

# ZAMORE ET MIRZA OU L'HEUREUX NAUFRAGE

DRAME INDIEN

*Zamore and Mirza, or the Fortunate Shipwreck*<sup>1</sup>

An Indian drama. 1788. With the Approval and Privilege of the King.

## CHARACTERS

ZAMORE, an educated Indian.

MIRZA, a young Indian woman, Zamore's lover.

M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT, governor of a Town and a French Colony in India.

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT, his spouse.

VALÈRE, French Gentleman, married to Sophie.

SOPHIE, natural child of M. de Saint-Frémont.

BABY, a three year old infant, Valère and Sophie's daughter.

A CAPTAIN of a French Vessel.

EMILIE, Mme de Saint-Frémont's friend.

M. LEBEL, M. de Saint-Frémont's Secretary.

BETSI, Mme de Saint-Frémont's maid.

AN INDIAN, overseer of M. de Saint-Frémont's slaves.

FÉLICIO, Valère's Servant.

AZOR, M. de Saint-Frémont's valet.

M. DE BELFORT, Garrison Major.

A JUDGE

A YOUNG INDIAN

Several local Indians of both sexes and slaves.

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<sup>1</sup> Written in 1784, accepted for performance by the Comédie Française in 1785, the piece was published in 1788 and performed in 1789 with a new title *L'Esclavage de Nègres, ou l'Heureux naufrage*. It is the first French play to put a slave on the stage in the hero's role, to give people of colour voices equal to their white peers, to highlight the barbarity of slavery - emphasising the damage it does to both the enslaved and those who oversee the trade - while simultaneously portraying women and men as equals and addressing the problems of children born out of wedlock. An early play it lacks the dramatic tautness of the later version and suffers not only from addressing too many disparate problems but also from having been taken out of its context i.e. West Indies to East Indies (to suit the racist views of the actors who refused to play black characters preferring rather to masquerade as Indians?). The play was written before either the English (1787), or the subsequent French (1788), abolitionist societies had been created: de Gouges believed in using drama to educate audiences; by highlighting the horrors of slavery she hoped to encourage them to denounce the trade as inhuman and abhorrent. De Gouges's forceful abolitionist essay *Réflexions sur les Hommes Nègres* was appended to this edition of the play. The inflammatory ideas contained within the play, in particular the pardon of a slave who had murdered a white man, resulted in the theatre (which had probably accepted the play without immediately realising its subversive potential and allowed it to stew in their repository for four years) being strongly influenced by the powerful slave owning members of society to prevent its success. This was duly achieved (cliques were hired, the pro-slavery press virulently attacked the play and its author etc.) and, following the complex system then in place at the Comédie Française, the play became the property of the theatre and could never be performed elsewhere. It was effectively taken out of circulation after three performances. *Zamore et Mirza* challenged the status quo to such an extent that its author was seriously threatened with imprisonment: this in part explains some of the strange moments where de Gouges almost damps down her arguments as in the final 'entertainment' which feels as though it was placed there solely to placate a censor.

Grenadiers and French soldiers

*The Action takes place firstly on an Island then in a large Town in the East Indies.*

## ACT ONE

*The Set represents the shore of a deserted Island edged and surrounded by steep rocks through which the distant sea can be glimpsed. At the front of the stage, to one side, is the opening of a hut surrounded by local fruit trees; the other side is filled by the edge of a seemingly impenetrable forest. As the curtain rises a storm is agitating the waves; a ship is seen being wrecked on the shore. The wind drops and the sea gradually becomes calm.*

### SCENE I

ZAMORE, MIRZA.

ZAMORE – Calm your fears, my dear Mirza; the vessel has not been sent by our persecutors, it is foreign. Alas! It has sunk, none of the crew are saved.

MIRZA – Ah! My only fear is for you. The punishment does not appal me. I bless my fate if we are to end our days together.

ZAMORE – Oh my dear Mirza! How you touch my heart!

MIRZA – Zamore, do you believe that the wicked Overseer was determined to ruin me? I did not love him and when he tried to force me to, I told him that I loved you alone. Could this avowal make me a criminal in his eyes? I am simple hearted. You know, Zamore, that I have never known deviousness. Until the moment I saw you I missed the country ways of our peaceable forests. My love has made you guilty. Without the unfortunate Mirza you would never have fled from the best of all masters, and you would not have killed his right-hand man.

ZAMORE – That barbarian. He loved you in order to tyrannise you. This love made him ferocious. The monster dared to give me orders to beat you cruelly. The education given to me by our Governor added to the sensibility of my primitive manners; it made me even less able to bear the appalling despotism that gave me orders to punish you.

MIRZA – You should have left me to die; you would still be with our Governor who cherishes you like his child. I am responsible for your misfortune, and his.

ZAMORE – What are you saying! You, dying! Eh! Why remind me of the virtues and goodness of this respectable master. I did my duty by him; I repaid his favours with filial tenderness. He thinks I am guilty and that is what makes my torment more appalling. He does not realise the monstrosity of the man he trusted: I have purged the earth of him and saved others like myself from his tyranny. But, my dear Mirza, let us abandon these too fond and too destructive recollections: nature is now our only protector. Generous mother! You know we are innocent. No, you will never abandon us, and these deserted places will shield us from all eyes.

MIRZA – I enjoy listening to you. You have taught me all that I know but, tell me, Zamore, why do the Europeans and the Planters have such an advantage over us, poor slaves? They are, after all, just like you and me. Why are they so superior to us? We are human beings like them. Eh! Why then such a difference between their kind and ours?

ZAMORE – This difference is a very insignificant thing; it exists only in colour, but the advantages that they have over us are immense. Skill put them above nature: instruction made Gods of them and we are mere mortals. They use us in these climes as they use animals in theirs. They came here, seized our land, our wealth, and enslaved us in recompense for the riches that they stole from us. The fields they reap are our very own, and the harvest is actually watered with our sweat and our tears. Most of these barbarous masters treat us with a cruelty that would make nature tremble; our too unhappy kind has become used to these chastisements. They carefully guard against instructing us; if our eyes were to open we would be horrified by the state to which they have reduced us and we could shake off a yoke that is as cruel as it is shameful. But is it in our power to alter our destiny? A man debased by slavery loses all his energy; the most crushed among us are the least unhappy. I always showed such zeal to my Master and I was careful never to let my friends know what I was thinking.

MIRZA – How I would love to know all that you know! You will educate me, my love?

ZAMORE – Yes, my dear Mirza, I will teach you all that I know.

MIRZA – I would be so happy to be as instructed as you but I only know how to love you.

ZAMORE – Your innocence charms me; it is the imprint of nature. I am leaving you for a moment. Go and pick some fruit; I am going to the shoreline to gather up the debris from the wreck. But what do I see? A woman battling the waves! I fly to save her; should abject misery excuse us from being humane? (*He goes down alongside the rock.*)

## SCENE II

MIRZA, *alone.*

Zamore will save that unfortunate woman.... Supposing she were to betray us as a reward for our help; that would be very cruel! But it is wrong of me to believe such a thing; it is not right to be so suspicious. I must chase away these bad ideas: let me prepare for Zamore's return. (*She exits on the forest side.*)

## SCENE III

VALÈRE, *alone.*

The waves are still agitated, nothing appears. Oh my wife! Oh my child! Only fruit of our love, you are lost forever. Eh! Can I live without you? No, I must join you. I gathered my strength to save your lives and I alone have escaped the fury of the sea. Breathing fills me with horror. Separated from you, every moment becomes doubly painful. In vain I search for you, in vain I call for you. Your voices echoes in my heart but do not sound in my ear. I shall follow you. (*He moves with difficulty and collapses at the back of the stage, against a rock.*) A thick fog is clouding my eyes, my strength is gone! Almighty God, give me enough to drag myself as far as the sea! I can no longer hold myself up. (*He is immobilised by exhaustion.*)

## SCENE IV

VALÈRE, MIRZA.

MIRZA, *running up and noticing Valère* – Oh God! Who is this man? He comes to take us. Ah! If he were to harm Zamore!.... Yet he seems to suffer. Despite my fears I cannot prevent myself from helping him; it breaks my heart to see him in this state. He looks like a Frenchman. (*To Valère.*) Sir, Sir, Frenchman.... Who [What?] brought you here?.... He is not answering me.... What should I do? (*She calls.*) Zamore, Zamore. (*Thinking.*) Let me climb onto the rock to see if he is coming. (*She runs up and comes straight down.*) I cannot see anyone. (*She comes back to Valère.*) Frenchman, Frenchman, answer me.<sup>2</sup> He says nothing.... Ah! He is really sick!.... Let me go and find something to help him recover his senses. (*She exits.*)

## SCENE V

VALÈRE, ZAMORE, SOPHIE.

ZAMORE, *entering from beside the rock carries Sophie in his arms who seems to have fainted; she is wearing a white levite style dress with a belt, her hair is dishevelled*<sup>3</sup> – Madame, recover your strength; I am but an Indian Slave but I shall help you.

SOPHIE, *in a worn out voice* – Whoever you are, leave me alone. I find your help crueller than the waves. I have lost what I held most dear and my life is unbearable. Oh Valère, oh my husband! Oh my daughter! What has become of you?

VALÈRE – What voice is that? Sophie?

SOPHIE, *spotting him* – What do I see?.... It is him!

VALÈRE *gets up and falls at her feet* – Almighty God, you have given me back Sophie! Oh dearest spouse, the object of my tears and my affection, I yield to my pain and my joy.

SOPHIE – Divine providence! You have saved us, complete your work and give back to our loving arms the cherished child whose loss affects our happiness.

## SCENE VI

VALÈRE, ZAMORE, SOPHIE, MIRZA.

*Mirza runs in bringing fruit and water; she stops in surprise at seeing a woman.*

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<sup>2</sup> Mirza uses the familiar 'tu' when addressing Valère. Trying to plot the relevance of 'tu' and 'vous' usage in this play is difficult as there is not a great deal of consistency. By and large the couples address each other as 'tu'. I have footnoted the moments that seem appropriate where 'tu' may be used to convey a specific meaning.

<sup>3</sup> This style of dress was made popular by the actresses of the Théâtre Français when acting in plays set in the Orient. The defining elements were a large coloured sash around the waist, long sleeves and often a cut away front revealing an underskirt. The relatively loose fit of this fashionable dress gave rise to a certain amount of criticism.

ZAMORE – Come closer Mirza, do not be afraid. They are an unfortunate couple like us; we are duty bound to help them.

VALÈRE – Compassionate being to whom I owe my life and that of my spouse, you are not a Savage, you neither speak like one nor act like one.<sup>4</sup> Are you the master of this island?

ZAMORE – No, but we have been living alone here for the last few days. You seem to me to be French. If the company of Indian slaves is not beneath you they will gladly share the possession of this island with you and, if destiny allows, we shall end our days together.

SOPHIE, *to Valère* – My love, I find these words very affecting! Ah! If my daughter were returned to me I would go no further in search of a father whom I may not find. We have been roaming the seas for two years and have not found him; no one inhabiting the island, mentioned by my mother as the place where we could find him, had heard of him, even his name is unknown. My mother, on her deathbed, exhorted me to take this journey and we had to obey her orders; I undertook it to please her and to satisfy my own heart. I had no fears with you at my side but the loss of my daughter condemns me to perpetual suffering. I have lost half of my self... Dear spouse! It is now for you alone that I hold life dear.

VALÈRE – Well! Let us stay here; let us accept the offer of these Islanders, let us live one for the other and trust in the hope that we will find our child. Félicio was at a hand's breadth from her crib and I saw him dive in after it. If he has not been engulfed by the waves, if his strength has not abandoned him, then doubtlessly he will have saved our beloved daughter.

SOPHIE – Cruel destiny! You condemn me to eternal torment. This appalling image is always in my mind; I can see her looking at me, reaching out to me with her innocent hands. This touching spectacle tears my soul. Pity my plight. (*Crying.*) Let us run to the sea.

VALÈRE – I share your sorrow. (*To Zamore and Mirza.*) Indians, do not abandon us.

MIRZA – These French people are very unhappy. I feel as sorry for them as I do for us.

ZAMORE – Yes, my dear Mirza, let us console them in their misfortune. (*To Valère and Sophie.*) Rely on me, I shall search among all the rocks and if they have come ashore somewhere, I promise to bring them to you. Enter our hut, unhappy strangers; you need to rest; I shall try to soothe your agitated minds.

SOPHIE – Compassionate mortals, we owe you so much! You have saved our lives, and perhaps I will even be indebted to you for my daughter's: how can I ever repay you?

ZAMORE – In saving you I was only obeying my heart's command. (*He exits.*)

## SCENE VII

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<sup>4</sup> Valère uses the familiar 'tu' when addressing Zamore which, in the context of this play, probably implies respect (and later in the play friendship) though as a sign of familiarity, it was routinely used for children and servants. De Gouges is probably playing with her audience's expectations regarding communications between a white man of a certain rank and a man of colour, particularly as this play predates the later adoption of 'tu' as a mark of republican commitment.

VALÈRE, SOPHIE, MIRZA.

MIRZA, *to Sophie* – I like you very much even though you are not a slave. Come, I shall look after you.

VALÈRE, *to Sophie* – Now, my love, have a little courage; let us accept the help offered to us by this young Indian woman.

SOPHIE - Alas! As you wish,.... But I cannot overcome the sorrow that devours me.

MIRZA – Give me your arm too. (*Exiting.*) Ah! What a pretty hand! So unlike mine!

*They go into the hut, Valère holding Sophie by the other arm.*

SCENE VIII

FÉLICIO, *alone on top of the rock.*

I can find nothing. Oh my poor masters, are you drowned, like your child? I saw her, the poor innocent one, float a long time on the water.... She does not understand the danger. ... She was quiet in her cot. A wave carried her off and drew her out of my sight. (*He descends.*) What will become of me? Deprived of all that I held most dear, they were so good, so considerate, that despite my great age they never sought to abandon me. What will I do on this earth? I have so little time left! It is decided, I will follow their destiny. (*He notices the hut and approaches it.*) But, what do I hear? People are speaking in there. Those voices are not unfamiliar.... No, I am not wrong, they belong to my master and my poor mistress. Let me enter.

SCENE IX

FÉLICIO, MIRZA.

FÉLICIO – Alas! I was mistaken! I am so unhappy! Oh my poor Masters! You are less unfortunate than I for I have outlived you.

MIRZA, *stopping on the threshold of the hut and observing Félicio* – Now what does this stranger want? He does not look like the others. Almighty God! What if he were sent by our persecutors!.... Let me see if I can find him out. I tremble for Zamore. (*Aloud.*) Who are you concerned with, who are you seeking?

FÉLICIO – Death: our vessel was wrecked; I have lost all that I held most dear. (*To himself.*) I seek them in vain, I saved my life only in order to rescue them and now I have lost them for ever; I cannot outlive them.

MIRZA – Oh! How wretched he looks! He must be unhappier than most given his age. (*Aloud.*) What can I do for you, Sir, you are a stranger. If you are unfortunate, so are we but we will take care of you, like those that are in our hut.

FÉLICIO, *with delight* – What? Who? I beg you, explain yourself. (*Aside.*) Almighty God! It could be them!

## SCENE X

FÉLICIO, MIRZA, SOPHIE, VALÈRE.

SOPHIE, *to Valère* – Oh my love, here is Félicio! (*To Félicio.*) My daughter, what has become of her?

VALÈRE, *running towards him* – My dear friend, have you saved our child?<sup>5</sup> Where did you leave her?

FÉLICIO, *jumping for joy* – Oh! My dear masters! Is it you that I see? Ah! Allow me to express my joy! (*He embraces them.*) I thought you were lost like the rest of the crew.

SOPHIE – Alas! Destiny favoured us! But my daughter?....I dread asking him.

FÉLICIO, *aside* – What will I tell her? I will try to reassure her. (*Aloud.*) At least she has not perished, or so we must hope. I thought I saw a ship lower its sloop to follow the crib. But this ship, driven by a favourable wind, disappeared in an instant. (*Aside.*) Alas! If only my prediction could be realised!

VALÈRE – You see, my dear Sophie, things are not so bad and we will find her. Heaven will fulfil our wishes and bring her back.

SOPHIE - Ah! My dear Félicio! You enliven my hope. But I cannot overcome my terror; I am constantly alarmed. You do not know the sufferings of a mother. Oh my daughter! What hands have you fallen into? Who can care for you as I did? These thoughts make me despair.

FÉLICIO – Oh my dear mistress! At least my words should reassure you. Soon, you will see, we will have news of her.

VALÈRE - Félicio is right. Let us wait for Zamore. But here he is; no doubt he will calm our anxiety.

## SCENE XI

FÉLICIO, MIRZA, SOPHIE, VALÈRE, ZAMORE.

SOPHIE, *avidly addressing Zamore* – Well! My dear friend, what can you tell us? Have some ships landed? I tremble as I ask. What news do you bring me of my daughter?

VALÈRE – Speak, Zamore, without constraint.

ZAMORE – Unhappy strangers, you do not know that this coastline is terribly dangerous! Only desperate people, like Mirza and me, have dared approach it and overcome all the dangers to live here. Nonetheless we are only two leagues from one of the largest cities in India; a city I shall never see again unless our tyrants come and tear us away from here in order to make us suffer the punishment to which we have been condemned.

SOPHIE – Punishment!

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<sup>5</sup> Valère and Sophie use the familiar 'tu' when addressing Félicio, he addresses his employers using 'vous'.

VALÈRE – What crime have you committed, either one of you? Ah! I see, you are too well informed for a slave and, no doubt, the one who educated you paid a high price for the gift he offered you.

ZAMORE – Sir, be not as prejudiced towards me as others of your kind. I had a Master who was dear to me, I would have sacrificed my life to prolong his days, but his overseer was a monster and I purged the earth of him. He alone caused our misfortune. He loved Mirza but his love was refused. He learnt that she preferred me and in his fury he treated me appallingly but the worst was that he tried to make me the instrument of his vengeance against my dearest Mirza who had refused to give herself up to his desires. In horror I rejected such an assignment. Irritated by my disobedience he came at me, sword unsheathed; I avoided the thrust that he aimed at me, disarmed him and he fell dead at my feet. I only had time to take Mirza and flee with her in a sloop.

SOPHIE – How I pity him, the unfortunate man! Although he has committed murder, his crime seems worthy of a pardon.

VALÈRE – Their fate affects me; they brought me back to life, they saved yours: I will defend them to the end of my days. Let us stay here a while and try to create, from the ship's debris, another one that will be fit for us to risk setting out to sea. I will go and see his Governor myself. If he is French he must be humane and generous.

MIRZA – Ah! The Governor is very kind and very humane.

ZAMORE – I was his from the age of eight; he was pleased to educate me and loved me as though I were his son, for he never had one, or perhaps he was deprived of one. He seems to have regrets. He can be heard sighing at times; he is surely trying to hide a great sorrow. I have frequently caught him shedding a tear. He loves his wife and she returns his affections handsomely. He is very tender-hearted; I would be forgiven if it only depended on him but they need an example. There is no hope of mercy for a Slave who has raised a hand against his Commander [Overseer].

SOPHIE – How this Governor intrigues me. Hearing this account I feel an emotion.....His name?

ZAMORE – His name is Monsieur de Saint-Frémont.

SOPHIE – This name means nothing to me. But as a Frenchman perhaps he will be able to give me information regarding my father.

VALÈRE, *looking towards the rock* – What do I see? Slaves observing us and coming hurriedly towards us. One is carrying chains.

SOPHIE – Unlucky ones, you are lost!

ZAMORE *turning round and seeing the slaves*. – Mirza, it is the end! We are discovered.

## SCENE XII

FÉLICIO, MIRZA, SOPHIE, VALÈRE, ZAMORE, AN INDIAN [Overseer], SEVERAL SLAVES.

*Several slaves run down from the rock.*

INDIAN to Zamore – Villain, you have made us cover a lot of ground.

MIRZA – Let me be put to death before him!

ZAMORE – Oh my dear Mirza!

INDIAN – Put them in chains!

VALÈRE – Sir, hear our prayers! What will you do with these unfortunates?

INDIAN – A terrible example. They will be put to death by bow and arrow.

SOPHIE – Are you taking them away to put them to death? You will have to kill the three of us first to tear them from my arms.

VALÈRE – What are you doing, my dear Sophie? We must trust in the Governor. Sir, are you French?

INDIAN – I am Indian.

SOPHIE – Ah! So you will not pardon them.

INDIAN – It is not my responsibility and the Governor needs to set the Colony an example. You do not know this accursed race; they would cut our throats without pity. This is what we must expect from slaves that we educate; they are born to be savage and to be tamed like animals.

SOPHIE – What a terrible prejudice. Nature did not make slaves of them; they are human, like you.

INDIAN – What words are those, Madame?

SOPHIE – The same that I shall address to your Governor. It is through gratitude that I am concerned for these unfortunate people and no doubt the man whose position you now hold was atrocious and took pleasure in being barbaric.

ZAMORE – Ah! Madame, stop pleading with him, his soul is hardened and he has no humanity. It is his task to show this cruelty every day; he would feel he was lacking in his duty if he did not push it all the way to barbarity.

INDIAN – How dare you!

ZAMORE – I am not afraid of you anymore.<sup>6</sup> I know my fate and shall submit to it.

MIRZA – I alone committed an offence, Zamore is innocent. It is I who killed the Master of the slaves; you must put me to death and save his days for they are united with those of our Governor. M. de Saint-Frémont needs Zamore so only I must serve as an example.

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<sup>6</sup> In this scene Zamore and the overseer address each other using 'tu' to mark their disrespect for each other.

ZAMORE – I alone am guilty. Mirza knew nothing of the blow that I struck; do not take advantage of her weakness, Love alone has inspired her generosity.

SOPHIE – They are so affecting in their misfortune! What would I not do to save them?

FÉLICIO – Ah! My unhappy Mistress! There is no hope. We are in a land of savages and the most ordered, are the hardest hearted.

VALÈRE *to the Indian* – Take us with them, Sir. You will be facilitating our departure from this place. (*Aside.*) I hope to sway the Governor and recover my daughter.

INDIAN – It will be a pleasure especially as it will be less dangerous for us to leave this island than it was for you to arrive: no doubt your vessel was wrecked.

VALÈRE – Yes, Sir, but how were you able to land?

INDIAN – I risked everything for the good of the Colony so how is it possible to pardon them. We can no longer manage our slaves; the life of our Governor could be in danger; as soon as these two miserable creatures are punished calm will return to the plantations. It is very strange that all the Citizens demand an example yet groan at their destiny despite it being required by law.

FÉLICIO – What laws! Will men never be able to live in peace and must they forever spend their lives tormenting and destroying one another?

INDIAN, *to the slaves* – Make them walk in front.

SOPHIE – Ah! Sir, please promise me that you will not mistreat them!

INDIAN – Fear not, Madame, you will witness the care that their companions take; they know they are to die, they will guard against hurting them.

*Zamore and Mirza are taken away; the others follow and all embark. A moment later their vessel can be seen passing by, aboard the slaves play a symphony of death.*

*End of the first Act.*

## ACT II

*The scene changes to show a plantation drawing room furnished in Indian style.*

FIRST SCENE

AZOR, BETSI.

*Azor and Betsi enter carrying a coffee service that they place on a table.*

BETSI – So, Azor, what are they saying about poor Mirza and Zamore? They are being hunted everywhere.

AZOR – There is talk of putting them to death on the plantation rock; I think the preparations are under way. I shudder that they may be caught, it makes me tremble.

BETSI – But the Governor can pardon them. He is the Master.

AZOR – That must be impossible; he loves Zamore and says that he has never found fault with him but all the Colony demands their death, and he cannot refuse without compromising himself.

BETSI – Our Governor was not made to be a tyrant.

AZOR – He is so good to us! As are all the French. The Indians are much crueller.

BETSI – I have heard it said that in the earliest times we were not enslaved.

AZOR – Everything suggests it. There are still countries where primitive people are free in their climes.

BETSI – How cruel is our fate!

AZOR – Ah, we are indeed to be pitied!

BETSI – And no one comes to our defence! We are not even allowed to pray for our own.

AZOR – Alas, the father and mother of the unhappy Mirza will have to witness their daughter's torture!

BETSI – What barbarity!

AZOR – That is our destiny.

BETSI – But, tell me, Azor, why did Zamore kill the Overseer?

AZOR – I was assured that it was out of jealousy. You know that Zamore was Mirza's lover?

BETSI – Yes, I learnt it from you.

AZOR – The Overseer loved her too.

BETSI – But that was no reason for Zamore to kill him.

AZOR – That is true.

BETSI – There were other reasons then?

AZOR – That may well be, but I am unaware of them.

BETSI – If we could arrange their escape, I am sure that Monsieur and Madame de Saint-Frémont would not be angry.

AZOR – I am sure that is true but those who would help them would place themselves in great danger.

BETSI – No doubt, but there would be no death penalty.

AZOR – Maybe. Still, I know that I would not run the risk of it.

BETSI – We should at least talk to her father and mother; they could win over other slaves. They all love Zamore and Mirza and they would not be put to death.

AZOR – There is talk of arming the Regiment.

BETSI – Then all hope is gone.

AZOR – On the contrary, we should exhort them to obedience for the sake of our companions.

BETSI – You are right: do it if you can for I lack the strength for it.... But here is Madame.

## SCENE II

AZOR, BETSI, EMILIE, MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT.

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT, *to Emilie* – I am so grateful, my dear friend, that you have come to spend the morning with me! I am very sad.

*She makes a sign to Betsi and Azor to leave.*

## SCENE III

EMILIE, MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT.

EMILIE – You! How so! M. de Saint-Frémont is absent. It is still the fatal affair of the Overseer.

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT – My spouse has gone out due to this unfortunate affair. He has gone to one of the plantations; his presence there was necessary. Since this catastrophe the spirit of revolt reigns among our slaves; all claim that Zamore is innocent and that he killed the Overseer only because he had no choice. The Indians have united to demand the deaths of Zamore and Mirza, and they are being searched for everywhere.

EMILIE – I agree with you; they are to be pitied but perhaps this cruel example is required.

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT – It is true that the law decreed Zamore's punishment but my husband pardons him from the depth of his soul even though he gave his judgement, as he did against Mirza, who will die with her lover. I pity her all the more for she had of her people just their simplicity; she was sweet and kind and was one of the best of slaves. Their attentiveness and their zeal were remarkable; for us to lose them is a great sorrow.

EMILIE – The condition of your slaves is very good compared to the condition of ours and the planters complain of it. Consider, my dear friend, that these unfortunates have been harshly treated for centuries and are used to it. Like you, I have suffered to accept this rigour but our customs, and our laws, seem to require it.

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT – Is it not enough that they are enslaved? Must they, from morning to night, be beaten into submission? Can one find plantations better kept than ours? My husband has observed that by encouraging them with kindness they can be made to do all that is required.

EMILIE – So you have a special secret?

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT – Let us speak no more of domestic troubles. I need to be amused; let us have some coffee. (*She calls.*) Betsi, Betsi?

#### SCENE IV

EMILIE, MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT, BETSI.

*Betsi, at a sign from Mme de Saint-Frémont, pours the coffee.*

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT, *to Emilie* – Let us sit down. (*They sit.*) I am so anxious! My husband is not returned.

EMILIE – You cannot live a moment without him.

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT – That is so; deprived of parents and not having the pleasure of being a mother, during the ten years that we have been together I have been unable to bear spending two hours apart.

#### SCENE V

EMILIE, MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT, BETSI, AZOR.

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT – What news, Azor?

AZOR – A ship has just arrived in port and the Captain wishes to speak to you.

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT – Show him in.

*Azor exits.*

#### SCENE VI

EMILIE, MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT, BETSI, A CAPTAIN.

THE CAPTAIN – Madame, having fulfilled the duties that my position demands, my greatest wish was to relate to you the fascinating adventure that befell us yesterday evening. Never was the Sky more beautiful, the sea so calm. I was on the bridge when I

saw a sort of crate floating on the water, coming our way. I immediately sent out sailors who brought it to me. How surprised I was to find, in this box, an infant as beautiful as could be, a love: it was a little girl. She showered us with kisses as though she knew the worth of the assistance we had just provided. She appears to be about three years old; she can just stumble over a few words.

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT – I am so grateful to you, Sir, that you have told me of this great deed. I ask you for this child; I am better placed than anyone to offer her a future.

THE CAPTAIN – Madame, you anticipate me. My plan was to offer her to you.

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT – Where is she? She must be brought to me, I am burning with impatience to see her.

THE CAPTAIN – Madame, you will soon be satisfied; she is in your home surrounded by your servants.

BETSI – Ah! Madame, I will soon bring her to you. (*She exits.*)

#### SCENE VII

EMILIE, MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT, THE CAPTAIN.

EMILIE – How splendid are the workings of providence!

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT – Here is the proof indeed. This infant must have suffered a hundred deaths. Her situation moves me so. Here she is!

#### SCENE VIII

THE PRECEDING ACTORS, BETSI carrying BABY.

BETSI – Madame, here is the poor little mite.

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT – Oh, she is so pretty! (*Sitting her on her knees.*) Come, my child, let me kiss you; you are going to be my daughter.

BETSI – Ah! Madame, let me be her nurse, just me.

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT – Yes, you will be. (*Reflecting.*) How I long for Monsieur de Saint-Frémont to arrive! Ah! I hear him. His sensitive soul will be filled with such joy!

EMILIE – You are right, my dear friend, for he is very fond of children.

#### SCENE IX

EMILIE, MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT, THE CAPTAIN, BETSI, BABY, M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT.

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT, *to her husband, without getting up* – Ah! My dear friend! See the gift that Heaven sends us. An infant that the Captain found on the sea. He thought to please me by giving it to us. Do you think, my dear, that he may have been wrong!

M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT – I share your joy, and this Orphan boy could not have fallen into better hands.

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT – This Orphan is a girl, my friend; a little girl.

M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT – She is so intriguing.

THE CAPTAIN – Her adventure is no less so. She is a being that the oceans seem to have respected; she was lucky, I found her before arriving in port.

M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT – Alas! It is an early start to a career of misfortune. (*Aside.*) But what recollection is awaking in my heart! Those features! Where is my heart leading me? I feel as though I were seeing my daughter's image; my daughter who may be even more unfortunate than this unknown since fate has put the child in our hands.

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT – Look at her, my dear, you have barely glanced at her and I think that the poor little mite wants to come to you.

M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT – My dear friend, give her to me so that I may bathe her in my tears. (*He covers her in kisses.*)

EMILIE, *aside* – What a shame that two such respectable people should have no children!

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT – My dear, we can wish for nothing more. We will leave you with the Captain.

*The women exit.*

## SCENE X

THE CAPTAIN, M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT.

M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT – I trust, Sir, that you will stay with us while you are in this country.

THE CAPTAIN – Sir, I am grateful for the honour you do me.

M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT – Do you have any parcel for me?

THE CAPTAIN – Yes, Sir: here is one from Paris and one from Brest. I will leave you to read your despatches, and rejoin your Secretary.

M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT – Go my friend, today you have given us a most precious gift.

*The Captain exits.*

## SCENE XI

M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT, *alone, opening his letters hurriedly.*

They are from my two correspondents. So many conflicting emotions tear my soul! I wish for two very different things at the same time....to find the unfortunates that I left behind in France, and to ensure that Zamore, and the wretched Mirza, can never be found. (*He sits down and reads.*) 'I have searched in vain, the women you told me of are unknown everywhere, they must have changed their names. I am sorry not to be able to offer you better news.' (*Finishing his reading.*) So it was in vain that I sent great wealth for my daughter and for the woman who was, one day, to have been my wife. I want to make them happy and jealous fortune continually opposes my wishes. Let me look at the other letter. (*He reads.*) 'I trust that what I will make known to you may ease you anxiety: one of my friends has given me information concerning women he encountered during his stay in Lyons. I am off this instant to find out for myself, and if it is your daughter and your Claire, they will not be able to hide from me their true identities. I am too interested in all that concerns you to ignore the slightest circumstance.' (*Finishing his reading.*) I was sure of it. These gentlemen of Paris are the lords of the capital and care little for the interests of others. (*Reflecting.*) How this child reminds me of my daughter's youth.... Let me push aside a memory that tears my heart. Cruel parents! What have you done?.... I must no longer think of it. Let me attend to the affairs of state. Zamore's crime has thrown the colony into a panic. What will it cost me to reassure it.

## SCENE XII

M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT, MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT, BETSI, BABY.

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT – My dear, you cannot imagine my joy. This child creates in my soul an inexpressible satisfaction. Her features inspire the most tender affection: her physiognomy is so cheerful!

M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT, *observing Baby* – Alas! What are you telling me? I find in her a singular relevance to people who were dear to me and whose misfortune make them even more affecting. I cannot look at this child without weeping. (*Aside.*) Yes, it is the resemblance; it is my daughter. It is a punishment from Heaven that she appears thus, to awaken in my soul both a memory that is too dear and a reminder of my vows.

*Mme de Saint-Frémont indicates to Betsi that she should leave, taking Baby with her.*

## SCENE XIII

M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT, MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT.

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT – What are you saying, my love? You, a perjurer! Have you been unfaithful to me? Ah! Speak: I forgive you everything as long as your heart is mine. I pardon your mistakes. If this child is yours, she will be all the dearer to me, and I will become her mother.... You turn away: you are crying. Ah, my love! You no longer trust me; I am vexing you; I shall retire.

M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT – You, vex me! Never, never! Ah! If I had been capable of straying from my duty your kindness alone would have brought me back to your side and your noble virtues would make your charms all the more endearing.

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT – But you conceal from me a secret trouble. Admit it. Your stifled sighs suggest it. France was dear to you; it is your Motherland....Perhaps a love...

M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT – Stop, stop, dear spouse, and do not reopen a wound that had closed at your side. I fear it will grieve you.

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT – If I was dear to you, you must prove it.

M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT – What proof do you demand?

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT – That you reveal to me the cause of your affliction.

M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT – All right: you soothe my heart. So long as my narrative does not alarm yours.

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT – This heart shares your sorrows. Do not hide from me the slightest detail.

M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT – I was the last of seven children from a Province where the youngest have nothing. My parents sent me to Paris to ask for employment at Court. I met a decent Scottish officer who had come for the same reason. He was not rich and had a daughter in a convent: he took me there. This meeting was disastrous for the two of us. After a few months the father left for the army: he exhorted me to visit his daughter and even said that I could chaperone her when she wished to go out. This decent friend, this good father, could not imagine the result of his imprudence. He was killed in battle. His daughter remained alone in the world without parents or acquaintances: she saw only me and seemed to wish for my presence alone. Love caused my guilt; spare me the rest. I vowed to be her spouse; there is my crime.

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT – But, my love, did you decide to abandon her yourself?

M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT – Who, me? To abandon such a perfect woman? Oh! The longest absence could not have made me forget her, if I had not met you. I could not marry her without the agreement of all my family. She had a daughter. My parents discovered our liaison and used their power to separate us: Claire (that was her name) thought she would die of despair. I was sent away. A Captain's commission was obtained for me in a regiment leaving for India and I was made to embark. Not long after I was given the false information that Claire was dead and that only my daughter was left to me: this led me to ask for your hand. Barely were we united than my cruel parent, who had misled me, told me that she was still alive.

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT – Alas, what a tragic price for the joy of being united with you! My love, you are unfortunate rather than guilty. Claire herself would forgive you if you could show her your remorse. You must start vigorously searching so that your assets, and mine, can be used to absolve you with regard to these unfortunate women. I have no family other than yours: I shall make your daughter my sole successor.

M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT – Oh! Worthy spouse! I admire your virtues and I think that only Claire could have equalled them! I was thus destined to meet the most virtuous and good-natured of womanhood at the two extremities of this world.

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT – You deserve a companion worthy of you but, my love, remember that you took my father's name and that this single act could have misled Claire. Perhaps her difficult situation obliged her to do the same. Therefore you must write to your own family. My father, in offering you his name had no other aim than to cede you his place.

M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT – I sign all the letters that I write with my real name. If Clare were alive she would have received news of me and she would have found me.

#### SCENE XIV

M. AND MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT, AZOR, THE JUDGE.

AZOR – Governor, here is the Judge.

THE JUDGE – Sir, I have come to let you know that the prisoners are taken.

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT – What! So soon? Time might have erased their crime.

M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT, *overwhelmed* – What a dreadful example I am obliged to set!

THE JUDGE – In this situation, Sir, remember your father-in-law's disgrace. His leniency obliged him to quit a post he had occupied with too much consideration.

M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT, *aside* – Wretched Zamore, you will perish! Did I nurture you in your infancy only to see you dragged to your death. (*Aloud.*) My care has truly harmed him! If I had left him in his natural state maybe he would not have committed this crime. His soul was free from any vicious inclinations. Honesty and virtue made him stand out amongst the enslaved. Brought up to be simple and hard-working he never forgot his upbringing despite the education he received. How pleased I would be to be able to clear him. As a simple planter perhaps I could have mitigated his arrest but as the Governor I am forced to hand him over to confront the rigours of the law.

THE JUDGE – It is vital to arrest them immediately, and to add to the disaster, two Europeans, accompanied by a woman, have encouraged a general revolt among the slaves. They have depicted your Overseer as a monster. The slaves have listened avidly to these seditious speeches and all have promised to disobey the orders they have been given.

M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT – Who are these strangers?

THE JUDGE – They are French and were found on the shore where the criminals had taken refuge. They claim that Zamore saved their lives.

M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT – Alas, these unfortunate strangers were no doubt shipwrecked and it is only gratitude that has encouraged this indiscreet enthusiasm.

THE JUDGE – As you see, Sir, there is no time to lose if you want to avoid the total ruin of our plantations. It is a desperate situation.

M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT – I was not fortunate to be born in these parts but what a hold desperate people have on compassionate souls! It is not your fault if the customs of your country have habituated you to the harsh treatments you remorselessly mete out to men whose only defence is their timidity and whose work, poorly remunerated, augments our wealth while increasing the power we have over them. Tyrants outnumber them by a thousand to one. Sovereigns make their people happy. Under a good master every citizen is free yet in this country one has to be a barbarian despite oneself. Hmm! How can I not reflect in this way when the voice of humanity cries from the bottom of my heart: 'Be compassionate, be sensitive to the cries of those who are desperate'? But so be it: you want an example, it will be done, despite my slaves insisting that Zamore is innocent.

THE JUDGE – Do you believe them?

M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT – They cannot deceive me and I know Zamore's qualities better than they do. You insist that he dies without being heard. I consent to it; you will not be able to reproach me for having betrayed the interests of the Colony.

THE JUDGE – It is your duty, Sir, in this situation where, as you can see, we are under threat of a general revolt. Orders must be given for the troops to take up arms.

M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT – Follow me; let us see what option seems best.

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT – My friend, I see you leave in sorrow.

M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT – I have to be present in order to restore order and discipline.

*The Judge and M. de Saint-Frémont exit.*

## SCENE XV

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT, EMILIE.

*Emilie enters from the opposite side.*

EMILIE – The criminal Judge! What is the news, my dear de Saint-Frémont?

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT – Ah! My dearest friend! You come at the perfect time for me. I am desperate. These unfortunates are found. Monsieur de Saint-Frémont is obliged to take up arms! Ah! He may endanger himself? How we are to be pitied! Admit that my husband's position is very cruel. You can never imagine how tenderly he loved this slave, and circumstances force him to be a witness to his torture.

EMILIE – You speak only of him yet I pity poor Mirza even more. She may not be an accomplice to her lover's crime so one should rather take an interest in her.

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT – Can you doubt that we will miss her? But she has not been ours for very long yet Zamore has been with M. de Saint-Frémont since childhood. Pity

speaks to us for both of them but it is natural that we should be attached to one more than the other.

EMILIE – I agree with you but you will have to make your mind up about their fate. You can see how troubled our planters are. If this revolt were to remain unpunished we would have all to fear from our slaves.

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT – What does Betsi want? Her troubled air alarms me.

EMILIE – She is indeed worried.

## SCENE XVI

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT, EMILIE, BETSI.

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT – What fresh news is there, Betsi, you are very agitated!

BETSI, *in a heightened state* – I cannot get over what I have seen. Is the Governor not here?

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT – No, he has just left.

EMILIE – Do tell.

BETSI – Oh! Allow me to come to my senses. What has just happened will be forever etched in my memory.

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT, *troubled* – I tremble.

BETSI – Do not be alarmed, what I am about to relate will move your sensitive soul. We were on the terrace by the road that leads to the plantations, busy playing with our dear little one despite having rather heavy hearts; the Captain was also with us. We occasionally glanced towards the plantations. From afar we saw Mirza's father arriving with another slave. Between them was an unknown woman, running with great strides, her hair dishevelled and misery etched on her face; her eyes were fixed on the ground and although she was walking fast her mind seemed to be elsewhere. When she was almost opposite us the child, that I held in my arms, leapt up and I could barely restrain her; until that moment she had not yet uttered one distinct word; having clearly fixed her eyes on this woman she cried, in an assured voice: '*Mother, Mother.*' So this French woman raised her eyes to us and recognised her child: 'What do I see,' she said, 'with a piercing shriek, that is my daughter yes, it is her. Almighty God! You have given her back to me.' At these words, she passed out. We opened the gate and went to her side and despite all the help possible, she did not come round. Only the caresses of her daughter brought her back to life; she threw herself around her mother's neck, her innocent hands embraced her; she covered her in kisses. This tender mother regained her senses. Imagine her joy, Madame. when she saw her daughter in her arms. She cried but they were tears of joy; this scene was so touching that we spread the news to all.

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT – What a fascinating scene!

EMILIE – This tale is so affecting.

BETSI – The Captain recounted to her the fortunate circumstance that allowed him to rescue her child; straightaway this impassioned mother kissed the hands of her liberator. Ah! Madame! If you had seen the expression of her gratitude! She called him her tutelary God, her benefactor, but a deadly sorrow, she said, poisons her joy. She told us that Zamore had saved her from the fury of the sea, adding that she would die at the feet of the Governor if she could not obtain a pardon for these unfortunates; the Captain promised her that he would ally himself to her; she implores your help and asks to speak to you.... But here she comes.

## SCENE XVII

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT, EMILIE, BETSI, THE CAPTAIN, SOPHIE.

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT, *to Emilie* – Ah! My dear friend, she is so intriguing!

SOPHIE, *throwing herself at the feet of Mme. de Saint-Frémont* – Oh! My benefactress, I embrace your knees, take pity on an unhappy stranger whose only hope is your goodness.

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT, *helping Sophie to stand* – My child, do get up; I promise to do all that is in my power.

SOPHIE – If I had lost my life when our vessel was wrecked on the coast you would have become the mother of my daughter, more fortunate than I, since you have adopted her; will the one who gave her life interest you less?

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT, *to Emilie* – I cannot express how much her youth and her sensibility touch my heart. (*To Sophie.*) Intriguing stranger, I shall do everything I can to bring about the pardon that you ask of my spouse. Believe me, my heart shares your heart's suffering. I understand the strength of feeling you have for this unhappy couple.

SOPHIE – Without the help of Zamore, who is as brave as he is kind, I would have drowned in the waves. My spouse, preparing to follow me, is still alive thanks to the energy and ardour that this unfortunate used to rescue us. It is to him that I owe the pleasure of seeing you and of finding my daughter. To one I gave life to the other I owe my days. What he did for me gives him all Nature's rights over my heart, but these rights do not make me unjust. I am not concerned with criminals, but with human beings, sensitive and generous, who cherish virtue. They love you, Madame, and the testimony that they give of your qualities makes it pretty clear that they are not guilty. But what I can express to you is their unselfish humanity, the keen hospitality with which they welcomed us. The fate that pursues them should have filled them with fear rather than pity; they should have left us to die, with no succour, but far from hiding himself Zamore braved all dangers and threw himself into the sea to save me. Judge, Madame, if a mortal who acts thus can be inhuman. His crime was involuntary and justice dictates that he should be absolved and judged innocent.

THE CAPTAIN – I agree. Madame, you do not know that your Overseer was a cruel man, a monster who deserved his fate; he inflicted all his cruelty on your slaves; were he alive now he should be stifled.

EMILIE – It is true that he always seemed to be a hard man.

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT – Well, my dear friend! You see. You can now understand how punishments that are cruel lead to disorder.

BETSI – Ah! That is so true!

THE CAPTAIN – Too much cruelty often leads to more disobedience than excessive kindness.

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT – One cannot disagree. While Zamore managed our plantation no slaves were more obedient than ours.

EMILIE – They were very attached to you.

SOPHIE, *thrilled* – All speaks in his favour.

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT – My dear friend, we must all join together, the planters must plead for their pardon; I will lead them, go and join the Planters, we have no time to lose. (*To Sophie.*) And you, dear stranger, I yearn to know you better; I already feel that I love you: everything points to your being a well-born woman, your physiognomy.... (*Aside.*) The more I look at her, the more striking I find her features. But time is precious. When we have obtained a pardon for those that are banned, I will be able to ask her who she is. (*Aloud to Sophie.*) Return to the unhappy couple. (*To the Captain.*) You, Captain, follow in her footsteps.

THE CAPTAIN – Madame, I obey your command with total satisfaction.

SOPHIE, *thrilled* – Ah, Madame, so much generosity all at once! Alas! If only I could show my gratitude as I would wish. (*She kisses her hands.*) I leave you my daughter; your people cherish her as though she were yours: soon my spouse will come and fulfil his duty towards you. (*To herself.*) Dear spouse, what good news I have for you! (*She exits with the Captain.*)

## SCENE XVIII

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT, EMILIE, BETSI.

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT – Emilie, what do you think of this stranger?

EMILIE – Everything speaks in her favour.

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT, *thoughtfully* – I find in her such a striking resemblance to....

EMILIE, *interrupting* – To Monsieur de Saint-Frémont, is it not?

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT, *thoughtfully* – Perhaps; very much so. Could it be possible? That chance would have created such a fortunate encounter! Providence is full of these darts that pierce us: these are her blows.

BETSI – Madame, would you like me to tell you what I think, and what struck me the most? When I unlaced her, to help her breathe, I saw in her bosom a portrait medallion: on

one side was the image of a very pretty woman and on the other that of a man who looks like the Governor, unmistakably. I examined it closely and it is as I say.

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT – What are you telling me? Why did you not say so straight away? I am so unfortunate!

BETSI – Madame, if I could have known....

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT – I am not angry with you, my dear Betsi. Run and see if Monsieur Lebel is still in, but here he is.

EMILIE – He looks so troubled!

## SCENE XIX

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT, EMILIE, BETSI, M. LE BEL<sup>7</sup>.

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT, *agitated* – Monsieur Lebel, I have always found you to be most zealous: now, in this circumstance, you must prove it beyond a doubt, and put your best vigour into what I am to order you to do. Assemble here, in my home, the neighbouring planters and our closest friends. Zamore and Mirza must be saved.

M. LEBEL – Ah, Madame! That is more impossible than ever.

EMILIE – What has happened now?

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT – You alarm me.

M. LEBEL – Madame, you are unaware of what is taking place. I have just had your gates closed by order of the Governor. Fire and bloodshed are all around.

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT, *despairing* – Unhappy woman! What will become of me! What is my husband doing?

EMILIE – Good God, what a frightful day!

BETSI – I tremble, not for me but for the Governor and my companions.

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT, *overwhelmed by the greatest sorrow* – Almighty God! My husband may be in danger. Open the gates; I will fly to his aid, or die in his arms.

M. LEBEL – Be reassured, Madame, there is no reason to fear for the Governor. He is at the head of the Regiment. But even if he were at the heart of the tumult all the Indians would respect his days. They are too fond of him for any one to wish to do him harm. The slaves are only angry with a few planters: they blame them for Zamore and Mirza's punishment; they are convinced that without them the Governor would not have condemned them.

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT, *agitated* – What? They are going to be put to death so soon!

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<sup>7</sup> Le Bel and Lebel appear randomly in the text; I have followed the original.

M. LEBEL – No, Madame, not yet, but soon the unfortunates will be no more.

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT, *with alacrity* – No, Monsieur Lebel, they will not perish. My husband will be touched by my tears, by the despair of this unknown woman who, perhaps better than I, will know how to move him. His heart does not need soliciting for him to do the right thing. But he can take it all upon himself. (*Aside.*) What if she were his daughter! Dear God! He would be totally indebted to the victims that are being dragged to their punishment. (*Aloud.*) Go, Monsieur Lebel, my husband must be reached, and told.... But how, right now, can this be explained to him? I shall have to see him myself.

M. LEBEL – Madame, you must not endanger yourself: before you go, allow me to investigate; I will be back instantly. (*He exits.*)

## SCENE XX

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT, EMILIE, BETSI.

EMILIE – My dear friend, be reassured.

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT – Eh! How can I be! When I see such a terrifying disorder threatening to totally ruin the country! But, Monsieur de Saint-Frémont, what is he doing? Where is he? To many fears all at once tear at my heart. I cannot live with this uncertainty any longer; I fly to his side.

EMILIE – Calm yourself for a moment, my dear friend, you fill me with pity; am I thus less unfortunate than you? Let us await your Secretary; his vigilance and his ardour will soon relieve our anxiety.

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT – He is taking so long!

BETSI, *eagerly* – Here he is.

## SCENE XXI

THE PRECEDING CHARACTERS, M. LEBEL.

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT, *running up to him* – Well, Monsieur Lebel?

M. LEBEL – Madame, anything is possible, at the moment, especially in the town, but the slaves are, here and there, gaining the countryside. When the soldiers lead them to one part, they escape to another.

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT – And the Governor, where is he now?

M. LEBEL – I do not know which battalion he is with exactly. The two Regiments are dispersed: all that is said is that M. de Saint-Frémont is restoring calm and bringing back order wherever he goes. He will be very hard to find right now. We shall just have to go to the plantation, if it is not already too late, for you know that the law prescribes that criminals are put to death before the sun sets. They have only two hours left to live.

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT – Let us all run.

M. LEBEL – I have already converted several planters; they are all ready to follow you but the route is long, you will not be able to get there by coach. All the roads are blocked or cut off, as far as the little bridge over the Lake. We will have to cross it in a barque; it is impossible to imagine the damage they wrought in such a short time.

MME. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT – Never mind, as long as we have the good luck to arrive in time to save them.

*End of the second Act.*

### ACT III

*The scene changes to represent a wild place showing pointed hills edged with shrubs that stretch as far as the eye can see. There is a steep rock on one side whose summit is a platform and whose base is perpendicular to the edge of the footlights. The rock is accessed from the side of one of the hills so that the audience can see all characters arriving. Here and there are scattered primitive cabins; at the back of the stage the setting sun creates a beautiful horizon.*

#### SCENE I

VALÈRE, ZAMORE, MIRZA.

VALÈRE – Here you are, free. I fly to lead your companions. Before long we shall see my spouse arrive. No doubt she will have obtained your pardon from Monsieur de Saint-Frémont. I leave you for an instant but will not lose you from view. (*He exits.*)

#### SCENE II

ZAMORE, MIRZA.

ZAMORE – Oh my dear Mirza, our fate is too deplorable! It is getting even worse for I fear that this French man's ardour to save us will endanger him and his spouse; as for us we are undaunted. Could the fate that pursues us heighten its injustice by making us responsible for the deaths of these generous French people?

MIRZA – Alas! How I pity them! But maybe his worthy spouse will have been able to influence our good Governor. Let us not be overcome but await his return.

ZAMORE – I bless my death for it allows me to end my life with you but what cruelty, to die a criminal! For so I have been judged. Our good Master believes it: that is what makes me despair.

MIRZA – I want to see the Governor myself. This last wish must be granted. I will throw myself at his feet; I will reveal all to him.

ZAMORE – Alas, what will you be able to tell him?

MIRZA – The cruelty of his Overseer and the injustice of his love.

ZAMORE – Love blinds you; you want to accuse yourself in order to make me innocent. If you value life so little how can you imagine that I would be so mean as to want to stay alive at the price of your days? No, my dear Mirza, there can be no happiness for me on this earth if I am not sharing it with you.

MIRZA – I feel the same, I could not live without seeing you.

ZAMORE – How sweet it would have been for us to live out our days together! This place reminds me of our first meeting. It is here that the tyrant died; it is here that our journey will end. Nature seems, in these parts, to be at odds with herself. Yesterday she seemed to us to be light-hearted: we see two sides of her now for she depicts both our past happiness and the horrible fate that awaits us, poor victims. Ah, Mirza, how cruel it is to die when one loves!

MIRZA – The fate that awaits us seems so cruel! I will no longer be able to hear you, I will no longer be able to speak to you; I despair at the idea; never mind, we have to come to terms with it. We die side by side: death must be more dear to us than a life of separation, that hope alone renews my strength.

ZAMORE – Alas! The sun races through our last moments. (*Bowing.*) Perfect orb, you will witness our cruel end. Can your divine power allow this injustice? Your fire reawakens all; it penetrates the very centre of the earth. You light it up, and you allow our innocence to be buried in the shadows!

MIRZA – How you move me! Grieve me no further. I feel my courage leaving me. But that kind Frenchman is coming back to us; what will he tell us?

### SCENE III

ZAMORE, MIRZA, VALÈRE.

VALÈRE – Unhappy slaves, you must run away. Make the most of these precious moments afforded you by your companions. They have blocked the roads, respond to their zeal and courage; they are endangering themselves on your behalf, flee to another clime. It is possible that my spouse may not obtain your pardon. Several troops of soldiers can be seen getting closer: you have the time to run away over this hill. Go, live in the forests, your own kind will take you to their bosoms, you will find there the compassionate assistance that nature inspires in forest dwellers.

MIRZA – This Frenchman is right, come, follow me. He loves us; let us make the most of his advice. Run with me, dear Zamore; do not fear returning to live in the depth of our forests. You can barely remember our laws but soon your dear Mirza will remind you of their pleasing effect.

ZAMORE – Very well, I give up. It is for you only that I hold life dear. (*He embraces Valère.*) Farewell, most generous of men!

MIRZA – Alas! I leave you in sorrow especially as I go without seeing your spouse.

VALÈRE – She will share your regret, do not doubt it; but flee this place that is too treacherous.

#### SCENE IV

ZAMORE, VALÈRE, MIRZA, FÉLICIO *running in*.

VALÈRE – Ah! You took too long. (*to Félicio*.) So, Félicio?

FÉLICIO, *cheerfully* – Sir, here is Madame; joy shines from her eyes. Everything about her suggests calm and clemency.

VALÈRE – Ah! God?

#### SCENE V

ZAMORE, MIRZA, VALÈRE, FÉLICIO, SOPHIE, THE CAPTAIN, several SLAVES.

SOPHIE, *throwing herself into Valère's arms* – Ah! My friend! Let us thank Heaven; our child is returned to us and these unfortunate victims will be pardoned.

VALÈRE, *joyfully* – Almighty God! What ultimate joy!

SOPHIE – My friend, take note, this is our benefactor. He saved our child, Madame de Saint-Frémont had adopted her and wanted to be her mother.

ZAMORE – Ah! I see in this her good soul. (*To Valère*.) Generous stranger, Heaven grants your dearest wishes! The Supreme Being never abandons those who do not dishonour his own work.

SOPHIE – At last, I saw my daughter and rejoiced in her tender embraces.

VALÈRE – I cannot wait to hold her in my arms! (*To the Captain*.) Ah! Sir, how happy you make our days!

THE CAPTAIN – Anyone else, in my place, would have done the same.

MIRZA – How happy we are to have saved these French people! They owe us much, but we owe them even more.

VALÈRE – But what has been decided upon for these unfortunates?

SOPHIE – Madame de Saint-Frémont has assembled her closest friends. I have told her of their innocence; she is making every effort possible to save them. I had no trouble at all in interesting her on their behalf; her soul is so good, so sensitive to the pain of those who suffer. Ah! My friend, how well has fortune, with regard to her, placed her gifts!

ZAMORE – Her estimable spouse is her equal in merit and goodness.

THE CAPTAIN – Ah! That is so true.

SOPHIE – I have not had the pleasure of meeting him.

ZAMORE, *alarmed* – What do I see? A mass of soldiers arriving? Ah! We are lost.

SOPHIE – Do not take alarm, no doubt it is for a good reason.

VALÈRE – I will defend them at the risk of my life. Alas! They were about to flee when Félicio announced your return.

THE CAPTAIN – The Officer in charge of this detachment is a friend of mine; I will find out their purpose.

FÉLICIO, *aside* – I tremble for these unfortunates.

*A Company of Grenadiers and one of French soldiers lines up at the back of the stage, bayonets fixed. In front of them a troop of slaves armed with bows and arrows; at their head are the Major, the Judge, the Overseer of M. de Saint-Frémont's slaves.*

## SCENE VI

ZAMORE, MIRZA, VALÈRE, FÉLICIO, SOPHIE, THE CAPTAIN, THE MAJOR, THE JUDGE, THE INDIAN [Overseer], GRENADIERS AND FRENCH SOLDIERS, several SLAVES.

THE CAPTAIN – Sir, may I enquire what brings you here?

THE MAJOR – A cruel task. I have come to carry out the sentence of death pronounced against these unfortunates (*He points to Zamore and Mirza*).

SOPHIE, *troubled* – You have come to put them to death?

THE MAJOR – Yes, Madame.

VALÈRE – This appalling sacrifice will not take place.

SOPHIE – Madame de Saint-Frémont promised me they would be pardoned.

THE CAPTAIN – I was a witness to the fact.

THE JUDGE, *harshly* – She is not mistress of the situation. The Governor himself could not grant their pardon. Therefore, desist from obstinately trying to save them. You will only exacerbate their punishment. (*To the Major.*) Major, execute the orders that you were given. (*To the slaves.*) And you, take the criminals to the top of the rock. Draw your bows!

VALÈRE – Stop!

*The slaves only listen to Valère.*

THE JUDGE – Obey.

*The Major signals to the soldiers. The Grenadiers run, bayonets aimed at the chests of all the slaves, none of whom move.*

ZAMORE, *running in front of them* – What are you doing? I alone deserve your blows. What have my poor companions done to you? Why cut their throats? Turn your weapons on me. (*He opens his jacket.*) Here is my bosom! Cleanse their disobedience in my blood. The Colony asks only for my death. Is it necessary that so many unfortunates should perish when they are not implicated in my crime?

MIRZA – I am as guilty as Zamore; do not separate me from him: for pity's sake take my life; my crime and my days are united to his destiny. I want to be the first to die.

THE CAPTAIN, *to the Major* – Monsieur de Belfort, allow me to delay their punishment; I can assure you that their pardon is being considered.

THE MAJOR – We cannot take this upon ourselves; let us await the Governor.

THE JUDGE, *harshly* – I listen only too my duty and the law.

VALÈRE, *furiously* – Barbarian! You were born to be merely an executioner.<sup>8</sup> Your position may harden the heart but you degrade it by rendering it even more cruel than the laws dictate.

THE JUDGE – Major, conduct this audacious man to the citadel.

THE MAJOR – Sir, he is French: he will answer to the Governor for his behaviour and, in this instance, I am not required to take orders from you.

THE JUDGE – At least execute those you have been given.

SOPHIE, *heroically* – This excessive cruelty gives me courage. (*She runs to place herself between Zamore and Mirza, takes both of them by the hand, and addresses the judge.*) Barbarian! Dare assassinate me as well; I will not leave them; nothing can tear them from my arms.

VALÈRE, *emotionally* – Oh! My dear Sophie, this courageous trait makes you even more dear to me than before!

THE JUDGE – Officer, take this audacious woman away: you are not doing your duty.

THE MAJOR, *indignantly* – If you insist but you will be responsible for the consequences. (*To the soldiers.*) Soldiers, separate these strangers from those unfortunates.

*Sophie, with a piercing cry, hugs Zamore and Mirza to her bosom.*

VALÈRE, *furious, runs up to Sophie* – If any violence is used against my wife I will know no bounds.

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<sup>8</sup> Valère addresses the Judge using 'tu' (Sophie follows suit) reflecting his fury and his lack of regard for the man, irrespective of his position.

THE CAPTAIN – I am on their side.

FÉLICIO – Ah! My poor Masters! I must not abandon them; I will use up all my remaining strength on their behalf.

A SLAVE – Were we all to be put to death, we would defend them.

*The slaves line up and form a rampart around them. The soldiers and Grenadiers approach with bayonets fixed.*

THE MAJOR – Do not advance further. (*To himself.*) What should I do? I have not been sent here to direct a carnage, but to maintain order. If threats have no impact on the slaves that still does not allow me to use violence. (*Aloud.*) The Governor will be here before long and his prudence will be our best guide. (*To the strangers and the slaves.*) Be reassured; I will not use force; your efforts would be in vain were I to do so. (*To Sophie.*) And you, Madame, you may step aside along with these unfortunates. I await the Governor.

*Sophie, Félicio, Zamore and Mirza exit with a few slaves.*

#### SCENE VII

VALÈRE, THE CAPTAIN, THE MAJOR, THE JUDGE, THE INDIEN, GRENADIERS AND FRENCH SOLDIERS, several SLAVES.

THE CAPTAIN - And I, I will run to find the Governor and encourage him to favour these unfortunates unless his worthy spouse has already obtained his mercy.

#### SCENE VIII

VALÈRE, THE MAJOR, THE JUDGE, THE INDIEN, GRENADIERS and FRENCH SOLDIERS, several SLAVES.

VALÈRE, *to the major* – Sir, I cannot abandon my spouse in this state. Try your best to persuade Monsieur de Saint-Frémont. I have no need to recommend clemency to you. It must already reign in your heart; a warrior is always generous.

THE MAJOR – Rely on me; I will plead their case. Retire and reappear when it is time.

*Valère exits.*

#### SCENE IX

THE MAJOR, THE JUDGE, THE INDIAN, GRENADIERS and FRENCH SOLDIERS, several SLAVES.

THE MAJOR, *to the judge* – There, Sir, is the result of too much severity.

THE INDIAN – Here is the Governor.

## SCENE X

THE SAME, M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT, AND THE CAPTAIN, *entering from one side*, VALÈRE, *running in from the other*, two Companies of GRENADIERS and FRENCH SOLDIERS leading several SLAVES in chains.

VALÈRE, *to M. de Saint-Frémont* – Ah! Sir, listen to our prayers; you are French, you will be fair.

M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT – I approve of your ardour but in this clime it can be folly. It has done a lot of harm. The Captain has just witnessed a terrible attack. Against my nature, I had to use violence to put a stop to the cruelty of the slaves. I know how much you owe to this unhappy couple but you have no right to defend them.

VALÈRE – I have at least the entitlement of gratitude that belongs to all good souls; my heart calls out to yours.

M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT – Stop appealing to me, it pains me too much to refuse.

VALÈRE – Your worthy spouse allowed us to hope.

M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT – So the Captain informed me but even he understands the absolute impossibility of what you demand at the moment.

VALÈRE – If it is a crime to have killed a monster that made nature tremble, Zamore is nonetheless innocent, he only acted in self-defence.

THE JUDGE – You are taking advantage of the Governor's complaisance. You have been told before: they are condemned by the law as murderers, can you change it?

VALÈRE – No, but it could be tempered.

THE JUDGE – Are you in your right mind? In favour of a Slave! We are not in France here! We need examples.

M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT – That is true, the sentence must be executed.

VALÈRE – These words freeze the blood in my veins. Dear spouse, what will become of you?

M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT – Unfortunate stranger, go and console her. She is already dear to me; her child has so captured my imagination! If need be, mislead her so that she is not a witness to this appalling punishment: tell her that the unfortunates are needed for questioning and that they must be left alone: that their pardon may depend on this wise precaution; in short, to persuade her be inspired by all that love and nature can offer.

VALÈRE, *weeping* – How we are to be pitied! I shall not survive their loss. (*He exits.*)

## SCENE XI

THE MAJOR, THE JUDGE, THE INDIAN, M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT, THE CAPTAIN,  
GRENADIERS and FRENCH SOLDIERS, several SLAVES.

M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT – How this stranger adds to my grief! His sorrow on behalf of these unfortunates increases my own. I will never have the strength to see them die. [*To the Judge.*] Sir, fulfil your duty; it suits you better than me.

THE JUDGE – Governor, your presence is required. Consider that you are the only one who is obeyed; here my orders go unheeded. The Major made that clear by telling me that he was not required to follow them.

THE MAJOR – We will come to an understanding at another time but I agree with you, it is vital that Monsieur de Saint-Frémont be present.

M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT – I have been in the Government for ten years and this is the first time that I have experienced any adversity.

THE JUDGE – Major, let the soldiers advance. (*To the Indian.*) Overseer, escort the slaves away and line them up as is customary.

*The Indian exits with the armed slaves whilst those that are unarmed throw themselves at the feet of Monsieur de Saint-Frémont.*

## SCENE XII

THE MAJOR, THE JUDGE, M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT, THE CAPTAIN, GRENADIERS and  
FRENCH SOLDIERS, several SLAVES.

A SLAVE, *kneeling* – My Lord, we were not among the rebels, may we be allowed to ask that our companions be forgiven; to bargain for their lives let us be subject to all the punishments judged appropriate; increase our gruelling work and decrease our rations, we will bear this chastisement with courage.... My Lord, you are softening; I can see your tears flow.

M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT – My children, my friends, what are you suggesting? (*To the Judge.*) What should I reply to this generous offer? It is the least of men who exhibit such a greatness of spirit. (*Aside.*) Ah! Nature has given them the highest rank! Our positions, our greater wealth, offspring of prejudice and injustice, you are nothing compared to these generous mortals. They are men and we are mere phantoms led on by prejudice and dominated by personal interest.

THE JUDGE – They know where your weakness lies; but you cannot, Sir, give in to your feelings without compromising your dignity. I know them better than you; they promise all; besides, these criminals are no longer in your power, they are delivered up to the rigour of the law.

M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT, *moving as though to exit* – Well, so be it! I hand them over to you. Alas! Here they are! Where can I hide? My position is too cruel!

### SCENE XIII

THE MAJOR, THE JUDGE, M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT, THE CAPTAIN, THE INDIAN,  
ZAMORE, MIRZA, GRENADIERS AND FRENCH SOLDIERS, several SLAVES.

ZAMORE – There is no hope left; our benefactors are surrounded by soldiers, embrace me for the last time, my dearest Mirza.

MIRZA – I bless my fate since we will fly together to eternity. (*To an old man and an old Slave woman.*) Dear creators of my days; weep no more for your poor Mirza, she is to be pitied no longer. Farewell. (*To the slaves of her sex.*) Adieu, my companions.

ZAMORE – Indian slaves, hear me. I have killed a man, I deserve death; do not despair at my punishment, it is necessary for the good of the Colony. Mirza is innocent, but she cherishes her death. Remember, at a time like this, the law of the forests; any creature on the earth who suffers must be put to death so it would be pointless for you to prove her innocent for she would end her days herself if she could not die with me. Take our place beside the Governor and his respectable spouse. Repay with your ardour and with your attachment all that I owe them; I could never have acquitted myself towards them. Cherish this good Master, this good father, with a filial tenderness, as I always did. I would die happy if I could take his friendship to my grave! (*He sees him and throws himself at his feet.*) Oh! My dear Master! Am I still allowed to address you thus?

M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT, *with deep pain* – These words break my heart. Unhappy man! What have you done? Go, I hold nothing against you; it is enough torment for me to see your life end.

ZAMORE, *bows and kisses his feet* – Oh! My dear Master! Death holds no more fear for me. You still cherish me; I die happy.<sup>9</sup> The planters would never have forgiven you if you had pardoned me. You do so in your heart and I prefer that than to live without your friendship.

M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT, *lifting him up* – Unhappy man, you who were so dear to me and are still so at the moment when I will lose you; your courage overwhelms me.

ZAMORE – Do not be overwhelmed, my dear Master, think of your respectable spouse who lives only for you. You weep and it is my fault. Ah! That I should be so guilty as to have caused you so much sorrow. (*He takes his hands.*) Let me kiss these hands for the last time.

M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT, *with the greatest tenderness* – Leave me, unhappy man, you tear my heart apart.

ZAMORE, *to the armed slaves* – My friends, do your duty.

*He takes Mirza in his arms, and climbs with her upon the rock, where they kneel down. The slaves adjust their arrows.*

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<sup>9</sup> In this scene the relationship between Zamore and M. de Saint-Frémont is reflected by the use 'tu' and 'vous' being as expected i.e. the younger man/servant/son figure uses 'tu' while the older man/master/father figure uses 'vous'.

## SCENE XIV

THE MAJOR, THE JUDGE, M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT, THE CAPTAIN, THE INDIAN,  
ZAMORE, MIRZA, VALÈRE, SOPHIE, FÉLICIO,  
GRENADIERS AND FRENCH SOLDIERS, several SLAVES.

SOPHIE, *to Valère* – You are holding me back in vain. I absolutely want to see them. (*Looking up towards the rock.*) Barbarian! You lied to me: my strength abandons me. (*She falls into the arms of some soldiers.*)

M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT – Who is this woman?

*As the slaves prepare to loose their arrows a great noise is heard.*

## SCENE XV AND LAST

THE MAJOR, THE JUDGE, M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT, THE CAPTAIN, THE INDIAN,  
ZAMORE, MIRZA, VALÈRE, SOPHIE, FÉLICIO, EMILIE, MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT,  
BETSI, BABY, AZOR, several PLANTERS, GRENADIERS AND FRENCH SOLDIERS,  
several SLAVES.

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT, *running in and stopping the arm of a Slave who is about to loose his arrow* – Stop, wretched man and respect the Wife of your Governor (*To M. de Saint-Frémont.*) Mercy, my friend, mercy.

ALL – Mercy!

M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT – Halt everything and give immediate help to this unknown woman. (*Approaching Sophie.*) What do I see? The more I look on her face....(*Aside.*) What unease rises up in my soul. (*Aloud to Valère.*) May I ask you your name? Who are you, wretched Frenchman?

VALÈRE – Look, my wife is dying. (*Approaching her.*) Oh my dearest Sophie!

M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT – What name did you just use? (*To himself.*) Her age, her looks; her name was Sophie. (*To Valère.*) Speak, answer me, who was her mother?

VALÈRE – The unhappy Claire, from Scotland.

M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT, *pushing Valère aside and throwing himself on Sophie's body* – Oh my daughter, oh my blood! Nature has not misled me. Know the voice of a father too long separated from you and your mother.<sup>10</sup>

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT – I was right. (*To the slaves.*) I command that these wretches be freed. The Governor will pardon them. (*Zamore and Mirza are lifted up; distraught, their chains are undone and they are brought down from the rock.*)

SOPHIE, *coming to* – Heavens! What voice do I hear! It reaches to the depths of my heart.

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<sup>10</sup> Here the dynamics of 'vous' and 'tu' between a father and his adult child are the same as in the previous scene indicating, I think, that de Gouges wanted her audience to know that Zamore was considered as a member of the extended family rather than a servant.

M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT – That of a father; recognise me.

SOPHIE – It is him; I remember him, his features have stayed etched in my soul. Oh my father! What happy circumstance finds me in your arms? I had no hope left of finding you. After two years of sailing and searching, what inexpressible joy!

M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT – My daughter, we will only concern ourselves with our happiness.

SOPHIE – Ah! My father! What has happened to those wretches? Are they still alive, let us beg the Governor for mercy.

VALÈRE – My dear Sophie, it is he!

SOPHIE – You are Monsieur de Saint-Frémont?

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT – Yes; he is my spouse and you will be my daughter. Like you, I beg for mercy for these unfortunates.

SOPHIE, *throwing herself at Monsieur de Saint-Frémont's feet* – Oh my father! The fate of these unfortunates is in your hands. They have brought you back to my love. Without their compassionate help your daughter would have died; accord to nature the greatest mercy that she asks of you. Planters, slaves, fall on your knees to this most generous of men. Clemency is to be found at the feet of virtue.

*All kneel bar the Military and the Judge.*

THE SLAVES – Your Lordship.

THE PLANTERS – Governor.

MME. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT – My friend.

SOPHIE – Father.

M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT – What do you ask of me?

ALL – Pardon these wretches.

BABY, *kneeling* – Mercy, papa, mercy.

VALÈRE, *taking Baby in his arms* – Ah! How sweet it is to cover you in kisses.

M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT, *moved* – Ah! I cannot resist this last entreaty! My children, my spouse, my friends, I grant it.

ALL – What joy!

*The Grenadiers and the soldiers bend their knees and straighten up immediately.*

THE MAJOR – Brave warriors, do not blush at this sensitive gesture; it purifies courage rather than perverting it.

MIRZA – Almighty God, you are altering our unhappy fate; you are making us supremely happy; your justice manifests itself without end.

M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT – My friends, I give you your freedom, and an honest fortune.

ZAMORE – No, my Master; keep your favours. The most dear to our heart is to allow us to live with you and all that you hold most dear.

MIRZA, *approaching Sophie* – I want to stay by your side for ever and I do not want you to have any other slave to serve you; promise me. I have a right to a place in your heart as you have in mine.

SOPHIE – My dear Mirza, only death can ever separate us.

M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT, *to his spouse* – My dear friend, here then is the daughter that I grieved for this morning, her husband and her child! This Orphan that we took in with a tenderness above and beyond that which simple humanity inspires; nature's rights are never lost. But alas! The fate of the wretched Claire fills me with fear!

SOPHIE, *crying* – My poor mother? She is no more.

M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT – Alas! I was the cause of her death!

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT – My dear Sophie, if I could efface the painful image of your unfortunate mother by the love I feel for your father then perhaps you could see her in me and become my daughter. Your father knows my intentions in your favour as will you by and by.

SOPHIE – Ah! Madame, you are already so dear to me! You were born to be the worthy spouse of such a respectable father. I am moved by so many different feelings all at the same time! And all make me perfectly happy. (*To her spouse.*) Dear Valère!

VALÈRE – My dear Sophie, I share your joy.

EMILIE – After so much misery, let us enjoy ourselves.

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT – Emilie is right; let us think only of celebrating Zamore and Mirza's Wedding. (*To the Indian.*) You will see an unusual ceremony, artifice will not preside: here simple nature holds sway.

M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT – Let us start with torchlight and dance all through the night.

MIRZA – We live so that we may love each other; no more sorrow for us; we shall be forever happy. For ever and ever!

ZAMORE – Yes, for ever and ever.

*End of the third and last Act.*

## ENTERTAINMENT

*The performance should end with an heroic ballet of natives and soldiers; Zamore and Mirza's wedding takes place on stage; a tree trunk serving as an Altar, men and women should file past, each holding a palm frond. Zamore and Mirza are to be carried in triumph on a palanquin; a chariot, pulled by slaves, carrying Madame de Saint-Frémont, closes the procession. Zamore and Mirza approach the Altar, led by two elderly People, one of each sex. The young couple kneel while the old people crown them and young natives dance around them. A canon is heard and the sea appears to be covered in Ships. This Ballet must depict the discovery of America, the terrified natives interrupt their ceremony and run towards the shore. The soldiers arrive en masse, the natives hand over their kneeling women to the soldiers and then all run and hide in the forest. The women pretend to hand themselves over to the force of the warriors but as soon as the ballet starts they all run away over the hill. The soldiers seem to pursue them angrily. The General appears and halts, at a sign, the fury of the soldiers, and gives them such a moral lesson that all the surprised natives return. The General makes them understand that he landed on the island to protect them rather than to tyrannise them. The ballet ends in admirable harmony; Indian music, blending with military music, must create a novel theatrical effect.*

THE END.

## RÉFLEXIONS SUR LES HOMMES NÈGRES

### *Reflections Concerning Black Men*

The deplorable fate of black mankind has always elicited my interest. My understanding was just beginning to develop, at an age when children are carefree, when the first sight of a Negress made me reflect and enquire about her colour.

Those that I could question at the time did not satisfy my curiosity or my reasoning. They treated such people as brutes, as beings that Heaven had damned but I, growing older, clearly observed that it was force and prejudice that had condemned them to this horrible slavery, that Nature had no part in it and that the unjust and powerful interest of the Whites was responsible for it all.

Imbued with this truth for a long while, and convinced of their appalling situation, I treated of their Story in the first dramatic work that came from my imagination. Several men took an interest in their fate, they worked to temper it; none thought to represent them on the Stage, complete with their costume and local colour, as I did, if the Comédie Française had not opposed it.

Mirza had conversed [in or conserved?] her natural tongue; nothing was more affectionate. I felt that it added to the value of this Drama, this was also the opinion of all Connoisseurs, apart from the Actors. Let us spend no more time on my Play as it was received. I present it to the Audience.

Let us return to the dreadful fate of the Negroes; when will work be undertaken to change it, or at least to temper it? I know nothing of Governments' Politics, but they are fair, and never has Natural Law been more in evidence. They cast a benevolent eye on all the worst abuses. Man everywhere is equal. Fair-minded Kings do not want Slaves; they know that they have loyal Subjects; France will not abandon the unfortunates who suffer a

thousand deaths for one, since personal interest and ambition settled the most uncharted Islands. Europeans, greedy for blood and that metal that cupidity has named gold, have changed Nature in these happy climes. The father disowns his child, the son sacrifices his father, brothers fight each other and the conquered have been sold like cattle at a market. What am I saying? It has become a Trade in the four corners of the world.

A trade in men!... Almighty God! And Nature does not shudder! If they are animals, are we not likewise? How do Whites differ from this kind? It is in colour... Why does the pallid Blonde not want to cede to the Brunette who resembles a Mulatto? This impression is as striking as from the Negro to the Mulatto. The colour of mankind is nuanced, like all the animals that Nature has produced, as well as the plants and minerals. Why does day not compete with night or the sun with the moon and the stars of the firmament? All is varied, that is the beauty of Nature. Why then destroy her Work?

Is man not her most beautiful work of art? The Ottoman uses Whites in the same way that we use Negroes: we do not treat him as a barbarian or an inhumane man and we exercise the same cruelty on men whose only resistance is their submission.

But once this submission has run its course what does the barbaric despotism of the planters of the Isles and Indies produce? All manner of revolt, a carnage that the power of troops only serves to augment, poisonings and all that man can achieve once he is rebelling. Is it not atrocious that Europeans, having acquired considerable plantations thanks to their industry, should rain blows from morn till night on these unfortunates who would nonetheless till their fertile fields if afforded more liberty and kindness.

Is their condition not the cruellest, their work painful enough, without them being subjected to the most horrible punishments for the slightest misdeed. Changing their condition is discussed, new means of tempering it are proposed, without fearing that this type of man might misuse such total or limited freedom.

I understand nothing of Politics. It is predicted that general freedom would render Negro men as essential as Whites; that once they had become masters of their own fate, they would be masters of their desires; their children would be able to stay with them. They would work with more exactitude and more ardour. The spirit of dissent would no longer torment them: the right to advance themselves like other men would render them wiser and more compassionate. Deadly plots would no longer threaten. They will be free Farmers in their own lands like the Labourers of Europe. They will not leave their fields to come to foreign Nations.

The freedom of the Negroes would create a few deserters but far fewer than among the inhabitants of the French countryside. Barely have young Villagers acquired maturity, strength and courage than they set off towards the Capital to take up the noble employment of Lackey or Porter.<sup>11</sup> There are a hundred Servants for each position whereas our fields are short of Farmers.

This freedom multiplies an infinite number of unemployed, of wretches, in a word all sorts of undesirables. A wise and salutary limit should be placed on all People, that is the art of Sovereigns and of Republican States.

My innate knowledge could allow me to find a sure method, but I will guard against presenting it. I would have to be better educated and more enlightened with regard to the Politics of Governments. I have said it, I know nothing and I submit my observations at random, good or bad. The condition of these unfortunates must interest me more than anyone since it has been five years since I conceived of a drama based on their deplorable History.

I have only one bit of advice to give to the actors of the Comédie Française, and it is the only favour that I will ask of them in my life: they must adopt both the colour and the dress of the Negro. Never was there a more favourable time and I hope that the

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<sup>11</sup> 'Laquais and Crocheteur' are the original terms, 'crocheteur' derives from 'crochet' i.e. hook and can mean docker, porter or, piquantly, picklock.

Performance of this Drama will produce the effect that one can expect in favour of these victims of ambition.

The costume is responsible for at least half of the effect of this Play which will move both the pen and the heart of our best Authors. My aim will be fulfilled, my ambition satisfied, and the Comédie will elevate itself rather than denigrate itself through colour.

My happiness would no doubt be overwhelming if I were to see the Production of my Play, just as I imagine it. Posterity would require of this feeble sketch a touching tableau. Artists keen to use their brushes on its behalf could be considered the Founders of the wisest and most useful Humanity and I am certain, in advance, that their support of this feeble drama would favour the subject.

Ladies and Gentlemen [of the Comédie Française], do put on my Play, it has waited its turn quite a long time if, by rights, it should not already have been done several times. Here it is in print, you wished for it; all the Nations and I beg you for its production, I am sure they will not disagree with me. This sensibility that, in anyone else, would smack of self-esteem is merely the effect produced in my heart by all the public clamour in favour of Negroes. The Reader who has judged me correctly will be convinced of this truth.

But with you, Ladies and Gentlemen, I have to justify myself after you attributed some nonsense to me regarding Molière, and Mercier whom I cherish and admire in more ways than one given that he preceded me in being badly treated by you despite being a most honest gentleman. I am not surprised that you did not know how to appreciate him for he knows neither the adulations nor the petty jealousies of all the low Literati. Despite the many grievances that I have against you I have no doubt that you are capable of being fair, when it suits you, but you have to admit that it does not suit you very often. You appreciate artifice due to your character and your talent suits well-turned phrases. Dramatic expressions pass you by yet that is what you should do best. Well, forgive these last words of advice, they cost me dear and at that price I feel entitled to offer them to you. Farewell, Ladies and Gentlemen: following on from my observations act my Play as you see fit; I shall not attend the rehearsals. I give all my rights to my son; may he make good use of them and may they save him from becoming an Author for the Comédie Française. If he believes me he will never scribble any Literature. Meanwhile I have not been able to prevent him from joining the general impetus. Noyon's daughter [or the girl from Noyon] has suddenly made an Author of him. His Lordship the duc d'Orléans's good deeds have excited his pen. I have to admit that I offered something by way of anecdotes, and were it not for the aim of this bagatelle, this piece would not be tolerable and I would have kept it anonymous. But believing that it was pitiful in its writing I have placed it at the end of my last Volume. There are Authors who always retain their mystery unless they succeed but I see no dishonour in a mediocre text; this one merits indulgence as much for its aim as for the times. He has reworked his idea for Noyon's daughter and with one of his friends he has created a Comic Opera that I think should meet with some success. I must make the Author known to the Public and accept that the worst elements are those in my style. I barely worked on it for an hour, without thought, and my son was no wiser; my mediocrity in this genre has only weakened his first attempt. I beg indulgence on his behalf and for myself the greatest severity; I make honourable amends in advance. And in order to be readily forgiven I beg my Reader to remember that *Zamor* [sic] and *Mirza* dates from the century of Great Men. It will soon be forgotten that as an unnatural mother I dipped into the subject of the Good Mother.