

# **YVETTE**

**A Play**

**By B. K. De Fabris**

**From The Novel By**

**Henri Rene Guy de Maupassant**

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"Yvette" is a stage adaptation of Maupassant's outstanding novel.

Yvette is eighteen, and she is a mystery. Nobody can make out whether she is a charming youngster or a wretched jade. She belongs through her mother, a high-class courtesan, as well as through her manners and her customs, to the vortex of the most rapid life of 19th-century Paris. Yet, she lives in that atmosphere of infamy with a calm and triumphing ease as if she suspects absolutely nothing of her mother's profession, which is either wonderfully profligate or entirely artless. She allures and excites men and at the same time acts like an impeccable virgin. If she is not the most complete monster of astuteness and perversity, she certainly is the most marvelous phenomenon of innocence that can be imagined. Only, this young lady belongs neither to society, nor to the tradesmen's class, nor to the common people, and she can never enter any of these ranks by marriage. She has only one possible career, a life of pleasure, and she cannot escape her fate.

Time: The summer of 1885.

Place: Various sets in Paris and Bougival, France.

**CHARACTERS:**

YVETTE

MARQUISE OBARDI

JEAN DE SERVIGNY

LEON SAVAL

CHEVALIER VALREALY

VISCOUNT DE BELVIGNE

PRINCE KRAVALOW

THE MAID

THE MASTER OF CEREMONIES

THE FOUR SERVANTS

A DOZEN OF DANCERS

## SCENE 1

A crowded boulevard in Paris. Evening.

(DANCERS/CITY FOLKS, SERVIGNY, SAVAL)

*A restless crowd moves along the boulevard, dancing, singing, and flowing like a river, filled with a sense of comfort and joy. Here and there a cafe throws a flood of light upon men and women drinking at little tables on the sidewalk. Jean de SERVIGNY and Leon SAVAL leave the Cafe Riche.*

## SCENE 2

A desolate street in Paris. Night.

(SERVIGNY, SAVAL)

*The two friends SERVIGNY and SAVAL walk with slow steps, in evening dress and overcoats on their arms, with a flower in their buttonholes, and their hats a trifle on one side, as men will carelessly wear them sometimes after they have dined well and the air is mild.*

**SERVIGNY:** If you don't object, let us walk. The weather is too fine to take a cab.

**SAVAL:** I would like nothing better.

**SERVIGNY:** It is hardly eleven o'clock. We shall arrive much before midnight, so let us go slowly.

**SAVAL:** Have you warned that lady that you are going to take me to her house to see her?

**SERVIGNY:** (*Laughing.*) Forewarn the Marquise Obardi! Do you warn an omnibus driver that you shall enter his stage at the corner of the boulevard?

**SAVAL:** (*Perplexed.*) What sort of person is this lady?

**SERVIGNY:** An upstart, a charming hussy, who came from no one knows where, who made her appearance one day, nobody knows how, among the adventuresses of Paris, knowing perfectly well how to take care of herself. Besides, what difference does it make to us? They say that her real name, her maiden name—for she still has every claim to the title of maiden except that of innocence—is Octavia Bardin, from which she constructs the name Obardi by prefixing the first letter of her first name and dropping the last letter of the last name.

Moreover, she is a lovable woman, and you, from your physique, are inevitably bound to become her lover. Hercules is not introduced into Messalina's home without making some disturbance. Nevertheless I make bold to add that if there is free entrance to this house, just as there is in bazaars, you are not exactly compelled to buy what is for sale. Love and cards are on the programme, but nobody compels you to take up with either. And the exit is as free as the entrance.

She settled down in the Etoile district, a suspicious neighborhood, three years ago, and opened her drawing room to that froth of the continents which comes to Paris to practice its various formidable and criminal talents.

I don't remember just how I went to her house. I went as we all go, because there is card playing, because the women are compliant, and the men dishonest. I love that social mob of buccaneers with decorations of all sorts of orders, all titled, and all entirely unknown at their embassies, except to the spies. They are always dragging in the subject of honor, quoting the list of their ancestors on the slightest provocation, and telling the story of their life at every opportunity, braggarts, liars, sharpers, dangerous as their cards, false as their names, brave because they have to be, like the assassins who can not pluck their victims except by exposing their own lives. In a word, it is the aristocracy of the bagnio.

I like them. They are interesting to fathom and to know, amusing to listen to, often witty, never commonplace as the ordinary French guests. Their women are always pretty, with a little flavor of foreign knavery, with the mystery of their past existence, half of which, perhaps, spent in a House of Correction. They generally have fine eyes and glorious hair, the true physique of the profession, an intoxicating grace, a seductiveness which drives men to folly, an unwholesome, irresistible charm! They conquer like the highwaymen of old. They are rapacious creatures; true birds of prey. I like them, too.

The Marquise Obardi is one of the type of these elegant good-for-nothings. Ripe and pretty, with a feline charm, you can see that she is vicious to the marrow. Everybody has a good time at her house, with cards, dancing, and suppers; in fact there is everything which goes to make up the pleasures of fashionable society life.

**SAVAL:** Have you ever been or are you now her lover?

**SERVIGNY:** I have not been her lover, I am not now, and I never shall be. I only go to the house to see her daughter.

**SAVAL:** Ah! She has a daughter, then?

**SERVIGNY:** A daughter! A marvel, my dear man. She is the principal attraction of the den today. Tall, magnificent, just ripe, eighteen years old, as fair as her mother is dark, always merry, always ready for an entertainment, always laughing, and ready to dance like mad. Who will be the lucky man, to capture her, or who has already done so? Nobody can tell that. She has ten of us in her train, all hoping.

Such a daughter in the hands of a woman like the Marquise is a fortune. And they play the game together, the two charmers. No one knows just what they are planning. Perhaps they are waiting for a better bargain than I should prove. But I tell you that I shall close the bargain if I ever get a chance.

That girl Yvette absolutely baffles me, moreover. She is a mystery. If she is not the most complete monster of astuteness and perversity that I have ever seen, she certainly is the most marvelous phenomenon of innocence that can be imagined. She lives in that atmosphere of infamy with a calm and triumphing ease which is either wonderfully profligate or entirely artless. Strange scion of an adventuress, cast upon the muck-heap of

that set, like a magnificent plant nurtured upon corruption, or rather like the daughter of some noble race, of some great artist, or of some grand lord, of some prince or dethroned king, tossed some evening into her mother's arms, nobody can make out what she is nor what she thinks. But you are going to see her.

**SAVAL:** (*Laughing.*) You are in love with her.

**SERVIGNY:** No. I am on the list, which is not precisely the same thing. I will introduce you to my most serious rivals. But the chances are in my favor. I am in the lead, and some little distinction is shown to me.

**SAVAL:** You are in love.

**SERVIGNY:** No. She disquiets me, seduces and disturbs me, attracts and frightens me away. I mistrust her as I would a trap, and I long for her as I long for a sherbet when I am thirsty. I yield to her charm, and I only approach her with the apprehension that I would feel concerning a man who was known to be a skillful thief. To her presence I have an irrational impulse toward belief in her possible purity and a very reasonable mistrust of her not less probable trickery. I feel myself in contact with an abnormal being, beyond the pale of natural laws, an exquisite or detestable creature—I don't know which.

**SAVAL:** I tell you that you are in love. You speak of her with the magniloquence of a poet and the feeling of a troubadour. Come, search your heart, and confess.

**SERVIGNY:** (*After a pause.*) That is possible, after all. In any case, she fills my mind almost continually. I always call her "Mam'zelle", as if I were her pageboy. She tolerates it with a smile, and I am proud of that little intimacy as a peacock. Yes, perhaps I am in love. I dream about her too much. I think of her when I am asleep and when I awake—that is surely a grave indication. Her face follows me, accompanies me ceaselessly, ever before me, around me, with me. Is this love, this physical infatuation? Her features are so stamped upon my vision that I see her the moment I shut my eyes. My heart beats quickly every time I look at her, I don't deny it.

So I am in love with her, but in a queer fashion. I have the strongest desire for her, and yet the idea of making her my wife would seem to me a folly, a piece of stupidity, a monstrous thing: And I have a little fear of her, as well, the fear which a bird feels over which a hawk is hovering.

And again I am jealous of her, jealous of all of which I am ignorant in her incomprehensible heart. I am always wondering: 'Is she a charming youngster or a wretched jade?' She says things that would make an army shudder; but so does a parrot. She is at times so indiscreet and yet modest that I am forced to believe in her spotless purity, and again so incredibly artless that I must suspect that she has never been chaste. She allures me, excites me, like a woman of a certain category, and at the same time acts like an impeccable virgin. She seems to love me and yet makes fun of me; she deports herself in public as if she were my mistress and treats me in private as if I were her brother or footman.

There are times when I fancy that she has as many lovers as her mother. And at other times I imagine that she suspects absolutely nothing of that sort of life, you understand.

Furthermore, she is a great novel reader. I am at present, while awaiting something better, her book purveyor. She calls me her 'librarian.' Every week the New Book Store sends her, on my orders, everything new that has appeared, and I believe that she reads everything at random. It must make a strange sort of mixture in her head.

That kind of literary hasty-pudding accounts perhaps for some of the girl's peculiar ways. When a young woman looks at existence through the medium of fifteen thousand novels, she must see it in a strange light, and construct queer ideas about matters and things in general. As for me, I am waiting. It is certain at any rate that I never have had for any other woman the devotion which I have had for her. And still it is quite certain that I shall never marry her. So if she has had numbers, I shall swell the number. And if she has not, I shall take the first ticket, just as I would do for a street car.

The case is very simple. Of course, she will never marry. Who in the world would marry the Marquise Obardi's daughter, the child of Octavia Bardin? Nobody, for a thousand reasons. Where would they ever find a husband for her? In society? Never. The mother's house is a sort of liberty-hall whose patronage is attracted by the daughter. Girls don't get married under those conditions.

Would she find a husband among the trades-people? Still less would that be possible. And besides the Marquise is not the woman to make a bad bargain; she will give Yvette only to a man of high position, and that man she will never discover.

Then perhaps she will look among the common people. Still less likely. There is no solution of the problem, then. This young lady belongs neither to society, nor to the tradesmen's class, nor to the common people, and she can never enter any of these ranks by marriage.

She belongs through her mother, her birth, her education, her inheritance, her manners, and her customs, to the vortex of the most rapid life of Paris. She can never escape it, save by becoming a nun, which is not at all probable with her manners and tastes. She has only one possible career, a life of pleasure. She will come to it sooner or later, if indeed she has not already begun to tread its primrose path. She cannot escape her fate. From being a young girl she will take the inevitable step, quite simply. And I would like to be the pivot of this transformation.

I am waiting. There are many lovers. You will see among them a Frenchman, Viscount de Belvigne; a Russian, called Prince Kravalow, and an Italian, Chevalier Valreali, who have all announced their candidacies and who are consequently maneuvering to the best of their ability. In addition to these there are several freebooters of less importance. The Marquise waits and watches. But I think that she has views about me. She knows that I am very rich, and she makes less of the others.

Her drawing room is, moreover, the most astounding that I know of, in such, exhibitions. You even meet very decent men there, like ourselves. As for the women, she has culled the best there is from the basket of pickpockets. Nobody knows where she found them. It is a set apart from Bohemia, apart from everything. She has had one inspiration showing genius, and that is the knack of selecting especially those adventuresses who have children, generally girls. So that a fool might believe that in her house he was among respectable women!

You can't imagine what a collection of fictitious titles are met in this lair. By the way, I shall present you by the name of Count Saval. Plain Saval would not do at all.

**SAVAL:** Oh, no, indeed! I would not have anyone think me capable of borrowing a title, even for an evening, even among those people. Ah, no!

**SERVIGNY:** *(Laughing.)* How stupid you are! Why, in that set they call me the Duke de Servigny. I don't know how nor why. But at any rate the Duke de Servigny I am and shall remain, without complaining or protesting. It does not worry me. I should have no footing there whatever without a title.

**SAVAL:** Well, you are of rank, and so you may remain. But, as for me, no. I shall be the only common person in the drawing room. So much the worse, or, so much the better. It will be my mark of distinction and superiority.

**SERVIGNY:** I tell you that it is not possible. Why, it would almost seem monstrous. You would have the effect of a ragman at a meeting of emperors. Let me do as I like. I shall introduce you as the Vice-Roi du Haut-Mississippi, and no one will be at all astonished. When a man takes on greatness, he can't take too much.

**SAVAL:** Once more, no, I do not wish it.

**SERVIGNY:** Very well, have your way. But, in fact, I am very foolish to try to convince you. I defy you to get in without some one giving you a title, just as they give a bunch of violets to the ladies at the entrance to certain stores.

### SCENE 3

**The foyer of the Marquise Obardi's salon.**

**(SERVIGNY, SAVAL, FOUR SERVANTS, MASTER OF CEREMONIES)**

*SERVIGNY and SAVAL give their overcoats, hats and canes into the hands of the FOUR SERVANTS. The MASTER OF CEREMONIES approaches the newcomers.*

**MASTER OF CEREMONIES:** Whom shall I announce?

**SAVAL:** Monsieur Saval.

**MASTER OF CEREMONIES:** *(Loudly.)* Monsieur the Duke de Servigny. Monsieur the Baron Saval.

### SCENE 4

**The Marquise Obardi's salon.**

**(DANCERS/PARTY GUESTS, SERVIGNY, SAVAL, MARQUISE OBARDI, YVETTE, CHEVALIER VALREALI, VISCOUNT DE BELVIGNE, PRINCE KRAVALOW)**



*The salon is filled with men and women in brilliant gowns. The mistress of the house MARQUISE OBARDI comes forward with a majestic step, with grace in her mien and a smile on her lips. She gives one hand to SERVIGNY, who kisses it, and dropping her fan on its little gold chain, she gives the other to SAVAL fixing her eyes upon him.*

**MARQUISE OBARDI:** You are welcome, Baron, all the Duke's friends are at home here. *(To Servigny.)* You will find my daughter somewhere around here. Have a good time, gentlemen, the house is yours. *(She leaves them to go to the other guests.)*

*Suddenly from the end of the room YVETTE darts forward, gliding through the crowd, and holding her long train in her left hand. She runs with quick little steps as women do in crowds.*

**YVETTE:** Ah! How is Muscade? How do you do, Muscade?

*SERVIGNY shakes her hand firmly.*

**SERVIGNY:** Mademoiselle Yvette, my friend, Baron Saval.

**YVETTE:** Good evening, Monsieur. Are you always as tall as that?

*SAVAL smiles and bows, not knowing what to say.*

**SERVIGNY:** No, Mam'zelle. He has put on his greatest dimensions to please your mother, who loves a colossus.

**YVETTE:** Very well. But when you come to see me you must diminish a little if you please. I prefer the medium height. Now Muscade has just the proportions which I like.

*She gives her hand to SAVAL who shakes it. The music starts. The GUESTS prepare to dance. YVETTE turns to SERVIGNY.*

Do you dance, Muscade? Come, let us waltz.

*Without replying, SERVIGNY clasps her waist passionately and they start to waltz. They dance more rapidly than any of the others. They whirl and whirl, and turn madly, so close together that they seem but one. They appear tireless. The other dancers stop. YVETTE and SERVIGNY still dance on, alone. All the guests gaze at them, and when finally they stop dancing, everyone applauds them. YVETTE flushes. Her bosom rise and fall in short gasps. SERVIGNY appears giddy.*

**YVETTE:** You have no head, my poor Muscade, I am steadier than you.

*He devours her with a look and smiles nervously.*

Really, there are times when you are like a tiger about to spring upon his prey. Come, give me your arm, and let us find your friend.

*He offers her his arm. At the same time the MARQUISE OBARDI approaches them leaning on SAVAL'S arm.*

**MARQUISE OBARDI:** You know, my dear, Duke, that I have just leased a villa at Bougival for two months, and I count upon your coming to see me there, and upon your friend also. Listen. We take possession next Monday, and shall expect both of you to dinner the following Friday. We shall keep you over Saturday.

**YVETTE:** Of course Muscade will come to Bougival. We have only to ask him, for he and I intend to commit a lot of follies in the country.

**MARQUISE OBARDI:** *(Turning her eyes upon SAVAL.)* And you will, of course, come, Baron?

**SAVAL:** *(Bents toward her.)* I shall be only too charmed, Madame.

**YVETTE:** We will set all the world by the ears down there, won't we, Muscade, and make my regiment of admirers fairly mad. *(With a look, she points out a group of men who are looking at them from a little distance.)*

**SERVIGNY:** As many follies as you may please, Mam'zelle.

**SAVAL:** Why does Mademoiselle always call my friend Servigny 'Muscade'?

**YVETTE:** I will tell you: It is because he always slips through my hands. Now I think I have him, and then I find I have not.

**MARQUISE OBARDI:** You children are very funny.

**YVETTE:** I do not intend to be funny; I am simply frank. Muscade pleases me, and is always deserting me, and that is what annoys me.

**SERVIGNY:** *(Bows.)* I will never leave you any more, Mam'zelle, neither day nor night.

**YVETTE:** *(Making a gesture of horror.)* My goodness! no—what do you mean? You are all right during the day, but at night you might embarrass me.

**SERVIGNY:** *(With an air of impertinence.)* And why?

**YVETTE:** *(Calmly and audaciously.)* Because you would not look well *en deshabille*.

**MARQUISE OBARDI:** *(Without appearing at all disturbed.)* What extraordinary subjects for conversation. One would think that you were not at all ignorant of such things.

**SERVIGNY:** *(Jokingly.)* That is also my opinion, Marquise.

**YVETTE:** *(Haughty.)* You are becoming very vulgar—just as you have been several times lately. *(She turns and appeals to an individual standing by.)* Chevalier, come and defend me from insult!

*A thin man, with an easy carriage, comes forward.*

**CHEVALIER VALREALI:** *(With a constrained smile.)* Who is the culprit?

**YVETTE:** *(Pointing out SERVIGNY with a nod of her head.)* There he is, but I like him better than I do you, because he is less of a bore.

**CHEVALIER VALREALI:** *(Bows.)* I do what I can, Mademoiselle. I may have less ability, but not less devotion.

*A gentleman comes forward, tall and stout, with gray whiskers.*

**VISCOUNT DE BELVIGNE:** *(Bows.)* Mademoiselle Yvette, I am your most devoted slave.

**YVETTE:** Ah, Viscount de Belvigne! *(Turning toward SAVAL, she introduces him.)* My last adorer—big, fat, rich, and stupid. Those are the kind I like. A veritable drum-major—but of the table *d'hote*. But see, you are still bigger than he. How shall I nickname you? Good! I have it. I shall call you Monsieur Colossus of Rhodes, Junior, from the Colossus who certainly was your father. But you two ought to have very interesting things to say to each other up there, above the heads of us all—so, by-bye. *(She leaves them quickly going to a group of guests.)*

**MARQUISE OBARDI:** *(In a soft voice to SERVIGNY.)* You are always teasing her. You will warp her character and bring out many bad traits.

**SERVIGNY:** Why, haven't you finished her education?

*The MARQUISE does not understand, but she does notice a solemn looking man, wearing a perfect constellation of crosses and orders, standing near her.*

**MARQUISE OBARDI:** Ah Prince, Prince, what good fortune!

*She runs to the PRINCE KRAVALOW. SERVIGNY takes SAVAL'S arm and draws him away.*

**SERVIGNY:** That is the latest serious suitor, Prince Kravalow. Isn't she superb?

**SAVAL:** To my mind they are both superb. The mother would suffice for me perfectly.

**SERVIGNY:** *(Nodds.)* At your disposal, my dear boy.

*The overture to a quadrille begins.*

**SERVIGNY:** You won't dance?

**SAVAL:** No, shall you?

**SERVIGNY:** Not now. If you are ready to go, we will come back some quieter day. There are too many people here today, and we can't do anything.

SAVAL: Well, let us go.

*SERVIGNY signals with his hand and the FOUR SERVANTS approach him. SERVIGNY and SAVAL take their overcoats, hats and canes from the hands of the SERVANTS.*

SERVIGNY: But tell me, it is understood that we dine with her on Friday at Bougival, is it not? People are more free in the country, and I shall succeed in finding out what ideas Yvette has in her head!

SAVAL: I should like nothing better. I have nothing to do that day.

*The DANCERS elbow them aside as they are forming for a quadrille. SERVIGNY, SAVAL and the SERVANTS exit as the dance begin.*

### SCENE 5

The garden of the villa in Bougival. Late afternoon.

(SERVIGNY, SAVAL, MARQUISE OBARDI, YVETTE, THE MAID)

*There is a small table and a few iron chairs in a huge garden of a countryside villa. Some solid branches and foliage protrude out from both of the stage wings. A tall trees and a mass of verdure form a horizon. The house itself is offstage.*

*The MAID is quietly setting the table for the late afternoon tea. The MARQUISE is leaning on SAVAL'S arm, and YVETTE on SERVIGNY'S as they appear, leaving the house to seat themselves at the table. Suddenly YVETTE rushes ahead spreading her arms wide open and spinning around.*

YVETTE: Oh, what an air, what an air, what an air! I adore this pure and fragrant air!

*The MARQUISE and SAVAL sit at the table. The MAID exits into the house. YVETTE takes a twig from a weeping willow tree and sits at the large foot of the tree. SERVIGNY comes to her.*

SERVIGNY: What is the matter, Mademoiselle? I find you changed since last week. You have become quite a different person.

YVETTE: *(Making a garland.)* It is the country that does that for me. I am not the same, I feel queer. Besides I am never two days alike. Today I have the air of a mad woman, and tomorrow shall be as grave as an elegy. I change with the weather, I don't know why. You see, I am capable of anything, according to the moment. There are days when I would like to kill people,—not animals, I would never kill animals,—but people, yes, and other days when I weep at a mere thing. A lot of different ideas pass through my head. It depends, too, a good deal on how I get up. Every morning, on waking, I can tell just what I shall be in the evening. Perhaps it is our dreams that settle it for us, and it depends on the book I have just read.

*YVETTE places the willow twig garland on her head, then she draws a sketchbook from her pocket and starts to draw. SERVIGNY looks at her for a long moment.*

**SERVIGNY:** You are adorable this evening, Mam'zelle! I wish I could always see you like this.

**YVETTE:** Don't make a declaration, Muscade. I should take it seriously, and that might cost you dear.

*Nobody speaks for a while. The MARQUISE and SAVAL are quietly enjoying their tea at the table.*

**SAVAL:** Silence is a good thing, at times. People are often nearer to each other when they are keeping still than when they are talking. Isn't that so, Marquise?

**MARQUISE OBARDI:** It is quite true. It is so sweet to think together about agreeable things.

*She raises her warm glance toward SAVAL and they continue for some seconds looking into each other's eyes.*

**SERVIGNY:** Mam'zelle Yvette, you will make me believe that you are in love if you keep on being as good as that. Now, with whom could you be in love? Let us think together, if you will; I put aside the army of vulgar sighers. I'll only take the principal ones. Is it Prince Kravalow?

**YVETTE:** My poor Muscade, can you think of such a thing? Why, the Prince has the air of a Russian in a wax-figure museum, who has won medals in a hairdressing competition.

**SERVIGNY:** Good! We'll drop the Prince. But you have noticed the Viscount Pierre de Belvigne?

**YVETTE:** *(Laughs.)* Can you imagine me hanging to the neck of Raisine and to murmur to his face: "My dear little Pierre," or "My divine Pedro, darling Pierrot, give your bow-wow's head to your dear little girl, who wants to kiss it."

**SERVIGNY:** Scratch out number two. There still remains the Chevalier Valreali whom the Marquise seems to favor.

**YVETTE:** *(Regains all her gaiety.)* Teardrop? Why he weeps like a Magdalene. He goes to all the first-class funerals. I imagine myself dead every time he looks at me.

**SERVIGNY:** That settles the third. So the lightning will strike Baron Saval, here.

**YVETTE:** Monsieur the Colossus of Rhodes, Junior? No. He is too strong. It would seem to me as if I were in love with the triumphal arch of L'Etoile.

**SERVIGNY:** Then Mam'zelle, it is beyond doubt that you are in love with me, for I am the only one of your adorers of whom we have not yet spoken. I left myself for the last through modesty and through discretion. It remains for me to thank you.

**YVETTE:** (*With happy grace.*) In love with you, Muscade? Ah! no. I like you, but I don't love you. Wait—I—I don't want to discourage you. I don't love you—yet. You have a chance—perhaps. Persevere, Muscade, be devoted, ardent, submissive, full of little attentions and considerations, docile to my slightest caprices, ready for anything to please me, and we shall see—later.

**SERVIGNY:** But, Mam'zelle, I would rather furnish all you demand afterward than beforehand, if it be the same to you.

**YVETTE:** (*With an artless air.*) After what, Muscade?

**SERVIGNY:** After you have shown me that you love me, by Jove!

**YVETTE:** Well, act as if I loved you, and believe it, if you wish.

**SERVIGNY:** But you—.

**YVETTE:** Be quiet, Muscade; enough on the subject.

*SERVIGNY salutes militarily and stays silent. The night is about to fall. The MARQUISE rests, as if by carelessness, her bare hand upon SAVAL'S hand, but YVETTE makes a motion and the MARQUISE withdraws her hand with a quick gesture, pretending to readjust something in the folds of her corsage. SERVIGNY perceives the motion.*

**SERVIGNY:** If you like, Mam'zelle, we can take a walk down by the river.

**YVETTE:** Oh, yes! That will be delightful. Just imagine the calm and peaceful night, sky swarmed with grains of fire, and the black water flecked with the moonlight silver. (*She pockets her scrapbook then raises her eyes to meet his gaze.*) We will go all alone, won't we, Muscade?

**SERVIGNY:** Yes, all alone, Mam'zelle!

**YVETTE:** Fine.

*She quickly takes off her garland and hangs it to the tree, then runs to her mother.*

Mamma, Muscade and I are going to take a walk down by the river, right now! We will be back before dinner.

**MARQUISE OBARDI:** Don't be late, above all things. Moreover, we will escort you a bit of a way.

*YVETTE draws SERVIGNY along and they rush out as in hurry, while the MARQUISE and SAVAL slowly rise from their seats.*

**SAVAL:** Are you going to stay long in this place, Madame?

**MARQUISE OBARDI:** Yes, as long as I am happy.

*They exit following the young couple.*

**SCENE 6**  
**The river bank. Night.**

(SERVIGNY, YVETTE)

*The full moon spreads its light over the riverside. YVETTE and SERVIGNY come from the darkness.*

**YVETTE:** Gracious! They are not walking behind us any more, where are they? *(She calls out.)* Mamma!

*No voice replied.*

At any rate, they can't be far away, for I heard them just now.

**SERVIGNY:** They must have gone back. Your mother was cold, perhaps.

*He takes her arm, very gently slips his hand around her waist and gives her a slight hug.*

What are you thinking about?

**YVETTE:** I? About nothing at all. I am very happy!

**SERVIGNY:** Then you don't love me?

**YVETTE:** Oh, yes, Muscade, I love you, I love you a great deal; only leave me alone. It is too beautiful here to listen to your nonsense.

*He draws her toward him, although she tries, by little pushes, to extricate herself.*

**SERVIGNY:** *(Stammering.)* Yvette!

**YVETTE:** Well, what?

**SERVIGNY:** I do love you!

**YVETTE:** But you are not in earnest, Muscade.

**SERVIGNY:** Oh, yes I am. I have loved you for a long time.

*She continually keeps trying to separate herself from him, trying to release the arm crushed between their bodies.*

Yvette! Speak! Yvette!

*Then, suddenly, risking all, he kisses her on the cheek. She gives a little start aside.*

**YVETTE:** (*Vexed.*) Oh! you are absurd. Are you going to let me alone?

*Not seeing her too angry, he applies his lips to the beginning of her neck, just beneath the hair. She makes great efforts to free herself, but he holds her strongly, and gives her a fond, passionate kiss, squarely on the mouth. She slips from his arms by a quick undulation of the body, and, free from his grasp, she disappears into the darkness.*

*He stays motionless a moment, surprised by her suppleness and her disappearance.*

**SERVIGNY:** (*Gently.*) Yvette!... (*Loudly.*) Mam'zelle Yvette! Mam'zelle Yvette!

*Nothing stirs. He stops and listens.*

Mam'zelle Yvette, where are you? Answer. It is ridiculous! Come, answer! Don't keep me hunting like this.

*He exits into the darkness.*

## SCENE 7

The garden of the villa. Late at night.

(SERVIGNY, SAVAL, THE MAID)

*The MAID brings a lamp and cleans the table. She utters an almost inaudible scream as SERVIGNY appears from the darkness.*

**SERVIGNY:** Sorry. I didn't mean to frighten you. But, tell me, is it long since Mademoiselle Yvette came home? I left her at the foot of the place because I had a call to make.

**THE MAID:** Oh, yes, Monsieur. Mademoiselle came in before ten o'clock. Should I leave the lamp in here, Monsieur?

**SERVIGNY:** No, you can take it to the house. I'll come right away.

*The MAID bows and exits into the house, taking the lamp with her. SERVIGNY sits on a chair and takes a deep breath. SAVAL'S voice comes from somewhere in the dark.*

**SAVAL:** Jean!

**SERVIGNY:** Is it you, Leon?

**SAVAL:** (*Steps out from the shadows of an oak.*) Yes.



**SERVIGNY:** What are you doing here at this hour?

**SAVAL:** I am resting.

**SERVIGNY:** (*Presses his hand.*) My compliments, my dear fellow! And as for me, I—am making a fool of myself.

**SAVAL:** You mean—

**SERVIGNY:** I mean that—Yvette and her mother do not resemble each other.

**SAVAL:** What has happened? Tell me.

**SERVIGNY:** Decidedly, that little girl worries me. What a queer thing a girl is! She appears to be as simple as anything, and yet you know nothing about her. A woman who has lived and loved, who knows life, can be quickly understood. But when it comes to a young virgin, on the contrary, no one can guess anything about her. At heart I begin to think that she is making sport of me.

**SAVAL:** Take care, my dear fellow, she will lead you to marriage. Remember those other illustrious examples. It was just by this same process that Mademoiselle de Montijo, who was at least of good family, became empress. Don't play Napoleon.

**SERVIGNY:** As for that, fear nothing. I am neither a simpleton nor an emperor. But this girl completely puzzles me. In arithmetic, one and one make two. In love one and one ought to make one but they make two just the same. Have you ever felt that? That need of absorbing a woman in yourself or disappearing in her? I am not speaking of the animal embrace, but of that moral and mental eagerness to be but one with a being, to open to her all one's heart and soul, and to fathom her thoughts to the depths.

And yet you can never lay bare all the fluctuations of her wishes, desires, and opinions. You can never guess, even slightly, all the unknown currents, all the mystery of a soul that seems so near, a soul hidden behind two eyes that look at you, clear as water, transparent as if there were nothing beneath a soul which talks to you by a beloved mouth, which seems your very own, so greatly do you desire it; a soul which throws you by words its thoughts, one by one, and which, nevertheless, remains further away from you than those stars are from each other, and more impenetrable. Isn't it queer, all that?

**SAVAL:** I don't, ask so much. I don't look behind the eyes. I care little for the contents, but much for the vessel.

**SERVIGNY:** What a singular person Yvette is! How will she receive me in the morning?

**SAVAL:** We'll see! Tomorrow is not that far away. Now, it is time to go back to the house.

*They head toward the house.*

**SERVIGNY:** Oh, it would be good to become Yvette's first lover. For that I would give—

**SAVAL:** Keep calm, my friend. Keep calm, and take a good night's sleep.

*They exit into the house.*

**SCENE 8**  
**The garden of the villa. Morning.**

**(YVETTE, SERVIGNY, MARQUISE OBARDI, SAVAL)**

*YVETTE stands in the path and throws handfuls of gravel at Servigny's window.*

**YVETTE:** Well! Muscade, are you asleep? What could you have been doing all night to make you wake so late? Have you been seeking adventures, my poor Muscade?

**SERVIGNY:** *(Off.)* I'll be down in a second, Mam'zelle. Just time to splash my face with water, and I will join you.

**YVETTE:** Hurry, it is ten o'clock! Do you hear me, Muscade? You know that we breakfast at eleven.

**SERVIGNY:** *(Enters, putting on his jacket.)* Here I am, Mam'zelle.

**YVETTE:** *(Taking his arm in a familiar and friendly way.)* Besides, I have a great plan to unfold to you, a plot we are going to concoct.

*She draws him toward the other end of the garden.*

This is my plan. We will disobey mamma, and you shall take me presently to La Grenouillere, a restaurant at the river bank. I want to see it. Mamma says that decent women cannot go to the place. Now it is all the same to me whether persons can go there or cannot. You'll take me, won't you, Muscade, right now? And we will have a great time!

**SERVIGNY:** I am sure of that, Mam'zelle.

**YVETTE:** That is agreed, isn't it, Muscade? As it will be very warm soon mamma will come from a morning walk and I am sure she will not go out any more. She always feels the heat very much. We will leave her with your friend, and you shall take me. They will think that we have gone into the forest. Oh, if you only knew how much it will amuse me to see La Grenouillere!

*The MARQUISE OBARDI and SAVAL come from the park. She is strolling on Saval's arm.*

**MARQUISE OBARDI:** The sun is so hot this summer, isn't it? I feel so drained by this heat.

*YVETTE rushes to her mother.*

**YVETTE:** Mother, if we were to go for a walk in the forest, it would be deliciously cool under the trees.

**MARQUISE OBARDI:** (*Murmurs with a listless air.*) Are you mad? Does anyone go out in such weather?

**YVETTE:** Oh, well! We will leave the Baron to keep you company. Muscade and I will climb the hill and sit on the grass and read. (*She turns toward SERVIGNY.*) That is understood?

**SERVIGNY:** At your service, Mam'zelle.

**YVETTE:** Let's go, then, Muscade! *Alons!*

*YVETTE grabs her hat and rushes into the forest. SERVIGNY follows her behind. The MARQUISE shrugs her shoulders with a sigh.*

**MARQUISE OBARDI:** She certainly is mad.

**SAVAL:** But tell me, Madame, are you tired, indeed?

**MARQUISE OBARDI:** I am exhausted.

**SAVAL:** Shall we, then, wait for the breakfast in the drawing room?

**MARQUISE OBARDI:** Gladly, my dear Baron, gladly! That is exactly what I need.

*SAVAL takes the MARQUISE by the arm and they enter the house.*