

DUKE Mademoiselle Gautier

M'G'ITE Marguerite, surely

DUKE I have received a letter from one Monsieur de N. He informs me that you intend to live at Bougival with one Armand Duval, who you have been seeing now for a number of weeks. Is this true mademoiselle?

M'G'ITE Well, yes, but it will not inconvenience you sir. You will be free to visit me. Armand is very charming, and a harmless young man

DUKE Who carries on with you at my expense. I will not tolerate it mademoiselle, nor support it. If you had been honest with me, you would have taken the waters at Bagneres. Seek the solution to your own finances mademoiselle

M'G'ITE Nanine! *(Entering)*

DUKE I will show myself out *(the Duke exits)*

-

NANINE What on earth will you do now?

M'G'ITE I really have no idea

## Act Two, Scene 9

*(Marguerite's apartment. Marguerite sometimes resorts to supporting herself with a stick)*

M'G'ITE Sir, my sacrifice is genuine, and I would ask what right you have to visit me. I have here the pawn tickets, and the receipts of sale for that which I could not pawn. My resolve is to finally clear myself of debt by selling my furniture. I am happy sir. I want to live a quieter, gentler life with Armand. But you are his father sir, and I am honoured to meet you

FATHER How can I return the sentiment to a mere prostitute?

M'G'ITE Sir! I am in my own home and you will treat me with respect

FATHER So it is by entreaties and not by threats that I must ask for you an even greater sacrifice than you have made for my son?

M'G'ITE What on earth do you mean?

FATHER Remember there is not only the mistress. There is the family. There is, besides love, duty. My son has only a small inheritance, and yet is ready to abandon to you the legacy of his mother. Consider the future. No one will consider whether Armand loves you, whether you love him, whether this mutual love means happiness for him and redemption for you

M'G'ITE Redemption!

FATHER They would see only one thing, that Armand Duval allowed a kept woman – for that is what I am still forced to call you – to sell all she had for him. And one day, the day of reproaches and regrets will arrive, be sure, for you and for others, and you will both bear a chain

you cannot sever. What will you do then? Your youth will be lost, my son's future destroyed, and I, his father, should receive from only one of my children the recompense that I look for in both

M'G'ITE The recompense of your children is nothing to do with me sir

FATHER Mademoiselle it is

M'G'ITE Have you finished?

FATHER I have hardly started. You are young, beautiful, life will console you; you are noble perhaps ...

M'G'ITE Well thank you sir, but I fear my life will be short...

FATHER ... and the memory of a good deed will redeem you from many past deeds. During the six months Armand has known you, he has forgotten me

M'G'ITE I will correct that sir. If this is a question of due respect for a father, I will ensure he writes

FATHER It is more than that. Whatever may be your resolution of living otherwise than as you have lived, Armand, who loves you, will never consent to the seclusion to which his modest fortune would condemn you. And are you sure, besides, that the life which you are giving up for him will never again attract you? Are you sure, you who have loved him, that you will never love another? What if, with age, thoughts of ambition in Armand, succeed those of love? What is respectable in youth is not respectable in middle age. Think it all over mademoiselle. You love Armand; prove it to him by the sole means which remains to you of yet proving it to him, by sacrificing your love to his future. No misfortune has yet arrived, but one will arrive, and perhaps a greater

one than those which I foresee. Armand might become jealous of a man who has loved you; he might provoke him, fight, be killed.

Finally, my dear child, let me tell you all, for I have not done so. Well, my daughter is about to marry. She is to marry the man she loves from an honourable family. The family have learned of the life Armand is leading in Paris and are demanding the marriage be called off. The future of a girl who has done nothing against you, and who has the right of looking forward to a happy future, is in your hands. Have you the right, have to the strength, to shatter it? And what will Armand think then? In the name of your love and of your repentance, Marguerite, grant me the happiness of my daughter.

*(Marguerite weeps)*

M'G'ITE Tell me sir, do you believe that I love your son?

FATHER Yes

M'G'ITE With a disinterested love?

FATHER Yes

M'G'ITE Do you believe that I have made this love the hope, the dream, the forgiveness ... of my life

FATHER Implicitly

M'G'ITE Well sir, embrace me and do not reject me. Embrace me as you would embrace your daughter, and I swear to you that that kiss, the only chaste kiss I have ever had, will make me strong against my love, and that within a week your son will be once more at your side, unhappy for a time, but cured forever

FATHER      You are a noble child (*he kisses her on the forehead*), and you are making an attempt for which God will reward you; but I greatly fear you will have no influence over my son

M'G'ITE      Oh, be at rest sir, he will hate me (*she writes a letter*)

FATHER      To what does your letter refer mademoiselle?

M'G'ITE      Your son's welfare

FATHER      You are chasted mademoiselle (*he embraces her*)

## Act Two, Scene 10

*(Armand's apartment. Evening)*

JOSEPH Sir, you must stop drinking. And you have been gambling again. Ever since you received that letter, you have been in a frenzy. What on earth did it say?

ARMAND "Armand, all is lost between us. By the time you read this letter, I will be the lover of another man"

JOSEPH She is a courtesan sir, what did you expect?

ARMAND You don't understand Joseph. It is all my fault *(the door bell rings)*

JOSEPH Shall I answer it sir, or are you not at home?

ARMAND Yes, yes. I am at home *(Joseph exits and re-enters with Olympe)*

JOSEPH Olympe Duplessis

OLYMPE You have lost at the gambling table sir?

ARMAND Yes

OLYMPE All that you had in the house? Be frank

ARMAND Yes. But I still have three hundred louis. Here they are, if you will stay the night with me here *(he throws the gold on the table)*

OLYMPE And why this proposition?

ARMAND Because I am in love with you of course

OLYMPE No, but because you love Marguerite and seek revenge on her by becoming my lover. You don't deceive a woman like me, my dear friend. I am still too young and too good looking to accept your proposal

ARMAND Would you rather I take you for nothing? It is I who wouldn't accept then. Think it over, my dear Olympe; if I had sent someone to offer

you these three hundred louis on my behalf, you would have accepted. I prefer to speak to you myself. Accept without inquiring into my reasons; say to yourself that you are beautiful, and that there is nothing surprising in my being in love with you

OLYMPE Sir, there is nothing surprising in it at all. And it may even be true when you are not drunk. But you do not know me sir, neither my plans nor my intentions. I would rather be a virgin than a courtesan, but despite the designs of Madame Duvernoy, I intend to be neither. And damned be the attentions of Count G. I will start my own milliner's shop if necessary. You might love me sir, but in your present condition I don't love you (*the Father enters*)

ARMAND Father!

FATHER (*Armand falls into his arms*) Have Marguerite as your lover, Armand. Or have this sorry creature instead. Don't you understand Armand? These women are worthless

## Act Two, Scene 11

*(Marguerite's apartment. A bailiff banging on the door)*

NANINE You can't come in! There's no more to be taken, and madame is taken with a severe malady. You're vermin your kind, pure vermin!

BAILIFF *(Shouting from outside)* You let me in yesterday, you'll let me in today. I'm a bailiff and I'm just doing my job. I have a court order to enter and seize whatever belongs to the creditors *(he bangs on the door again)*

NANINE *(Opening the door)* Try not to disturb madame. Oh, where is the Duke? And you can't touch that! It was a present from Count G .!

BAILIFF It's worth three thousand, and everything must go. There we are. Everything is valued. All that remains is to arrange a date for the auction

NANINE Sir, an auction already! This is unseemly. My mistress is dying!

BAILIFF Her creditors have lost patience. They don't trust her guarantees. The Duke won't vouch for her, and Count G. is in London

NANINE The lady is ill

BAILIFF So she cannot work at her profession then, can she?! Good day *(the bailiff exits. The door bell rings. Nanine exits. Enter Marguerite, pale, in a dressing gown, supporting herself with a stick. Nanine re-enters)*

M'G'ITE Who was it Nanine? Is it Armand?

NANINE It was Monsieur Armand's servant madame. But he didn't want to stay. He gave me a letter

M'G'ITE *(Opens it)* "I enclose five hundred francs for your services as a good whore". Oh, Armand! How could he? I was yet conjuring an

impossible reunion between us... (*Writes a letter*) Here. Give this to Armand

NANINE You must stop writing to him madame. There is no point. His father has sent him away to Alexandria (*the door bell rings. Nanine exits and re-enters*) I couldn't stop him madame... Monsieur de N.

N (*Holding a vast bouquet of camellias*) You are mine now, and only I stand between you and bankruptcy

M'G'ITE You mean you want to fuck me for nothing. I am dying sir

N How much is Olympe?

(*Marguerite dies*)

## Act Two, Scene 12

*(Paris, 1847)*

OLYMPE I am standing in the Cemetery of Montmartre waiting for the disinterment of the grave to begin. The grave of Marguerite was only rented for five years by the old Duke, and Armand wants a more permanent memorial for the one he loved. The new grave is to be for an indefinite time and regularly decorated with camellias, Marguerite's favourite flowers. The old Duke obviously thought a five year grave was good enough for Marguerite, but Armand disagrees. Officially I am here to identify the body, but privately I am here to help Armand in his grief. Armand is late, so proceedings cannot begin. His boat from Alexandria must have been delayed into Marseilles, and it is a considerable journey from there. I also have letters for Armand, letters he does not know about, the last letters Marguerite ever wrote, all written to him. I want to tell Armand how much I love him, but it is hardly appropriate to Marguerite's memory, the memory of these letters of love. But when else can I tell him before our destinies go their separate ways?

ARMAND *(Entering)* Hello Olympe

OLYMPE Hello Armand

ARMAND Is this gravestone the best the Duke could do?

OLYMPE I have letters for you Armand. The letters of Marguerite when she was dying, all written to you

ARMAND I see. *(He reads them)* "Look after Olympe"

OLYMPE How could you go away like that?

ARMAND    It was my father. He means well, but he is provincial. Olympe...

OLYMPE    ... Armand. Will you take me?

ARMAND    Yes

**THE END**