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// **THE REVOLT**

AND

THE ESCAPE //

BY VILLIERS DE L'ISLE ADAM

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH

BY THERESA BARCLAY



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INTRODUCTION

VILLIERS DE L'ISLE ADAM, although owing his extraction to one of the oldest families of Brittany, and in spite of his exaggerated family pride, was the true type of the Bohemian. His intellectual affinities, therefore, naturally drew him towards those other—then Bohemians, the abused Parnassiens, whom he rivalled in his unbending hostility to the current taste. Though welcomed as a coming star even by such men as François Coppée, Sully Prud'homme, Catulle Mendez, and Alphonse Daudet, his genius did not attain the development warranted by its great and rare qualities. This was chiefly due to his want of method and even horror of directing his life according to the rules of common sense, of that common sense of which Tribulat Bonhomet his favourite character says :—

“Let us bow our heads before this almighty common sense which from century to century lays down new sets of laws, but whose essence is to hate the very name of soul. Let us salute as enlightened folk, this common sense, which, as it passes, insults the mind that traced the path it follows.”

Villiers was deeply influenced by Baudelaire. His kinsman M. Pontavice de Heussey, who has told with kindly sympathy the story of his constant struggle with material want and yet indifference to comfort, and of his

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eccentricities and pride, thinks this influence was not altogether to his advantage. "It developed in him a taste for deliberate exaggeration and mystification. His genius, naturally clear and luminous, became wrapped in a cloudy, fantastical imagery and in obscure and superfine affectations, which often spoil his work and perplex the reader." Premonitions, mystic and supernatural agencies do indeed occupy a large place in his writings.

The two short pieces forming this volume are among Villiers' best and most suggestive work. Though short and simple in construction, they deal with two of the greatest problems of modern civilisation. *L'Évasion* was played at M. Antoine's *Théâtre libre* in 1887, among the first pieces of his "new school." It not only contains a powerful and dramatic situation, but it is full of suggestive incidents. *La Révolte* is an essentially modern drama. It appeared in 1870, more than twenty years before the question of the relations of the sexes had become, in France, the burning one it is now. After five performances at the Vaudeville in Paris, it was withdrawn by order of the Censure on the same grounds no doubt as those on which much other artistic and conscientious work of that time was persecuted. Witness the ridiculous lawsuit against Flaubert for the authorship of *Madame Bovary* and the condemnation of Baudelaire. The critics, however, gave it no quarter either, and as for the public they had not yet been educated by M. M. Antoine and Lugné-Poë to grasp the import of the inner tragedy, of the conflict of conscience and tendency with which Ibsen's dramas have now made Parisians familiar.

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Between *La Révolte* and one of Ibsen's most popular plays, *The Dolls' House*, there is a strong family likeness. Both deal with the same problem, both heroines propound the same theories of self-duty and both leave home, husband and children with the same object of leading thenceforth a worthier existence in dreamland. Elisabeth returns after a few hours with a dread of the loneliness of the cold, dark night, and the discovery that her self-dependency, her aptitude for the appreciation of her own inner life is gone, in other words, that her character has been tainted by contact with her husband's materialism. Her freedom had come when she was no longer fit to make use of it. In *The Dolls' House* we are left in doubt as to the ulterior fate of Nora, though Ibsen does not exclude reconciliation and the presence of Nora's sensible and well-meaning friend points that way.

But while the subject is the same, *La Révolte* and *The Dolls' House* are developed on entirely different plans. Ibsen's work is that of a master of dramatic construction. Villiers, essentially a dreamer and a poet, was indifferent to the stage effect and would have considered it beneath him to make an effort to please the popular taste. Since its first failure, *La Révolte* has been put on the Paris stage now and again for the delectation of a small group of faithful admirers. The recent representations, however, have been comparative successes, which shows that public understanding for such pieces has progressed during the last quarter of a century. In fact, although Villiers was a precursor of Ibsen in *La Révolte* (*The Dolls' House* was published in 1879), it is owing to Ibsen that the public taste

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has at length been sufficiently educated to understand him.

The present translation of *La Révolte* appeared in the *Fortnightly Review* in December 1897.

T. B.

PARIS, July 1898.

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1

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

ELISABETH.

FELIX, *her husband.*

Large sitting-room, decorated in red, black and gold. Door at back of stage. Chandelier, carpet. To right of grate, in which small fire is burning, arm-chair. On the left an office-table, covered with account-books and papers, full in view. A shaded lamp throwing light on table. Rest of stage in partial darkness. Hand of clock over door at back near midnight.

When the curtain rises, Elisabeth, dressed plainly in black, seated resting her elbows on the table, deep in thought. Felix opposite, turning over letters and bank notes.

SCENE I.

ELISABETH, FELIX.

FELIX (*after a long silence*).

What's the time?

ELISABETH.

Very late.

FELIX (*absently*).

Midnight already? (*He turns up the lamp, blinking.*)

Bother the lamp! What is the matter with it to-night? I can't see! Baptistin! Francis! Francis!

ELISABETH (*taking up her pen*).

They were tired and I told them to go to bed.

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FELIX (*muttering*).

Tired—tired! And are we not? You let them impose upon you, my dear. Those rascals are not worth a rope to hang them with. They take every advantage of us. (*He gets up and lights a cigar at one of the candles on the mantelpiece. Smoking with back to the fire. Hands behind him.*) Yes, they do, they do. But that's enough for to-day. You will tire yourself.

ELISABETH (*smiling*).

Oh! you are too kind.

FELIX (*slowly and businesslike*).

Have you entered the Farral & Winter receipts?

ELISABETH (*writing*).

They are pinned together and put away in the second drawer of the safe.

FELIX.

And what about the Lelievre summons?

ELISABETH.

Insolvent. They are very, very poor.

FELIX (*shaking the ash from his cigar*).

The building is always worth something.

ELISABETH (*after a pause*).

In that case see to the summons yourself.

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FELIX (*indifferently*).

Eh? (*Aside*) Oho! sentiment, bother sentiment, (*Aloud*).
Come, you can't see clearly in business with tears in
your eyes. If we wait till they are declared bankrupt,
we shall have to take a dividend.

ELISABETH (*ironically*).

How awful!

FELIX.

Yes, yes—schemes of arrangement!—Long proceedings—
delay—then a composition—so much in the pound,
etc., etc. Don't misunderstand me, my dear. If I
sue these poor Lelievres pitilessly, it is on principle.
I could weep for them myself, but, hang it—business
is business. (*Pulls his waistcoat straight.*) By the
bye, what are to-day's debits?

ELISABETH.

I have subscribed for twenty-five shares of the Silesian
Mines. Drawer C.

FELIX (*drily*).

That's rather risky! Oh, I know, directors with sounding
titles of course, and flaming prospectuses, the financial
press full of it. I can understand poor devils buying
such things as a last try of luck, but that you—such
a prudent, clear-sighted, businesslike woman—should
have bought on the faith of—

ELISABETH (*gently, still writing*).

I know their value. I have given Gaudrot, Goudron &
Co.'s bills as cover, and completed the amount in
cash.

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FELIX.

Oh! that's different. You were quite right to get rid of those rotten bills; they——

ELISABETH.

Excuse me. The bills were excellent—perfectly safe. I indorsed them with the signature of the firm. All I wished to gain was the discount and the commission.

FELIX.

Oh! If you are sure of the operation, you have done well. Honesty is never thrown away in business. And now what about the credits?

ELISABETH (*consulting a ledger*).

Two thousand six hundred and four francs, twenty-two centimes.

FELIX.

Good. [A church clock strikes twelve.

ELISABETH (*closing her account books. Aside*).

Midnight!

[*She remains pensive, her eyelids half closed, her hand buried in her hair.*

FELIX (*looking at her complacently*).

Well well, after all I must confess you really are a plucky little woman and you have a head on your shoulders. Positively, during the four years and a half we have kept house together, I have never once repented having married you. No indeed! You are a first-rate book-keeper. You don't seem bad looking, and

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you are no fool. That's not to be despised. You are painstaking beyond my expectations and sweet temper itself. I have nothing to find fault with, nothing. And if I have trebled my fortune, I have you to thank for it. [*He walks to and fro smoking.*]

ELISABETH (*quietly and smiling*).

What woman would not be proud of such praise.

FELIX.

Yes, I say, thanks to you. But for you I should have made many a slip, done perhaps something wrong, committed a lot of follies. You have penetration . . . almost masculine penetration. And really you have a perfect genius for business . . . That is a tremendous thing! . . . Then your modest tastes! *You* wouldn't ruin me with milliners' bills and pleasure seeking. It's even wrong to go out so little as you do. You lead too sedentary a life—almost a nun's. Why did you break with all your school-friends after they got married?

ELISABETH.

I am foolish enough, as you know, to respect only women, who are so unfashionable as to decline to neglect their duties.

FELIX (*sitting down*).

I am glad of it. But of course business first. One has to see people, if only for business' sake. We must never go to extremes, or we fall into Utopia.

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ELISABETH (*teasingly*).

I did not think the credit of the firm would suffer if I shunned such company.

FELIX (*pleasantly*).

You obstinate little woman! Come now! No quixotism. As regards the credit of the firm, of course everybody knows that I am not the sort of man who would disappear by moonlight with the cashbox. And when I say I am in the right, I don't pretend to be better than I am. To tell you the truth, I don't think I was by nature overscrupulous. (*Elisabeth gives him a look.*) This is between ourselves. Education has taught me to see my true interests and I have become an honest man.

ELISABETH (*mockingly*).

Yes, for manners' sake.

FELIX (*coughs, warming his feet at the fire*).

You might mix me a drop of something. I am afraid of catching a cold. I look strong, but my constitution is delicate. The least draught brings back my lumbago.

ELISABETH (*with a sort of kindly interest*).

It is true you are not robust. I have often noticed it.

FELIX (*sitting down on the sofa*).

Now listen. I want you not to tire yourself so much—I insist on it. You understand me? See how easy it is to fall ill. You know I am very fond of you

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and I should not like to see you in bad health. Whom could I trust to keep the books if you were in bed. No! henceforth when the weather is fine we will go twice a week, except of course on settlement days, to enjoy the country air and to look at the beauties of nature. Spring is just coming in and that always makes a new man of me. You will see—(*smiles slyly*)—I don't dislike the country now and again. It brightens one up and it's good for business too. It's like the theatre,—we live too retired a life. Why shouldn't we go to the play sometimes? Even that can be turned to some account. Besides it is a pleasant change. Yes, we'll do that. I can easily get tickets—through our friend Vaudran—he is the very man. I will punish him for flirting with you at your tea-parties—and it will be a saving into the bargain.

ELISABETH (*after a short silence, near a window, absently*).

How dark it is to-night.

FELIX.

What does it matter? I have no ship at sea and the roof of this house is water-tight. Our worthy forefathers knew how to build (*returning to the previous topic*). Of course when we go to the theatre we must try to avoid those horrid new pieces—you know.—According to the papers there is a crew—a band—of innovators who try to put everything into confusion to make themselves notorious. They fancy they are superior to others. So far as I can see, all they do is to awaken emotions in respectable people—that—

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that are almost dangerous. It's preposterous. It ought to be put down. I go to the theatre to laugh. What else does one go for? I like simple things, simple as nature itself. Isn't nature simple? Isn't life simple? Isn't everything simple? I don't care for mountains too high, in nature, nor in persons either. What I like is honest moderation. If people want to live in the clouds let them do so discreetly. Hang innovators. I like the old pieces. They are good—and when a thing is good, people ought to *i—mi—tate* it (*poking the fire*). I don't mean to say, of course, that sometimes—in certain cases—it may not be all right to——

ELISABETH (*listening*).

Excuse me! (*A carriage is heard drawing up at the gate. Aside*). The carriage! Good.

[*She goes to the window and looks out.*]

FELIX (*turning round*).

Hallo! Did you hear that? Who can be coming at this hour? That Baptistin! And—(*gets up*)—I shall dismiss them on the spot. Nobody to answer the door! I must go myself. [*Takes a candlestick.*]

ELISABETH (*in a high key, turning round sharply, pale and proud*).

Save yourself the trouble. There is nobody in the carriage at the gate, and I have a confession to make to you. You may find it useful to grant me a few moments' attention. Of course you will do as you like.

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FELIX (*startled. Stopping, candle in hand*).
Eh! What do you say? You are joking?

ELISABETH.
You will be able to judge by and bye.

FELIX (*looking at her closely*).
How pale you are. Do you feel unwell? Why do you speak to me so coldly?

ELISABETH.
I should not encroach upon your time so late if I alone were concerned.

FELIX (*puts down candle, slightly bewildered*).
Why such a tone? Why do you look like that? (*starting to his feet and breathless*). Farral & Winter have failed?

ELISABETH (*taking a pocket-book from a drawer*).
No!

FELIX (*stuttering though evidently reassured*).
Really, my dear, I have never seen you so strange.
[*A pause. He sinks into an armchair opposite his wife.*]

ELISABETH (*turning over the leaves of her pocket-book*).
Oh, my looks never meant anything. (*After a short pause, curtly*). Here is the exact amount of your fortune, trebled as you said in the last four and a half years. It is one million two hundred and

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seventy-four thousand francs. Of this sum fifty thousand two hundred and eighty francs have been earned by me personally, in commissions—here are the items. My salary at ten hours a day, Sundays excepted, is not included. Here is the amount without interest. The law gives you the right, as head of our joint fortune, to two-thirds of these sums. Deducting them, there remains for me thirty-two thousand francs minus sixteen francs thirty centimes. Here they are. (*She places some money on the table.*) This purse contains about two hundred francs. They belonged to me before my marriage. As they are quite apart from my dowry, the law permits me to do with them as I like. Out of them I pay therefore the balance of the thirty-two thousand francs—if you please.

FELIX.

What do you mean? Are you out of your mind?

ELISABETH (*curtly*).

Here is a schedule of the price of my clothes, deducted and paid, for four years and five months—One thousand eight hundred and seventeen francs exactly. I may remind you that the law compelled you to feed and shelter me from the day you put this ring on my finger. (*Takes off her wedding ring and quietly puts it on the table.*) The lace, diamonds and other presents you gave me before my marriage are upstairs in my desk. Here is the list of them, fastened to the key of my room. (*Puts the key on the table.*) My dowry belongs to you by law, we

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need not go into that. The two hundred thousand francs will be sufficient for the education and marriage of your daughter, of the child I bore you and which the law in its omniscience does not allow me to take away with me. Keep her. I kissed her to-night, no doubt, for the last time, when I put her to bed.

FELIX.

Elisabeth!

ELISABETH (*unaffectedly*).

You will notice in the account I have just given you that I have deducted from my salary the four months and twenty-two days during which I was unable to work, because of my interesting condition, as you were pleased to call it. If I have omitted anything I may owe you according to law, I will send the amount with business interest from to-day to the date at which you receive it inclusive. Please provide in your will how it is to go in case you should die before me.

FELIX (*to himself*).

Good God! She has gone mad.

ELISABETH.

To be brief, the thirty-two thousand francs which belong to me are so invested that I shall be able, in return for my past labour to count on a little bread and cheese for the rest of my life, without going through any further trials. In fact I have paid my debt to society. (*Pause. She takes a paper from her bosom*)

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and places it on the table beside the key and ring.)
Here is the power of attorney to use the signature of the firm, you did me the honour of trusting me with. I return it as received. *(She gets up.)* Any further explanation seems needless. I therefore—
[She takes hat and cloak from the chair.

FELIX.

Why! What's the matter with you? What do you mean? Is it on account of the Lelievre affair? Good heavens! I'll willingly forego the three thousand and sixteen francs and even the law costs. But do explain.

ELISABETH.

I have explained. *(She walks towards the door at the back. Then quietly)* I wish you good-night and entreat you to forget even the sound of my voice.

FELIX *(standing before the door and folding his arms. Shortly).*

You have a lover.

ELISABETH *(stopping and getting still paler).*

This is an outrage. You compel me to speak. Very well. It is your right. I obey. *(She comes forward again, leaning against the mantelpiece. Her head is lit up by the candles behind her. Speaking in a cold, perfectly calm voice)* You will not like what I have to say, but you have left me no alternative. I must reply *(looking him full in the face).* I think you do not know me very well. You probably have a false idea of my character. *(She smiles in a*

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strange way. Felix is thunderstruck.) I will tell you the facts. (*Pause.*) You remember the sort of family mine was and the kind of life I was leading when you proposed to marry me. You recollect the shop with the old armour and the curios. My father and mother were matter-of-fact people. They had taught me early to attach the greatest value to the smallest piece of gold. That is why I can keep accounts and am not quite unworthy of your good opinion.

FELIX.

Am I dreaming? My dear girl, you frighten me.

ELISABETH.

Oh! don't alarm yourself!—Well, in spite of my surroundings and education, I did not perhaps consider what is called “the practical side of life” of supreme importance. However, with the modesty becoming young people, I did my best to see things in the same light as my family. I said to myself: “They must know best, because they are older and then they are my parents.” You understand?

FELIX (*stuttering*).

But—I—Come now—sit down.

ELISABETH.

I recollect my father often talking to me as he would to a grown-up person. He was a clever sort of man. When we were out walking he would point to the railway carriages, the electric wires, the gas, the smoke. “Look, child,” he would say, “this is Human

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Progress, Science spreading its wings and giving freedom. Look at the might and splendour of these inventions. The past was an age of childhood. It is barely a hundred years since Man, casting off superstition and dreams, dared face the broad sunlight. Be a practical woman, be a good woman and be rich. Everything else is vanity."

FELIX (*coming nearer to her*).

Now that's not bad, especially the last bit.

ELISABETH.

I listened attentively to these precepts, but I could not help thinking, in spite of my filial respect, that in comparison with the "everything else" my father and mother called "vanity," the things they called practical and important were only of secondary value.

FELIX.

Secondary!

ELISABETH.

Yes. And on account of these, unfortunately, rather exceptional feelings, no one took the trouble to notice I had a profound antipathy, disgust, for what is called the solid and practical side of life—do you understand—and I listened in silence. You see, if others are not deceived by words, I am not deceived by facts. And whenever any impression, any idea delights and raises me above everyday life, helps me to forget my bondage and troubles, I shall persist in considering the fact which seems to belie

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the truth of my impression, as false. In other words, life for life in this world, with its substantial reality of three hundred and sixty-five days per annum, I hold that it is better to live in the clouds than in mud, however thick and solid it may be. (*A pause.*)

FELIX (*as if stunned*).

Good heavens! What is she saying? What *is* she saying?

ELISABETH (*quietly*).

Then you came. I yielded to the advice my parents gave me, out of gratitude and because it was my duty. I accepted you. (*Smiling*). And yet you cannot imagine the utter indifference I have always felt for you.

FELIX (*coldly*).

Look here, Elisabeth, if this is a joke—Hang it—You had better stop.

ELISABETH.

When I swore in the presence of that man with the tricoloured scarf, to be faithful to you unto death, without understanding the pledge I was taking, I said to myself: "This man who is holding my hand in his, is my husband, on him I have henceforth to lean. He looks like a sensible man, whose judgments are probably more correct, trustworthy and enlightened than mine. He has a right to know my thoughts. I have to put all my trust in him. In him I put all my hope in the future. It seems moreover that this is my duty."

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FELIX (*calmer and ironically*).

Good, very good. When you talk anything like sense I always agree with you.

ELISABETH.

Three days after, as you said nothing, I was simple enough to suggest that we should enjoy life together as best we could. I spoke to you of the delights of this world, of the true reality, the one we ought to choose. I poured out all the treasures of my heart and soul impetuously at your feet. I spoke to you of a peaceful intelligent life and I felt that I was deserving of love and that I could be a worthy companion and a devoted mother.

FELIX (*stroking his chin*).

But I only remember the—the——

ELISABETH.

The attitude with which you listened to me, you mean. Yes, indeed, it was worth remembering. It was at this very hour and in this very place, four and a half years ago. You came towards me with a slight, almost paternal smile, tapped me gently on the cheek with two fingers, and said with your usual air of superiority: "You little goose! Come, come! we must repress this wild imagination of yours." That was how you met my advances. And I saw at once that although married we were not one at heart, that there was an essential difference between our two natures, in fact, that my life was wasted. I determined then to live apart from you and to prove

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that my ideas were not inferior but superior to yours. I did my best by hard and successful office labour to indemnify you as far as possible for the loss you might sustain on my departure. Hence my unceasing industry and foresight and the increase of fortune that followed. I was working for my ransom.

FELIX (*beginning to get angry*).

Tut, tut, tut, tut, you are talking nonsense. You'll make me angry yet. I know what women are and can make allowance for quick tempers. But come now. What is it you want? Specify once for all, what is it?

ELISABETH.

I want to live, you dullard. Don't you understand that one may reasonably want to enjoy life? I am stifled here, I long for serious things, I want to breathe the open air of heaven! Can I take your banknotes with me to the grave? How much time do you think we have to live? (*A pause, then thoughtfully*) To live?—Do I even care to live? A lover!—you said. Alas no! I have no lover and never shall have one. I was meant to love a husband—mark that—and all I asked of him was a spark of human sympathy. You see, it is all over now; the pride of love has frozen in my veins. You took from me in my stupidity and anguish, as if it were mere dross, what I would have given with wild joy and for ever. I hope for your sake that you will never find out what you have lost. You are like a blind Jew who has dropped his precious stones by the roadside.

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FELIX (*looking at her uneasily. Aside*).

I really think she is mad. (*Aloud in icy tones*) Come, come, be calm. These are words — mere words. You must not excite yourself with empty phrases. Suppose you go and lie down. Come now! What do you say to that?

ELISABETH (*unmoved*).

Words! And with what else do you want me to answer you? With what do you question me? I hear nothing but the ring of money in your words, if mine are more beautiful and more profound, pity me. It is unfortunate no doubt, but it is my way of speaking. And after all what does it matter? We are both in the right, I daresay. But that is not the question.—I am quite aware that the intense desire to love, at least, the glory and grandeur of the world, when one is excluded from social love means nothing but “words” to you.—I know that for you it is mere sentimentality to dream in the twilight, with a silent, pretty young wife. I know the mystery of the Universe will never draw more than an indifferent smile from your self-satisfied lips for nothing has ever struck you as pathetic or mysterious, not even the lot of Man. Of course I know that, being a well-informed, sensible person, you don't despise “now and again” the open air, the sea breeze, the rocks, the tree-clad hills, the sun, the woods, winter and night, the starry heaven—that is if you admit a heaven. You consider such things “poetical.” You speak of them as “the country.”

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I have a different way of looking at them. The world has only the meaning the strength of words and the power of eyes give it, and I consider, to look around from a higher point than reality—is the art of life—the secret of human nobleness, of Happiness and Peace.

FELIX (*impatient and contemptuously*).

The art of life is never to dream. You can tell me perhaps what dreaming is ?

ELISABETH (*gloomily*).

Are you sure you would understand ?

FELIX (*growing angry*).

Elisabeth ! . . . No . . . I made up my mind to listen to the end. When I know what is in your mind, I will answer you after my fashion.

ELISABETH (*quietly*).

Well! In the first place to dream is to forget the tyranny of inferior minds, which are a thousand times more abject than stupidity itself. It is to escape hearing the moans of incurable misery. It is to forget those humiliations we have to bear and to inflict on others, called social life. It is to forget so-called duties, which are nothing but greed of profit, and in whose name we shut our eyes to the lot of the weak and suffering. It is to contemplate in the depths of our thought a hidden world only faintly reflected by outside realities. It is to strengthen the ever conscious hope in death—

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death which is at hand. It is to feel the mystery of the everlasting, to feel solitary but immortal. It is to love the Ideal, to love it as naturally as the river flows to the sea. And as for the rest—the amusements and duties of the wretched age in which my lot is cast—they are not worth a day's existence. To dream is to die—to die in silence with a glimpse of heaven in one's eyes. How I long for it. I have no tenderness left, all my enthusiasm is gone, my heart is dead.

FELIX (*insolently*).

Oh! I will tell you what it is. You must have been reading some mischievous novel which has unhinged your mind.

ELISABETH (*taking no notice*).

But supposing that to dream were mere fruitless contemplation of one's own solitude—is that not more *useful* than to pass time in making profit out of the ruin of others, than daily to commit a thousand acts of fraud and of meanness, than to dishearten those who really work and flaunt before them licensed operations which make a man rich in an hour. . . . Why you have nothing but emptiness to offer me in exchange for my dreams!

FELIX (*bursting into laughter*).

Do you want to make me believe you are a woman without principle, *you*! You have a fit of despondency. And to think that a minute ago you were sitting there so quiet and reasonable. It is incredible!

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Are you blaming me for earning a dowry for our child?

ELISABETH.

If I could only pity you! But no—these vouchers and accounts, a well-filled cash-box, law suits, liquidations, litigation are your native element. Just as air is that of a bird. You snap up banknotes in your flight like butterflies. For you the sun does not shine, the wind does not blow, man has not patiently dreamt and suffered, there is no vaulted heaven over the grave. You reckon your days only as so much time for making money, premiums, dividends, interest—compound if possible. And is it not downright insanity to despoil others and rob yourself of your own life for a monomania of business, to satisfy a mechanical, unquenchable thirst for money making?

FELIX (*stamping his foot*).

Money means influence; it commands esteem. Nobody knows that better than you.

ELISABETH.

Well, so be it. But your pleasures are not mine. I who know well enough what success in business is, I consider things that seem to you mere frivolity the only realities worth living for. And it is *your* occupations I call childish and mischievous, for in them the precious days of life are squandered. Even to think of them is lowering and waste of time. They pay dear indeed for daily bread who are incapable of anything better than eating it.

THE REVOLT

FELIX (*furiously*).

Really—I——

ELISABETH (*sitting down, her eyes gazing vacantly.
In a low voice as if to herself*).

Yes—indeed, filial respect and conjugal fidelity hardly warrant such blind confidence. My conscience is aghast at the results of duty fulfilled. And what, under cover of duty, have these big words brought me to? Youth murdered—beauty gone before its time—exquisite evenings profaned by account books. A child whom I dare not bring up—a husband whose very presence awakens remembrances which fill my eyes with tears of shame. Of shame I tell you—a future without a family or friends, the annihilation of all I have cherished—degradation and suppression of all that is most lovable in me. And amid this ruin, if I let it be seen, I should hear the rude laugh of the passer-by, sneering at me as a *femme incomprise* whose desire was to be thought intellectual. For to jeer at misfortune with words of contempt like “dreams,” “poetry,” “clouds,” sounds practical good sense to people who are simply obtuse, people who probably could not cope with me for five minutes in a business transaction. I have proved that, I think. Yes! these are the realities I have lost for the sake of learning that two and two make four—and that I know as well, if not better than you. They are gone for ever, and all your so-called common sense will never make up for them. These are my assets and liabilities—that is the balance sheet of my life and now you know it.

THE REVOLT

FELIX (*shrugging his shoulders*).

Ah! Your ridiculous excitement is more than I can endure. Stop your reproaches and come to the conclusion.

ELISABETH (*getting up*).

You see no discussion between us is possible. If you could only understand what you have done to me, your unconscious equanimity would be poisoned with remorse for ever. All this, however, is beyond your depth and I have not even the resource of hating you. My soul is like a child stolen by the gypsies—my heart is a vessel of gold filled with gall. . . . And now I must have a little freedom. And if it is my duty to remain, I have not the strength to perform it. So I am going to leave you. And thanks to you there is no time to spare if I am to preserve the faculty of enjoying my last rays of sunshine.

FELIX (*dazed*).

But I have been suggesting that we should go twice a week to the country.

ELISABETH (*going on without listening*).

Far from here is Iceland, Sicily or Norway—it doesn't matter which—in a country of my own choice stands a lonely house which I have earned, bought with my money. Instead of being caged in this office, I shall retire to this delightful far-off spot, where I shall get a glimpse of the horizon—*that's* something useful. . . . As for the company you receive on Wednesday evenings, I prefer that of the trees. It is infinitely

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more wholesome. I prefer the moaning of the winter winds to the compliments of Mr Vaudran. Yes, I am insane to that extent!

FELIX (*surprised*).

What! Vaudran pays you compliments?

ELISABETH (*taking no notice*).

I shall open once more my old books—those boon companions of the evening. And silence—my old friend—I shall have that too. So do not fear for your name, which I cannot cast from me. I think a good conscience—that you ought to know—the most precious thing in the world, whatever anyone else says and does. And, if ever I ceased to be strictly a virtuous woman, my light would go out, like a lamp without oil. Such is my nature, and I like myself the better for it.

FELIX (*disturbed, sarcastic and cold*).

You have bought some property?

ELISABETH (*playing absently with a little pocket pistol*).

No one will find me in the country I am going to, and no taste for society, flirtation, toilets, balls and gaities of any kind will ever make me quit it, except on some grey winter morning in the cold rain along a lonely road, escorted by an old servant and a man with a spade.

THE REVOLT

FELIX.

There is no doubt about it, I must send for the doctor.
You are mad.

ELISABETH (*quietly puts on her cloak, hat and gloves*).

FELIX (*interrupting her*).

Where are you going? Do stop this absurd scene and go to bed like a sensible woman. The country—the country, after all, is only fit for little birds!—I was wrong to be angry just now—I should not have taken what you said seriously. Come, give up that idea of going away. You don't mean it any more than I do; it is absurd. It is even pitiful. I need only say one word to prove it to you. You give me up—very well. But what about your duties as a mother? You speak to me about trees, and evening companions—and your daughter? It is with *her* you ought to spend your evenings—you hear? You have to bring her up and teach her to love her parents, and all the things a woman should know—book-keeping—healthy ideas, and how to spend a useful and active life. You can even teach her her prayers—I don't object. Yes I have noticed you are given to mysticism and devotions. Now don't say a word, but go to your bedroom. To-morrow morning, when you look at things more calmly, you will be the first to acknowledge——

ELISABETH (*stopping and frowning*).

Perhaps you don't know I have some acquaintance with your character. You are appealing to my motherly feelings in order to retain a good and trustworthy

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cashier. This is terribly clear to me. Only yesterday you said your daughter was to be brought up in a convent, that she should go there as soon as possible and only leave it at her marriage, like everybody else.

FELIX (*almost strikes her, but stopping short*).

Wretched woman! Now see whether you are right. You would crush a poor little innocent life with the weight of your sickening discontent. You have no right to do so. Yet I do not think you really cruel and unnatural.

ELISABETH (*more and more gloomy, almost threateningly*).

My child! Oh, how often in the night have I taken her in my arms and tried to knead her afresh with my kisses, to transfuse my being into her and in her seek deliverance. But she looks at me as at a stranger. There is not a trace of me in the child. I see only you—you—in her eyes. Even in *her* I cannot escape from you. Do you think I should otherwise have hesitated to take her away and make her my companion in misfortune? There may be grandeur and beauty in some despair, but mine, mingled with the life of your child, would be poison. No! my heart has shed its love drop by drop. I am a lifeless body. I should freeze my daughter when I kissed her. I leave her as I leave this house. There is nothing more for me to do here. Besides, I have other duties to fulfil. The fire is out and the ashes are cold.

[*She wraps herself hastily in her cloak and goes towards the door.*]

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FELIX (*with his arms folded*).

Elisabeth, you shall not go out. Am I not master here? You talk of leaving your daughter and your husband—*you*—a good and virtuous woman. Come now. You are hysterical. It is impossible.

ELISABETH (*pointing to a crystal paper weight on the table*).

You see this block of crystal. I leave it to you as a souvenir. Not even the shadow of these account books can tarnish it. All light, as the light of this candle sparkles in its depth, with a thousand gleaming rays. Its one faculty is to reflect light. Its edges are hard and sharp; it is polished, transparent, truthful—and icy cold. If you should ever think of me—look at it.

[*She pulls down her veil, and opening the door goes out. While Felix stands stupefied she disappears in the darkness.*

FELIX (*makes a motion as if to rush after her, seems suddenly to change his mind*).

Ah! the——

[*He stops on the threshold. A deep silence.*

SCENE II.

FELIX (*contemptuous but furious*).

She does it to frighten me. She wouldn't leave her child. I have been too patient. I should have—yes I should have taken my stick. She thinks

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perhaps I shall run after her! I'm not such a fool—that is certain. It is her reading those police reports during my nap after dinner. I have noticed she has looked rather strange for some time now. I know what women are. It is hysteria. If I have understood a word of her reproaches, I'll be—What in the world have I done to her? Nothing whatever. I can't pass over such an outburst. No doubt she has gone to bed—and I will . . . (*Sound of carriage wheels outside*). . . . Eh! (*runs to window and opens it*). What! No! It's impossible. Surely she is not going to abandon her husband and child. . . . Baptistin! . . . the carriage!—the carriage! Baptist . . . (*strokes his forehead and stops*). Good God! It is too late. It was she who sent the servants to bed to-night—she ordered the cab. She has dared! I am choking (*tears off his cravat*). What's the matter with my chest. I can't breathe. How queer I feel. I didn't think I was so sensitive as that! Gone—gone! Oh! this is really getting serious (*falls into an arm-chair by the table*). So the women nowadays leave husband and child to go and dream! (*A silence*.) These things—this pen she has just used! Her watch! she has left it behind—her ring!—She can't leave me alone with her child.—*Has she really gone!* It is abominable. She is a bad mother. It is against nature—it is impossible. (*He rises and strides excitedly to and fro*.) No, she will never come back—never. She has an iron will. I am beginning to understand her now. I know her. I am alone. She left nothing unforeseen. I am . . .

THE REVOLT

(with a groan, sitting down on a chair in a corner). Oh, these walls! how empty it is here. I never noticed it before! *(with a distracted air, interrupting himself in a low voice).* A little house—the winter wind—silence—always solitude—solitude—and I—*(pulling himself together).* Help! help! I cannot make out what is the matter with me—I am not ill—and yet—I feel so queer—as if I were drowned—it's like tearing my life from my body. Elisabeth! *(He makes a few tottering steps, and then falls into a chair near the door with arms extended.)* I don't know what it is, but I am suffering dreadfully—dreadfully. *[He faints.*

DUMB SCENE.

The clock over the door strikes one. Slow music. Then from time to time after a sufficiently long pause, two o'clock, then half-past two, then three, then half-past three, and at length four o'clock strikes. Felix remains unconscious. The dawn appears at the windows. The candles go out. The rim of a candlestick cracks. The fire burns down. The door in the background is roughly opened. Elisabeth enters trembling, deadly pale, holding her pocket handkerchief to her mouth. Without seeing her husband, she goes slowly to the big arm-chair, next the mantelpiece, throws off her hat, then covering her face with her hands, sits down and begins to think aloud. She is cold and shivers, her teeth chatter.

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SCENE III.

FELIX *and* ELISABETH.

ELISABETH (*looking benumbed. To herself*).

Too late!—I have no spirit left. When I looked through the carriage window into the night, despite all my longing for freedom, my heart sank and a cold feeling of exile came over me. I felt as if I were held in fetters of lead. Had I exaggerated the charms of the countries I longed to see? The noise of the wheels jarred. It seemed as if I were hiding something from myself. Even my pride failed me, and solitude seemed simply bewildering. I thought perhaps I was ill and that the rupture had been too much for me. Illness had never before affected my thoughts.—It could not be that. I felt unhinged, utterly helpless. After all I suppose I was just like other people—overpowered by the sense of the irremediable. The minutes seemed interminable. I saw what I should be to-morrow, the day after—in a week—in three months—sad and alone, in the midst of that coveted solitude, regretting even the insipidity of my previous life. (*She leans her elbow on the table thoughtfully.*) The brambles beat against the carriage window. The sky shone, over the wood through which we passed. Yes, the sky was there, but it seemed to me like forbidden fruit. I felt as if all its grand and ennobling influence were wasted on me. It was horrible! I knew that the sacred breath of life was around me—that I was conscious of it, and yet I was indifferent. I enjoyed it no more. My intense

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longing for oblivion was gone. I could no more concentrate myself in meditation. I had forgotten how to soar above the world, how to shut my ears against the mocking laughter of mankind. It was over with me. . . . Oh God! I see it is too late. One must not stoop ever to win freedom. I had given way too much, overvalued the daily bread. The eyes of my youth are gone. Enthusiasm too. Art no longer exalts. Silence does not appease me. That man has drunk up my soul as if it had been water. These four years of drudgery have broken my spirits.—Nothing can be blotted out. I was boasting when I said I wanted to live. I give it up. I have become like those who have never had a glimpse of heaven. That man's perpetual smile has filled my soul with bitterness and gloom. His accounts have crippled my mind. Whether he lives now or dies, it is just the same to me. I must remain what I have become. The world is henceforth a blank. Why go away? What does it matter whether I sleep here or elsewhere.—Do I even know why I have come back?—Oh yes—I remember. I did not know where to go to. The cold morning air chilled me and I returned. (*A long silence.*) There is one thing still—I might carry off my child and cling to her as to a raft, might try to make her a woman with a heart of steel, able to endure all disenchantments, stomach all loathings. For that I should have to take her with me. I should have to accept with a bold front—like so many others. (*She smiles bitterly.*) Have I the right to oppress her with the weight

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of my future? (*She stops.*) No, I will not. I cannot. It is only by bending to the law that you rise above it. No—let me have no troubles of that kind, no romantic acts to reproach myself with in the hour of death. I am chained to a wretch who has killed me. But my place is here, and there is no way out of it. To flee with a faint heart would be cowardice. I shall educate my daughter—that is all—and to-morrow I shall recommence my old life. I have gone through the ordeal and I have failed. (*A pause.*) I was made to bring forth brave men who deliver the world, to soothe the noble brow of one who shared my thoughts. But this, it seems, was not in store for me. To live under this roof is duty—honour—dignity. (*After a moment.*) And yet how strange! (*She gets up.*) Let me begin. (*Throws off her cloak, arranges her dress before the looking-glass and appears as she was at first.*) Oh, the cold bleak dawn! (*Looks round.*) It seems as if years had passed since I left this room. (*Goes slowly to the table, relights the lamp and opens the account books.*) There are hours like a lifetime, they fix your fate for ever.

[*Sits down and takes up her pen in the same attitude as when curtain rose.*]

FELIX (*coming to himself and looking at her stupidly*).

You—You here—am I dreaming? Have you sent away the carriage? Have you not gone away? I can tell you I almost died. (*Looking suddenly at the clock.*) Four o'clock! Four in the morning. (*Looks at*

THE REVOLT

Elisabeth. Silence.) Oh! I understand! (*Laughs sarcastically.*) It is only fools who don't come back. (*Crossing his arms.*) Now, what about Sicily, Hungary and Norway. Ah, you thought you could desert your duties and go off to dreamland! You thought your fancies could be realised! Fool that I was to excite myself, as I did, instead of saying to you: "My dear girl, the door is open—go—try." (*Elisabeth makes a movement.*) Don't speak! I forgive you, and I am sure you will never go away again. Look here, I don't even regret the pain you gave me. It was a good lesson. This quarrel has shown me that you were more necessary to me than I thought; it has proved to you that you are not only my cashier but my wife. And it has also proved to both of us that as long as there is romantic nonsense in the world, respectable people will not be safe.

ELISABETH (*with a gentle smile*).

And to think that I was going to desert you, just when the half monthly balance should be made out. That wasn't common sense?

FELIX (*quite charmed*).

That's right. Now that word shows me you are quite yourself again. Give me your hand and let us make peace. What are dreams indeed compared with this pleasant reality?—Poetry?—hem—a disease. I know it. Have had it myself. (*Takes her hand. Elisabeth totters,—from fatigue no doubt. Felix looks at her with real affection. Elisabeth smiling seems quite happy. He kisses her hand, then aside,*

THE REVOLT

nodding to himself). All the same, I am not sorry she should be a little humiliated. (*Aloud*). Now you see, I am not such a brute after all. (*Kisses her hand again. Elisabeth standing near a chair. She has become gloomy again. Felix does not notice it. She seems lost in thought.*)

ELISABETH (*bends over him and says in a slow and serious voice*).

Poor man! (*She looks at him with pity and sadness*).

THE ESCAPE

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

PAGNOL.
OLD MATTHEW.
LUCIEN.
MARIANNE.
YVONNE.
OFFICER OF GENDARMES.
PEASANTS.
JAILOES.
A CARTER.

"Lazare, veni foras!"—*The Gospel.*

Drawing-room in a country house. Night. On the left, in the foreground, window with heavy curtains. Balcony visible. Beyond in the half obscurity, trees and garden. Doors at back, and on the left, another on the right. On a table in middle of stage two vases with flowers. Sofa, carpet. Near door at back, piano with unlit candles. When the curtain rises, a man is seen climbing over the balcony. His hair is close cut, his shirt dirty and bloodstained. He is followed by another man dressed like a sailor with a blue cape, the hood drawn over his head. Moonlight.

SCENE I.

PAGNOL *and* OLD MATTHEW.

PAGNOL (*panting, looks about him*).

Hush!

[*Then goes to the door at the back, listening intently.*]

OLD MATTHEW (*taking a flower out of one of the vases, in a loud voice*).

Will the Viscount accept a rose? (*Then changing his tone*). Everybody is at the wedding. We are at home, so to speak.

PAGNOL (*anxiously*).

Bother it! I wasn't careful enough on the road. That carter, you know? That was bad luck meeting him.

THE ESCAPE

He looked suspicious. I should have squared his account—without a word! I was thinking about you—I don't know what—and I let him pass.

OLD MATTHEW.

Fool! (*Deep silence.*) After all though, it does not much matter. You will be safe at my place before the cannon lets the citizens of Rochefort and the peasants hereabouts know that the famous Pagnol alias "the Throttler" has escaped after strangling his pal in chains, and killing two calkers on the quay—A mere trifle!

PAGNOL.

All the same—I am sorry.

OLD MATTHEW.

Never mind, old chap. Don't repent. You're as safe as a registered letter.

PAGNOL.

Oh, I mean on account of the carter. I hope he has not followed me. I am afraid of spies to-night.

OLD MATTHEW.

Don't think of it. Come now, be cool, Pagnol. Don't get soft.

PAGNOL (*suddenly*).

How many have I to—to-night?

OLD MATTHEW (*reflectively*).

Probably three.

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PAGNOL.

With those that I have already—

OLD MATTHEW (*anxiously*).

Well ?

PAGNOL.

That'll make six.

OLD MATTHEW (*rubbing his hands*).

You remember my thumb trick all right ? With that the thing's done in a jiffy ! Isn't it clever ? Nick !—and it's done.

PAGNOL.

Those three to-day. Do you think they said a word ?

OLD MATTHEW.

It's true, you do have a paw. Worse than a screw. That thumb trick was a present to me from that famous Bordier, you know, alias "the Parson." I hid him ten days in my cellar near the quay. You'll be there in an hour, or hour and a half. There I'll clothe you like a gentleman, give you documents, take you into my lighter and then off to sea. You arrive in a foreign land and there you can pass for anybody you like. You can let your mustaches grow and revel in the Oriental luxury of being an honest man—as Bordier did—sly cuss he was !

PAGNOL.

And—with how much ?

OLD MATTHEW (*patting Pagnol on the stomach*).

Twenty thousand francs. Nice sum, eh ?

THE ESCAPE

PAGNOL (*pleased*).

Enough to retire from business, anyhow.

OLD MATTHEW.

Yes. That's what they say! Enough!—You have lost the habits of good society, but once free, your fine manners will come back.

PAGNOL.

Are we going to do it together?

OLD MATTHEW (*taking snuff without speaking*).

Listen, Pagnol. A good friend—a just enemy—fair with the spoil. That's Old Matthew! I have helped you to escape to-night from the prison of Rochefort where you were a convict for life—that's true. I have brought you here, to this snug country house. It is quiet and isolated. You can work here at your ease—That is true again. But that's enough. I don't dip my hands in blood. I am only a poor sailor and wish to remain one—always ready to oblige a friend, as everybody knows. But it's only just that he also should do his share, eh?

PAGNOL (*starting and listening*).

I thought I heard footsteps in the house—No. I am mistaken.

OLD MATTHEW (*looking at him after a silence*).

It's the wind in the trees. It's nothing. Haven't I told you, you would hear the front door when they come in from the wedding?—What's that you are doing?

THE ESCAPE

PAGNOL.

Oh nothing. Sharpening my knife on my boot. In case of an accident——

OLD MATTHEW (*laughing*).

Oh ! Two years of galley-slaving makes paste for razors of your heels does it ? . . . Now listen. They are quite capable of not waiting till the ball is over. (*Aside*). Considering certain precautions I took, it's very likely indeed. (*Takes more snuff.*) Well, M. Dumont, young Lucien Dumont—Did I tell you ? —But his name doesn't matter—He was married this morning to the daughter of M. Lebreuil, Mademoiselle Marianne. Her father left this house yesterday and has made a present of it to the young couple. The wedding is being celebrated in his new home not two hundred feet from here. You see the lights shining through the trees ? We heard the music, you remember, when we passed. (*Pensively*). So he lives there now, old Lebreuil——

PAGNOL.

Well ?

OLD MATTHEW.

Nothing, nothing. Well then, M. Lucien and his bride are coming here to their home to spend the wedding night. Besides them there will be only (*points to the door on the right*) old Yvonne. She'll come in soon. She sleeps in there. That makes three. He is only twenty-two, she seventeen. Just two children. (*Taking more snuff.*) People shouldn't marry so young. It's unhealthy.

THE ESCAPE

PAGNOL.

And then?—I suppose they are rich, the young couple?

OLD MATTHEW.

Stupid!—there's the dowry!—forty thousand francs neither more nor less: Lucien received this morning Mlle. Marianne's fifteen thousand francs and had to show his own portion you know.—Twenty-five thousand francs.—He brought the money in a pocket-book and then put the two sums together.

PAGNOL.

And—he carries—all that about him?

OLD MATTHEW.

Wait a bit—what a hurry you are in. Think a little. I can't swear of course if he has it in his pocket—and you understand—we had better make sure of the joke before we laugh, as "the Parson" used to say! But, if he has not, then it is certainly locked up somewhere here in the house. He came this afternoon and examined the house from garret to cellar so I heard from old Yvonne. There was no letter, and no notary was employed! So the money is either here or on his person in banknotes—in a pocket-book.

PAGNOL.

Then how can I know! I'm not going to kill those kids for nothing!

OLD MATTHEW.

Patience, patience!—A newly married couple talks. They make projects for the future before they go to sleep!

THE ESCAPE

—You understand? You'll hide yourself and listen. You're sure to hear something about where they have hidden the pile and then!—they'll give no trouble, I'll bet. (*Aside*). Considering I poured some drops of this into their glasses at the wedding dinner where I helped—(*showing a little bottle*)—Another present from “the Parson.”—A newly married couple sleepy! What a good joke! They'll get drowsy all at once and Pagnol will do the rest with his big thumb.

PAGNOL (*under his breath*).

And after it's done, what then?

OLD MATTHEW (*aside*).

There will be no difficulty. I need not explain. Better not. What do they call it? Accessory in murder. No. No damned foolery. You never know what may happen.

PAGNOL (*looking at him*).

What are you mumbling there, to yourself?

OLD MATTHEW.

I am thinking how you will get away.—Yes, I have it. Here is old Yvonne's room. I have often offered her a pinch of snuff to have a talk. You see I have been maturing my plans for a long time, and if I got you out just at the right moment, it was to lose no time. I am no noodle, I can tell you.

THE ESCAPE

PAGNOL.

Yes, yes!—I know—you are no noodle.

OLD MATTHEW.

When it's done, you go in there, to the old woman : if she wakes up—mind, no noise!

PAGNOL.

There will be no noise.

OLD MATTHEW.

You're a duck. In her room—you know? You push open a door to your right and the staircase is before you. You go down and get into the cellar, it's open. There you will see an air-hole giving on to the fields. I'll wait for you outside. You need only say "hush" and I'll throw in a rope. You pull yourself up and ten minutes after we are in my den, dividing the spoil—twenty thousand for me, twenty thousand for you. I'll hide you in Bordier's cellar and a little later, off to sea! rich and free! It is as clear as spring water.

PAGNOL.

I couldn't pass through an air-hole though!

OLD MATTHEW.

Yes, my love, you can. I have loosened two big stones. If we have time we'll put them back and stick them in with clay, then nobody will ever know how you came out.

PAGNOL.

Why not by the window? it would be quicker—

THE ESCAPE

OLD MATTHEW.

Wait a bit. Distingo!—In an hour or two the ball is over and people will be passing this way. They mustn't see me in the garden. (*Aside*). I must prepare an alibi at once for myself. You never know!—(*Aloud*). In three quarters of an hour I am at the air-hole. On that side the road is lonely and leads to the port. It passes alongside a wood and I can be there without danger. Besides, it's the safest and nearest.

PAGNOL (*almost to himself*).

Where can he have put them, except in the desk?

OLD MATTHEW (*looking at him*).

Most likely, still we don't know. Listen and make sure. A bold front, a good scent and a firm wrist. All depends on that. I see you understand, count on an old chap who always keeps his word. (*Putting his leg over the balcony*). Ta-ta—I'll see you at the air-hole. [*Disappears*].

SCENE II.

PAGNOL *alone*.

PAGNOL.

Hallo, you're going? (*Stopping short*). I felt as if I was being tugged by my leg. (*Looking round*). Alone!—This morning we were two and I wasn't afraid. This then is freedom! (*Breathing hard*). I feel as if my chain had got into my lungs.—Yes, in

THE ESCAPE

an hour, the wide sea!—Oh the sea—I love the sea!
And to be forced to do like a wild beast, to be free
—to enjoy the woods, the wind, the hills, and the
sea! It is different with the bosses. For them it's all
jolly. They have no troubles and don't care. They
only look after themselves—I'm going to nab two of
them anyhow!—And God will reward me for it.
(*Goes towards the table*). Flowers for the bride!—
Flowers? I had quite forgotten about them. They
don't grow in the place I come from. (*Silence*.)
Love!—and to think that I too have known what
love is! (*Pulling a convict's cap out of his pocket*).
And here is the proof of it. (*Walking excitedly
about the drawing-room*.) Love!—If I had been
before the registrar they wouldn't have sent me
to Rochefort when I surprised the two together
and slipped them off into the other world. And
my advocate, who came to the prison smoking his
cigarette, said it was merely a question of form.
Oh my advocate!—such a well-shaven young man!
—While he was talking to me, it seemed as if my
chains, the guillotine, God, the devil and all the rest
were dancing in the clouds of his smoke——

Curse it! Are those little fools never coming? You'll
have a nice hug, my pets, and it's I who will be the
registrar to-night. This thing on my head is not a
night-cap to go to bed with. (*Putting on the cap
and lifting his head*). I have had enough of that
life, and if I can only live in blood, it's no fault of
mine. (*Noise of the front door opening*.) Somebody
(*grins*)—Oh yes! the sofa. (*Hides under it. Yvonne
enters*.) It's the old woman!

THE ESCAPE

SCENE III.

[*Pagnol hidden, Yvonne enters candle in hand. The scene lights up slightly. She shades the candle with one hand against the draught.*

YVONNE (*joyful, in grand attire*).

So now they are married, the young ones. My little Marianne! How pretty she looked under her veil! And now she is a Madame. How sweet they both are! And M. Lucien, he said to me "Go home quickly, Yvonne. We shall get away in a few minutes." I am sure they are at my heels—Their room? Everything ready and all in blue!—I don't know why it makes me think of my poor Charlot!

PAGNOL (*starting. Aside, under the sofa*).

Fool that I am! I am still thinking I am over there. And I thought she was speaking of—

[*He makes a motion of cutting off his head.*

YVONNE (*putting the furniture in order*).

Never mind, Yvonne! Let us go to bed. It is the young ones who will stay up to-night. To-morrow morning I shall be up betimes and prepare their breakfast—But it must not become a habit. Dear little things! Won't they be happy!—(*going to the window and arranging the curtains*). It's rather cold to-night. I don't know why it is, but since M. Lebreuil left it seems lonely like here. We shall have to keep a dog. Then it's the country, and when I think that only

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a few miles off in town, there are—Only to think of it makes me shudder. Now, to bed. Everything in good order? (*Looking round with satisfaction*). There—

PAGNOL (*aside*).

A voice too much. She is one to cry out.

[*Creeps softly behind her.*]

YVONNE (*opening her door*).

Good night, my children!

[*The candle falls, Pagnol has stood up and in horrible earnest pushes Yvonne into her room. The noise of a falling chair, but no cry. After a few moments Pagnol re-enters and shuts the door behind him.*]

SCENE IV.

PAGNOL.

PAGNOL (*he looks pale and anxious, his features contracted*).

Amen.—It has made me quite sick, this work! . . . After all, it is perhaps better for the old woman. The young ones would have treated her like a dog, now they are happy. (*Gloomily*). Yes—she wanted to bite me already. (*Pushes the sofa mechanically in front of the door of Yvonne's room. Sound of the front door being closed.*) There they are!—Curse it! —I smell blood! Rich! saved! free! In an hour! —first find where the hoard is, and then!

[*Hides behind curtains, knife in hand.*]

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SCENE V.

[Pagnol, behind curtain. Enter Lucien and Marianne laughing like children, Lucien with a lighted candle. He is in his wedding clothes. Flowers in his button-hole. Marianne all in white with orange blossoms and veil. She comes forward to the right of the table.]

LUCIEN (*setting the candlestick on the table, coming forward to the left and taking Marianne's hand*).

At length!

MARIANNE.

Lucien! my dear, dear Lucien!

[He draws her towards a stool in front of table, seats himself at her feet and looks at her.]

LUCIEN.

Let us remain like this.

MARIANNE.

To live together for ever! Lucien, do you realise it?

LUCIEN.

My wife!

MARIANNE.

So much happiness makes me wish to die.

LUCIEN.

Yes, live—or die, anything you like—only with you.

MARIANNE.

Dearest!

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LUCIEN.

Your hair smells so sweet. What is it?

MARIANNE.

The orange blossoms.

LUCIEN (*enraptured*).

You think so?

PAGNOL (*aside*).

What bosh!

MARIANNE (*smiling*).

Yes, sir.

LUCIEN.

Let me try to realise you are there.

PAGNOL (*aside*).

Are they never going to speak of the shiners?

LUCIEN.

If you knew, Marianne, how I have longed for this moment.

MARIANNE.

And I, have I not? All day long I have thought of you: Now he is coming home, now he is working. I hope he will not tire himself. If he were to fall ill! And I contrived to find out many things without showing how. Why, what is the matter? You have tears in your eyes. My darling, have I said anything to hurt you?

LUCIEN.

I love you!

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MARIANNE (*goes and leans over the balcony. Lucien follows her.*)

What a lovely night: I can see the lights on the water. What joy to love one another! (*Turning to Lucien*) In summer when we go to the shore we——(*interrupting herself*). Look! I thought I saw the curtain move.

LUCIEN.

It is the shadow of the candlestick on the wall. The soft wind played in your veil, and made the light unsteady. How lovely you are, Marianne. (*She passes her hand over her forehead. He takes her into his arms.*) Are you tired?

MARIANNE.

No; I have only danced with *you*. But I feel so strange — I can hardly speak. It's nothing—too much happiness, perhaps——(*languidly turning again to the window*). Oh, you dear flowers in the garden of our home, I bless you for the happiness——(*A distant flash of light and boom of a cannon.*) What's that? A cannon? From the town at ten at night! Is a prince expected?

LUCIEN.

No, a prisoner must have escaped.

MARIANNE (*folding her hands*).

Oh, the poor man. I do hope they will not catch him. (*Silence.*) To think that to-night, so near our joy someone exists, so unhappy, so desperate.

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LUCIEN (*thoughtfully*).

The poor fellow is perhaps hidden under the prison floor,
half drowned.

MARIANNE (*tears in her eyes*).

Perhaps he is even innocent!—We ought always to
forgive, for the judges can but punish. The poor
man! How much he is to be pitied.

LUCIEN.

Yes, to save and to pity is for angels like you—Oh!
I was forgetting. Since this morning—(*opens a
pocket-book and takes out banknotes*). This is our
whole fortune, Marianne, I should have handed it
over at once to our old friend, Lawyer Dubois,
but then I should have had to leave you, and
I couldn't do that.

MARIANNE.

You will show them to-morrow to Yvonne, won't you,
Lucien? How glad she will be! We must take
great care of her and not let her want for anything.
My good old nurse!

LUCIEN.

Dearest wife!

MARIANNE.

You'll see how well we shall arrange our lives! There
are so many poor people hereabouts, so very, very
poor. We must make the bread go a long way.
We shall always be rich enough—and then there
are so many who do not love one another. We

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could even go without something. There would always remain a good share.

LUCIEN.

Yes, indeed! The best!

MARIANNE.

I have but one thought—you, and that is all I want—
But I don't know what makes me shudder. I feel as if at this moment we were in great danger. Now listen to what I say; those that do not pray are never happy. Let us think of God together.

LUCIEN (*smiling*).

If you wish it, dear heart!

MARIANNE (*kneeling down drowsily, struggling against effects of the narcotic*).

Our Father in heaven who has blest us, have pity on the poor miserable man who is dying of cold and hunger, under the prison floor—half drowned! Help him to find a heart which shall not repel him, comfort him and give him shelter and hope! Make him to weep if he should be guilty and forgive in his turn! He is our brother, your child like ourselves, let him be saved here,—(*her head drops on Lucien's shoulder*) and hereafter!

LUCIEN (*softly*).

If the one for whom you have prayed were here, I should save him. (*Trying to lead her towards the door to the right*). My little wife, my love, come. (*Stop-*

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ping short). But what is the matter with me?
How drowsy I feel!

MARIANNE (*rises, tottering*).

I don't know—I can't see you. My eyes are closing—
Lucien! (*They take a few steps with half closed eyes.
Reaching the sofa near the door they drop on to it,
and sit side by side*). I love you!

[*Puts her arm round his neck and goes to sleep
with her head on his chest.*

LUCIEN.

Marianne!

[*Tries to get up; totters and falls back on the
cushions. Both fall asleep and remain motionless.*

SCENE VI.

[*Lucien, Marianne asleep. Pagnol, coming from
behind the curtain.*

PAGNOL.

No, none of that for me. I don't like to be wheedled.
(*Between his teeth*). Brats! I expected cuffing,
cries, kicks—I hate cries and strike to shut them
up. But—when they are sleeping like lambs! I
ought to be glad—yet it puts me out of humour.
Drat it! That there should be the like of them!
These are not a man and a woman. They're two
little saints—just! I don't like this work! (*Scratch-
ing his head, haggard, crumpling his green cap in per-
plexity*). If they were a couple of great fat bosses,

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with fine round stomachs, watch chains and seals dangling over them, with a look about them of good advice to the starving! I like the bosses, they give me an appetite. (*Grinding his teeth*). A juryman! (*Smacks his lips and rolls his eyes*). A dainty bit! Ha, ha, ha! a dainty bit indeed! (*After a moment*). I didn't think they would be like that—these kids! —They have hit the right nail on the head and no mistake—I don't understand all they said, but that's what it is all the same. (*Seeing the banknotes on the ground*). What children! They don't hide! They have no thought of ruin.—Still take it I must. If they were only in a desk with drawers and locks! But like this—there's no merit! Is there merit or is there not? There is none. (*Suddenly*). Pooh! they are not galley-slaves! Anybody can be good at that rate. Besides they can work. What's the fuss! I can't work: I wasn't taught Latin like the priests. I have had no education—they have a business! All the same, I'm glad I have not to touch them. (*Bends down to pick up the notes and intently watches their sleep, his face above theirs. His arm drops as he looks at Marianne and Lucien.*) They are good to look at! So young!—Yes, and good—Good as doves. They love each other quietly and go to sleep! I don't know what they have done to me but—I'm afraid!—No!—I won't have their money! (*Mechanically stuffs the money into Marianne's pocket. Silence.*) Now, let's cut. There are other bosses in the world besides these. I'll spin old Matthew a yarn. I'll tell him they did not speak of the money and that I shall do other work for him.

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He'll have to hide me all the same.—As for his twenty thousand counters, he can lump it if he doesn't like it. I'll be off. Of us three, I may be the luckiest after all. Good-bye, my pets—I have heard your babble. You are nice and I don't want to hurt you; besides there would be no merit in it, and I won't. It's lucky I can't read, that I'm not a notary like my pal was. He would have done it.—He was a sly rogue: he did know a thing or two. I don't—Now to the air-hole. (*Looks about.*) It's easily said—let's cut—but how?—(*Looking at Marianne and Lucien.*) Confound it! The door is there! (*Reflectively after a moment of consternation.*) Now, what made me push the sofa they are sleeping on in front of that door, as if on purpose to be tempted? They prevent me from going—This is the way to the air-hole. (*Knitting his brows.*) Wait a bit! I have to save my skin.—It's rot all this. I don't mind sneaking off for once, but I won't be a——(*He reflects.*) Can't help it—must wake them—I shall say: Don't cry out. I am a poor wretch. I'm the one they're after. They aren't turnkeys—they won't split, and I——(*Stops short.*) Hang it!—the old woman—They mustn't go in there. They'd hate me. (*Walks towards the window. A cry as of a sea gull.*) Ah! That must be old Matthew whistling in the distance. (*Pagnol remains motionless, trembling, livid.*) There they are! The police, jailors, gendarmes, peasants!—All after the convict. Oh, the beasts!—It's the carter—it's he sold me! (*Violently places the candlestick on the table.*) No time to spare—Or perhaps if——(*Reflects, then with decision goes to the*

THE ESCAPE

window. Bends over listening, then gloomily. They are whispering in the garden. (*Stops and looks about*). The chimney? No go. They would light a fire and get on the roof. Besides they have their blood hounds. (*Looking at the door behind the sofa*). The only way is by this door. The air-hole is my only hope. (*Looking at the sleeping couple*). There is nothing for it. They must be hushed; I have always been unlucky—Well, they have had their day; and I must pass over their bodies to save my head. (*Looks at them. Trembling, opens his knife, then talking fast and wildly*). I see the gallows before my eyes. All is red. The straw! The priest in the cart! The hour has come. (*Sounds of footsteps and swords on the staircase; he starts and grips his knife*). Worse luck! it's all over! (*Suddenly, haggard, and with a terrible look throws down his knife and folds his arms*). Well then—That's it—I shan't kill them. (*Remains staring, while the door is burst open with the butt-ends of muskets. Confusion of voices outside.*) He is in there—quick, quick! He's there. Break open the door!

[*Door gives way.*]

SCENE VII.

[*Lucien, Marianne, Pagnol, officer of gendarmes, peasants with pitchforks. A carter, gendarmes with drawn swords climbing in through the window. People armed with sticks. Sailors with pistols. Old Matthew gagged and in chains.*]

THE CARTER.

There he is!

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OFFICER.

In the name of the law, don't move. (*Seizes the convict by the collar.*) Jérôme Anthony Pagnol alias "the Throttler," convict for life and murderer, you will return with us to the prison of Rochefort.

THE CARTER.

You know what awaits you there. (*Makes the motion of cutting off the head. Pagnol motionless and in thought. His hands are taken hold of.*)

LUCIEN (*waking*).

What is it?—Marianne, good heavens!

[*He takes his wife in his arms. Marianne wakes.*]

MARIANNE.

Lucien! What—what is it? (*Looks round terrified.*)
Oh! I am frightened! I am frightened!

A JAILOR.

Well?—How do you like being caught by me? Eh?

CARTER (*hitting Pagnol with his fist*).

Take that, you dog!

[*Marianne swoons.*]

THE CARTER.

I had a notion he was a runaway when I passed him in my cart.

OFFICER.

Come now, let him alone. It's a good thing we are in time! (*Pulling out his watch.*) What's the time?
—11.37. We shall be back about midnight.

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PEOPLE.

Drown him, the murderer !

PEASANTS.

Kill him !

OFFICER (*knitting his brows*).

Stop that. You hold your tongues, or I'll handcuff the whole lot of you. You know he'll lose his head—
But till then he is under the protection of the law.
—Respect the law ! *[Deep silence.*

PAGNOL (*aside, while being handcuffed*).

It's queer!—but—it seems to me as if it were now that I was escaping.

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