

LOUISE'S MONOLOGUES

LOUISE

Could I be in love with Julien? Is that possible? I don't understand anything about it. I was in the convent until I was sixteen, then I got married, and nobody ever said anything about love. They said Monsieur de Rênal was a good match, and I didn't even know what that meant. Elisa is in despair about Julien. But I was in despair when I thought Julien would marry her. Valenod is constantly pestering me. Father Chélan says that's not only a sin, it's filth. But there's no temptation, because Valenod is repulsive. He says all the other women are attracted to him. Why would I care what other women think? But what about Julien? (*reflects*) We'll be good friends, that's all. I'll be his good friend, and help him to get on in the world. I hope he'll like our country house—the chateau, my husband calls it. I've invited my cousin, Marie Derville,¹ to join us. We were at the convent together.

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LOUISE

I should never, never have let him take liberties with me! What does he think he is, a Casanova, a rustic Don Juan? He took advantage of me, and I let him! Oh, my God, what's happening to me? All this is going to stop. We are going back to the formal relationship we should have stayed with. I am Louise de Rênal, my husband has a title and I have a fortune, and I have no interest in a stupid little peasant! (*Exit.*)

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¹ Derville = dair-VEEL

LOUISE *(to us)*

Last night you behaved shamefully, monsieur. The only reason I did not reprimand you was that I didn't want to make a scene in front of my friend—and my husband, of course my husband. As a result—I slept badly. The word “adulteress . . .”

(LOUISE starts over.)

Understand for once and for all, monsieur, that there can be no—relationship—of any kind between us. I respect your intellect. But I am a married woman, with children, and I will not allow you to attempt to become—familiar. If such a thing happens again, I will see to it that you are sent away. And you don't even love me! You had the portrait of another woman hidden in your room—no, I can't say that.

(LOUISE glares at the audience. SHE starts over.)

Last night you behaved shamefully, monsieur. The only reason I did not reprimand you was that I didn't want to make a scene in front of my husband and my friend. As a result—I couldn't sleep last night. Understand for once and for all, monsieur, that there can be no relationship—no friendship—of any kind between us. It's not the difference in our stations. I respect your intellect. But I am a married woman, with children, and I will not allow you to attempt to become—

(While Louise is searching for the right word, DE RËNAL enters behind her.)

—to treat me disrespectfully. If such a thing happens again, I will see to it that you are sent away.

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LOUISE *(to us)*

Oh, oh, my God, how happy I am! I've never been so happy in my life! My whole life has changed. Before Julien came, I never felt like a grown woman. I felt as if I were still back in the convent, living in a tiny room, going to prayers and lessons. Nothing was a pleasure and everything was an obligation. Now when I wake up in the morning I know I'm going to see Julien again, and the whole world is light and beautiful, and every breath I take is delicious—could this be a sin? No, such happiness can't be sinful. Julien's lived here for a month, and we've never done the slightest thing wrong, and that's how we'll go on. He's my friend, and that's all, and, oh, my God, how happy I am!

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LOUISE *(to us)*

Will I never learn! He's a peasant, and a boor, and he has shocking, shameful ideas, like an animal! I'm willing to be his friend, but certainly no more than that. No, I'm not even willing to be his friend any more, after what just happened. Things can't go on like this. I've behaved like a fool. I must talk to him at once, and get things settled for once and for all. And if he can't learn to behave himself— If he can't learn to behave himself— If he can't learn to behave himself— He has to learn to behave himself, and that's all there is to it!