

THE PRETERIT-PRESENT; OR, A BIG
BOOK WITHOUT MANY PICTURES

By

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PREFACE

If a writer writes for any reason other than to earn wages, it had better be to learn something. Else the title of fool is too generous. Having never had the luck to offer my work in exchange for more than "drinking money," I have become accustomed to the sole pursuit of a sound technical understanding of the craft. Thus, my decision concerning the dissertation--surely to be a work of some note, considerable weight, a (terminal) degree of complexity--had to rest upon the answer to a deceptively uncomplicated question: how could I best learn what I most needed to know?

I wanted to explore the relationship between time and literary genre on the basis of the assumption that prose, drama, and poetry achieve different effects because each makes use of a distinctive "sense of completion." If rhythm is time deliberately altered in accordance with a particular artistic objective, it must play a determining role in any definition of genre based upon closure: after all, rhythm would, perforce, be the writer's chief tool in manipulating the reader's view of time in order to "make an end." I determined to operate with the hypothesis that the temporal illusion of prose is linear, that of drama, cyclical, and poetry, static--because, in my

own writing, I had observed a strong tendency to rely on these particular and distinct modes of rhythmic synthesis.

At the time I reached this decision, I had no notion as to what the subject might be; I only knew that it would have to possess sufficient depth to warrant extended development and sufficient scope to allow for more than one approach. I trusted my ability to recognize the right material when it came along, and I felt that I had found it in the life, death, and "resurrection" of François-Émil Sébastien Renier de Bois-Marchés. Here was a tale that crossed three cultures, spanned huge tracts of geography--and travelled through time, itself. If my focal character was not exactly scaled to epic proportions, the events which enveloped him certainly were. I could present the circumstances of his life, as he understood them, by means of a first-person narrative; the dramatic format of the second book would enable me to escape the (presumed) limitations of that point of view and provide the reader with a present-tense argument among four key characters now occupying the "nether-world"; finally, the third book--to be comprised of a series of poems--would facilitate the introduction of ideas concerning the universal implications of the relationship between protagonist and writer.

I cannot otherwise explain my rapid, apparently arbitrary association of prose/linear time with the past, dramatic/cyclical time with the present, and poetic/static time with the future than by reference to a common perception. While it is undoubtedly dangerous to rely too heavily upon the notion of shared experience, I could not resist the temptation to assume that many human beings, under the influence of Western civilization, tend to view past events in a sequence--moving

linearly from first to last; the present, as a cycle or, more sadly, a routine; and the future as some distant, frozen moment. If I were correct about the temporal illusion of prose narration, then this genre was best suited to a description of actions completed in the past-- events to be interpreted in a linear sequence, no matter how they might be presented. Similarly, the cyclical rhythm of drama--created by the interplay of fixed voices--inevitably mirrored the recurring patterns of our perception of the present. And poetry, with its singular ability to hold time within its own rhythm, could best serve to lend us a glimpse of the future. I was ready to begin my experiment in The Preterit-Present; Or, A Big Book Without Many Pictures.

I should perhaps insert a note concerning that ominous title. The Anglo-Saxons had an interesting habit of "reincarnating" obsolete verbs. The past tense--slightly altered in form and meaning--was appropriated to the present and, thereby, preserved for the future. We refer to those dozen or so verbs as "preterit-present." I thought the term might prove an effective title for a book in which time would be of-the-essence. The subtitle makes lighter reference to the unusual use of illustrations--which are here intended to function as images rather than "depictions."

By the time I had completed "Rôles et Paroles," it was evident that my initial postulate--pertaining to the genre-specific, structural function of rhythm in literature--would have to be adjusted in accordance with certain discoveries I had made with respect to the potential flexibility of the first-person voice. Henry James could label the extended use of a first-person persona "barbaric" because, given this technique, the reader's comprehension of characters and events would be

limited by the narrator's own quirks of perception, recollection, and expression. Yet what if, at the point of narration, the first-person persona were no longer living? Granted the wisdom of Lazarus and the "supernatural" gift of omniscience, the narrator could speak with unprecedented authority--derived from the union of first- and third-person techniques.

I was able to discern four "tones" within the first-person voice of "Rôles": those of the boy, the youth, the man, and the spirit. If these were adequately delineated, each could provide its own perspective on the sequence of events that comprised the prose narrative; the interplay among the four "tones" would create a cyclical pattern with the immediacy of drama; furthermore, if the work as a whole could be structured so that key thematic elements were supported by specific rhythms--then I could simultaneously achieve the effect of poetry. Indeed, I began to suspect that I might have stumbled upon the proper form for the "modern epic."

I decided to pursue my original plans for the second and third books, despite increasing misgivings. I now look upon "Le Danse: A Quadrillogue" and "from Ontario to Oklahoma" as unpublishable exercises. "Rôles et Paroles" must be rewritten to incorporate a few of the topics of conversation in the "quadrillogue," as well as the letters of François-Émil to Martha Jefferson which currently appear in book three. Since the value of my experiment finally rests upon what it has taught me, I intend to speak at some length concerning my scheme for revision; yet I cannot effectively do so without first exploring what-went-wrong.

I sensed from the outset that no ordinary "illusion of reality" would suffice to overcome the barriers to believability which the basic

premise of a book like The Preterit-Present might engender. An exceptional (even rabid) veracity seemed necessary if I were to re-create the voice of an eighteenth-century spirit to the satisfaction of a twentieth-century audience. The verism of "Rôles et Paroles" is reducible to two elements of story-telling: the selection of language and incident.

Since François-Émil spoke three languages fluently, my first difficulty lay in establishing a natural degree of linguistic variety without placing excessive demands upon the reader. To some extent, this problem was both complicated and assuaged by the fact that the members of the narrator's intended audience--twentieth-century Americans--are largely monolingual. The dominant language would be English, but this was neither the native nor the adopted language of the narrator. Literate speakers of English will almost certainly know something of French (through no fault of their own), but the peculiar dialect of Tuscarora which François-Émil shared with the members of his tribe has been effectively eradicated. Thus, while I could, however precariously, rely upon the reader's understanding of some phrases in French, I could not employ the lexicon of a dead language. In the following prose narrative, the "foreign" languages are chiefly conveyed through syntactic distortions in English; in the sparing instances in which I have used "Indian" words, the vocabulary is drawn from Iroquois--the lingua franca of the Six Nations tribes.

Although it would require a concordance of much greater bulk than the text to account for each of the narrator's mistakes in English, these may be broadly grouped into one of two categories: deliberate/consistent or unintentional/inconsistent. François-Émil will not spell

the word French correctly because he considers the e a subtle insult to his first language, but he occasionally misspells that--only because the word functions similarly to que and he tends to confuse the vowels. A number of his errors, such as the pluralization of adjectives, are inspired by the influence of the French language: when one is accustomed to les chevaux blancs, it is difficult to avoid "the whites horses," even if one knows better than to say "the horses whites." Of all his linguistic lapses, perhaps the most interesting occur in the misformation of verb tenses, e.g., "I was being angered by this." These owe their origin to the impact of Tuscarora.

Many other mistakes are uniquely individual, the result of the narrator's own habits of thought and speech. Varying levels of maturity also affect his perception and consequent expression. When relating events he witnessed or participated in as a small boy, François-Émil makes errors that do not occur elsewhere; a good example is reflected in the simultaneous conjugation of to take as a strong and a weak verb in the past tense: "I kissed him, and he tooked me home" (108). Nevertheless, he makes so many and such a wide variety of mistakes that the reader is hard-pressed to note the differences. One of my most important tasks in revising the first book will be to systematize these errors such that each becomes identified with a particular tone-of-voice.

Obviously, a spirit might be willing to discuss matters that no living individual would consider--and with an excruciating degree of frankness. Surely there would be small reason for him to take the trouble, were he not to speak of the unspeakable. Furthermore, the reader would have no incentive to lend credence to a spectral account that

was as carefully dishonest or as cautiously obfuscated as the speech of ordinary men and women. Even so, if I risked confusing my readers with the interplay of half-remembered languages, I--perhaps more seriously--risked alienating them in remaining true to the nature of my narrator in this respect.

During his childhood, François-Émil was victimized, in one way or another, by virtually every adult around him--the stable-master and the playwright Caron (better known as Beaumarchais) being notable exceptions. The abuse of children in any age is not remarkable, and France, during the time of de Sade, doubtless harbored tales far more shocking than that of my narrator. Since "decorum" was the least of my worries, I decided to let François-Émil speak freely, in hopes that his voice could command an earnest, even compassionate, acceptance of much that was not "aesthetically pleasing."

Human sexuality is frequently conveyed in literature through oblique insinuation or pointless pornography; in "Rôles et Paroles," however, sexuality is--whether exquisite or terrifying--simply inescapable. It was, after all, a determining factor in the life of the narrator from his earliest recollection to his last. He had been raped and seduced as a boy and could scarcely be expected to forget the fact; to me, at least, his unselfpitying honesty in recounting these events seems an heroic achievement. I have no plans for deleting any of the episodes recorded here, but I shall include additional vignettes relevant to the narrator's role in the American Revolution and as a teacher among the Tuscaroras.

"Le Danse" will make notable contributions to the revision of "Rôles" before I file it away. The material concerning François-Émil's

uncertain parentage [Renier, his adopted "surname," is French for "to disinherit"] and the historical relationship between Simon Bar Kochba and Hia-leah's ancestors is, I think, essential to the story--although it appears too late in the present version for the reader to form the necessary connections with ease. Perhaps something will be lost when the distinct (if disembodied) voices of Marie, Martha, and Hia-leah can no longer be heard, but I believe more will be gained, dramatically, by the interaction of meticulously modulated tones within the narrator's own voice.

Just as there are four vocal tones within the first-person narrative (however inadequately distinguished) and four voices in the anti-climactic closet drama, the verse section represents my attempt to explore the relationship between character and author through the use of four personae. There is, of course, the familiar voice of François-Émil; in addition, the "implied author" assumes three masks--those of the prophet, the satirist, and the egoist. Experimentation in the arts is often an excuse for iconoclastic frivolity, and, while the seriousness of my intent was of a high-and-deadly order, I can readily see that, were this book to remain unchanged, I might be charged with a kindred buffoonery. I had hoped that, by subsuming everything from classical Greece to contemporary Stillwater, from chemistry to cabalism, I could create a verbal vortex into which the reader would be willingly, actively drawn. Instead, the effect--to judge by the responses of early readers--is disturbing and distracting. A few of the poems, especially "American Fits," may find their way into print separately, but the poetry of the second draft of "Rôles" will be of an entirely different order.

I began by saying, in effect, that writers of prose, drama, and poetry destroy time in order to create rhythm. The rhythm of prose, much as one means of interpreting the past, moves in an irresistibly linear fashion. When "Rôles et Paroles" is rewritten, the narrative sequence should be recoverable--even if thirty vignettes were inserted between any two which appear here. I have said that the anticipated interplay of set voices in drama establishes a rhythmic pattern that approximates our sense of the cycles which may be used to measure the present. Once the characteristics of each tone within the first-person voice are clearly evident, a "drama" should unfold as the reader learns to expect the exchange and to comprehend it in terms of a vital action currently taking place in the mind or, more properly, the spirit of the narrator. While I have previously indicated that I consider the rhythmic structure of poetry capable of imposing the illusion of an ever-lasting instant, I have referred only briefly to the possibility of uniting "key thematic elements" with "specific rhythms" in order to achieve this effect.

For my purposes here, it is not necessary that readers be familiar with the intricate terminology of classical prosody: pherecrateans, aristophaneans, telesilleions, enoplians, and reizianums need not yet become an integral part of their vocabulary. The chief value of the study of Greek metrics for English prosodists concerns its identification--not only of unusual feet that are inexplicable on the basis of syllable-and-stress scansion, but also of certain combinations of feet in recurring units called cola. The reader need only consider that any idea or emotion has a unique rhythmic quality when expressed verbally--and that this quality may be heightened and refined by the poet such

that, even if the resulting cola appear at irregular intervals, they will have--to put it simply--an effect similar to that of the leitmotif in opera.

Anyone who manages to struggle through the following draft will note that there are some concerns or interests which remain relatively constant throughout the various phases of the narrator's existence. Sex, race, religion, and politics are among the more striking--but there are humbler and perhaps more peculiar fascinations: François-Émil loves horses and takes great pride in his skills as a rider. It is my intention to tie each narrative theme to a particular metrical unit in order to establish cola that will recur throughout the book--irrespective of the vocal tone. A counterpoint should develop between the separate tones of the first-person voice and the persistent cola which will underscore the fact that the boy, the youth, the man, and the spirit are each and all François-Émil. Time has no power over that which poetry has put in order. At least, that's the illusion.

My experiment has succeeded in convincing me that the highest and best form of literature is that which combines, instead of isolating, the effects of prose, drama, and poetry--without confusing them--and that form I consider to be the epic. While I am not fond of the arduous task of revision, my goal is to see the vignettes of "Rôles et Paroles" function simultaneously-yet-distinctly as episodes, soliloquies, and cantos. Perhaps through this "multeity in unity" the narrator may give us a glimpse of human existence as at once a thing accomplished, ongoing, and yet to come.

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RÔLES ET PAROLES

If there were a marker, it would be telling you that I was born November 16, 1755, *et aussi que* someone named me François-Émil Sebastien Renier de Bois-Marchés (I am not knowing who). On the one bright day in January, 1800, I died killing another man. *Mais ce n'est pas l'histoire complète.* Perhaps a stone could be keeping rest, but here there is none.

Forgive poor grammar. I am not to the English quite accustomed: Jefferson's wife told me I had not the mouth for it. What is my language, *maintenant?* *Je me demande parce que ce n'est pas français--ne plus--et ce n'est pas anglais (d'accord?).* And I am forgetting me most of the Latin: *amo, amas, amat, amamus, amant.* (I have not been to the Church *depuis que j'ai eu quinze ans*, and those were not the words I heard then from *le monseignor.*) *Ma belle-mère* would give small thanks that François-Émil has yet enough Provençal to feel *la différence entre amorar et amorejar (devenir ou être amoureux!) dans son coeur--if once it did not show on his piece of slate. (Ils ont été les mots she first was me teaching.) C'est très difficile pour moi quelquefois à cause du fait que languages have different thinking. Denique, je suppose que ma langue, comme ma femme, is Tuscaroran: kenonwes, senonwes, rononwes--.*

You are not hearing of it? I know the why, *mes amis*; well do I know of it. But is not true Tuscaroran I give you--only Iroquois: the

master tongue with which we met at council. If you were before thinking that "Indians" say only *ugh*, then they are letting you play the fool at their own expense. Try this to remember:

Kenonwes.
Senonwes.
Rononwes.
Kanonwes.
lenonwes.
Teninonwes.
lakerinonwes.
Seninonwes.
Hninonwes.
Keninonwes.
Tewanonwes.
lakwanonwes.
Sewanonwes.
Ratinonwes.
Kontinonwes.

Already you know more of love than Latin can ever be telling you.

Hinc quam sic calamus saevior ense, patet. I warned my Tuscarorans that the white man *dit que son stylo est le pire*. They were saying his sword and his musket were enough: this writing must be very evil thing. *J'ai fait ma réponse*: "No! It carries words across great distance; it lets the past speak to the future--." At this, they were laughing: "*Il n'y a pas besoin de this writing!* The past is present allways in a future tongue." The people who took me in had no vision of a day when all those tongues would be cut off.

Be seeking the source of "ugh-ly" words in your English dictionary.

In the beginning, the Tuscarora were of North Carolina. *Où sont-ils maintenant?* They are the birds, the bear, the grey wolfe and the yellow--. Where are their children? Brantford, Ontario. (This is more worse, *mes amis*, than an *garçon de Provence* being chased to Calais avec *sa grand-mère*. Believe me, or be taking the walk yourself.) They called me what in English might be meaning mosquito: "small-flying-creature-stings." I am not knowing why, *exactement*, but I was of short stature and so was often finding it best to move quickly. And, too, I had some temper. Perhap these were a part of their thinking.

Au cours de la révolution, the English *et les Americains* wore Indian people against one another. I was learning of this during the time *j'ai parlé pour* Washington--but, busy riding and talking *toujours*, I did not think me of it. I was always speaking for guns: another shipment via Cape François? When? What is their condition? The ammunition? I was lucky to be getting weapons that were not older than myself.

On the night before God was to give me to the Tuscaroras, I watched a ship of "*Rodrigue Hortalez et Cie*" sink off the coast. It was a night of such cold that even Augustin--*mon cheval*--trembled under the blanket I had given him. I was myself, for once, glad of the signal-

fire--having more fear that I should freeze than be seen by English eyes.

The moon was full and heavy on the horizon. I was thinking it looked a warm place, compared to my piece of earth. *En fin*, I saw a ship and called out--as much for the heat of shouting as in hopes that my friends might hear me. There was a great blast of cannon from some distance, then flames aborde the vessel I come to meet. Quickly, I took Augustin and rode to the point: from there was I seeing two of ships. The English had hidden themselves in a cove and were firing from behind a little jut of land that served to protect them. The ship Pierre had sent had no fixed cannon with the hwich to answer (would have made them too suspicious), and it was hit three, four times before the men could haul forth the lighter guns and make their response. I saw them get off only the one round before a British shot hit the hold. This time, the cargo was plentiful: there was much combustion with flames ever rising. A cloud of steam gathered as the cold bay swallowed flickering splinters.

The English ship pulled from its cover. I was hearing men scream out of my reach. I yell for them to make the shore--only hoping they could survive such waters. 'Twas then the English began making best use of their muskets, emptied them into a handful of drowning Franchmen. I was looking a long time after and thought me to see dolphins lifting their backs against the moon. The English turned their cannon to the shore, and I, Augustin, to go.

As rarely, I was not thinking of British snipers. I rode blind and was aware only that it seemed Augustin had a ghost. I thought me to

hear atwhiles it scramble after Augustin leapt; methought even that its breath was quicker. But the snow was ever falling, muffling the sound, and I had not heart to listen closely. I was trying to hear nothing--to forget all sound, so I would not remember either the screams of my friends or the silence after rifle-fire.

A Tuscaroran arrow pierced my liver, and I was awake with pain. Augustin drew up as he felt me stiffen, then slump forward over his neck. I again urged him onward, clutching the mane. He quickened his pace. I squeezed my thighs fast around him with all I knew of strength and gave Augustin his head--knowing he could find Washington and that François-Émil does not fall from his horse.

My arms were rigid and cold; my legs burning. Over and over was I repeating, "François-Émil does not fall from his horse! *N'importe ou, n'importe quoi!* You are a stupid, stupid man, but you know how to sit a horse. You will NOT fall!" Even as a boy, everyone was telling me that I was the finest of horsemen. No one ever looked more grand astride his horse than Washington, but he said I should be teaching him to ride. It was all I had ever taken in pride.

Yet Augustin's uneven stride--now slipping in snow, now stumbling through hidden branches--was made the worse as he hesitated when he felt me jerk with pain. Each time he leapt and landed, leapt and landed, the arrow worked itself deeper through me. His wild running was tearing me apart. My legs were in another world; I could neither see nor feel them. The snow began to fall black, then red; black and red. It was no longer snow; I was no longer riding. The one impossible thing, the single thing that could never happen in all the shaken, shaking globe had come about: François-Émil had fallen from his horse.

When I first awoke to the Tuscaroras, there was a woman's breast in my mouth and fire below. It was the most embarrassing and confusing moment. She was holding my head in her arms very tenderly--so carefully that I was of some certainty that I must have done nothing I should not. But I was more certain that I did not know this woman--that I had never seen such a woman! When my eyes opened and found hers, she was smiling and saying something I could not understand. I tried to smile and felt her warm milk easing from my lips. As careful as I was always to be mindful of polite action and words--for these were most important to Maman--I knew of nothing to say or do in such situation. I was hoping only that soon I would remember something of how I had come to be nursing this strange woman, for I did not really want to stop--yet could not continue in this confusion.

I had not long to wait before a most horrible face forced its way between us, and then I was knowing François-Émil was in hell--as *le monseigneur* had predicted. (This, despite the fact that my own fire had quite gone out.) It was a terrible mask-man, grumbling and shouting in words altogether unknown to me. My head slipped from her hands to his as one instant of a dream slides into another. It was then only that I realized I had no strength, and only a dim sense of my anatomy. The terrible figure lay my head back and was examining me in ways I did not like, tho' I could make no complaint nor resistance.

I was frightened but determined to become angry if he did not stop his poking on me. Still, it was seeming that my body came to life in his grasp--however rough. He rubbed my arms and legs hard between his hands until I made effort to draw them away; then he rolled me to one side and examined the very places that still remained vague in me: a hollow, grey bore through me. He bent over me, pressed something cold into my back, and screamed. I screamed. There was a frozen moment--in which I expected Satan and a drove of devils--then instead came incredible laughter of women.

I have never liked the way women laugh when things are not entirely funny. Somehow it is most disconcerting. The demon-man seemed of like opinion, for he ripped his mask off and shouted the women away. When his face turned back to me, I knew I was not in hell but another world. It was a grim, handsome face, and it caught me by the eyes: he seemed to know I could not understand his meanings else. He took great time in talking to me. I said nothing and learned a few words. By the time he pulled the blanket over me, I was very tired and most unconscious of any hunger.

In dreams, I recalled me of another life.

On arrival in Boston, I had taken the first coach for Philadelphia and there waited in an inn close to the meeting-hall--of intent to meet the man whose words were stirring the world *et moi aussi*. In three of days, I must have drunk every bottle of Franch wine in the house--tho' this was being yet no large amount, may I assure you. *En fin* was the owner teasing me that I should have to learn to like his English ale or go thirsty. But did I tell this fellow that I would sooner drink my horse's water AFTER him--than be drinking with King George. At his were we all laughing, when John, the innkeeper, nudged me: "There he is."

I turned *lentement, très lentement*--as not to wake me. He was with four, five other men, but there was no mistaking him. I thought me never to have seen so tall a man with such grace. I began shaking, thinking of sudden--having come so far--I yet would not have courage but to walk across the room and introduce me. John was nudging again and nodding his head in Jefferson's direction. I made a small quip that I should wait until he was sitted--as then we should be nearer the same in height. The men took a table in one corner beneath windows by the doorway--thus to be keeping wary of the British soldiers on the street, or so did I think me. John drew five mugs of Colonial beer and stepped from behind the bar to serve them. He must have said him something, for Jefferson was looking 'cross the room at me.

There was no helping it: John had forced the moment. I am not knowing how I made my way to Jefferson. I was uneasy on my legs as a foal of three hours. But for the wine I might have fainted. Grand introduction! Make yourself the fool, François-Émil; be tripping over someone's boot, be falling on the floor at his feet. Certain to make good impression! But somehow I crossed the room without incident. 'Twas only close on I proved me the fool. He was starting to stand, when I knelt by instinct. (I could not be helping it; to me he was king.) For one of instants, we were both of us baffled: him again sitting so I would not be staring into his waistcoat. *En fin*, he laughed and drew me a chair--into the which I collapsed most gratefully. I had muttered sufficiently in Franch for him to catch my name; thus was I already shamed--for I had no right to it. But the *de* caught his ear, and for this he must have felt friendly to me: the nobility in France had no love of Englishmen. ('Twould be two days' ride from Philadelphia before I had courage to reveal my situation.)

Even an unimportant man may have his moment. So was this myne. Since was obvious I knew Jefferson, he began making the introductions. John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, James Madison, John Jay--and a young man of no more years than myself who was only then joining us: Alexander Hamilton. Do you know these men, *mes amis*? Do you know them? I have seen the most of their faces on your currency; they would rather you spinned their words.

Pardon. Is difficult to forget.

We seven drank late into the night. John brought forth the last bottles of wine and two of champagne--in no longing to be rid of us. By then was it decided that I should accompany Jefferson on the road to

Virginia. My English was very bad at the hour we parted, yet was I understanding that I should meet again with Jefferson in the morning--and so ride to Monticello. (I am thinking he had no small pride in its construction.) Adams and Franklin remained my friends; the others, I was never to see again.

Mais oui: looking from the windows of *le salon de Jefferson*, it was with effort I recalled the long ride through wildernesses. When Martha walked into the room, my vision failed me: I was blind. I bowed deeply in kissing her hand; for some of reasons, she let the other to touch my hair. I was covered with the road--as was Jefferson. We made excuse until we could be washing ourselves and make us worthy of her. She kissed him lightly upon the cheek, and I watched their hands--as they met and released, released and met. Her large grey eyes were ever on me, and I flushed--I could feel it in my ears. God could not be so unkind as to make me love her!--not with what I felt for him.

We laughed through dinner--such was my English then. For several days, the three of us were everywhere--excepting when Jefferson would retire into his library. Then would Martha and I find our own rooms--whether with willingness to sleep or no. On one evening late, she asked that I stroll with her. Begging God that I not love her, I agreed. What could I otherwise? All Provence would shudder, should I refuse.

It was most innocent walk and talking. We could see the lamp to burn in the library. We spoke in Franch, then English--as one moves easily from the left foot to the right, with me alone limping. Martha said I should read poetry to better my English; in this, were we much agreed--as I was thinking on Maman's words concerning the Latin. I had made love with no woman other, and my body was beginning then to ache.

Martha moved her hips gently beneath the scented pleat of her skirts, and I could feel myself shamefully rising. I was not yet twenty, and the evening was warm and vibrant all about us.

She spoke of Jefferson as if he were a great book she would never tire of reading: no matter if some parts were memorized and others could not be rewritten to please her. The lamp burned on in the library. I was glad of the dark as was not so difficile to hide me. Martha led me onward from the house to a small spot of the gardens she had claimed for her own. She was saying even Jefferson had not accompanied her there, and I was becoming a most uneasy boy. She sat herself on a stone bench, and I paced, pretending interest in all manner of flora which could scarcely be seen in the night. I asked again and again of Jefferson as the lamp burned--almost to the point I was *impoli*.

Martha was most intelligent woman; she was knowing my discomfort--*et c'est possible*, its source. Still was she not venturing toward the house; still was she tossing her beautiful auburn hair. Soon I was all but dancing in the front of her. His lamp was not burning the more than I. And Martha was too keen not to have noticed.

She began to ask the questions I could no be answering. Many were times I had made my bluff, but here I could not--not in this rich garden whose perfume could yet not match that of her dress. I was in sweat and fighting the mosquitoes; her coolness was so complete as to torment me. My voice began to break as it had not for years. With finality, she asked me to sit beside her. I could not. I could not. Thus was I kneeling at her feet--the which was worst. She took my head into her hands, and I was crying. This the moon must have told her, for his lamp was too distant. I was breaking apart in her arms.

The Tuscarora had saved me out of curiosity. Some weeks later I was learning I was not to leave. No one was more kind to me than Ruffled Owl--the boy who had shot me and who wore the jacket I had designed for service under Washington. Jefferson's sword belonged now to the chieftain, Royanerkowa. He had given his wife my necklace, bearing the Cross, but this she returned to me after asking what it meant. *Le pire*: Augustin had been made present of the chief's eldest son.

I was to touch no woman, no man's horse. In other things I was free, tho' not to be told where I was. One day, I walked away--thinking I knew more than they. The boy who was wearing my coat followed. *Après de six jours*, I was glad at having him on my path: the hills were nameless, like waves among waves on the sea. He letted me to share his horse, and we returned were in little time.

It was after certain that this "mosquito" (such as was my new name), being only stupid and white, had need of a guardian. Thus was appointed an *homme* in disgrace: 'twas no job for "noble creature," tracking an insect. One was many times out of favor because that his wife talked sharply--a thing no man should bear. *Finalement*, he grew bored from watching and thought to speak with me: it was not with pleasure that I first encountered "Hawk-Braking."

I was learning Tuscarora rapidly, more quickly than I could have imagined the English. But even thus was easier far for me to judge what a man meant by his actions than his words; *et, bien sûr*, all of my own actions were out of their context. At the first, they were of opinion that I was but an animal who responded as a human being; then I was a human being who spoke as a spirit. Finally, I was a man who thought like a woman--or so was I told. Hawk-Braking decided in his *ennui* to put this notion to the test. Either it was my courage on the moment or his kindness--neither of us ever knew--but was to him proven that I was no woman. It was he who decided then that no man should live as I: a wife of ill manners was still a woman, and I had none. This was he telling the others.

The clan was gathered, men and women both--a most exceptional event, if unimportant. Much argument followed *à cause du fait que je n'ai été pas un homme ordinaire*: I would not eat meat, and I would not kill. I had grown averse to the first from the time I was ten, and the latter I had sworn myself against. I would be good only for cutting wood and helping the women to grow plants and gather herbs the which were necessary to us. (Only later was it allowed that my service would be with the children, and our chief was even the slower to trust me in trade.)

Gravely, Royanerkowa was telling all that the women should decide among them if any might have me to husband. (Was always the woman's decision when any stranger were taken into the tribe and, the likewise, what his position within it should be: who, if any, should be his mate.) I was most embarrassed and sure thinking that there would be not one to want me.

The women separated from us--the younger ones laughing, their elders scolding them. I stood nervous and uncertain, almost wishing Hawk-Braking had said nothing. The women were taking a good time during hwich I was saying me--*encore et encore*--"No one is going to want you, François-Émil!" Aswel, Royanerkowa's son was making the great sport of me, tho' I could understand his wording but in part. *En fin, elles sont revenues. La réponse?*

Five of the women were thinking to be my bride! At this, the men were something in anger, but I had the most of surprise, *bien sûr*. Royanerkowa looked sternly on his wife and ordered that the women go again and find ONE, *seulement*, who should be so dishonored as to wed with me. When they return, it is Hia-Leah--a girl of seventeen. Since she was of a blood that once, long before, had mixed, Royanerkowa--*et sa femme aussi*--were in agreement. I looked on her as if I had never seen another woman--and was to look after at no other.

After Hia-Leah and I were married, I did not come from the special tent that was made for us *pour trois jours*. This seemed most unusual to the Tuscarora, and I am with certainty my reputation suffered during that time. Yet was it most important, for me, not to hurry her: she was but a girl, and we scarcely knew one the other. Too, my skin, my hair, my eyes were strange--and I had great fear lest the least rush should make her to detest me.

Our wedding took place in the long-house, as all others, and Hia-Leah was dressed as befit a Tuscaroran maiden of our clan: she wore many skirts, a small, white apron, and her long, black hair was dressed with flowers and feathers. She was the most beautiful woman who has ever lived!--or so as I saw her. I, myself, was but the odd mixture: I wore for the ceremony a Tuscaroran shirt, but aswell my old broadcloth breeches and black, Colonial boots.

Royanerkowa presided, but his wife did most the talking--and the ghost-dancer wove about us with his eery incantations. I was told that--unlike other husbands--I was to be in Hia-Leah's charge because I was, after the all, a foolish white man and had not wisdom to govern. Harder still, since I would not hunt, Hia-Leah must offer herself to other men of the village--if she or our children after were to have meat. (In this, the men were kind on us: only once were we threatened to make such payment.) In all these things, I agreed, for how could I do other?

I would have this woman or none, and her only on the terms of her people. But I was not thinking myself an unfortunate man!--only something nervous.

Her friends and family sang and danced before us as we walked--our anxious hands together--toward the tent. It was of white cloth, like Hia-Leah's little apron, and I thought it to afford no considerable privacy; yet was set at some distance from the camp. We entered: me first, her following. As she drew the flap down behind us, there was outside much frenzied cheering and few tears.

With suddenness, I knew not what to do and was obvious she waited upon me. I took her hand and led her to the bed: it, too, was special--the mattress filled with herbs and feathers, not straw. She sat her there, and we stared at one another--smiling, but unable really to speak, as neither of us had the other's language. I said brief words which seemed to puzzle, then frighten her. I took them back, and she laughed. I was now in absolute confusion, but feeling better as she relaxed. Again, we stared--me stammering. At lengths, she lay back upon the bed--her body stiff and fully dressed. I shook my head--"Non, non, non!"--falling into Franch and taking her hands to have her sit *encore*. I kissed her palms, let my trembling lips to light upon her forehead, and stepped back. She looked on me with less *hesitation*.

I took off my boots--the which was no easy task, standing as I was and shaking! Hia-Leah smiled broadly, with more of *confidence*. I was in no way eager for her to see the scars on my back, but I must suppose she had been told of them by others. I removed my shirt and stood looking to her, hopefully. She made the smile again, and I grew much less afraid. I was yet most aware that my chest must seem very pale to her

and so thought to sit with her: the least distance, mayhap the least chance to seem strange.

I sat me then and put my arms around her. She placed her fingertips upon my shoulder and began to trace their shape. She felt aswell the lines of my face, the curious moustache, and my chest; then she dropped her hands to her lap, smiling. I stood to finish my undressing, but she seized my arm and motioned me again beside her. Tho' I did not want it, she turned my back to her and made examination of that British enterprise. I was then hurt and embarrassed and tried to dodge her touch, but she spoke soothingly in Tuscaroran as her fingers found the worst places on me. I caught some of her meaning. She was asking what test I had been put to for my manhood--if this were common practice among white men. I confessed to her that was but an enemy's cruelty--not honor, but disgrace--and I begged of her, as best I could, not to ask me further.

She turned my face to hers and kissed me full upon the mouth. We lay back together--her lips at mine not *timidement*. But suddenly she felt the moustache and drew back, rubbing her nose. (On this point, we would quarrel once--before she was in agreement I could keep it!) I stood me again to remove what remained of my clothes, and this was she watching most attentive. I felt her eyes move over me 'til I was again the one at loss; yet, if I did not please her, there was nothing in this I could change: I was but what I was.

She moved now with grace and swift dignity. She rose and removed the apron, lay it carefully upon the bed. With the same steady, almost sombre movement, she stepped from the moccasins, untied the strings to her blouse and the skirts--letting them fall, one upon the other, to the

floor. When she was naked, she pulled the braiding from her hair and approached me.

Hia-Leah, Hia-Leah! Where are you? I was so in awe of what I had seen before me that I could not raise my eyes then from your feet. Where has God taken you? WHERE ARE YOU?! Why was I damned to part from you?

Forgive, *mes amis*: I am a man yet.

I was thus staring on the ground, my head bowed for her beauty. She lifted my chin lightly, put her arms about my waist, her cheek to my flushing chest. She was speaking, yet I could make no answer save to let my palms sing across her back, about the fine turn of her waist, the warm curve of her hips. I sank slowly to my knees, covering her mouth, her neck, her breasts, her tight belly with kisses. Then, at once, I nudged the space behind her knees and let her drop into my arms, hers clutching my neck in surprised laughter. I stood with the weight of us both--feeling neither--and carried her to our bed. I knew not the time, the place, or who I was: this might be any age, anywhere; I could be any man. For such things I cared not. I had but one thought remaining: this would be her night, not mine.

She was yet the girl, and she did not know me. To all my awareness, she knew little of herself. What had she been told? What had she felt? Did she know anything of the intensity that we could bring between us? Above all, could she desire a man so foreign as to seem the freak? a man so often scorned as a fool? I thought my flesh would burst if I could not be inside her, but not now, not yet. No, no, no! First, I must be certain that she had the knowledge of a woman's pleasure in my arms.

I kissed her thighs, and the moustache tickled; she laughed and wrapt her legs about my neck. I licked and kissed and caressed her as I had been shown when but an impotent, uncertain boy. I was he no more, but determined to restrain me--until such an hour, such a day as she would draw me in. I knew what it was to be pressed too early; I knew the confusion and the pain. This was not to happen to Hia-Leah--if I died with desire of her!

When she came to the highest point of pleasure, I found my release aswell, tho' outside her. She pulled me close to her afterward, nibbling and licking my ears; then she began humming, sometimes singing, rocking with me. These were songs I had heard among the Tuscaroran children. I slept as I had not in years.

The next morning, Hia-Leah, dressed as before, went from out tent for the food and water--yet I could not leave while she remained the virgin. I heard the women excitedly to approach, and then back from her. I heard aswell Royanerkowa's son--his crude laughter and some of his language. Yet Hia-Leah, even at seventeen, was not a woman to make light of, and I caught her unguarded response: most bold address to the son of a chieftain! I was not caring what they said or thought of me: I wanted Hia-Leah's love only.

When she returned, we sat naked--the sun-light filtering through our tent, making us better known than had the moon. We could not eat, tho' we were thirsty. Hia-Leah began to find interest in me as she did not the evening before. I lay back and let her fingers take me. She watched curiously as her fondling aroused me, and then asked, with her hands, for me to help her give me pleasure. It was through her most gentle, sincere caresses that I found an innocence I had never known.

Although it must have seemed strange to her--as it must to any woman at the first--she was neither the least afraid nor ashamed of me. When I had spilt me in our palms, she closed her hand in mine, and we slept. For all my knowing that such is not possible, I thought--and still must think me--that we dreamt then as one.

A second day, and she must leave me if we were not to die of thirst--and this time hunger! The joking was hard for her, and the son of Royanerkowa made point to come beside our tent, shouting: "As I told you, the Mosquito is a woman!" When Hia-Leah entered the tent, it was with fury. Now in our ease, my speech was better, and I was telling her not to be so troubled: I did not care what they thought of me. But 'twas her pride, *mes amis*, that was the greater affected! Seeing her anger and knowing her trust and growing love for me, I took heart in the belief that my passion would be asked to wait no longer.

She removed her elaborate dress--the curious apron again spread upon the bed, this time her buttocks squarely placed atop it. Her breasts seemed the fuller and her hips more rounded than before. She drew me toward her, sliding her arms about my waist, her legs around my hips. There was a tense determination on her lips which I did not like and quickly kissed away: 'twould be no better if she took me to her in revenge than I her to me from lust! Softly, I began to speak our names and she to repeat after. I spoke them gently, lovingly, then *plus en plus* eagerly--as did she.

For the first time, I brought my hips into line with hers. She shifted under me--I feared in a last reluctance--yet she was but making her own adjustment, for her hands now moved to guide me. I began, as on the first night, to lose all sense of anything that was not her. I am

even yet not confident we were in such-a-place at such-a-time, for I, at least, was soaring. And there was but an inch of me inside her; she had not asked for more.

She spoke then our names with questions after them: "Hia-Leah? François-Émil?" To this I made answer: "Leah. Émil." Again and again, she queried, 'til I made reverse of the sounds, scrambling our names--blind and deaf and dizzy in my desire. I felt her hands glide from my penis to my hips, and I knew the moment close. There was not such a great deal more of me, yet I yearned, yearned for her to take all that there was. I was in full knowledge that I could finish at any time, but working, hoping to wait for her. I called her name in desperation, and her palms pressed into my buttocks.

Her hips moved toward mine so that I thought me to feel, impossibly, the tip of my penis stroke the last, delicate limit between us. I looked full into her eyes, felt her nipples rise just beneath mine--touching and rushing away, meeting to part, parting to meet again and again. Her eyes brightened, her legs gripped behind mine, and her hips thrust upward to greet me. We cried out on an instant in which I knew not whether I was in her or she in me, or if any such distinction still existed. I was throbbing yet, all that I had racing into her. I had never held this moment so long or realized what infiniteness rushed within it. I was lost, vanished, all gone into her, and only her warmth, her certain blood kept a familiar terror at bay from me.

I was in Maman's rooms of the afternoon and again in the evenings. She taught me Latin, Provençal, music, and aswel others things a mother really should not. I cannot remember when she was not me touching, but I was of ten years before I respond *comme un homme*. (It was then to me given my own room next to hers, so Anton had less the chance to torment me.)

I can recall feeling something frightened--uncertain--until I saw Maman to be pleased with me. There was incredible tension in my body, and I did not know how to direct it. *En fin*, I had fear something terrible was about to happen, but she was of patience, steadily stroking me. She was saying this was a wonderful thing: I was becoming the man--as she had been hoping. Still I could not imagine Papa with his head so dizzy.

I had fear for all she said that Maman did not really know what was about to happen and that when it did she would be angry with me. I told her that I was nervous: *j'ai eu besoin d'uriner*. She was laughing, kissing me hard on the mouth. I threw my arms around her bare neck and pressed my face into her hair--the both of which were scented: *un peu capiteux*. She whispered into my ears: "You are about to become the man, my little bird--for Maman." Although my mind was not clear, I think I most expected to find myself of a sudden six feet tall, wearing Papa's heavy boots and spectacles. But I could not understand what this

might have to do with the sharp, steep edge *mon pénis* was climbing even in her soft hand.

I must have said a number of silly things, for Maman was laughing always and kissing my ear. I was discovering the tension in my back to lessen if I moved my hips the further into her embrace. Many the times she had so caressed me, but here there was great difference: the warmth was so anxious as not to be entirely pleasant--*et, bien sûr*, I was not knowing what would come of it. I wanted but to forget myself and become part of her; I was feeling that I would die if I could not. At the last, I could but surrender myself to her hands, hoping she would forgive me.

Is difficult for small boy--even one who had often seen a woman find her mark of pleasure--to be comprehending the blade which cuts without pain. But, even not understanding, my penis found the place it had been seeking high at the point of a sword; of a sudden did it pierce--with joy! I cried out, astonished. Maman fell to kissing me everywhere and praised the spot of dampness in her palm. I can recall me only asking, *encore et encore, "Est-ce que je suis un homme, maintenant?"*

Anton, my step-brother, was seven years the older than I and, like all Maman's children, of dark hair and temper. He was most jealous of me. In this was my understanding slow--for I could not be seeing the why anyone should have wish to be François-Émil. Yet was Anton catching me by the shoulders to say he had told Papa *par lettre* that I was sleeping with Maman.

I was of great puzzlement. Even as *un enfant*, I had been carried to her chambers by our nurse. Maman took me to her from the first. 'Twas true she returninged me to my own bed allways before the dawn, but this was only bycause that I woke earlier--and would be making too much noise. Was not this why I had suffered the cold sheets? Why would Papa suddenly care to know what had never mattered before?

Anton became incensed and hit me hard across the mouth. I was thirteen to his twenty and not prepared to stand him. I remained was, on the floor. He loomed, laughing in hysterical fashion, over me: soon would the devil in his house be punished; soon would the innatural one be driven from his mother's bed. I thought me Anton to have lost his mind, like Adeleine. Adeleine.

When at last Anton was leaving, I picked me from the floor and went to Maman. It was late of an afternoon, hot in July. She would not be listening to me: she was of insistence that we bathe in champagne--cold from the cellar. The servants had spent hours bringing bottles

from below and were yet filling the huge brass tub with champagne. The high windows were thrown open, and the long, light curtains trailed into the room: was no time to be talking of Anton. I watched as another thirty bottles of Papa's champagne completed our bath--Maman making test of its temperature. When was just to her touch, she ordered the men gone and began to undress me.

Champagne has much strange effect when your skin is warm and open: every part of me seemed to be drinking. Maman cupped her hands and sipped, then splashed at me. In truth, was wonderful coolness--'tho something sticky. I attacked, most cleverly, pulling her feet from below--near-drowning her in a sea of cold champagne, she tugging me under. I rose, gasped, gulped champagne--and was knowing I wanted her. Then was she flying up, in a stream; I seized her, pressed my chest wet against hers. For once in always, I wanted her first.

She, scrambling from the bath, rang for a maid who towelled her, spread back the sheets. I sat, staring, cupping champagne into my mouth, my face, across my quivering chest, and Maman could not be taking her eyes from me--'tho to this end was she making much effort. I kept watch as the maid's hands gently swept across Maman's body making the little peaks of her breasts to pucker into nipples, her slender bottom to ripen and glow.

After her servant was leaving us, I stood from the bath, felt the wine drying--cool on my shoulders, warm on my tongue. I was something drunk and with great hunger to be inside her. I was also the boy. I thought like a boy; I felt like a boy. But the warm wind whipped at my skin through the windows, and I knew every hair on my body to grow as stiff as my penis.

Maman laughed and said me I looked *trop serieux*. I was serious, but I smiled any the way. I walking to the bed slowly, trailing champagne. I took her waist in my hands, and she licked by shoulder. I was almost as tall as she by then. Almost.

After the making of love, I fell to sleep atop her as was my habit. (I was very light and of no nuisance.) In thinking on this, I am something surprised the servants made no attempt to be warning us. Perhap they were in fear of Papa. Any case, he must have come most softly up the stairs, most quietly into the room--for I knew nothing of his presence until his fist closed upon my wrist twisting, tearing me from Maman. She screamed, and he threw me against *le chiffonnier*.

Papa had never been with kindness toward me; he had never liked me whatsoever I do. Yet was I unaccustomed to his direct hating, for even such attention was denied me--ever until this moment. *Son baton* sliced the air above me, thrashing against Maman's forever screaming. I put me my hands toward him--more to beg than shield, as I knew them not strong enough for the latter.

Le baton had nothing of mercy. It struck first quick against my left arm, snapping the bone. Then was it everywhere upon me--my ribs, my legs, my belly, my back--'til I could not be moving. I had not strength to cover me and was lying on my back naked, breaking and bleeding. He stood over me--in sweat from the effort.

Maman was crying and talking to him softly--as if by this she might distract his rage. He smiled down on me. I was then in confusion, for he had never, never before, smiled on me. I made hard attempt

to be smiling in return--with great hope his fury was at its end. Mistake! Mistake, François-Émil (another for the list). He was but preparing to destroy me.

He thrust the figured head of his walking-stick against my throat; if I be trying to move, he pushed it the farther. Thus was I lying in perfect stillness as he looked over me. I could hear Maman yet sobbing. I felt her start from the bed, but Papa shouted her back. He was then gazing on me as I have seen hunters to study the slain deer before slaughter. Tho' he was no longer smiling, I made move so to greet him; in truth, was I grinning like the fool--but this was he not seeing: his gaze was fixed between my thighs.

His mouth jumped, jerking in a snarl. He turned his eyes for the moment to Maman and began laughing most terribly. He made comment to her that this certainly was no penis and a whore such as herself should have finer taste. "Ah, oui, Girart, oui!" I heard her to be pleading with agreement. He but shoved the cane more sharply into my throat. An instant framed by silence stood between us; then was I blind with pain. His great boot had driven what I had back into me, and my body crumpled beneath his foot. Maman shrieked for him to have done with me, and he sent the head of his stick against my jaw. I tumbled through vast dark-nesses into light.

The very first time I rode to speak for the Tuscarora, Hia-Leah and I were acting more silly than our two children. She and I had been allways together since our marriage. Although I would be going but a week or two, Hia-Leah was saying I would never return--thus was she ordering me to stay.

By agreement of the tribe, *à cause du fait que* I was only stupid and white, I was to obey her and to learn. I accepted to do so, most of times. I only disagreed when she was wrong.

In this, the chief gave me special right to ignore her. I was to ride with a few men other to a Franch fort that was only a few miles away. We would trade furs for supplies, and I would keep the Franch honest. Hia-Leah was saying I would sleep in a Franch bed again and would have no longer interest in hers. I was seeing her jealousy then and kissed her and reminded her that I had slept in other beds before I found hers. This was not wise. She slapped me.

Mon petite fille, Mirakah, started to cry. I could not bear for her to be weeping and so became a little angry myself: was I such a fool that I could not be riding with the men for once? Our little boy, "Fire Leaps," began shouting at his mother; "*Papa est un homme! Papa est un homme!*"

His saying that in just such way embarrassed me very badly. He was only four years old, but already others boys picked on him for his curly hair and said his father--as all white men--was a "common creature," a woman. Mirakah howled again, and I picked her up. Fire Leaps was hugging my knees and begging to be lifted aswell. Soon was I holding two screaming children with a very angry woman glaring at me.

Hia-Leah was big with a boy that we would lose, and I was knowing this difficult time for her. Yet our people stood little chance to survive the coming winter without some store of grain and more of blankets. (The ghost-dancer had predicted this autumn to be short and the spring long in arriving.) There were others things to trouble us also: we were knowing another clan to have been attacked by British forces. It would be the best if I could form alliance for us with the Franch. I kissed the children and promised them presents, then was I preparing to leave.

Hia-Leah would speak no other word to me. As I was mounting my horse to go, Mirakah and Fire Leaps waved after, but their mother stood looking another way. Mirakah had little tears dancing in her eyes--for she was old enough to have some understanding of Hia-Leah's fear. But Fire Leaps was jumping and singing as the loud as he could: "*Papa est un homme! Papa est un homme!*" I was then for once glad that most of our tribe had not time for learning the Franch.

You will think me silly, *peut-être*, but as a boy--even as young man--I was most terrified of storms. It seemed to me that the mind of God was raging at such times, and I had fear lest much angry thoughts rain upon me. Perhaps fear makes frightening things to happen, but lightning and thunder often brought bad luck to François-Émil.

It was raining when Papa broke my nose. I had but five years and was most eager to crawl into his lap. Any of times that he was coming home there was celebration. The servants were much troubled to see that all was right in the house: most particularly, the children. Anton was twelve and better able than I to stand quiet and await his attention.

Papa had asked the nurse to bring us to him, but was busy talking with important men when at last we were ready. She held us lightly by the hand, but I could be waiting no longer. There was a bright crash as lightning struck a tree outside the window of his library. I ran for his arms frantically. When he flung out with the back of his fist to stop me, I was yet running. The blow was thus double-forced, and I sailed backward--blood rushing from my nose.

It was just at this moment Maman walked into the room and screamed as she saw me flying across the polished floor. I was only startled and not feeling the pain at first. I remember how she swept me up into her arms, shouting once at the nurse and then boldly at Papa. As she squeezed me against her breasts, I was seeing my blood spill out upon

her new dress. Thunder followed, and I began to cry without control. afterward, I often thought it was however fortunate: my face else would have seemed *trop féminin*.

It was raining *aussi* when Jefferson asked Martha and I to come into his study. He was very grave of countenance, and I asked quickly if there were things amiss in Philadelphia. (He had only returned to the Monticello one evening before.) He looked hard on me with most unfamiliar expression. Then was he telling us what he had himself seen. Martha began softly to weep, but I could not go to her in such situation. He turned his tall back to us and stood waiting at the window for me to speak. I could say nothing.

After much pausing, with only Martha's broken breathing between us, he again began. He said he had gone to her room late of the previous evening. He had seen me lying naked upon her bed, her stroking my back. This great man was telling me that he was a coward for not having gone into the room then. I could not bear his words and was only glad that his eyes were not on me. Martha went to him and, taking his arm, leant upon his shoulder. He turned and bent to embrace her. There was nothing I could say, and I had not heart to remain. I do not think they saw me walk from the room.

Betty, who was ever more informed of things than was seeming possible, stood at the door with my bags. I was of hope she would say nothing, and she did not. I forced myself and my poor horse--never so great a one as Augustin--to drive through the storm to Boston. I am not knowing how we kept to the road and remember me only that there were streaks of light lashing all around us for many the mile. It was no weather for riding a horse thus hard, and I must have been another man.

Of course it was likewise raining when a small band of Tuscarora topped a ridge just out of cannon range and stood their horses beneath the trees. *En route*, the men had described for me the white encampment, and so was I suspecting it more settled than an ordinary fort. I was not even so of suspicion for what I saw: the Franch were making a village along the great water-way--your St. Lawrence.

In my absence, it was all starting again--everything the same on a new continent. I saw the small beginnings of a city in the valley below us. Things which had some fascination for my friends I explained to them--for I knew, without knowing, each detail: there stood *la caserne*; there the captain's quarters; the ammunition would be kept distant; supplies of the sort we were seeking would be close to the horses. I expressed some surprise at the advance of the harbor: it was evident that the Franch were preparing for ships of size. These my friends would not wait for me describe, as they were in amazement I could foresee what it had taken them many times after hunting to surmise.

Even now I do not know why it was difficult for me not to cry. Perhaps I was in fear that something of what Hia-Leah had said might come true. Perhaps I was *simplement* afraid of old mistakes repeating. Any the case, I closed my eyes and my horse stumbled forward. A round of cannon landed ten degrees off and to our right. I rode onward. The son of our chief commanded the others to remain on the ridge, but my friend Hawk-Braking insisted to follow. Men on return from the harbor were ushered quickly inside the gates, while a dozen on horseback emerged. I knew nothing of what I was doing but rode toward them with Hawk-Braking behind.

The cannon were fixed on a point near our men on the hill; another round fell harmlessly--as a warning?--to their side. As we advanced, the Franch riders lifted their muskets but did not fire. At some incredibly crucial distance, both parties halted. Knowing not in the least what was best in such situation, I dismounted to stride the ground between us. One officer was peering at me through a spy-glass; his men did not lower their rifles until I could feel the breath of his anxious horse.

I ate more that night than I had in years and drank more of cognac than I should. Ever. By his choice, Hawk-Braking slept in the open even despite the rain: he would enter the walls of the fort for my sake--but go not under the white roof. (In truth, I think he was not wanted there and, sensing this, took offense.) The rest of our men kept to the ridge 'til next morning. That night I would sleep in a feather bed, tho' I am certain someone watched the door.

After the rich dinner, *la femme du capitain* thanked God that I had been rescued from the heathens. I was at some difficulty to express that I had no need of rescue: my wife, my children, and myself were Tuscaroran. At this, the captain's wife and daughter excused themselves. The captain brought forth cigars, one of the hwich I smoked in hesitance. A young officer meanwhile asked me what it was like to make love with a savage. I assured him that I did not know, asked did he. *Le capitain* interrupted our anger to say that he could not be believing I had seen no civilization in eight years and yet could tell him I did not miss it. I made small attempt to explain that the people of Europe were not the only ones with manners. Was of no use. I told him I was in concern for my old friends, and his words were as a miracle to me:

Washington was president of a new nation! (I had taken no faith in the rumours we had had--some of hwich labeled *mon général* the "Town Destroyer" and spoke of my old enemy, Arthur Lee, as his liaison in dealings with Brant.) I cried out and wept then--something because of the cognac--but then was I learning not to show too great cheer at the success of revolution: there were changes occurring even in France. Here, I could not speak my heart and remained silent; thus was it assumed that I--being of *la famille royale*--had appropriate politicks. *Comme un homme fatigué*, I begged forgiveness and promised to be showing them the finest of furs in the morning. The thunder should have told me to be ware.

I rose at dawn (unlike myself) and discovered, to my great pleasure, that a bath had been drawn for me. Aswel, there were Franch clothes--of a fashion new to me--laid out. The daughter of the captain had taken much trouble to ready these things for me, and I was with gratitude for her kindness. I removed the clothes Hia-Leah had made for me and slipped into the warm, scented water.

Now, this bath was behind a screen in a small room near the kitchen--so as to make the chore of bringing the heated water to the tub less burdensome. I was of intention to sit in this bath a long time--as had been many years since such a luxury was made available to me. At intervals, the captain's daughter would ask if I did not wish for more of the hot water. She was even asking if I did not wish to have her shave me. This, too, was a pleasure I had not had for some time: Hia-Leah was kept busy with others chores when I had need to shave me. The men among you, *mes amis*, will perhaps agree that it is a chore which

becomes most boresome! Thus it was that I did not refuse this thoughtful gesture on her part.

She was a plain girl, as she was telling me (tho' I could see this, intruth, for myself)--full of common sense and without the least inclination to fancy. I should understand that life were most difficult for a young woman trapped in a barbarous country, with only the most unsuitable of men for her companions. I could make little conversation with the razor at my chin, but, when she was of occasion cleaning the blade, I had opportunity to speak. It was seeming to me that Jean (the young lieutenant)--tho' he thought too much of himself--was not entirely beneath her. She sighed with incredible heaviness and declared him a fool and a coarse one at that: he had never seen Paris, much the less Versailles. I laughed then, saying I had not had the latter fortune myself before I was fully of eighteen years and even so I was not thinking great Louis to have been informed of my presence.

After my long bath and the shaving, she left me to dress. I confess to having taken great enjoyment in putting on the fine clothes--in despite of the fact that most of them were Jean's and did not fit with perfection, as he was the taller. The boots she had found for me were yet well-fitting. (I was not told their source, but was yet much embarrassed to note on my own that the boy with the bugle was wearing boots the which were so much too large for him that he was put to some effort in walking!) I did observe that my own clothes--so carefully embroidered--were missing, yet I thought only that Imogene had courtesy to wash them.

When I was dressed and made the entrance, the captain greeted me most warmly; his wife, howsomever, made remark that I should have her

daughter to alter Jean's clothes for a better fit. I thanked this lady for the offer of Imogene's skills but declared that I would, in any case, be returning them at my departure.

"*Mais, ce serait impossible!*"

"*Pourquoi, Madame?*"

It was then I was told Imogene had burned the "filthy costume of the savage." I was at once in fury! Hia-Leah had spent many weeks caremostly crafting my clothes. It was custom that a man should have some symbol of his own woven into the cloth, and my wife had taken greatest pains to shape for me the letters of my alphabet along the sleeves and legs of the trousers. This had been doubly difficult for her as the shapes were unfamiliar, but she had achieved them with more precision than a school-boy drawing on horn. The thread, in many colors, had cost several furs, and I could not begin to estimate the time taken from her common work. And such was but the "filthy costume of a savage"?!

I cried out sharply then bit my tongue to prevent the anger. I could be thinking only of the importance of our *negotiations* and the necessity of success: my people would starve if we had not sufficient grain for this coming winter. And, too, Hawk-Braking would be cold and wet in the open compound. I wonder at the tears a man weeps inwardly and at the fact that, with all their wisdom, women seldom see these.

On a chill, grey October day, it was with considerable trepidation that I rode in the company of my friends back to the village. Hia-Leah could not deny that we had traded the furs at a very good rate for grain

and blankets and many trinkets. Yet would she suffer, even as I, at the loss of the clothes she had made me.

Knowing my fears, Hawk-Braking took particular sport in joking of them and, aswell, my new costume. On the journey, he found ways of knocking off my hat and would marvel that my feet looked very like Franch chimneys, stuffed inside the silly boots. (it was in true friendship that he never did these things when others men could be watching.)

Quand nous sommes arrivés, the older boys spotted us quickly, and some leapt upon horses, rode out to greet us. There was much excitement visible in the camp, tho' we were still at a distance. The boys raced their ponies in circles around us and shouted a good deal. I was unaccustomed to such welcome, but could not enjoy the honor--as I was too concerned for what Hia-Leah would be saying, seeing me in the clothes of a Franchman.

I had hoped that the days of our separation would soften her regard for me, but, if 'twas so, the sight of me in Europe's dress rapidly stealed her heart. When we entered the village, Mirakah and Fire-Leaps came racing toward my horse. They broke out in laughter at my appearance--which, also, I was thinking, might encourage their mother's sympathy. As soon as I dismounted, they began searching me for the present I had promised, but then found their little fingers more fascinated by my strange clothes. Mirakah pressed her nose against my neck and sneezed and shook her head in response to the cologne: all of France must have shuddered!

To their understanding, it seemed at last not so bad to have a white father, for my children were soon ridding me of my hat and hand-

kerchief--parading with these among the others. Everyone was in the best of tempers--except for the beautiful woman, full of child, who stood resolutely refusing to look at me.

I started toward her but was immediately attacked by my son from the rear: he had not entirely forgotten his present. I managed only to catch Hia-Leah's eye once before returning, in the confusion, to my horse. And after the excitement there was much time and great ceremony taken in unveiling the results of our trading. I was called to sit among those on the mission, so was having but the moment to briefly kiss her and assume my place. There was to be serious talk among the men--somewhat heightened by a great quantity of liquor. The women retired.

We drank and spoke together until it was coming dawn, then decided it best to be abed. We were a little drunk and leant upon one another as we walked into the lodge. We stumbled and fell about seeking our families in the dark. The women had been up late, as well: there was still smoke from the common fire. A few giggled when they greeted their husbands or observed them staggering past to a wrong bed. (Some mistakes may not have been entirely honest.) Hawk-Braking was especially in need of assistance, and thus I carried him to his wife. (She was not pleased and uttered many abuses, but her husband could not be hearing her and dozed on, smilingly.)

I had not, myself, much drunk. I was worried of numbers of things--although at the time only for what I should say to Hia-Leah. When I came to our bed, the children were fast sleeping, but she was sitting straight upward, silently. I fumbled toward her--from the dark, not drunkenness--and kissed her forehead harder than intended. I also found myself of a sudden sitting on one of her hands; I retrieved it and

kissed the palm. She informed me that I had no use in coming to her bed again until the stench of France was off my flesh.

Nothing could have persuaded me to do other than ease my arms around her--save those words. I was aching and hot inside, hating myself for the anger. I wanted only to hold her and sleep beside my children. Perhaps even to tell her what had happened--. To tell her I had become enraged at the captain's daughter. To say that, if she wished, I would never again leave the village. Hia-Leah could tie a bit of rough rope about my neck and fix it to a stake. I would willingly endure whatever test she could make of my love--if ONLY she were not using those very words!

Her hand was still in mine, and I could not keep from caressing it. Unconsciously, my hand must have given forth something of affection. Somehow I recalled afterward, too, that her own had not been so very cold. Yet did I tell her that I had had, momentarily, enough of being the fool, the butt of every man's and every woman's joke. I was white and I was Franch before I was Tuscaroran, and there were no reasons I should be ashamed for that. Why should my wife, my husband, dishonor me when I had been of service to our people? That very evening, the chief himself had spoken to me for the first time as if I were not an amusing pet--tho' my actions were greatly lessened in his son's report. Hawk-Braking, who had been with me inside the fort, had given more elaborate account of my efforts after the drinking began. He himself could tell her--.

Hia-Leah did not want to hear any of this. She advised that I take the second blanket and sleep elsewhere. She would know her husband when his skin was Tuscaroran.

I withdrew my hand and stood. She fell silent, and the stillness only settled her words. I was trembling in the dark--tho' I tried to keep this from my voice. I said I would not take a blanket as the night was damp and the children would be in need of both. I stood there lingering, hoping she would be saying something to rescue us. But she did not. Thus, it was that I, in misery, retreated to the embers of the common fire and began to prod them with little sticks and twisted leaves.

It was not long after I was so seated that another man who had been among the venturers sadly sank down beside me. And there had not been much talk between us when yet a third fellow joined our unhappy council. He had with him the remainder of a bottle from which we drank eagerly, each of us idly poking bits and twigs into the fire. We could hear in the muffled warmth of the long-house other men who were better greeted by their wives; the sounds were most annoying and clouded all our speech. Yet were our sufferings greatly eased by the companionship, and we began to become familiar--in the bold manner of drink.

I declared that my wife (my husband) after nearly seven years had determined she would not have a white man. I could only hope the ghost-dancer might see a way to change my color. My friends admitted this was grave predicament--but their wives were no less disagreeable; in fact, they knew greater disgrace.

The man who was out of his bed almost as quickly as I had a fat wife who was always hungry: she shunned him because he had brought back none of the mutton she was so fond of. In like manner, another friend claimed to have left his wife--when she ridiculed him for not having the courage to accompany us. We, *naturellement*, supported him by

over-loudly asserting that only the chief himself had chosen the party-members: it was not a matter of the man's choice. Besides, there had been little to no risk in the escapade--given my knowledge of the Franch!

We began, oddly, to exhibit many signs of good cheer as we rebuilt the lodge-fire and drank our way toward dawn. Hawk-Braking rose suddenly in the twilight, strode past us, relieved himself in the doorway--then, pausing, remarked us on his return. He sat down and finished the bottle. It seemed he had no recollection of how his wife had received him--altho' he presumed she had been in the bed. Spitting out the last of our drink, he declared that we had yet to taste the best and went to fetch it.

By this, it was plainly morning, and the children had started to awaken. They were as timely as the best Viennese clock, clear as the bells of any cathedral. I knew them all well, since I was their teacher, and, in like manner, did I know the most of their mothers. There would be no hunt that day; there was no need of anyone rising--save the mothers whose children would be expecting their breakfast. These women began to come forth, none too happily approaching, stepping over and around us, setting kettles of corn-soup over the flames of our fire.

Fire-Leaps and Mirakah both kissed me on their way to other business. Hia-Leah stalked past behind them with exaggerated caution to ignore me. I tried to stand--at once unaccustomedly drunk and uncertain. The instant too late, I dived for her ankles, landing flat upon my belly in the doorway. I was in serious pain and lay there for some time before Hawk-Braking realized I would prefer to be sitting upright

at the fire. Our two other comrades took leave of us. I suspected that they would cunningly re-occupy the beds in their wives' absence. Hawk-Braking concurred, suggesting we do likewise.

I could not. Drunk as I was, it was yet necessary for me to make my amends with Hia-Leah. I stood with care and steadied myself as I watched my friend stumble, then heroically crawl on toward his bed.

The rain had changed to snow which was tumbling all about me as I left the long-house in search for my wife. I found her at the stream, gathering water. Several of the women were present, but I took nothing in notice of them. (It was with effort I kept to my feet on the icy bank.) Hia-Leah would not be talking with me. I was hurt and angry in drink. I tore my jacket off, regardless of the chill, and threw it into the river.

"*Je suis tuscarorain!*"

I slipped to the ground in shouting and frowned at the women who giggled. Hia-Leah did not smile, made no response. I tore from me then *la cravate compliquée et aussi* the silk shirt.

"*Je ne suis pas français!*"

I thought Hia-Leah to glance at my bare chest--the flesh of which was quivering with the cold and my anxiousness for love. Still, she was making no comment; she was but silently and with stiff movements stooping to the water, filling her various casks and jugs. I sat upon the frozen earth beside her and removed the boots of the bugler. I hurled them--one at the time--into the stream. With the first, I made claim again, "*Je ne suis pas français!*" With the second, I as loudly declared, "*Je suis tuscarorain!*" I had been given no stockings and soon could not feel my naked feet for the snow. My arms and chest, by this,

were something blue, so 'twas with irony I then made insistence that I was of "*les Peau-Rouges*."

One of the other women took from her shoulders a small blanket, thinking to wrap it about me. Hia-Leah glared at her in anger, and she came none the closer. I am thinking my wife to have known I had only one move remaining. Understanding my modesty, she must have been certain I would not take it. Yet did I begin to remove the Franch breeches--even in front of the women. This seeing, Hia-Leah dropped the vessel she was filling and pressed her lips into mine.

I was trembling in every part, and she held me close to ease the shaking. She was crying, as was I. We walked then as one back to the long-house. I gave the children swift word there would be no lessons that day. The rain and the falling frost were over. Hia-Leah and I could at last share our warm, if simple, bed.

Jefferson was returning to Philadelphia, and I had packed me my bags to ride with him; neverofless, Martha and he had decided them that I should remain--for lessons in the English. I knew him but most short time, yet such was the trust he bore me; I am not knowing why.

Was beautiful warm: *en juillet*, 1775. We waved him good-bye, and Martha had Betty to make for us *un petit pique-nique*. I was to read Donne to be improving my English; then would I show Martha *quadrille, la Française*--a game of the cards--tho' for this we were missing two pairs of hands.

Martha and I were afoot and did not take us far. We had eaten little when she opened the book of Donne and handing it to me with instructions. First, I was simply to speak the poem, pronouncing in care; after she would help me in understanding. The verses opened of their own to "The Ecstasy." *L'extase*.

I was sitting on other side a delicate Viennese cloth from her, the book in my lap. She rose as I was reading and paced at my back. I was thinking her very bored by my poor English. Embarrassed, I stopped me, and she sat close behind--now asking what was meant.

Martha's heavy auburn hair was sudden falling across my neck as she stooped over my shoulder, one hand taking an edge of the book. I could say nothing, and, in patience, her hand smoothed the page. I

shifted my legs, but this was of no use. I was very much aroused and could feel she was knowing it. I stretched out my legs, crossing them tightly at my knees, wishing this book were some great deal larger.

She asked three, four questions in English very quickly. I heard only the music of her voice--could remember no thing of her language. I understood not any sense of it but the sound. And was she pointing, with a rhythm touching the fourth word in the second line of the second stanza: balm. She was in softness defining this word and rubbing small circles onto the page lightly with her fair fingertips. I knew in next moment one of three things was to happen--the least worse of hwich was to kiss her. My lips were trembling, and the book falling from my lap.

I closed my eyes, kissed her, and flinched for the slap. But, after my kiss, there was but the sound of Martha laughing. I smiled, not opening my eyes. Maman had taught me more than to think myself safe in the presence of a lady too quickly.

"Open your eyes," she was saying and laughingly. "*Ouvre tes yeux, mon ami!*" I blushed hot and lay back against the grass, my eyes yet in fastness closed, both hands folded *entre mes jambes*. *Bien sûr*, I was with realization how ridiculous--if not lewd--I must look, yet was there none of things I could be doing that would not make the worst matter. *Grâce à Dieu*, Martha ceased laughing and lay beside me.

I could feel her lashes winking against my cheek; I could feel the side of her mouth next to mine, and one corner of her lips lift as she smiled. I dared not move. I could not breathe: she was kissing my ear, then flicking her tongue against my neck. At this last, my eyes sprang open and I gulped for air. My hands ran to her waist, rushed

across her breasts. I was in a moment kissing her as I had kissed no woman other--still with fear she would cry out. But this she did not.

My chest was pressed against hers, pounding. I kissed her throat, begging for her to forgive me. She clasped my face in her hands and told me to love her. In much of astonishments, I fell again back into the cool grass--pulling her over onto me.

Jefferson himself was but few hours away. Martha and I were of acquaintance less than the week. I was not a boy. I was in certain feeling that what I was doing might be wrong and that what I of sudden might do definitely was. Yet Martha had in earth the only power to stop me, and she was loosening the bodice of her dress, seeming to breathe as heavily as I.

With the warm sun full upon her small, light breasts, I felt as if only half-present, only incidentally there--however desperately in desire. A sanctity or ceremony--something mystical--was upon her. Tho' the focus of her attentions, I knew me but dimly recognized. I was knowing Martha did not see the world, nor me in it. I had been taken, for the moment, to another kingdom--one so much with care designed as great Monticello, by no less skillfull an architect. But more it was as if I were on holy ground.

I was not longer the boy. If, as some, I had not mismade the love to many of women, I had yet made love caremostly for one. This was I wanting to show Martha. I was of need to become flawless in her dream, even if she could not see me. I wanted time. I did not wish for hurry--'twould be then too easy after to forget. She would have me for so long as she was wishing. I could not refuse her and remain in my own mind. In my own mind, a man.

I cannot in fairness suggest that there was no difference in custom when one made the crossing of the Atlantic. The most wealthy, most refined of the Americans could not have imagined Versailles--unless he had been there. More yet, he or she could not have guessed at the conduct and dress considered essential to a young French nobleman. These things escaped my realization--untill I had occasion to attend a formal party at the home of my hosts in Boston.

In disgrace with Jefferson, I had ridden to Boston, uncertain of whether I should return to France, and came upon Adams quite in accident. He knew me from Philadelphia. I was greatly flattered that this powerful man should recall me from the single encounter and hoped, as we spoke on the street, that Jefferson had not sent special envoy to make my shame known to his friends. This last had not been the case, for, seeing I had no good place to stay, Adams invited me to his home.

His wife seemed less than truly pleased to see me. Abigail was very much a republican, and the traces of an old aristocracy were still upon me. And, too, she could not be telling by my look that I was, like her, in favor of the ladies. The three of us sat in the salon sipping bad tea--the best of which drink held no interest for me. Adams himself seemed most relaxed, but his wife and I gazed at the bold slats in the wooden floor as he spoke.

Franklin would be wishing to send me back to Paris; he did not want to go, at this time, himself--and 'twould be better in any case to send a Franchman, especially the one who knew Beaumarchais. *Mon oncle* had become more involved in talking with Louis since my departure. Perhaps in this, was I thinking, I could have again a little of my honour. I told Adams that I would be most eager to speak with Franklin and would sail at his command. Adams rose and took himself then to compose a letter to Franklin, the hwich he would send post-haste. He thanked God I had at such a moment arrived in Boston and begged his wife to offer me some of the sherry.

Abigail strode--with the quiet impatience she possessed--to the small cabinet where the liquor was kept. She said nothing, and I became very nervous. She returned with the glasses, and I stood to receive mine. She sat down. I sat again. She watched me; I wondered if she were a friend to Martha. If so, was yet obvious thet Mrs. Adams did not share Martha's enthusiasm for things Franch! At length and with much reluctance, she offered me a cigar. I declined, saying I preferred not to smoke.

"Good!"

The word was spoken more loudly than necessary--in a small room with two people who are not saying the much any way. I jumped, spilling some drops of sherry. I made apology, knelt, and, taking *mon mouchoir*, made the best of my mistake. I sat then with a second apology. Abigail burst out in laughter. I thought this woman must seldom drink sherry--for it so to affect her. She continued with laughing. I apologized the third time.

"Do not make meaningless apologies. Is it a young man's fault if the silk in his handkerchief is worth all the old boards in Boston?"

I tucked the handkerchief into my sleeve, not knowing what to say. Of course, one like it would be hard to find in the Colonies--with the new war mounting--but I guessed that this woman had little interest in silk. What then had she meant? I was becoming *plus en plus* at ill-ease, scarcely able to sit. Should I not simply ride myself to Franklin, such that Adams did not have to be wasting thus much in time composing his letter?

Abigail said no, I was to do nothing of this kind. She then did a thing most unusual: to this day, I am thinking she did it solely for the effect upon me. She opened the cannister where the cigars were kept and, handing one to me, took another. By this, I really did not know at all what to be saying. I had expressed no desire to smoke but was now about to, and Mrs. Adams--to appearances--was determined to have a cigar for herself!

I had been riding hard for several days, had eaten rarely, had spent only the one night at a wretched inn in Boston--sleeping little. I was too nervous to feel the hunger and tiredness. The sherry was swimming in my anxious belly--atop warm, green tea. I did not think I could survive a cigar, much less two in the same closed room. I begged her not to light mine, but she insisted.

I became on the instant quite dizzy, could think only to say I must see to my horse stabled not far. I made many apologies and backed quickly from the room. I dashed from the house and to an alley. I was then relieved of the tea and sherry.

'Twas not long after that I returned with Augustin. Adams had finished his letter, and the boy had ridden to Franklin. It was clear from her expression that Abigail had enjoyed my predicaments, and I was hurt. What had she to count against me? I said that I would seek lodging at a tavern so not to trouble them. Adams would hear nothing of this. I should let my bags to be taken to the room already prepared for me; he would see to the stabling of my horse. I should honour him as his guest until it was determined I must sail for France. Wearily, I accepted--hoping I had but imagined his wife did not care for me.

Dinner was quiet, and I ate a great deal. Adams followed the meal with a cigar, but Abigail quietly, impatiently stared at me. I retired as soon as was possible.

When I arose, Adams had gone out, and I was again left to Abigail. She asked if it were indeed the custom among the aristocracy in France to wake at noon. I assured her it was not uncommon. (I was coming to understand her dislike of me and was, in truth, something of irritation that she should judge me so quickly and by my clothes alone.) She suggested we stroll in the garden. I bowed my agreement.

We walked. I was angry, but could not feel it keenly among the roses. I was most taken with these flowers and thus did she seem.

"When we desire to confine our words, we commonly say they are spoken 'under the rose.'"

Incroyable! I had heard Martha speak almost these same words not yet three weeks before--with most different intent. I asked Mrs. Adams her meaning.

"'Twill never do. It will not work."

I was not the least certain of my ground, and my English was not good.

"What, Madam? *Et pourquoi?*"

She sighed and looked away from me.

"Is it the custom in France to teach a boy nothing save to prance like a pony?"

I was most grateful when Adams came to take me for a meeting--even if Franklin could not join us.

On the Wednesday to follow, there was planned a great party at the home of my host *et l'hôtesse hostile*. I was told that it would be most formal as the intent was not entirely frivolous. I had my wig readied and was otherwise taking extra care in preparing my clothes and myself. (At Pierre's insistence, I had abandoned the notion of a valet and had developed considerable skill in organizing my dress.)

Americans may powder their wigs, but they do not powder their faces--even on such ceremonious occasion. This I discovered only after entering a very crowded room and undergoing elaborate introductions. Abigail sat--impatiently, quietly, victoriously--to the side unnoticed by any save me. And she was laughing under her breath. The men had better manners, but I could see smiles on the faces of several women. I made the escape when was possible--to wash my face and rejoin the others with greater knowledge of American custom.

When I came again into the room, Abigail fell to laughing. Even she sensed the disgrace she was handing me, and she left quickly for a stroll with two of the ladies. Adams himself was seeming oblivious to everything.

I could not think all the evening for dread of her laughter. I would have danced, but could not--for fear of entertaining Abigail against my intention. I remained sober and thought to speak with her concerning the extent of my welcome.

On the pretext of a message from her husband, I drew her from a group of women and asked openly--but with politeness--why she did not view me with kindness. To my surprise, she was the astonished one. Whyever could I think she did not care for me? I was again in confusion and some anger. Surely she would not find it entirely comforting if all France were to break with laughter when she entered a room. She looked on me with sudden coldness, not the least trace of mercy.

"What gives you the right to such pride?"

"*Je suis un homme!* I have right to such dignity as is not beyond my conduct. I have done nothing--!"

Abigail smiled in the direction of a woman whose ears had taken heed of us and led me once again into her garden. She spoke slowly--I thought then to spare my mind in the wake of her language, but think now 'twas from the difficulty of her words.

"I have naught against you--save that your 'dignity' is purchased by another's disgrace. Including my own."

"*Comment?*"

"What dignity does a man possess if it is shattered by a woman's humor?"

"Such dignity as her silence affords."

She slapped me. I was never--and yet never still--more shocked by any of things. I told her, *simplement*, that I would pack my bags for the morning. I made blind excuse for any offense I had caused her. She

struck me *encore*. I did not move, was too stunned. When she raised her hand again to strike me, I made no defense. She with-held the blow.

"You do me not the honour of flinching, young peacock!"

"I have been taught to receive a woman's anger--not to show her mine."

"Yes! And you see no insult in it?"

"Was a woman taught me--"

"To detest women?"

"Non!"

I was in worry lest someone witness our anger and think me a man to take improper advantage with a lady. What could I do? I had no wish to stand and be slapped--especially as I now guessed the only reason she so posed me was that I would allow it! She raised her hand to strike, and I dodged.

"That is much better."

She sat on a small bench and gestured for me to sit beside her. I declined. She insisted. I sat.

"A man like you should have some understanding of women."

"I trust that I do, Madame."

"Yet you don't"

"But, I do. I am more certain of very few things!"

"And more incorrect in none."

"Madame! I do not wish to be made a game. I am not to your taste, and I shall leave."

I stood, but she caught my hand.

"Sit. Sit down."

I sat, tho' I did not wish it.

"You have not the least respect for women."

"*Ce n'est pas vrai!*"

"None whatsoever. That is what I detest."

"Madame, I am simple boy from Provence. My manner may not be that of your husband, yet I am not a man given to hurt women."

"Then how is it your every breath degrades us?"

I began to see then it was not François-Émil that had so upset her, him she had slapped, or him of whom she had made merriment.

"Madame, you hate me for my sex?"

"Certainly."

"Why do you not hate others men?"

"I do."

"You hate your husband?"

"At times. You understand, we are under-the-rose."

There was, *en fait*, a trellis above us. It would soon be autumn, and her roses were ripe and heavy. I could not speak. I knew well what it was for a woman to share her bed with an unwanted husband, yet I did not sense that Abigail held such disaffection for Adams. Was somehow not the same.

"Madame, I was most close to my mother. I learned from her of many things. I have never thought myself the better of a woman. I have only hoped to be a worthy man."

If not my words, my voice must have intrigued her.

"I thought you would deny it."

I shook my head, thinking she had mistook me, that she might yet again strike me.

"You are a man who wishes to please."

I nodded--in some hesitation.

"You will. You will please my husband and Franklin. But never anyone more than me."

She took my hand. We stood and walked again into the house.

I returned to France only the once at Franklin's order. In Paris, I took the name of "Jeremiah Caron" and residence at the home of an old friend Franz Goëzman. He was a Jew, the hwich fact caused him to be (unrightly) ignored in politicks--both in France and abroad. His home was therefore somewhat the safer for a man who must talk weapons and revolution.

In short time after I made my return, I received a coded invitation from Pierre to attend the performance of a play--not one of his own. *Mon oncle* said that I would find certains lines extraordinaries. Since I had only just come again to Paris, I was as yet uncertain if Pierre himself knew the extent of my errand. I was not at all thinking of British spies as I took my seat in the shabby little theatre.

Scattered through the first act of this bawdy country comedy were lines completely extraneous to all concerns of plot and character--and couched in Provençal. (I think the most of the play-goers mistook it for Latin.) There was *en fait* a further letter from my "uncle": greetings, munitions statistics, cautions, advice, and aswel sarcastic comments on the playwright, his play, and the acting. (The players were evidently innocent of the meaning of their lines in Provençal.) There was even a formal salutation for closing.

It was not my immediate thought that I should strive to appear ignorant and unmoved; thus was I laughing in odd moments--making myself obvious to one watching. When I had heard the close of the letter, I left the theatre--for the play was dull and I thought me both safer and better entertained in returning to discuss these matters with my friend. I was afoot, since my walk was not a long one.

I soon heard the rapid fall of English boots behind me. I turned with quickness and found myself only just avoiding the thrust of a knife at my back. I kicked in the direction of the spy's hand, but he ducked, and my foot clipped his shoulder in the stead. He fell then upon his knife and lay still. I knelt over him, thinking to search for any papers. These I found--fixed betwixt the hilt of his blade and his breathless chest. I read them rapidly: this man among the English was already aware of "*Rodrigue Hortalez et Cie.*" Wishing not to have such documents discovered upon me, I rushed to the bank of the river, tore the crumpled pages into shreds, and let them fall anonymously into the Seine.

I never thought again of the man who lay in the alley-way. This, Gode may never forget, yet I soon forgave myself. He was an English spy whose own knife found its way into his black heart--through his error, not my craft. And a man in revolution cannot suffer guilt for everything. Or must he? I shudder to think such may yet be so.

La prochaine fois que j'ai vu Thomas Jefferson, God and the Devil were both laughing--although for different reasons, *j'espère!*

The English searched my ship when it arrived Boston and, finding nothing, had let me be going on to Philadelphia. *Il y avait les espions dans tout de Paris*; thus was I accustomed to feeling watched. But when I was getting into the coach for Philadelphia, at the last--*après de beaucoup de mois*--I relaxed myself (*une erreur* I was not before listening!).

There were riots being everywhere, and Washington had been fighting *depuis que* many months. War was only the distance of a declaration--a border men may the seldom recognize, but are always crossing. It was no time for a Franchman to be at his ease in the Colonies. Louis was playing farot *avec les "Américains"*--*mais Pierre et Vergennes* were most close to convincing him: "After all, they are but a few old muskets left from the last war!"

I knew would be best not to do much talking--*mais j'ai eu cette problème*: *cacothés loquendi!* And, too, there was charming young lady travelling all the distance with her uncle. *Et les autres hommes*, they were very old and quiet. (Two was I recognizing from the boate.) I could not be just sitting there saying nothing!

When I stept from the carriage, there were two of British soldiers standing to greet us. I was helping to draw down the baggage *pour la*

mademoiselle et son oncle. I kissed her hand, and the uncle touched his cane to his hat and then to my shoulder, smiling. I had not time to call for my own bags: The English had me from behind.

My things were searched (I having had to carry them myself). I knew they would be finding something, *bien sûr*, 'though there was nothing in them. They find *beaucoup d'argent*--incredible sum of money!-- and they are saying I took the bribe in Boston. I was telling them, "Philadelphia is not such terrible place that I have to be payed to come here!"

I am slapped--slapped *encore*--then someone hitting me in the stomach with his rifle. When I am again standing, I am told that all Franchmen are liars, cowards, popists, spies, and men who sleep with their mothers. (At this last, I raise an eyebrow.) The question is only should I be hanged or whipped. I was not caring hwich, so was I struck again *avec le fusil*--this of times at the base of my spine. Then I am on my knees hearing that I would be whipped *à cause du fait que* more men are coming to see that, than another hanging.

When I was first staying in Paris--a boy who had but seventeen years--I saw *un homme* beating an horse such that it could not stand. I took the whip and hit him hard across the face. He moved to strike me in return, but was seeing *le costume de l'aristocratie* then and dropt to his knees. He was a man more than my father's age--praying to a boy's clothes, lest he be thrown *à la prison*. The horse was breathing hard and heavily *sur les pavés en avant de nous*. I let the whip to fall from my hand. The animal gave a great and sudden shudder--its lungs

heaving and long legs scrambling in air. *Tout à coup*, its mouth was wide gaping, and its swollen tongue came to rest among the cobblestones. On the steam that rose from its torn flesh, *j'ai pensé que* I could smell the whole of *Paris, toute de la France, et aussi tout du monde--*insofar as I was then knowing it. The scent made me to be sick, at which the man was hard laughing.

When Jefferson cut me down, I had been stricken thirty-forty times and was much of blood losing. He carried me himself to the place in Philadelphia where he and Martha were staying.

L'homme qui m'a fouetté had preference for the left shoulder, and I was almost losing the arm that writes for me. It was in May this was hapening, and I was not well again enough to be leaving untill late *en juillet*. Martha and I were agreeing then that never should we be lovers--friends always. But God did not make the Universe in that way.

Jefferson was kind and seeming glad to see me--'though not in such predicament! At first, Martha tried to wash my back, but was hurt by hearing my pain. Betty was not unaccustomed to the sounds a man must make at such times and so was taking most care of me. *En fait*, the care she was having of me for some weeks was intimate, yet was she never making the jest of me. (I had proof then--even for Jefferson--thet the white race and the black are but *la même*, or so was I hoping.) Martha would come and be reading to me afterward.

Daily was Jefferson bringing me declarations: most beautiful words, omitting important things. Always was he me asking, "Is this not it? Is it not finished?" What was I knowing? I, the bastard Franch noblemen on his belly at the grace of a revolutionist *de l'Amerique?*

But I was not entirely of right thinking: I had fever often and seizures--atwhiles seeing things I really should not. *Pour cetttes raisons, je crois*, I spoke more boldly to him than would otherwise have been my desire.

Behind him, I thought me to see dark figures--bleeding, towering shapes of things to follow. They frighten me, so much at times I ask him to be leaving--for these would go with him and let me to rest. But would he becoming into the room--all hours. The lines I ask to be added were sometimes there, then stricken *quelquefois*: no man other, was he saying, would accept them. 'Twas not important to be writing all at once; these things I wished now would later be. His effort always was *seulement* to pen what all together might have written--so all, at once, would sign.

En fin, il m'a dit: "This is what they will accept; this is what we shall sign. It is here that it begins."

When Jefferson and I rode the year before to Monticello, we spoke of manies things--such as my English would allow, for I was of insistance to learn this language and not be relying on his Franch. I could see a nation taking the shape of his words.

We had ridden at our leisure from Philadelphia, taking severals days. Jefferson talked, and I listened--of occasion asking silly questions the which made him to smile. I have even now no understanding as for why he liked me. I was most ignorant boy, if eager.

In later looking from the windows of Jefferson's salon, it was *très, très difficile* to believe that Virginia had not so civilized a countryside as France. Even harder still to reckon that the man who had built this Monticello was not in the lineage of its sovereign. *Bien sûr*, I was very young man caught in a dream: in myself, something dangereus--tho' I was not realizing this then.

After our third day's ride, we decided us not to trouble for finding an inn; we would but instead make the camp. You might have been surprised, *mes amis*, to note how easily such a refined man made a fire--although methought he took excessive time in piling the twigs just so ('twas the instinct of the architect!). As he buildt the fire, I tended the horses: his was a fine chestnut animal; mine, merely one I could be purchasing in short time. (I would trade him when I found my great Augustin.) We made something of a meal from brown bread--Jefferson

having also some dried meat which I declined. We drank only water, a fact that he cursed.

He then drew forth a pipe and pouch, I was thinking, of tobacco. He filled the bowl and passed the pipe to me. I would, of the occasion, smoke a cigar--to be polite--but I had no liking for tobacco. This, he was then to tell me, was NOT tobacco--yet I knew it was not opium for I had seen the leaves. He was explaining this the product of an herbaceous plant, *Cannabis sativa*: some varieties were good for the making of rope, others for smoking. He grew many kinds in Virginia, had learned the custom of smoking from Indians who lived in the Carolinas.

I saw then his interest in my sharing his pipe. And with reluctance accepted that I should again be having to smoke. I took and lit the pipe, shutting my eyes and nose against the smell. To my most surprise, this cannabis was without the dreadful taste of tobacco; *en fait*, tho' the smoke was hot, the herb had to it an odor something pleasant. I puffed at his pipe, 'til I caught him laughing. I thought was because I looked rather silly--for so has it always seemed to me that people look when smoking: their cheeks working like bellows, the heavy, clouded air curling in and about the mouth and nose. I handed his pipe to him, the bowl now empty. He began filling it, looking at me yet in amusement--or half in expectation. For a reason unknown to me, I commenced then to laugh harder than I had for some time, more loudly than I knew to be polite. But Jefferson was laughing likewise.

I leant back against the trunk of a tree, so to appear the more casual as I sought to bring myself under control. At once, the night seemed with intenseness alive: our fire and the stars beyond were burning as no fire and no stars had ever before. I felt very given to

talking and less the fool for it--tho' I was not knowing if any the thing I said made great deal of sense. Soon was he again smoking and listening.

I recall only a few foolish words: through *mon oncle*, I had learned of republicanism; in London, I had come to read Jefferson's "Draught." This revolution now only beginning would, I was thinking, prove one war worth fighting. I explained to him that I felt it not right to kill; yet, in recognition of the views of others men--both sides--I knew the necessity.

Silently smiling, he tapped the bowl of his pipe and filled it again, handing it to me. I lifted a small stick from the fire with the which to light it. This of times, I was less eager to let the scented smoke flow from my lungs. My friend began to question me.

"But you were raised the aristocrat. Would you see Louis leave his throne--or George only?"

I coughed, sitting upright. I feared his response to my dishonor, but this I must to tell him. He must not be thinking was for Louis' benefit alone that I would see the English king lose his colonies. So did I tell him of my disgrace, the loss of my name. And, as I was fearing, he asked the reason. I sayed only that my father had no love for me: mayhap he would not see his house divided.

Jefferson took the pipe again, again filling it. Like his wife, he had the gift sometime for speaking to the air--as if I did not exist, as if considering in his own mind only.

"What do you think of the women?" He asked, distantly.

Not only the stars and our fire, but the evening itself seemed to be burning all around us. I could hear *les insectes et un oiseau* that

sings in the American night. I was, noneless, of some confusion at his question: in what sense was he meaning? Jefferson laughed, *en fumant encore*, yet he gave no explanation.

"*J'aime beaucoup les femmes!*"

"*Mais, pas beaucoup DE?*"

At this was I most in embarrassment, and he, laughing, placed a hand on my knee. I jumped then--for I never liked a man to touch me, even one for whom I felt some trust. He withdrew his hand, looking on me carefully.

"What do you think of women--in a republic?"

I knew his meaning in the question, but not easily my answer. I thought me of my mother's learning: she had known far more than *mon père* of the politicks, tho' 'twas he ever playing the game. At length I had something to say.

"In a republic, blood does not make matter. Sex is but a difference of blood."

Jefferson coughed and stared at me strangely.

Late *en juillet*, 1776, I had sufficient recovery from my wounds. Jefferson made resignation of his seat in Congress, *après de la Déclaration*. My great friend and I were at peace one with the other, and between Martha and me was agreement--as the earlier mentioned--never again to betray him. Martha and he would return to Virginia.

I had spent me the last several weeks making design of my uniform for was my hope to join Washington at Long Island. Noble Jefferson gave me a sword the hwich with I practiced long but in order well to carry: I was to draw it once, yet not to wield. And Martha was finding me the seamstress, aswel the haberdasher, the boot-maker. Was little system in this matter of Colonial uniforms, *mes amis! Et particulièrement* when was coming to a Franchman.

Our parting was most, most difficult--for was I thinking never to see them. Jefferson was grand and in much relief to be rid of the burden of historical words. *En fait*, he was glowing; I had not before seen him in such happieness. Monticello lay in front of his carriage, and he would have--for short time--something of peace. A small peace in the private midst of public and open war. *Bien sûr*, he was having no love of killing, but at this moment was vast relief to speak freely and act on final decisions.

Martha was tense and fragile. She trembled beside him--me standing opposite, restless in her dream despite our wording. And was I shivering in my blue coat beneath the summer. I had lost much weight and was yet weak in my footing. Methought Jefferson to wince as I took Augustin under me with inusual effort. I made joke then was but my poor handling of his sword. Jefferson lifted Martha easily to her seat and stepped to sitting beside her. Her hand flew once from the window as the driver drew the horses--a moment holding their heads, then clapping the reins. The animals set their hooves against the resounding stones of Philadelphia.

Washington ordered an assembly of his officers. Having attended the small meeting aforehand, I--already present--sat on the front line. Arrangements had been made for fifty others to find their places among assorted benches and crates of wood.

It was early in our acquaintance, and *mon général* knew yet not what to make of me. I was in great excitement--so much *l'aiguillette* shook upon my shoulder. Washington spoke of the war. He spoke of liberty. He spoke of honor and dignity. I was restless in my seat to hear this, and he noticed my forever shifting.

With a soft aside, the general at length turned to me, saying, "Beaumarchais, do you need to be somewhere else?"

I shook my head forcefully. "*Non, mon général!*" I simply can't be sitting quietly upon such words."

He smiled, clapped me upon the shoulder, and renewed his speech--praising the ready vigor of youth and the Franch.

In October was a letter for me from Martha. Was coming at a time I felt little of use to Washington or anyone. The week earlier, I had first occasion to test Jefferson's sword--in most humiliation.

An officer whom I thought a friend was coming late to my tired tent. I had been having long talk with *mon général* of depressing nature: no word from France, nothing for me to be doing--save watch the death of men and my helpless hoping.

He must have seen me hang the lantern as was preparing for sleep. I was with fatigue--more in heart than in body--but could not, as a man, decline a friend. He was a great burly fellow whose name I will not remember. He sat himself roughly at my table, and I could think me nothing but to open a bottle of wine. Weary, I yet found a clay mug and poured the drink for him. With best politeness, I begged not to be joining him--as would mislike me in my tiredness: 'twould make me dizzy and the more unhappy.

I watched, in great boresome masquerade of cheer, as he finished the bottle. I was claiming then at some loss for having not other to offer him (tho' in truth were several such bottles in a wooden case sent without word from Boston: was doubtless Abigail). He smiled through the wine which was, I knew, of good character--showing his bad teeth, his swollen tongue. Then he clasped my knee and leaned toward me, unmistakably.

The stale wine on his breath made him more than usually repulsive. I drew back and he grabbed my leg, an ugly laughter following his hand. I was of no doubting: I knew what he thought, sought of me. His heavy fingers forced up between my legs, fought for my penis, and I struck him *un coup de poing* straight to his nose. I stood, backed, drew the sword of Jefferson. The officer had fallen, was stumbling to his knees. I held the sword over him, unwaivering, and commanded him from my quarters. He staggered standing, bleeding from both nostrils. Was then I saw his confusion: he had--in earnestness--thought me the man's toy. And this I had to suffer in his eyes.

Of sudden was he knowing his error. Of sudden was he in great perplexion. He looked the great, gaping fool--yet, *mes amis*, was I more hurting. He stammering backed from me. I could not be speaking and stood only with the sword high in my fist. After his leaving, I sat me longtime with the lantern burning.

As was saying, Martha's letter found me the week following. I was in no eagerness to stay--and here was she pleading: Jefferson had left for Williamsburg; she was again alone at Monticello. I went humbly to Washington. To my great surprise, he spoke of the incident I have been telling you: he had awareness of the shadows in my tent. He told me to go--tho' he knew not to whom. Asked he only that I leave him an address--and that, for me, was ever Abigail's.

As a boy was I, *fréquemment*, feeling no hope, nowhere. Phillippe et Georges, the youngest of my mother's children, were not to play with me; Anton possessed them: they knew truly no other father. As often as I could, I was going to our stables to read Vergil to Jean-Paul or to the horses--if the stable-master's son had been sent to the village. More often than I should, for Maman would be angry, I took my horse and rode away, as hard and as fast as he would fly! I tried to hide us in the woods, *mais partout il-y-avait les yeux d'Anton*. (*Ses yeux me brûlent--maintenant*.) Hunger was the better horseman any the way; *éventuellement*, I would have to be going home.

Yet Anton was always watching for when I leave our mother. He would follow--with our little brothers--and be making game of me, before returning me to Maman. In this manner, he was forcing me to learn much of the forest and the secret places which would shield me and my horse. There was, in particular, a little brook that I was thinking Gode to have given me--for Anton was never sensing us there. Not before one day in autume when I had but fifteen years.

Seulement ma mère et le monseignor were knowing of this then. Now you. I could be telling no one after the what *le monseignor* did unto me. (Ah, is not entirely true: I was often telling of it to myself. Always.) But I am being confusing and must speak more clearly. . . .

Anton was not allowed to beat me; Maman loved my body too much tho' I was only small in every part. Thus was he knowing there would be no reward, if he were to hurt me with his powerful fists. Yet he was most clever in the finding of ways to shame me.

On this day in autume, they discovered me asleep on the moss-bank of my little brook. Even de Chernod had not time to stamp his feet and warn me, for my brothers left their horses in the distance. Anton had Phillippe and Georges to tie me as he sat astride my shoulders. They were but boys--twelve, ten years in age--and Anton was to teach them of sex.

I was not often allowed to Church *à cause du fait que ma belle-mère*, Maman was having fear that I might confess us. A priest could then do much against the minor aristocracy. *Mais cette fois*--THIS time, I would see *le monseignor*. Else, as was telling her, "François-Émil will never be of use to you again!" When Maman was convinced that I was not *simplement* being the disobedient and stupid boy, she let me go to him.

Le Monseignor. I had seen him only rarely, but I was certain I had then seen God standing at his shoulder. (I had once ambition to be the boy who carried the censer for Him, but this Maman would not allow.) At the first, he was not wishing to be troubled with me--saying I should see a lesser priest. Yet was I crying and crying, until he let me into his chambers. I fell at his feet and told him what Anton had done to me. Have you ever tried to select among your tragedies? To determine--once for all--the worst of them? *Le Pire*? Although the deciding is *très, très difficile, je crois que*. . . I am thinking this was the worst for me.

Le Monseignor was saying to me, "Why do you think Anton did this to you, François-Émil--and not to Phillippe ou Georges?"

"Because he HATES me, Monseignor! He is being jealous--."

"No, no, my son. You are wrong in this. It was because you are not an ordinary boy."

"Oh, but I am, Monseignor! I am most ordinary."

"No, my child. You are not. If you were, do you think God would let such a thing happen to you?"

"God must be angry with me, too, Monseignor. He must be punishing me for things my mother and I--."

"You are wrong in thinking this of God. You do not know Him!"

"He is not angry with me?"

"No, no. He is only trying to show you that you are not like other boys. You are different. But He will become angry if you do not learn to accept this."

"How am I different, Monseignor? Because I am small? I have only fifteen years, Monseignor; God may yet let me be taller."

"Foolish child! I do not speak of your size! Have you not studied yourself closely?"

I was prostrate before him, thinking hard as I could. *J'ai pensè*, *j'ai pensè* such that my head would soon be coming off. I did not know how *le monseignor* could know this of me--unless it were God him telling. It was a most unusual thing for a man of the time, if he were not a Jew. But I was boy Catholic, so I could not understand this about myself. I had asked Maman, again and again, but she would answer me nothing.

"Is it because. . . I am circumcised?"

I heard *le monseignor* draw his breath sharply: God had not told him.

"You bear the mark of a Jew? How is this?"

"I do not know, Monseignor; no one will say."

"Well, I know now why God has made you special: it is so you may atone for this *terrible* sin."

"How may I atone, Monseignor? How?"

(I was very excited; it was the beginnings of a kind of silly hope. I spoke rapidly--into *le tapis cramoisi* beneath his feet.)

"If I atone, Monseignor--if only I can!--will God let my foreskin grow back? Please, Monseignor? Will He be putting it back for me?"

I am able--even over the centuries--to remember the red of that rug and the strangely horrible smell of it when *mes larmes* mixed with the ashes of incense *et aussi* the holy dust from the feet of *le monseignor*. I hear, as well, the rustle of his surplice above me--and then his voice, suddenly terrifying and wholly unlike that of the singing priest beside whom a boy had once seen God standing:

"Rise to your knees, François-Émil, and look!"

His words had pinned my belly to the floor. I was shaking and could not be lifting myself. I did not want to be getting up; *en terreur*, I felt I would never rise again. I could remain a part of *le tapis* and let him walk on me--but I could NOT get up. And *le monseignor* was becoming very angry with me.

"Get up on your knees--or you will be spending eternity in Hell, you *garçon terrible!*"

L'éternité? People think they do not know it, but they have all felt it--though perhaps not flat on a floor, as I, before *le monseignor*.

I lifted my chest, feeling only great Atlas could go further. *Le monseigneur* jerked me by the shoulders and brought me to my knees. I saw the reason for the rustling of his surplice: *le monseigneur*--this holy man--was holding his penis, great with erection, toward me. I sealed my eyelids shut and would not be opening them.

"Ouvre tes yeux!"

I was sobbing and trembling, but I would not.

"Very well! Perhaps you are unworthy to see God, but you will open your mouth for Him!"

I could not breathe; I could not move. I had not strength for anything save keeping my jaw fixed and my eyes fast closed. But I could not shut my ears.

He called me a devil and a changeling Jew. He slapped me and slapped me and slapped me. He was saying I was made to serve God's priests in the place of women. He was saying I would do this for Him often--if I did not wish to be sent to Hell to search for my foreskin. He found the height of his pleasure, as he was this last thing saying. I wiped his semen from my face, gasped for air, and was sick at once on his sacred carpet. At this, *le monseigneur* went into the rage and commenced to kick me.

"You are damned in this forever! I condemn you to Hell everlasting! You, you dare this? I declare you--EXCOMMUNICATUS! Go! Go from before my eyes!"

My departure would have been the swifter but for his kicks. I crawled toward the doors--as the priest, his secretary, rushed in for the noise. *Le monseigneur* told him to hurl me from that holy place; I was enjoined never to return. I was Satan's *Juif--vile et terrible*.

Together they lifted me and threw me down the sainted steps. (These were marble and several; I felt each one, but I have forgotten how many. *Grâce à Dieu.*) I heard the polished doors slam shut, heavily and forever, as I lay breaking at the bottom.

When Martha sent for me in October and Washington bid me go, New England was full into the autumn--the air fresh, but heavy with mist and the ripe scent of leaves at their crest. I rode along the eastern edge of the Appalachians from Long Island to Virginia--atwhiles, slowly, in thought of Jefferson and what I was again doing to him; at the others, most quickly and eagerly, in hope of Martha's love. If she were to love me--and not Jefferson--then he could not have honorable cause to scorn me, for it was her heart that had brought this upon him; but, if she could not love me--if it were, *avec finalité*, only her loneliness that called to me--then he and I must hate me, both damn me for my wicked weakness.

After so many days riding, I took me first to the Raleigh, thus to have a bath and clean clothes before presenting myself at Monticello. I even had Augustin curried and his mane and tail dressed with ribbons of fine blue satin. Martha did not have word that I was coming--altho' she must be knowing I could not with willingness do other--so Betty should be put to none of extra troubles. (This I was hoping would soften my dark friend toward me: we had found great affection one for the other during her intimate caring of me as I lay ill in Philadelphia; I was determined this would not change--now or the ever.)

I bought a bottle of champagne--so not to be robbing Jefferson's cellar--and sought me something I could take as a present for Martha.

The tavern-master told me he was not a shop-keeper; still was I of insistence there must be some thing small and unimportant (*comme moi!*) that she could yet accept with grace. Hearing this from me, his wife took interest and returned from her chamber with a small book of verses which she were claiming quite new. "Your lady will not have this book; you see, it is in his own hand." I opened the little volume and saw there on the frontispiece *le nom de Crève-coeur*. "Another Franchman!" I laughed, excitedly. "Yes, yes! He gave them to me himself. I hadn't the heart to tell him I never learned to read." I was stung then by her shame and handed the book again to her: "Oh, but you shall learn!" She but shook her head and pressed the poems into my palm.

I was struggling in myself because that I wanted very much this book for Martha; thus was there some silly chatter between us, Crève-coeur's poems going from my hands to hers and back until they were surely dizzy! Our foolery was the sooner ended by the inn-keeper who told me that, if I did not take the damnable book and leave his wife alone, he would show me that the Franch were not the best fighters. (His wording was more strong than this, *mes amis*, but old anger is the better forgotten; I wish not to stir me with its recollection.)

My pride had suffered the offense--yet I must have the little book for my Martha and I was in no eagerness to let this ignorant man beat me. In the end, I pretended not to notice his bellowing and asked his lady what price she would have for Crève-coeur's verses. She said she could name none, for, in honesty, the gentleman had told her they were not good. Then she bent to my ear and quickly whispered: "Besides, my dear husband is a jealous man, and you will do me a favor if you take

the book from our house. He has long hated the fact of its presence, but I could not simply throw it away!"

I knelt, kissed her hand, raced from the tavern with the book--and her brute of a man at my heels. *En fin*, I leapt on Augustin the instant the inn-keeper would else have had me! I could not keep myself from laughter, knowing the pale dirt which covered him in our retreat. A happiness thrilled through me at the thought of Martha, and I wheeled Augustin about again to face him--at safe distance; Augustin reared, and I shouted: "The Franch, they are most glorious in defeat; are they not Monsieur?!" I stayed us long enough to hear him growl and see him come raging after; then Augustin and I (wisely) sped us toward Monticello--leaving him the second coat of our dust.

As we reached Jefferson's "little mountain," it was coming dusk. I kept me back a moment--*simplement* to cherish my anticipation. I vowed me then to uncover Martha's heart and be ruled by it: if she loved me, I would alone face Jefferson and let his pain to sink through my soul; if she loved me not, I would take her to Williamsburg and return her to him. (Our carriage would reach him five days short of Christmas, 1776. But I was not knowing that then.)

I stroked Augustin's neck and teased him lightly about his new ribbons; he turned his grand head and snuffed at me. "But they are bold and noble in the wind!"--I reassured him, and we raced with our hearts bared for Martha.

She must have seen us from the windows of her bedroom, for it was she--not the servants--who made our first welcome, and her long, elegant throat was damp. She must have run down the hall, carefully on the

staircase, despite her most complicated dress. I did not even see the boy take Augustin, and for this I trust my great horse and he have forgiven me.

Martha and I were of one height: our lips met with neither awkwardness nor the least restraint. I could tell she had been ill, was but recovering. Her eyes seemed the larger and her fair face more fair. But her passion for me had--unbearably, unthinkably--increased. As to myself, I had been with no woman other; in its fourteen months of isolation, my body had grown desperately anxious for the release of love.

I dropped my bag at the bottom of the stair, and Martha swept me with her to our room. I never felt the steps. The servants--perhaps Betty among them--must have begged instruction, which Martha must certainly have given, yet I knew not any of this. I felt only her eyes, her hands everywhere upon me. I took in the scent of her as a drowning man catches the air.

She started, seeing the scars on my back, but even so did not shun me. In fear to be thought the cripple, I with quickness assured her that I had again the complete use of my left arm, tho', in truth, it was never the same. I was often later wondering if that small lie may not have put an end to us, even before our embrace.

Through October and November, we made love with a constancy I had not known since childhood. Yet steadily, irrevocably, I began to see further into Martha's heart. When she looked at me, she saw a boy whose body she cherished--despite its new scars--whose heart she perhaps pitied, and whose mind was no match for hers. She would keep me in her dream so long as it was of convenience, yet would she turn to destroy

me--if need be--the instant I threatened the reality of Jefferson's love.

Her lack of serious thought for me made itself known in the smallest of ways: when she was teaching me English and I make the mistake, she would laugh and say, "What does it matter? You have the most beautiful rose-gold curls!" Then she would caress me, thoughtlessly, until I was aching in the knowledge that I could please her in but the one fashion. This caused greater hurt to me than even the sting of my mother's *petit baton* across my knuckles when I make errors in the Latin *ou Provençal*. For at the least was Maman of opinion that I could learn; at the least she did not have me to love her before my lesson was over.

By December--tho' I was young and could yet have an erection whenever Martha wished--I could not achieve pleasure. Thus I had suffered as a child for long time after my father beat me. My penis would rise at my mother's insistence, yet the fear and guilt and shame prevented my release. Somethetime, I would remain in such state for hours; many nights, I could not sleep for the anxious pain of it. I prayed, and I exercised myself--struggling for the blood to go back. No thing was of use. I would beg my mother the next day not to be touching me: "It hurts, Maman; it won't go away, and it hurts me!" This she refused to understand--or was unable. So it became with Martha. Worse, I could not speak of these things to her, and she seemed not to notice.

But Betty knew me. One evening, some friends of Jefferson arrived without announcement--but I was easily explained, and they stayed for the dinner. I was very nervous, afraid to make bad impression, yet as ever unable not to be talking. I tried to tell a little story--something amusing for them. My English was the worse from my nervousness,

and Martha would not let me speak for correcting. At the last, I left off the tale, unfinished. I stared into my plate, until Betty came for it. When the guests went with Martha to the salon for coffee and cognac, I asked that I might retire. I walked then to a small room on the first floor--in the which it was agreed between us I must spend that night. I was stumbling then between the boy and man, for--tho' I did not know it--I had yet to find me the woman who would shape the difference. So it was I began to cry as I entered this lonely room. I had but lain on the cold bed to weep when there was a soft knock and Betty followed.

She carried an oil lamp that made her warm, brown skin to glow. There was, aswell, a depth of kindness in her eyes; strong eyes, they were, yet incredibly soft. I stod then to receive her, for, regardless of station, I knew me a great lady when I met one. She was the one who had relieved me of my dishes and who now stood beside me in my sorrow. I took the lamp and set it *sur le bureau*. There was only the one chair which I brought to her. She sat herself, taking both my hands; I dropped to my knees before her. We stayed thus in silence 'til I could stop the tears. Then she spoke:

"When you first came into this house, 'Lord!' I thought, 'What sort of man-child have You wrought? He's the last thing on earth I'd put in britches!' But I was wrong then, and I knew it when Thomas brought you to me--bleeding. I've seen a man whipped; I've heard him scream the night through afterward, when his woman put the salt-water to those wounds. Surely you hollered, like him--but no louder and, to be honest, not near so long. And he was a big man, nigh to forty. You weren't nothing but a boy, and beaten worse. Why do you let her make

you a fool? You know she won't love you. Why d'you let her break you apart? You want love, child; you don't want this."

A week later, I told Martha that we should go to Jefferson for Christmas, and she was of agreement--tho' she knew not my reason. On the long ride to Williamsburg, we played cards, and she spoke lightly, cheerfully as a girl, warming to the thought of Jefferson. I laughed when she joked with me, but, when she would nap, I turned my face to the window and wept. No language could describe the expression born by Jefferson when he saw us standing at his door-step. He took Martha gratefully into his arms, but his gentle, thankful eyes were on me. I wonder me now if they ever read the Crève-coeur.

Washington and I must have made a strange pair riding about the camp: a huge, great man atop a white animal unequal to him beside a small, stupid one who sat an enormous black horse! But such were we when the shifting lines were drawn at Long Island and in the Valley.

Jefferson's sword most often remained in my tent, and I carried instead a light foil in battle: was the easier to bear riding. Even this, howsomever, I was not much at wielding; yet, with my uniform and grand Augustin, I was able to make the good show. Aswel, I was seldom fighting--tho' often at the front. I was, *en fait*, more frequently there than any other, for--when there was no shipment, no bargaining-- Washington sent his best rider with every order. Augustin and I carried his reason with quickness through to the Colonial Army. And, in riding so, I saw the close scene; I knew, intimately, the forces--the men, the guns, the horses. These knowledges then we fed to Washington.

In the rare, genuine thrust of war, I scarcely knew *mon général*. He rattled on sometimes, as if he were blind, but deafless. On others times, he would shout too briefly at me: "Left! Left!" I would beg of him, "Who left and when, *mon général*?!"--Augustin snapping, breathless to be gone. "On, on!" Sometimes I left him with but the barest notion of his command. In blood and sweat and confusion I rode, wondering if

this were even how the women felt under him: hopeless, helpless, ridiculously human--all odds to his even.

Blood is a common terror to which men become all the too soon accustomed. Blood on snow, in water--these retain some original horror; yet, *mes amis*, not enough. When you can greet human blood on a winter's wild-flower with indifference, you know you have made the last leap from God. I am thinking this to be at least in part the reason women must not be making battle: they lack even the initial fear of blood.

One night, Washington came late into my tent. I was most tired--having ridden the past three days with constancy the back and forth. He sat him beside me, quietly, and said that we were winning because the British had not such a good horseman. I smiled--naked, vulnerable, with completion exhausted: even unable to present myself as a man. I made trial to lift me, but he placed one great hand on my shoulder, easing me backward. His thumb stroked my breast, and I lay still silent--much achingly tired.

He bent then to kiss me on the mouth. My breath caught, and I closed my eyes to keep my terror inward. Great Washington, Washington had kissed me on the lips. He knew I could deny him nothing--for I had neither strength nor will against him. Was God to so disgrace me on this hour? I must let him take me as he would, but he did nothing: he only rose and left me to myself.

I crawled then from my cot and knelt beside it, praying; when my knees gave, I lay in the dirt on my belly. My prayer was most simple: "*Grâce à Dieu, grâce à Dieu; merci, mon Dieu--ou ma Déesse--merci!*" In Heaven it had been determined: such shame was too great, even for François-Émil.

If you are misfortuned *suffisamment* to be the bastard Franch nobleman--*aussi sans un nom et avec seulement l'argent de votre mère et pardessus tout (d'une façon ou d'une autre!)* circumcised--let me be telling you something: do NOT be going to London, until you are knowing the English. They will humiliate you--*encore et encore. Le pire est* you will not even know, *quelquefois*, and will later it discover in the arms of a beautiful woman you thought, once and foolishly, might love you. No one knows better how to crush a Franchman's soul than the English. (They have been practicing since 1066!) And if you are *absolument* misfortuned and God has made you short--with a face that is *trop féminin*--well, then, François-Émil is thinking it might be better if you are never going to London. *Jamais!* Unless, *peut-être*, someone broke your nose for you, and you were able--*en fin, comme moi*--to grow a little *moustache*.

In 1773, London was most filthy city imaginable. (Perhap it is some cleaner now.) There were parts of it a gentleman simply could not walk: to ride past in a hired carriage was sufficiently unpleasant. I am not saying that Paris was without flaw, but we Franch had enough *intelligence* not to make a sewer of her. Was best not to be going within a mile of the Thames, yet London held no small excitement--despite all the King's men. Within but few days, I had met John Wilkes through the (ever) strange auspice of *le Chevalier* Charles Genevieve

d'Eon de Beaumont. (To say more here would spoil Pierre's story, for *le Chevalier* was perhap the greatest part of it.) *Et sur les auspices de M. Wilkes*, I soon met a native of the Colonies named Arthur Lee; I am wishing I had met a cockroach inthestead. The one thing of decency between M. Lee and myself remains the fact that he gave unto my hands Thomas Jefferson's "Draught of Instructions."

Some days after our acquaintance, Lee asked if I were of the mood for a differing view of London. To this was I in rapid agreement, as was ever as a young man in eagerness of places and people. When his carriage drew before my rooms, I was most in surprise to find there were being with him two beautiful women. As I climbed into the carriage, I was with further astonishment to note that the perfume they were wearing was not Franch: this should have told me something.

We went for the dinner at an inn I thought not proper place to be taking the young ladies; yet neither of them seemed to be minding, so was I thinking this custom English. In truth, I was too much of excitement and the struggle to think their language for great concern over the matter. Aswel I was drinking as I had never before tho' the wine was not good (*comme le parfum*--not Franch!).

In my drink, I lost all English and was thus speaking--for I was nonable to be silent--alone, since the none of them knew my tongue. Even this was of no irritation to *ma belle femme*. It was seeming I could do no thing for which she would not look into my eyes with most affection. Since the death of my mother I had been incapable of love-making, but now was I being glad that the table was spread with a long cloth--however cheap--for I was great with erection.

I felt myself falling in the love of this woman--for ever was I in ignorance of the way many can with ease make separate the body from the heart. This was great puzzling question for me to which, mayhap, you have the answer. Was it not the blood of my heart hwich then surged in my penis? Even the if my penis led my heart astray, were they not yet of the single flesh that was but François-Émil? That which was wrong or right for the either--was it not wrong or right for the both? Martha was often saying me that she had never known of a man to be loving so, but always, allways, was this my final truth.

Après le diner, I had fear to make the fool of me and so ask to be taken again to my rooms, with promises to call at my lady's on the day next. *Mais M. Lee* would not hear my Franch--tho' was *très, très simple et clair*--and had the driver to deliver us at the home of these charming women.

There were three, four men, *aussi* a very unusually thin woman, alltheready present when we entered. Aswel there was thick smoke--as were the evening fog had settled itself in my lady's chambers. I knew this smoke and the strange pipe which sat in the middle of the room. I had seen them in Paris--*avec Pierre*--but had never wanted to be smoking: was bad enough in my eyes. Unlike "*mon oncle*," Lee was of insistance thet I join the others; of more importance for me, my lady wished it. Thus did they make light of my *résistance*, until I could not in it continue, if I were to be with politeness--and out of *ridicule*.

The others men moved aside, and the thin mysterious creature filled the pipe with new opium. My lady sat her beside me, lifting one of the coiled ropes to her lips, making offer of the other to me. As the soon as I had the mouth-piece at my lips, I knew the pipe to be of

brass--the taste of which I hated. (Why did they not have one of glass or clay, if they could not afford the ivory *comme les amis de Pierre?*) With all that I had, I yet made effort to take in the spice: was grave mistake (*une autre*), for I became sick on the instant. Was no preventing it: the contents of the evening rushed from me, to my considerable shame, the laughter of the men, and the disgust--I am certain--of these women.

My lady was yet unwilling to desert me. She led me with quickness from the room, veritably carrying me upon her rounded shoulders as we made miserable way up the stairs. To this moment, I am in most disgrace that I could not even take the steps on my own, as a man must.

She took from me my soiled clothes and began to wash me. As she was smoothing the cool cloth over me, my head became the less dizzy, and my penis yearned toward her touch *encore*. I was yet in no eagerness for her to be removing my breeches (for these I still retained): I was in fear, you understand, to make known the circumcision. Yet was I weak and very tired, if painfully aroused. At the last, she took them from me. *Je suppose à cause du fait qu'* I was so upright, she was not noticing my difference. (The room was also something dark.)

She smiled, caressed me, spoke with rapidness in English, and hurried out from *sa chambre*. I lay me back upon the bed, unknowing what to think--but much in happiness that she not of sudden reject me for the many faults I commit on the evening. Tho' I had lost the wine, I had taken more opium than I was of realization, for now I lay me in a dream, half-waking. I saw an incredible woman, with me beside her; a new world, and a new age. This was brief vision--in fragments at the entrance of Arthur Lee.

He was a smallish, dark, cruel man--inside, if not the out. My lady and his were with him. The three of them removed their clothes and bent in nakedness over me, chuckling, making the English noises. Not with sleep, not waking, I could scarce stir me on the bed. Lee began to massage himself, and the women each the other. They came then again to me. My lady, fair and scented, sat astride me as Lee fixed himself in the other woman. I made effort to turn aside, but could not beneath her hips. I thought me to hear myself screaming and felt, vividly, his hand prevent my lips. I am remembering its roughness, the heavy tobacco--his stern grip covering my mouth and jaw. I couldn't move; I could move neither at my head or from my hips. My arms stretched in terror, yet move I could not. I had not breath to scream--so were my muscles shrieking. I began to seizure as I had not in years, and my body, with all my heart but its own will, flung them from me and me from the bed. I twisted now on the floor--most dimly aware of women racing naked from the room, Lee kicking me as if I were the devil.

God had not a very good sense of humor, I am thinking, when He made a man in such way that he could be seeing his mistakes only if there were no longer hope to correct them. And the Devil's laughter was even worse when he caused the most of a man's sins to seem unimportant and something silly, if he should be confessed of them to anyone else. But I put myne down before you--not the whole of them, *bien sûr!* for you would be bored from reading before I could be finishing the list--
seulement le pire:

not refusing Maman,
going to see *le monseignor*
whipping an *homme de Paris*,
drinking with Arthur Lee,
loving Martha Jefferson,
not telling Hia-Leah the truth,
killing a man.

On darker days, I would be naming them more *à la cette façon:*

not dying at 36,
not dying at 30,
not dying at 21,
not dying the year before that,
not dying at 15,
not dying at 13, and
being born (*certainement*).

I had many of chances à mourir--but was never hurt or being sick when I felt like dying. More bad joking au-dessus? *C'est possible*. I have never been ashamed to make God laugh--except when He is angry.

Of a morning was I hard to get from bed. Hia-Leah was many times saying that, if all white men were so fond of sleep and so long in eating their breakfasts, she did not see how they had time to be chasing the Tuscarora. I was not really lazy man but loved to lie awake after Hia-Leah and the children had left me for the morning. It seemed a most long and curious trail I had followed to find them, never knowing where I was going. (*En fait*, I was not often certain where I was *quand je suis arrivé!*) At the end, I was only wanting to wrap myself in their scent and to pray--lest God snatch the blankets and wake me from our dream.

On once I was getting up somewhat later than the usual. Ohannash-tay, our youngest boy, was still trying to finish his breakfast--looking to make the mistakes of his father. I said good morning to Hia-Leah who handed me a bowl of very cold corn soup and said that I should watch Ohannashtay to be certain he was eating all of his meal. Without further words, she went with several other of the women to a stream by our village to wash the pots and bowls of the morning.

The common fire was still smouldering, but had been doused with water. I thought my son and I looked something miserable with our bowls of cold porridge before a dwindling fire. Thus was it that Ohannashtay and I decided us to rekindle the flames. This we did very quickly and

were well pleased with ourselves. Yet were we facing the most difficult of tasks. *Mais peut-être* to best be understanding, you must know something of what befalls the corn after it is being cooked all morning.

When one is ever last from bed, one becomes acquainted *avec le potage* which has remained stuck to the kettle. And, if one should have the misfortune to arise after the women have put out the fire and gathered the bowls for washing, one is of times finding little black pieces amid *le maïs gelée*. It was impossible for me to eat such a thing, and Hia-Leah knew this; she was only pretending not to when she had decided her to be angry with me for somethething. In this, I knew myself insulted before the day had begun.

I looked at Ohannashtay; he blinked up at me. If was possible, his breakfast looked worse than mine--*à cause du fait que* he had been pushing it around the bowl for quite long time. He had not been feeling well, and I could think me clearly how putting any of thet. . . food in his mouth must be seeming to him. But I told him to eat.

My lack of the conviction must have been obvious to him, for he replied with most apt query concerning my own failure to be eating. I was in no mood to argue with a three-year-old boy, knowing I would need the strength elsewhere before the day was over. I put a small spoonful of the. . . corn into my mouth. I was not wanting to swallow, but Ohannashtay was watching me carefully. My face no doubts was expressive of *chagrin*--and indecision. He broke into laughs. I could not then either swallow or spit it out, but was also clear I could not be holding it in my mouth forever. *Éventuellement*, I gulped and gasped for some air. Ohannashtay was truly laughing by this.

It was of great apparence that neither of us could be compelled to eat this. . . porridge. But we decided us that it might be possible to build something with it. Ohannashtay greatly liked this idea and seemed of sudden feeling better.

We carefully emptied our bowls in a single heap on the ground and began patting it into a sort of rectangle with our spoons. Our medium was amazingly responsive. I showed him how to build towers--only one of the hwich had tendency to lean. We dug a moat around the castle of corn and poured some water into it. We had but found our wooden drawbridge and were determining how it could be made to lower--when Hia-Leah and the others returned.

Ohannashtay grabbed his mother and drew her over to show what we had created. I had not before considered how exceeding silly I must look, on my knees beside a mound of. . . corn soup--however carefully shaped. But the laughter of several women and the silence of one reminded me. Ohannashtay was with eagerness detailing a parapet that bore the flag, but became distracted by a beetle which had fallen into the moat. Meantime, Hia-Leah was looking on the ramparts of *Le Chateau-fort de Mais* with much disgust, even some degree of horreur. I stood, and she turned her gaze to me. All the women were looking on us, the most of them struggling not to laugh now.

I felt need to be joking and told them that my son and I had been discovering new uses for the soup: perhaps we would one day construct a long-house of it! I asked them how much corn they thought they could be cooking--and specified that it should be boiled far longer than necessary and infrequently stirred. We would also be needing many great kettles, for it must then be allowed to grow quite cold before--.

Hia-Leah brought me from my oratory with a hard slap across my bum. It was not uncommon for her so to lightly strike me there: in fact, it was a loving thing between us--typically. But even not looking at her, looking instead into the faces of three or four of the other women, I knew this not a friendly gesture. I flushed, embarrassed to be struck so in front of the women and my son. I turned to be facing her with a certain intensity--if not anger--perhaps most because, in truth, her slap had stung me.

Hia-Leah countered by softly asking if Ohannashtay had eaten his food. I looked at Ohannashtay, and he bit his lip. I said that he had not. That neither of us were hungry--. She asked, still quietly, if she had not possibly reminded me to see that the boy ate his breakfast. Before I could be responding, she loudly told me there had been special medicine in his soup--the which he was to have eaten because of his illness. And now I had wasted this medicine and his food playing foolish games in the dirt.

The other women looked away now--as if I were something terrible. I knew myself then a man set up for his fall. To say I was the sorry one would crush me: what had I done? I did not know there was medicine in his food. Why had she not told me? I gazed on her and waited for the others to leave us. This they began doing with awkwardness--one taking Ohannashtay unwillingly from his castle. (At least, he had retrieved the beetle.) The waiting gave me yet few moments for thought.

If I made not the apology, she would be angry. Yet she had been fierce at me since before I awakened. There was more to this than some herbs--however hard to find--that the ghost-dancer had given her. Was it something I had dreamed which upset her?

For most of the year, there would be no one in the house save Maman, Anton, Phillippe, Goerges, myself, and the many servants. But on occasion Papa would return, and, when he was so doing, there was always *une grande fête*. In particular was this true the year my cousin Thérèse turned sixteen. Her own family had not such a fine house as ours, yet was her blood the same. Papa had thus been persuaded to hold the celebration for her.

There were to be two hundreds of guests. More servants were taken on simply to make preparation for the one evening. We were all to have new clothes, so was the tailor brought in and kept very busy weeks before the event. The new chef and our cook argued constantly. For many days, one could not enter a room without stumbling over someone at work: cleaning, polishing, decorating--more cleaning, more polishing, more of decorations!

I was with much excitement as would be able to see again my many cousins--the most of whom preferred me to my brothers. With some luck, the others boys and I could slip away from the party and play football. (This was a sport at which I was something gifted--as one must be very quick to play by oneself, the hwich was usually my misfortune.)

Une semaine devant de la fête, Thérèse and her mother arrived for rehearsing of her entrance and the opening dance--the music for which was of her choosing. Anton was to be her escort, although she did

not care for him, because he was the oldest son and deserving of the privilege.

Thérèse was the most beautiful of all *mes cousines*. She had long, dark hair, yet was her skin most fair. I grew embarrassed but could not forego her company. We spent much, much time talking. I soon discovered that Thérèse had knowledge of few things, so we spoke of those only: perfume, wigs, ribbons, lace, and silk. I was not really bored, as she liked to walk with her arm resting on mine--and to sit very close to me in the garden. Once and once only, she strolled with Anton; when they returned, Thérèse was angry, but she would not be telling me why.

It seemed carriages were arriving every moment on the day of the affair. My one disappointment was that *mon oncle* could not join us. Still, there were so many people that a very lonely boy could not be sad. I wanted to talk to all of my cousins at once! Yet did I suffer gravely in learning that, if I wished to waste my time in football, I should have to play with the little boys. No one my own age--I would be seventeen in November--had any longer interest in childish games.

Frédéric had not worn his fine clothes to make them muddy on the field. Auguste would have several glasses of wine and try to speak with Thérèse. (I hoped he knew something of embroidered silk.) It was then I remembered again Maman's secret with me. I hung my head, thinking on this so suddenly--and must have seemed more upset than football should make me. Jacques suggested I go to play *avec les petits garçons*. I glared at him and declared I would just so be doing. In truth, I lost heart for the game sooner than expected, for I longed to talk again with my old--and distanced--friends.

Anton had been drinking all day. Only moments before Thérèse was to make the entrance and dance with him, it was found that he was far too drunk to make proper appearance with her.

I was standing with my three closest cousins, excitedly awaiting Thérèse. Maman came through the crowd to me. (By force, she was standing with Papa--tho' I was allowed to move as I pleased, having no part in the ceremony.) It was then she was telling me that I must dance with Thérèse as Anton could not. I begged not to such be doing, for I had watched them dance only the once and knew not even where to stand. Phillippe was almost old enough: let him to be dancing with Thérèse!

Auguste, a little in drink, punched me in the arm and called me the idiot. Why would I not dance with the most beautiful woman in all France? Maman scowled and ordered me to be asking the parents of Thérèse what were my duties and where I should place myself.

Even with little practice, I was a good dancer. It was not the dancing I feared; after all, was a simple and stately tune Thérèse had selected. I was simply not the boy to want such and so much of attention. But I could not disobey Maman.

I spoke briefly to the father of Thérèse and took my position. I felt the great, small fool standing in Anton's place, looking eagerly up the stairs. To my surprise, at her arrival, the orchestra began the music I had heard them rehearse for the dance--not her entrance. Something had already gone astray.

Thérèse was incomparable descending the steps. Her father walked with her to the landing, but let her hand go free as she walked with grace down the stair. As a boy and a young man, I had considerable probleme with excitement. And, tho' it shames me to recall it, I became

most aroused at the moment. 'Twas not even so much Thérèse as the flooding in my veins at the thought of being so carefully watched, so suddenly the focus of attention. My heart was pounding within me and that meant always that my body would respond in this manner. (Was chief reason I had not wished to escort Thérèse!) Mayhap the worst of it was that I knew me often to remain in this condition for some hours.

I thought Thérèse would hate me in this--for was not possible she (or anyone) could fail in the noticing; our clothes were not such a man could hide in easily.

The applause lessened as she took the final step and approached me. By the time I had kissed her hand and she placed it on my shoulder the room was silent and breathless. To my surprise, she kissed my cheek and whispered: "I have changed the music. I have done so only this hour--to make Anton appear the fool. It is like the singing of gypsies. Begin slowly; then--very quick!"

Her soft words sent a chill through me, even as the first chord struck. I was dancing unaware of my legs--entirely conscious that, by now, even the father of this marvelous girl must have noticed me. . . . I could not see the many faces about us. I saw only the blue, dancing eyes of Thérèse as we flew across the polished floor. The tune moved quickly from but the first few bars, as she had warned. She foretold the movements with a glance, and I was--of mercy--able to fake the lead by following.

After was over, all of the people--most particularly the young women--crowded upon us. It was then I heard, for the first, the great applause and words of good humour. I was soon surrounded by my own friends, swept by them to the side, and handed two glasses of champagne.

It seemed I was their champion--in part because of my physical state! In a sea of young women, Thérèse stood now across the room, but was looking at me. My cousins were most interested in accompanying her friends for the dance to follow and was thrust upon me to make the move for us: I must approach Thérèse and thank her, perhaps again kiss her hand--if she offered.

So it was that we four--Frédérick, Auguste, Jacques, and I--made way through the crowd to Thérèse. I stepped before her, not knowing what to say (for the once in all my talking). She gave me her hand, and I bowed very low in kissing it--most in all to hide me. When I was again standing, several of the others girls were looking upon me and covering their laughter. Thérèse herself smiled, and Frédéric claimed--loudly--"François-Émil obviously enjoyed much the dancing!" Everyone laughed, and I was hurt. I took another glass from the steward and, as graciously as was possible, escaped to the terrace.

I had need of air and a minute's peace. It was a lovely night: the moon full, sitting on the horizon; stars everywhere, and a bit of wind rising.

"*Bon soir, François-Émil.*"

I dropped the glass--to which I was paying little heed--and a few drops of wine spattered across me. Emiline rose from her seat in the darkness of the balcony and came toward me. We soon had me dry with two handkerchiefs.

Tho' not so pretty as Thérèse, Emiline was my favorite cousine, and I had not even thought to seek her amidst the many relatives. We sat then and talked the long time.

Emiline had little interest in lace. She was citing Voltaire and asking me what I knew of this Mozart. Emiline was more quiet than I among others, but, with me alone, she was ever the most demanding in conversation. Like Maman, she became angry when I exposed myself as only haphazardly read; as a boy, I should be taking more advantage of what a man with knowledge might do in the world--things the most learned of women would not be allowed to attempt. I tried to explain me: I loved poetry, but mathematics was more truly to my taste--hwich, as with any one, followed upon my abilities. She said she understood this, yet should I read more in philosophy and the politics. I was a good man who might change much, she said. She was then with suddenness saying that she cared for me--more than a little.

I offered to find two more glasses of champagne--promising not to drop them--if she would remain. She laughed and was of agreement. When I returned, there were two figures seated on the terrace--Emiline and Maman. To my surprise, Emiline made rapid excuse for herself and went to rejoin one of our aunts. Maman gestured for me to sit beside her. I was much wanting to follow Emiline, but Maman was not in a mood of patience. I walked over to her and sat down, still holding two glasses of champagne.

She began to caress me. I begged her not so to make my condition the worse, yet she would not stop. She was with certainty that I was but in hunger for her--as Papa had shared her bed these many days. I could not tell her no. I could not be confessed that I preferred to play football--caring not about my clothes--thet Emiline and I had been discussing Rousseau. I could not be telling her that Emiline had spoken

of her feeling for me. I only sat with her hands upon me, her lips sipping at one of the glasses I held.

Emiline unexpectedly returned to the terrace. She saw us. Even in the night, she saw my mother caressing me. I knew this from her face. She covered her mouth and fled the balcony. I arose at once from Maman, but was too late. Emiline had seen us. Emiline would tell her aunt. Emiline never spoke to me again.

In my father's house there had been a great table--which I am certain the servants were thinking a fine place for us to eat; instead, it was *simplement le champ de bataille*. If Papa were home (*rarement!*), he would be taking time before the dinner to tell Maman, Anton, and myself all that we do incorrectly: Maman does not look to the social events often enough, and her dress is frequently behind that of Paris; Anton has not studied himself seriously--and he spends too much of money trying his manhood; but, worst of all, was my being there. (*J'ai été un enfant illégitime.*) And I should remember always that, without *mon père*, I would be having not horses, not books, not this food to eat--so was I little swallowing.

No one was to respond this during. We were to sit and not to say any thing. Somethetime, Maman would comment, then Anton--but François-Émil? I can assure you was saying nothing, not even asking if there were more of bread or salt, some water. I try only to be as quiet as was possible--shrinking always, not to appear more the nuisance than he knew me. This was not easy, especially as Anton had incredible imagination for what other people had done.

Selon d'Anton, as a child I did much that could bring but disaster upon me. To break Papa's spectacles, *par exemple*: what purpose in this could there be? I was forbidden to enter Papa's library--which was any

the case locked--so I could not be getting at his reading glasses. And if I should cleverly steal a key to his library, why would I crush these expensive spectacles and hide them behind a volume of Voltaire? I was not a mad boy. Why would I be doing this?

I had but eight or nine years and was on my knees in the chair to make me taller, pleading with Papa to believe I can do no such wicked, stupid thing. Anton claimed I must do this terrible deed from jealousy--intending to blame it upon him, since he has a key to the library. Maman laughed: this was more Moliere than Voltaire! But I was frightened: Papa preferred Anton and would believe him.

Papa found his broken spectacles (*miraculeusement*) where Anton had predicted. He struck me but once, yet was I seated *très précairement*, so went sailing across the table--a most miserable part of the *mélange* of wine, sauce, bread, great dishes of food, a bowl of flowers.

Thus garnished was I served to Anton who--only half in jest--stabbed at my belly with his knife. I was terrified, wildly slipping, struggling to avoid his blade. Finally, I felt it slice sharp and hot below my ribs. The cut was not deep but bleeding. Maman screamed. Anton looked at me for one of instants as if he would plunge the knife again to kill me. I scrambled and fell from the table onto the floor beside him. Papa caught Anton by the elbows, and I ran from the house to our stables, hid in the stall with Belette.

She was a light, nervous filly who cared for no one but me. I showed her what Anton had done to me, then lay on the straw at her feet. I determined not to come out of her stall--perhaps ever.

Papa sent a boy from the house. I promised I would make Belette to kick him if he came in after me. This he seemed to believe and

fetches the stable-master. M. Claremont was not afraid of Belette--but he winked at me and swore to *le garçon* that she was most dangerous little "weasel," very like to kick a young man's head to Marseilles. The boy reported this to Maman who then came herself.

It was very strange to see her there in the stables--*particulièrement* flat from the straw of Belette's stall. She was crying, and I started to cry *plus encore*. M. Claremont, winking, asked me to tell Belette not to kick him, he was coming into the stall. I wanted to say no, but in its stead I stopped crying and asked Belette to be still. M. Claremont knew well he could have led her from the stall but did not. He held Belette's head and told me let Maman to look at me.

And then was Maman also standing on the new hay of Belette's stall. Then it was she knelt actually to sit on the floor of the stables beside me. I could not take my eyes from her ribboned shoes all caught up in straw, her skirts sifting through the hay.

My clothes were torn, splotched with remnants of our meal. Maman tried to be smiling as she plucked *un haricot vert* from my collar. I remained tightly curled, clutching my stomach. She kissed my nose and asked to see where Anton had cut me. Slowly, I opened my shirt as I had for Belette. "*Mon pauvre garçon! Mon petit oiseau!*" She was saying, and I began to cry although the scratch no longer hurt enough for tears.

Maman would have me to come back with her. I would not. I was never going into the house again. I was never going to have a bath and let the nurse--or even Maman--treat my injury. I had decided to live with Belette. In this way, I would perhaps not be getting into any more of troubles. Maman tried to lift me, but I wriggled free. Belette snorted and stamped her feet. M. Claremont suggested that a boy might

need to sleep in the stable on occasion--and I am sure he was winking at Maman. He called to his son; Jean-Paul brought a blanket. This the stable-master handed to me before following Maman out of Belette's stall. Maman said only that she hoped I would soon be changing my mind; she did not even say that I do this only to hurt her with my stubborn disobedience. M. Claremont must have been winking very hard. I wrapped myself about with the blanket and fell asleep.

When I awoke, M. Claremont was carrying me up the steps to the house. I clung to his neck and begged him not to be taking me inside. I asked him to let me be his son and work in the stables with Jean-Paul. He laughed and said I was foolish to want to be a poor boy who could not read; I would grow tired of a straw bed very quickly. So I offered the bargain to him: for one week, I would be his son and do exactly as he told me--if only he would not make me go now into the house. I would stay up all nights working--repair the harnesses, polish the saddles, clean the carriages--whatever he wished. Only I should not have to stay in the same room with Anton tonight.

M. Claremont became very stern with me then, saying no man could trade his life for another's and I must accept to be myself. *Le marquis* would not allow Jean-Paul to be his son; would I yet take Jean-Paul's place from him? M. Claremont seemed in fact angry, and I thought not without some reason. Then was I promising, if Jean-Paul would share his place for one evening, I would teach him to read--and I would not ever hit his hand with the little stick Maman used.

M. Claremont looked up at the great windows, the most of which were dark. No one noticed us. He said he saw no reason not to ask Jean-Paul if he would like to learn to read--but that I should certainly

have to explain to my mother in the morning. I kissed him, and he tooked me home.

To arrive in Paris for the first time at any age and in any of ways is enchantment. To ride through her streets a small boy from Provence at the side of a great and most popular playwright is to know that Gode may somethetime look in your direction.

Mon oncle (again, was not so, but such I called him) was seldom at our house, but when he came he spendt much time with me. He told me many stories and was ever listening to my own with gentle interest. And, too, he was bringing me presents--tho' none for the others. I was, in this, something puzzled, yet thought he must be knowing that Papa had nothing for me on his visits, so was M. de Beaumarchais making the difference. Maman was never so pleased to see him as I. When he asked to take me with him to Paris for the plays, she refused in anger.

The both of us were begging. We would be gone only the three weeks. I had twelve years, yet had never seen more than our small village. Maman made comment that Pierre's friends were not fit company for *un petit garçon*. He made reply *avec un peu de colère* and sayed that I was too young to be in danger of the women. I blushed, as did Maman. She was with conviction: I could no be riding to Paris. She turned then to the stairs. I cried after--not to be persuading her, for I knew I could not. (She was most strong woman when in decision.) I wept à *cause du fait qu'* it would be many months before I should see my uncle again and I should perhaps die before reaching Paris.

He came then to console me, saying that we could still go--if I were big enough boy to pack my own things and meet him at the stables before dawn. *Bien sûr!* I hugged him about the neck and ran to my own room. *Mon valet de chambre* (a boy not the much older than myself) was setting out my clothes for the next day. I told him that I should undress myself that evening and slept in my clothes.

Mon oncle was not entirely pleased when he saw what I was bringing. Aside from the items *mon valet* had arranged for my dress, I carried many books, three balls which were good size for me to juggle, and my wooden puppets--*Jacques et Monique*. The last were causing great probleme as I insist they ride in my pockets--not the saddle bag--so to breathe. At the first, one or the other of them was ever jumping out--untill my uncle bound them to my waist with ribbon he had thought to bring a lady. *C'est vrai:* we were having such fun with these childish toys on our travels that I am thinking even he was not unhappy I had brought them.

We rode very long hours, stopping rarely to eat and rest ourselves and the horses a little. I made no complaint--was too much adventure!--and he praised me, saying he would make the journey with no other boy my age. I was such good horseman, he knew I would not slow him. (In truth, I shall confess, noneless, that once was I so much in tiredness that he tied my horse to his, and I slept rocking in his lap.)

It was far into the night on the sixth day when we found Paris. I could yet tell something of her in the lamp-light and by the cobblestone beneath Belette's hooves. I could not believe there were people enough in the world for such a city--and some of them yet awake on the streets. *Les amis de mon oncle* greeted us with excitement despite the hour, but I

was *trop fatigué* for conversation. My uncle led me to a small room at the top of the stairs, helped me from my clothes and into bed. I fell fast in sleep.

When I awoke, I thought instantly of Maman and became fearful and sad. But my windows looked out upon the street, and I could not long be with care. I ran from my bed to the balcony to watch the people, carts, and carriages--so many of them!--rushing everywhere. I looked too and saw *mon oncle sur la terrasse* below. He smiled and, waving, told me to be dressing: was alltheready late in the day, and we had much to be doing.

I rushed back into the room but suddenly stood in confusion. How was I to dress me? Short time later, he came to my room and found me in the most shameful state of unpreparedness. He laughed and asked the matter, so was I explaining that I knew not how to dress. But surely, he was saying, there is no decision: I had only the one set of clothes with me. *Certainement*, yet I did not know how to be putting them on. He looked on me then with a fierceness that yet flashed away. It was true. I had never brushed my hair, much less placed a wig; I knew nothing of the complicated lace and bow at my neck. I knew only to stand like a quiet pony to be saddled. What could I do?

With some impatience, *mon oncle* called for one of the women--a serving girl of sixteen--and left us. I had not been dressed by a woman the since I was ten and felt much embarrassment, which she was not understanding. I was to dine with M. de Beaumarchais; I would attend with him a play; I had better look like a boy who knew something! She had me together in little time.

At the dinner, the lady *de mon oncle* was splendide. She asked *seulement les questions* of things I knew, and, after dining, I showed to her my puppets. She took Monique and had her to kiss Jacques--the hwich made me blush to my ears. But was soon time to go to the theatre.

Great Louis should have been dishonored to know how Pierre de Beaumarchais was greeted at a stage! Mayhap that, *mes amis*, is why the King's wife was later giving *mon oncle* such troubles.

Maman could not have known what she was doing when she locked me in the room with Adeleine. Poor, terrible Adeleine! She was Anton's twin and had been kept in her room for seven years--after it was thought she had tried to kill little Georges in his crib. I never had faith that it was Adeleine, but Maman believed Anton. The servant found both of them in the nursery with Georges strangling, smothering beneath a mound of pillows. Adeleine was not so clever as Anton who claimed he had but come into the room to stop her.

Now that I--a disobedient and unloving boy--had returned from Paris, I could live with Adeleine. Such were the words with which Maman greeted me when I parted from *mon oncle* and made most tired and humble offer of myself to her. I was stricken with terror.

Maman had not made habit of visiting Adeleine. She had less knowledge than I of the changes in my step-sister. There was but one old nurse who tended her, and I knew only what this woman would tell a small, prying boy. 'Twas enough to assure me that I could not bear to be locked with her in the dank filthy room. (Adeleine, now if not before, was quite mad and played with her excrement. The nurse had given over the effort to clean after her.)

Maman told Anton to take hold of me, and he carried me--twisting and kicking hysterically--to his sister's room. I screamed and begged Maman to punish me in any other way. Adeleine's nurse even plead with

Maman not to leave me in that room if, in truth, she loved me. Maman cared to hear nothing from this woman and reminded her of what befalls carping, agèd maid-servants.

The nurse unlocked Adeleine's door, and Anton threw me inside. Adeleine screamed. Seeing her for the first time in seven of years, I could recognize only the color of her long, dark hair--which was yet matted and unwashed. (As a tiny boy, I had watched the serving-girl to spend hours brushing this same black hair, carefully rolling it with ribbons *à la chignon*.) I could hear Maman's voice fading down the long hall and hurled myself against the door, trying to press myself beneath it. Was of no use. And my cries did not bring the merciful sound of her return.

Adeleine shrieked again. She was wretchedly thin and pale, half-naked with her bare back pressed into the farthest corner. I am certain she did not know me. Even in my terror I was yet conscious of hers. I put out my hand for her to see I meant no harm. She folded her arms across her face and slid to the floor.

There was almost nothing of furniture in the room: a tiny hard bed only. The floor was bare; the windows boarded. The air was heavy and horrible to smell. There was very little light.

Sobbing, I walked toward Adeleine--thinking I must live thus with her forever. She must have thought I moved to attack her. I cannot else comprehend what she did then. Perhaps even fear does not explain it, for she bit deeply into her own arm. With each of my steps, her teeth tore at the flesh. I ran back to the door, again screaming and pounding for Maman to have pity. I cried thus and beat at the door

until I could no longer raise my voice or my hands. I looked back toward Adeleine.

She rose, her forearm bleeding, and stood before me. I whimpered and begged that she not come closer. She laughed and suddenly ripped at the skin of her poor arm--ah, hideously!--this time swallowing a piece of it. I lay tightly curled--my arms about my knees, my head buried--and wept frantically through the night. I was all the time thinking that, at any moment, Adeleine might seize and begin to eat me. I do not know when I ceased to hear her laughter.

Maman had not intended to lock me forever with Adeleine. Was to be but the lesson of a single evening, tho' this I was not knowing. Early on the morning that followed, the nurse turned her key in the latch and released me. I clung to my mother's knees, pleading and ranting about Adeleine.

The nurse cried out and was only then Maman took chance to look upon Adeleine. My step-sister lay dead--from trauma, from loss of blood--her mouth open, her teeth stained with blood. The old woman was shrieking: "*Elle est morte! Elle est morte!*" I hid my face in the cloth of my mother's fine skirts; I could feel her trembling. She swept me into her arms, and, tho' I was of fair size at thirteen, she carried me to her rooms. We lay upon the bed a long time after--both weeping, begging the other to forgive.

Adeleine was given unto God's earth without a priest on the same day. Maman chose to keep the useless nurse yet with us; the old woman died in our service that year.

I awoke on one of mornings to the most strange touch of Mirakah and Fire Leaps examining *mes genitaux*. I was covering myself quickly and scolding Mirakah--for she had seven years and should be knowing such things were private. Yet was she of persistence: I had only just fallen into dream *encore* when I felt the blanket to withdraw from me. By this, I was of no small *irritation et perplexion*. What had overcome *mes enfants*?

"Do not so be touching me!" I tell her. Again retrieving the blanket, I turn onto my belly. The both of them remained sitting, staring on me. *Évidemment*, Papa was to get no further rest this morning. Thus was I asking their problem. Fire Leaps looked down, ashamed to be hearing me some angry, yet was his sister *très calme*. With evenness, she declared me different. "*Bien sûr, parce que je suis un homme*"--I sayed, and with this was I trying to sleep. It was then occurring me that she all the ready had such knowledge, and I opened my eyes.

For why were they to torment their Papa with silliness when he was trying to sleep? *Encore, la même chose--mais cette fois* from Fire Leaps. *Maintenant* was I of comprehension: they had been discovering the circumcision. This was I oft' thinking I must one day explain my son--tho' was never of imagination the need would come so early and with me half in sleep. But I satting upward, the blanket carefully around me: "Ah, oui."

Naturellement, la question éternelle: "Pourquoi, Papa?

Pourquoi?"

At that moment, Hia-Leah entered the long-house--*je suppose* to be checking on the children. They were not noticing, as were intent on me. I was of small hope that she might rescue me, but she stepped only softly away.

What could I be saying? I knew not myself. Is it ever that a man's children must be asking just those questions he cannot answer?

Pourquoi, Papa? Pourquoi?

"Je ne sais pas, mes enfants; je ne sais pas."

They looked on me then as if I were the liar and they hurting.

'Twas necessary I make other effort.

"I am a white man."

Fire leaps looked into me with care.

"I am a white man.

The each of them nodded. I was holding my hands forth and taking their own inside them. For the first in many years, I was feeling my difference hard. But soon they would be feeling it, too; I could not lie to them. I held their four little hands and found me of few words.

"I am a white man; forgive me."

I know was not entirely just to be leaving them so to think all white men were in this way like myself, yet was I most in tiredness at ever being *le caractère d'anomalie--particulièrement en avant de mes enfants*. And I could not be knowing then that they would find otherwise.

From the moment it was of apparence I would survive, the son of our chief hated me. Was not his to say whether I stay or not, but when this decision (a matter for women) had been made--he had yet much room to torment me. This he was doing as often and to great extent as possible.

He had charge of my Augustin, who was, without doubts, the grandest horse in the village, tho' something peculiar in his training. I had shown the "little Royanerkowa" (a man two, three years my senior) basics things. Yet Augustin was knowing the good deal more, and, for these, I refused to give Royanerkowa's son the commands.

Augustin knew to lie down on instruction from me--a very useful habit for a horse in battle. Is not exceptionally inusual: any horse may so be convinced--if the idea is well-expressed and he has sufficient reward. Still the first condition is most difficult and the second--*c'est impossible*--should the horse not first love, *avec beaucoup de raisons*, the man who talks to him.

I make the mistake of showing this trick to the children--so that every one was in knowledge of it. Yet had none heard my words to Augustin. "Little Royanerkowa" could never learn him love, yet would he have this command. *En fin* was I giving it to him: Mirakah was but the

year old then, and I would live to see my little girl a woman! The bysides, Augustin would do as he was liking.

Was a feast day and so no hunting. The chief's son became decided upon this matter of Augustin putting his belly in the dirt for him. I was cutting wood: my constant chore at such time. Hia-Leah and the women were cooking all the day, so was I always chopping. I would have taking more of irritation in this--except that the children were bringing me water and their stories. At lengths, howsomever, I heard that hwich I could not bear. Augustin would not lie down for the little chief, so was the latter beating my great horse.

I ran me from the wood-pile to the ponies. 'Twas as the children had said. Royanerkowa's son stood at Augustin's left side, striking him hard at the knees with a double length of rope. (This was NOT Tuscaroran way; it was but small sign of one man's madness.) I leapt to the tall shoulders of a man who wanted nothing--not even the obedience of this horse--so much as my death. The surprise of my weight sent us to the earth--proof that I was not thinking, for the lighter man never takes the larger on the ground.

With quickness he had me on my back not to be getting up. He spit in my face and sent his knee into my groin. He hovered over me, pinning my shoulders at his ease now, for I could not use my legs with such pain between them. He sent his knee again and again into me. I was, by this, most sick and to completion helpless. I saw little more than his angry face above me, tho' thought me to catch Augustin rearing behind. I was stricken with repetition--feeling this should be the way I would die, wondering but how long it must take by this method.

Then Hia-Leah surged into my view. She had taken Little Royanerkowa by his vast neck, and soon there was the crowd with her. Hawk-Braking pulled the man from off me, and others rushed to carry me to the long-house. I had first to be sick on the spot where I'd lain.

A man in such condition does not really want help, would rather be to himself, and most with certainty does not wish to remove his trousers. Yet what he does not want must come. Hia-Leah knelt her beside me, crying--her beautiful face scratched and torn in the effort to save me. I could do little more than hold me and accept her arms about my waist. The others had left us, but the ghost-dancer entered after them and ordered Hia-Leah to step away.

He told me to take my hands from me and Hia-Leah then to loosen my breeches. There was much indecision, but finally I did as told and thus did she. He spread my legs apart so to look on me, and I thought I would scream. Seeing this in my face, Hia-Leah came to sit at my shoulder and hold me. I had known this terrible pain as a boy--the hwich was making it worse *à cause du fait qu'* I was with understanding much time would pass before I could be myself again.

With water and herbs, the ghost-dancer dressed my genitals covering me with a light blanket and recommending special diet for me to Hia-Leah. He took himself then--as always--to his own tent.

The feast went on outside and without me. I slept much, fearing to come awake to pain. Late on the evening, nonetheless, Royanerkowa himself--together with his wife and most important people--came to stand at the foot of our bed. He spoke clear and solemn words: Augustin was returned to me, as was the sword of Jefferson. (Of this, he made

presentations.) His own son was in disgrace; the Mosquito had his honor. It was yet many days before I could walk.

Perhap it began because thet Little Royanerkowa felt I should have been his prize--not that of the Ruffled Owl. (This brave boy was to die against Brant before he saw twenty.) Perhap he had wanted my Hia-Leah. Perhap was but the chances building one on the other. For any reason, the son of our chief sought for me only sorrow. Our enmity was never ceasing.

My differences as a man were early noted; it was seeming same-nesses--tho' far greater in number--took yet the longer to find. Royanerkowa's son was particular obsessed with my circumcision: he had conviction even white men would not do this to their sons.

There was once a raid by the Tuscarora against a small white encampment. The men returned with success, tho' cheaply won. 'Twas long in the evening when their horses were heard. We--the women, the children, the aged, and myself--ran from the long-house to greet them with a great camp-fire. The cheerful warriors circled about us, their ponies hot and spattered with blood. Hia-Leah, Mirakah, and Fire Leaps--but a tiny boy--clustered about me. Royanerkowa's son, the leader of this excursion, stood his horse before us and drew notice: he had brought a token, a present for Mosquito.

With this, he threw toward me a pouch drenched in blood. Mirakah reached for the "gift," but, catching her into my arms, I forestalled her. Hia-Leah then took our child from me--as was obvious I must retrieve this offering. The little chief was leering at me, and there was silence all about us. I could well guess that I did not want what had been given me, yet I picked up the purse and opened it. Inside

there lay a severed penis--uncircumcised--the organ, I was now told, of a British officer. I hurled his challenge into the fire and, scooping up my small son, went again into the long-house. Even Hia-Leah dared not follow.

Hawk-Braking and I were best of friends and is with no little shame I must be confessed of a grave hurt I once was causing him. (This, *mes amis*, you should perhap be adding to my earlier list.)

We had been trading *encore avec les Français*. As was usual, the men were insisting upon buying much alcohol and consuming this for celebration *immèdiatement* upon our return. The women would have but little to do with us during this, so were we often keeping distance from the village. I was not of particular fondness for the practice--as was aching for my wife after two, three weeks from her touch. Yet was I to be there.

Royanerkowa's eldest son--whose hating of me as aforesaid never ceased--became with quickness drunk. At the first, he was making only insults at the Franch with whome we had made the bargain. Soon was my turn, howsomethever. I had most small desire to be this hearing. I was tired and had something drinken myself.

"Is the greater fool will argue with another who is in drink. With respect to Royanerkowa, I will prove me the lesser." With this words was I leaving. I had but stepped from the ring-light of the fire when I heard our chief's son to declare that the white woman's place was in the village. I stopped, turning to look on him: "It is seeming red woman threatens a man's honor only to his back." Had Royanerkowa

not motioned for others to be holding his son, François-Émil would have lost another fight.

It was lonely walking back to the village. Most, most lonely. Tho' grateful for the blows I had not taken, I almost wished me more the fool. Could this NEVER be ceasing? Only the thought of my Hia-Leah's warmth in the blankets kept me walking, yet worse was coming.

I did not know me what the women did when we were drinking; I was thinking they had sense to be asleep. But when I came into the camp, I found myself of sudden in 'midst of a sober council--and not in least welcome. My being there was great offense: this was I knowing. But was not of my intent to break custom. I was not the male spy sent among them! Yet for my ignorance would I be punished.

A man could not feel smaller than with twenty women angry forming the circle about him. I had been warned of this: was greatest disgrace a man of the tribe could suffer. At a word from the wife of Royan-erkowa--a woman of much power and, I was thinking, some feeling for me--they would attack as one. They would do me no serious harm, physically. Yet if I made least move to protect me, *l'humiliation* would be complete. I could lose all standing and become *l'exile*.

I looked at Hia-Leah. There were tears, bright with fire-light, standing in her eyes, some falling. She could do nothing for me. Our children were sleeping in the long-house. Sleeping. Softly sleeping. I closed my eyes.

I could hear the chief-woman to say the assault on me would be brief--as this was not declared council I had defiled. It was further of her order they should make no attack on my manhood--unless I were to

defend me. Her signal--the sharp, strange cry--was given, and I was on the ground.

Was not the sting of their forever pinching and scratching, nor the shrill sounds were making--but the non-natural effort I must be taking never to shelter me: I must but lie stillly and receive their disgrace. I should rather a thousand times have Royanerkowa's son to be breaking my ribs. A thousand, thousand times. I had not enough of them for him to break.

The second sign must have been given--tho' I was not hearing it. The women withdrew from me into the long-house. Hia-Leah stood behind and knelt beside me. She was crying, stroking my face with her tears. I lay, breathing hard--of sudden in fear of her touch. In fear of her touch.

Then were there hoof-steps. Hawk-Braking was astride his horse, leading another. He snapped for Hia-Leah to be gone. I looked at her, yet could not find it in me to soften his words. To say any of things. She turned and I got me again to my feet. I mounted my horse and tore away. I wished to be seeing, hearing nothing of the camp, nothing of my wife, nothing even of my children's sleepy dreams.

I rode hard, *comme un animal* atop more feeling beast. I drove and drove *le cheval* fiercely through dark and my fury. And I screamed and was shouting fast against the night. Hawk-Braking pressed from behind but could not be catching me. *Éventuellement*, I stopped, threw myself from the horse, and wept into the ground--until I could feel the pounding of the hooves of the horse of my friend. I straightened me some then and lay back against the warm earth. Was summer, and she was yet with the sun's heat soothing me.

Hawk-Braking, drawing-up, dismounted, sat him beside me. There were no words. Only stars and our breathing, the ponies snuffling, stamping, shaking their hot shoulders. I did not--for once in ever!--wish to be talking, and he did not. In the stead, was handing me a bottle. From this, as rarely, I drank heavily--wanting more of numbness in my soul such my heart could not feel it aching. The bottle went from his hand to myne and my hand to his for great length; then I held it to his mouth and he to myne.

In time was I telling him I should ride from this place and never return. Was foolish for a white man to be thinking his red wife could love him or thet, with years, he would no the longer be *le sujet du ridicule*, a thing of shame. Everyone hatinged me for my difference and was *très, très évident* I could not make them to stop. "*Ils ont raison: je suis un idiot.*"

I was bleeding from the cheek, and Hawk-Braking poured the last of our drink over this scratch. He said, if I should leave, he would be forced to follow--and he did not wish to leave his loud wife or his pesksome children. At this was I laughing, for was no way other: I could not prevent me on hearing such soft words from the tallest man in our tribe.

I hit him in the shoulder, and he hit me back. I hit him in the stomach, and he was, again, just so hitting me. I stood. I kicked him in the jaw, and he stumbling backward. I laughed; he laughed--and charged me. He was some drunker, and I dodged him; he fell. I laughed; he laughed and dove at me *encore*. I turned from him; he fell. I laughed; he laughed--and charged with some accuracy. I was at difficulties to escape him, and he took my shoulder. I tumbled, rolled, and

stood me again. We circled at distance, with occasion laughing. He closed on the sudden and struck me in the center of my chest. I staggered, without breath, but not falling. Again, we make the circle--rushing and dodging unevenly, some drunkenly. I made move to strike, but my left heel discovered a small hole *sur le terrain*. The ankle twisted, and I found me on my belly. Hawk-Braking leapt to his chance and sat astride me. I could not be moving. The weight of his hips wore against myne, and his vast hands were pinning my shoulders.

A flush flew through me, and I growled *avec rage sauvage et brutal*: "Get FROM me red mountain with the soul OF A POTATO!" May sound something funny in your English--but was not, *mes amis*, not in the heart of a Tuscaroran.

Without sound, my great friend took his horse and rode away. *Pour long-temps*, for long, long time, I remained with my face in the dirt.

After the loss of our last child, I had much fear that my Hia-Leah might die *aussi*--if there were being any more children. She was some younger than I, yet had she given to me *sept enfants*: only the four of them lived. And she had very bad time with this last. I know because that, unlike Indian husband, I stayed with her; I was seeing her suffering and the boy when he was born dead. I learned then why the other men would not be going to their wives at such time.

As she was recovering, I trynged to be the cheerful one--smiling and singing to make her laugh and not give in to dying. I do not think she was knowing how depressed I was because of this way I was being to make her well, I hoped. But I was only playing *le jongleur*: I had all the time much fear and sadness. I began to realize that I was no longer able, no longer capable of being the man in her bed. So it was then I was making this story: we should not be having *sexe* because that another child might kill her. *C'était vrai*: I was this thinking, but I was not telling her, *à la meme fois*, I could not be making love.

I was having *cette problème à cause du fait qu'* I was worried to lose her, but I was ashamed to say her that I was no longer a man. It was becoming *plus en plus* unlikely that I was of suddenness going to get an erection. Still did I have to be saying something, *si seulement que nous* should not--for fear of other children. I was often thinking she

to know me better than I myself. She must have been knowing this as well, for here she began to cut me off.

I was forty-three--a bad time for a man, I am thinking, and was bad time for our people *aussi*. The winter was not letting go of us until May, and ten of the young men--including Fire Leaps (who had but fifteen years)--left the tribe to join Brant and the others. *Peut-être le pire, pour moi*: Mirakah was married. Hia-Leah and I had but the two little ones left, and they were always being hungry. (I am not excusing me, but this perhaps shews that *j'ai eu*--there were many reasons for sad feeling.)

More than before ever, I am thinking--if with vanity--more than man has ever needed woman, I was in anxiousness needing my Hia-Leah near me. In any way that I could be holding her, caressing her to show my love for her pleasure--in any of these was I willing. But she would not have me so long as this lie lay between us.

My kiss she refused; my embrace she rebuffed; and my speech was to her but a windy silence. In anguish did I threaten our early love with claims that twenty years were but lust--which, if denied, revealed her inward hatred for a man not of her color. I saw then the eyes of God burning through her into me; even so, in my prideful shame, I could not be confessed. Thus did she turn from me every inch, each hour of those days.

And so did my lie and I grow together--petrified and irrefutable--until we became as one in half-living stone: a bloodless monument cut from clay. Day after day. Night by night. Week upon week. From month to months.

Mirakah was of many questions, for the two of us yet worked with the children. *Pourquoi, Papa pourquoi?* Even to her, I could not give answer. And Hawk-Braking, who had suffered gravely in a hunt the loss of one leg at his knee, even my friend--now often about the camp--could be finding no answer in me.

Hia-Leah treated me bitterly; her scorn was more cold than that winter: she was the ice that shatters stone. The little ones--Ohan-nashtay and Hia-Naktah--endured not only the common hunger, but our freezing rock aswell. Ohannashtay, my little boy, wept like a frantic girl, always; Hia-Naktah would but stare with her blue inexplicable eyes from her rose-brown face into a distance that denied both her mother and father.

At the least touch of Hia-Leah, the softest syllable--in truth--from myself, the spell might have been broken, and even the winter over. So was the ghost-dancer telling me, finally begging, incanting an end to our curse. Yet, if the tears of our son and the glare of our daughter could not dispell it, there was no dance, no song to lift us. We were caught in the hopeless hell, the final corner of despair.

Ma belle-mère died in childbirth. The child, which was mine, did not live.

The April was warm, but all of us in formal dress with people in and about. Even *une cousine* I had not seen in two of years was allowed in to her rooms. But François-Émil? *Je me rappelle*--I could hear Maman to scream from where I sat with Papa, Anton, Phillippe, *et* Georges. I was to sit in the hall until God had taken the last breath from her.

Toute de ma vie (j'ai eu dix-sept ans), I was but a part of her. My body existed only in ways it differed from her own. My heart was created to keep hers from loneliness, my mind but to satisfy her curiosity. Everything I knew and felt had come from her--excepting that the stable-master taught me how to ride.

There was more than pain in her screaming: *elle a eu terreur*. She was certaine she was going to die, and her terror convinced me. Without her hands, how could I feel my thighs? I would have no mouth but for her lips. Who would listen when I spoke?--or, worse, who would lend me words?

I began to sing to her. The more, the louder--I matched her.

Mon père ordered me to cease but remained, *comme toujours*, with his shoulders pinned to the back of his chair, his right knee crossed over the left. Maman was screaming as she had for hours my name, over

and over. I threw myself against the door, and Anton leapt after me. I turned and hit him, sent him to the floor. My voice broke, so did hers. There was silence, incredible stillness: I could feel her everywhere, all around me--holding and enclosing me. It was again for the instant as it had been when I was but small boy and her body extended all beyond me, warm and certain. But the door to Maman's rooms opened, and I was at once naked and invisible.

In the days to follow, I was being told that my father had disowned me four years the earlier--so was I without a name. (Maman had taken any meaning her last words had with her.) I was aswell told that my presence in the house would not be tolerated. Maman must have had more awareness of my father's mind than I, for she left all of her own money, her property, and her things to me. Anton was incensed, and Papa was eager for me to go: he allowed only that I should stay until the burial. *L'avocat d'affaires*, expressing his sympathies, began his advice to me. Anton stood, with rage shaking, and called me many unnatural names. He was of such anger that his nose was again bleeding from where I hit him, and Papa made him to lie down. After polite coughing, *l'avocat* suggested other names.

Unlike Maman's private servants, who were also dismissed, I thought it best to leave without much packing. I signed her property over to Anton and left things for Phillippe et Georges--both hers and my own. I took an advance on her monies, *mon cheval (de Chernod)*, *et quatre livres*: Vergil, Giraud (Le Roux), the Bible, and Rousseau. A young man on the road to Paris with no name and only his step-mother's money may be many things--

Li- be- ra me Do- mi- ne.

Li- be- ra. Alle- lu- ia.

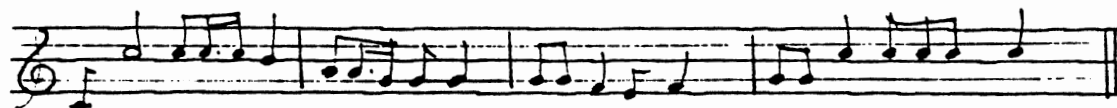
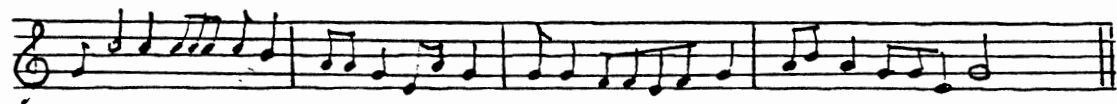
De o- re. Al- le- lu- ia.

Li- be- ra me Do- mi- ne.

E U O U A E .

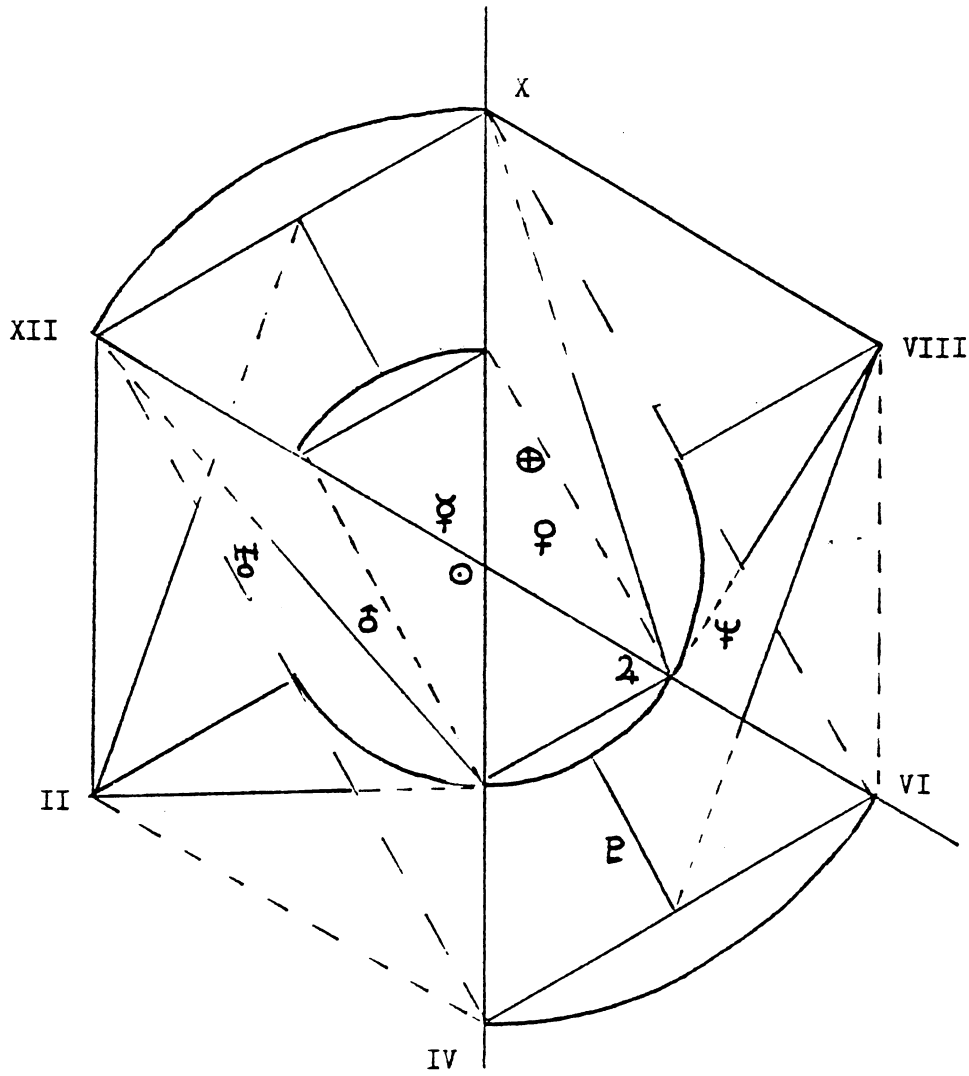
François Jeremiah Caron,

L'Abbé d'Avignon



Franco Emilio Allegri,

Le compositeur de Versailles



Franz E. von Brahe,
 Mathematician and Astronomer

--but by the time he is reaching *l'île de la Cité* he will be, *seulement*, very tired and hungry.

Riding into Paris with but seventeen years behind me, I had awe for much--so much of everything! My memories were only of the once I had ridden with Pierre to see the plays. *Avec mon "oncle"*--as I was ever calling him--there was no reason to be worrying. Paris was his, or thus was it seeming to me at thirteen. (I was then much the more concerned for what Maman would have need to say upon my return: she had forbidden me to go with him.) But now I was feeling too much alone. Everywhere *il-y-avait* someone knowing exactly who he was, what he was to do, and aswell the place to which he would return. I knew not where to start; de Chernod and I were wearing little circles in the heart of Paris. *Quelquefois*, we simply stopped allthegether--until an angry cart would be pushing us along.

It was soon coming dusk, and the great cathedral bells were tolling. We rode up and down the south bank of the Seine as I gathered courage to ask my direction. De Chernod was becoming *plus en plus* upset with me--and very skittish. *Tout à coup*, he started foolishly in front of a lady's carriage. She was most alarmed as he reared with violence. After the horses settled, the driver and myself were much put to calm this charming woman. But, at last, was I hoping to be able to ask for a way.

Before I could be speaking, she said I was very brave young man to sit such a powerful horse, and I had too much pride then to admit that I

yet did not know where I might stable him. Of fortune, her driver was guessing my predicament--but too much the man to make it known to this lady. Thus was he saying he could tell by the dust on my fine coat that I must be about stabling my grand horse at the best livery--the which was some further east and a bit south of our present ground. To this was I nodding most casually, tho' with eyes that followed each of his gestures with a hawk's great care. The lady let me to be kissing her hand, and my friend urged their horses homeward. Methought his wink reminiscent of another.

En fin, I found the stablery and there left de Chernod with special instructions--aswel what I was thinking too much of money. By this, was nearing nightfall. I was of sudden most tired, but with hope--knowing there is *toujours* an inn close to stables. As happened, two young gentlemen--not much the older than myself--were coming for their horses as I was leaving. I swallowed *l'orgueil de Provence* and asked where might be a comfortable room as I had only just ridden to Paris.

I was of expectation they would laugh at my accent and so was well taking it when they were rude. This they seemed to be liking, for one put his arm around my shoulder and pointed toward a house he said had very many comfortable beds--and clean. (It was then I could tell he had been drinking.) I thanking them both and walked for the door he had shown. I was of some question then as why the two stood leaning against the entrance of the stable looking after me--instead of claiming their horses. Mayhap they were thinking a country boy of such small intelligence as to lose his way on a single street--or so was I considering with shame.

I knocked loudly on the door in hopes they would be hearing, *et c'est vrai* they were still watching me. A very large woman answered, and I think me to have taken one or two steps backward--for I had never seen so large a woman! She looked strangely on my bag but was smiling with inusual warmth. Before I had more said than "*bon soir, Madame,*" she took my arm and was leading me up a stairway. The pride of Provence made me think to hear laughter echoing at my heels--yet for this could I imagine none of reasons.

La Parisienne, she began with rapid speech opening doors--to see if the rooms were occupied. I thought this odd and decided me she must have very poor memory so to be checking on her guests. She was with force jerking me behind, and I flushed to think how Maman would find fault with her--even if this woman were an native of Paris. The cheap, bright cloth of her dress recalled me of costumes the actresses had worn for Pierre's play, *et aussi* her voice was even as loud--as if she were attempting to fill unseen balconies with her words. I thus thought--when I could be catching up with my breath--'twould not be impolite to ask if she had been on the stage.

At this, she halted more abrupt than a horse with both reins drawn up at his ears. With one hand, she smoothed the falling hair from her neck; *avec l'autre*, she cupped my cheek, her palm glowing. I thought me aswel to see the slightest blush beneath the thick white paint on her face. I knew not then other than to kiss her moistened palm--if most but to hide the new flush I could feel at my ears. Her vast bosoms strained against the thinning brocade as she claimed I had not yet sufficient years to remember this of her.

When I had courage to look again into her distant eyes, I knew Maman would be wrong to think ill of this woman. She was not coarse--not inwardly, not entirely. Her hand yet in my own, she backed down the hallway with more grace than was seeming possible in a woman of such build. Passing several doors, she opened the last without taking her eyes from me. I was of hesitance for the moment, then looked inside myself--saw no one. Turning again to her, I saw she was of most different expression and, aswell, her voice had changed. In truth, there was great sorrow in the tone of her conviction: "*Tu as de la chance.*"

I was something surprised, but not really insulted by the informality: after the all, she was many years older. I said *merci*, and her warm palm left mine--her eyes at greater distance now than *la Méditerranée*. She was seeming very old, *en fermant la porte très lentement*. I was wanting to say more but could not--not with the heavy timber between us.

I walked *à la coiffeuse* and began to unpack *mes livres*. I took off my cloak and coat and was most grateful to be finding a pitcher of fresh water by the basin. I was in 'midst of washing my face and hands when I heard a young woman to giggle somewhere behind me. Of sudden, I turned--still dripping.

The curtains around the bed parted before a most beautiful face. I was of great embarrassment, seeing the room was taken. I made on the instant an hundred apologies, grabbed my coat, and quickly ran from the room. The proprietess was alltheready showing another gentleman to a room on *le corridor*, and I could hear great laughter from the floor below. I leaned then over the rails and was clearly seeing the two young men who had directed me to this place. They were staring up at me

from the entrance, waving and laughing drunkenly. I had just decided me to have a word with them when the door to *ma chambre* opened and the young woman, seizing my elbow, pulled me back inside. She shut the door *encore*, and I leant most uncertainly against it.

I had by this time understood my situation: it was joke on a boy from Provence. Yet had I not time for resentment: the beautiful woman had very long brown hair that fell about in heavy curls as she undressed. She was speaking to me very gently. My mother had not spoken so to me for many years. I was never before seeing such a young woman naked--*particulièrement* one with much eagerness! Perhaps I was not knowing so much *sur le sujet* of women as was I thinking. On an instant, I caught her eyes--and suddenly she was seeming the one embarrassed, for she moved quickly then behind the bed-curtain.

I would not make love with her, tho' I was much filled with desire. I could not make love to her: she was not my mother. I had, howsomever, a bottle of wine in my bag--aswell as my books, and I determined that I should be sharing. I was telling her of the wine as I pulled the cork. Carefully, she put aside the curtains--tying them back with white sashes that were not more fair than her arms and breasts. I would read Petrarch to this young lady who was so beautiful.

I asked her name. 'Twas Marie--the same as my mother's. This I did not like, and I asked for another name. Catherine. I called her Catherine. We drank the wine, and she settled her head into my lap as I read. I could not be believing myself, nor what a wonder I held in reach: I was but five hours in the city of Paris--*et voilà!* Most magical city of Paris, I was thinking, and began me to laugh--softly in my gratefulness.

I lay on my side, facing Hia-Leah's back, the night before the day I died. Ohannashtay and Hia-Nakta cuddled between us. I could not sleep. I was thinking again of the child we had lost and the love that had followed him from this world.

Eight months distant it had been--eight of them--when Hia-Leah and I shut ourselves into the small hut to await his birth. The women brought our food and water, leaving it outside the entrance. Was serious breach of custom I make in remaining with my wife, but this was the seventh time I had so sat beside her: being stupid-and-white yet allowed me certain privileges.

Hia-Leah's body was cold and damp and very still. This I could not understand as we knew it was time. Hia-Leah said she had little pain so I tried me not to worry. Her belly was great but quiet--impossibly quiet. I was thinking the baby to be asleep and made effort to wake him by helping Hia-Leah to roll from side to side. Then, pressing my palm against her belly, I found--to my great horror--there was no thing: no movement, not the quick beat of the tiny heart, nothing of life. The child was dead inside her. It was lying there dead inside of her! Like Maman, even as Martha, Hia-Leah must endure this for nothing, and the worst: if she were not rid of the poor creature soon, she might die.

I sat back in astonishment and terror, breathing rapidly. I felt myself cold and damp as she, but not still--no, instead, filled with the old shaking. God! if I were to seizure now, I was not a man at all. "*Mon Dieu, s'il Vous plaît--non!*" Hia-Leah reached for my hand, and her touch steadied me. She was dazed, and the hollows of her eyes had gone dark. I bent over her, kissing her face, our chill fingers fixed in a firm clasp. I told her the child was dead and that we must get it from her. She must try to force the baby from her, for it was dead.

At the first, she would not believe me. The day before, it was true, we had felt together his little hands and feet pushing; we had talked to him, telling him of our eagerness to see him. Yet had something gone wrong. In the night, his spirit had left us, and now his body must leave hers--or Hia-Leah might follow him.

We had lost two children before: one came too soon because that we were forced to break camp in the middle of the night, and Hia-Leah's pony had taken a bad fall; the other had been born when all of us were hungry, and the little girl had not strength beyond her first week. But this! This was more dangerous by the far: there was a dead child inside of Hia-Leah, and I--I had put it there. I had created death in the womb of the woman who was my life.

I helped Hia-Leah to sit upward, and the pain began. It would not leave us for three days. I took herbs--some given me by the women, some by the ghost-dancer--and made a tea for her to drink. There was something for the pain, some thing to make the baby come more quickly. Hia-Leah pushed, I pressed her belly, and we screamed as one. That night, there was the water and a great deal of blood, but the child would not leave her.

The second day, I made the tea stronger, and Hia-Leah became sick. And she was bleeding--all the time bleeding. I had not enough cloth, so was using our clothing to soak up the blood. I gave her plain water to drink, for she could tolerate nothing else. The women continued to bring food; we ate nothing. I asked for more cloth. There was an anxious note from Mirakah, but she could do nothing. No one could help us further at risk of the greatest curse.

That evening, I was half-mad and in most determination that I would force this dead thing from her body. Hia-Leah had grown so weak as to be unable to do more than breathe. At the last, I had in fact to remember her to do even this.

I thought me to cut the child from her, but I was in fear that this would finish her--and I knew nothing of how such should be done. She was of sufficient size for it to pass from her, if only there were enough strength to push it down. I sat her upright on her knees and knelt behind her. I put my arms around her and pressed with all my strength against her belly. She shrieked with agony and begged me to stop. I kissed her neck and wept into her hair--and thrust again with my hands hard against this thing in her. She howled and cursed me, but her body began again, at last, to respond. I could feel great shudders run fast across her abdomen. I stayed then behind her only for support.

Early on the morning, the baby eased from between her trembling legs. In terrible silence, she collapsed, unconscious--only breathing. I hurled the child, together with its blue, twisted cord, indecently into the farthest corner of the hut--and began to clean her. I lay then beside her, not daring to sleep--for fear she should forget to breathe.

She lay unmoving for two days. I would look from her to the little basket with its soft, tiny blankets--in the which we should have presented our son. At lengths, I spoke to the dead thing in the corner. I cursed it; I spat upon it. Then I dug, with bare hands, a small hole in the floor of the hut and buried it. Only with it from my sight could I weep, and Hia-Leah woke to me sobbing.

She was yet very ill, and we were not again to enter the long-house 'til she could walk. I asked if I might build us another hut, for I could not longer stand the first. This was allowed me, if I work only at night--and remain unseen. I finished it in but few dark hours, carried Hia-Leah into it, and spendt the rest of that moon watching the other burn: I left the cradle and the sweetly woven blankets inside, for I did not want Hia-Leah to think of them again.

These were the thoughts that ran through me, waking my last evening.

I was not good father to my sons, or so I am fearing--feared then. Fire Leaps came to find my white thinking, even my white skin, unmanly, and nothing I could do was afterward enough for him. As a small boy, he was often teased by the others children for his curly hair. . . .

Once he came to me crying, but, when I bent to embrace him, he fell to beating me upon the chest with his hard little fists. *Éventuellement*, he made confession that some boys had been pulling his hair--to straighten it. Then he began to cry once more, and I carried him from camp. We had the long talk--me explaining much with care that differences do not make a man better or worse than others men. At Versailles, the most handsome Tuscaroran boy--with the straightest black hair--would be looking something to be laughed upon; yet would he be wiser than the courtiers and their ladies for having gone to France and born their laughter. I told him that I loved him much and would speak to the fathers of the boys who had shamed him, if ever such were happening again. Fire Leaps hugged me then and said aswel that he loved me--but that some of times he wished I were not a white man. I said to him that this was often my wish, too.

Our probleme only seemed the worse in growing with him. When he was not much older--mayhap of nine or ten years--he insisted that I was no father, for I had never taught him to fight or to shoot with either bow or rifle. "Is riding nothing?" I asked him--for I had made him

best horseman of all the boys in our village. And I had been teaching him to write, if he would but learn. I could tell him nothing of the bow or rifle, knowing nothing of these myself. He said only that he was most tired of having two mothers and that he would become the son of another man if I could not teach him to fight.

We were standing not far from the stream where the women did their washing, and Hia-Leah, hearing a few of his words, became with anger and started toward us. Without my son noticing, I motioned for her to keep then from us.

I knew something of how to fight from necessity. Was not Tuscaroran fighting I knew, but was yet something. Thus it was I taught him to kick, to fall, and to roll---so that he would not be remaining on the ground. Fire Leaps was most excited at this new knowledge and attacked his poor father without mercy for some weeks. Even so, the storm between us was not at an end.

The winter after my eldest son had fifteen years, he made the decision to leave our tribe--with Little Royanerkowa--and join Brant, a Tuscarora who had long been the enemy of our clan. When told of this choice, I could not speak to him. In taking Fire Leaps from me, the chief's son attained at last his great victory over me--tho' at the loss of his own father's love.

Ohannashtay was most unlike his brother. His skin was very light for a Tuscaroran boy--tho' in France he would be known *un Peau-Rouge*. As result of much sickness when *un petit enfant*, he was never a strong boy and seldom sought to leave the side of his mother. Fire Leaps had not prepared me for such a child! His sisters were more spirited than he. My softest reprimand was a terror to Ohannashtay--or so was he

always making it seem. I often feared that, when the time came, my second son would declare himself a woman to avoid the test of his manhood. At least in this, I was with fortune not to have lived.

I am hoping I was better father to my daughters.

It was the one bright day in January, 1800. For many weeks, the winter had kept us fast in the huts. (We had not time to be building a long-house as were most frequently under attack.) Mirakah and I took the children for their lessons. We had some difficulty in controlling them, since the little ones were very much in excitement again to be outside. As we walked to the top of a hill looking over our camp, I was forced to scold two of the older boys for attempting to stray too far. Our enemies were all about us, and the valley--with the freezing river not far distant--was not so safe as it might seem to them. The hunters had ridden forth at dawn, hoping at last for some success in their efforts; this put the village at even the greater risk. We did not know what risk.

Mirakah and the smallest children were playing the game: she would write the name of a tree, a kind of rock, or others things in the traces of snow; each child would then try to find these objects in learning to read. I sat with the older ones talking of the seasons--the science and the poetry with which both Tuscaroran and white men described them.

Of sudden, Ohannashtay stood and--interrupting--pointed eagerly into the distance. I turned to follow his eyes and saw a group of horsemen fast approaching. Was too early for the men to be returning.

As the riders grew nearer, I saw indeed these were not our hunters--yet were they coming swiftly toward the village.

Our camp lay a mile or two below us. Only the women, the tiny babies, the wounded and old men remained at the huts. (Even the ghost-dancer had gone this time on the hunt so to be helping the men with his magic.) From the village, they would be seeing this band of men too late.

I shouted for Mirakah to gather the children. No one was to follow me into the village--no one, not even the oldest boys--whatever might be happening below. I ran then, half-sliding, down the hill and toward camp. I raced tho' knowing I could not beat the horses to our people.

The air was quite sharp and burned in my throat, my nose, and eyes. As I was running, my blood stirred--quick and hot with anger. I could think only of my wife; I could feel only flame.

Hia-Leah would be trying, with the others women, to make a meal from the last drying roots, a few nuts. Perhaps one of the women would confess to holding in store yet a little grain for her family--now willing to share, in shame at having kept it aside. There would be nothing, no thing they could do on seeing the enemies' horses--for, tho' I did not know these men, I knew them to be hostile: no friend rides so hard into camp. The women would make attempt to hide their babies, then put themselves at risk. Today, the old men would be slain.

There were nine horsemen, and these were not soldiers. From what I had seen, they might be trappers--the odd mixture of Franch and English, some Indian: men hated by every people, belonging to no one.

They would have seen our men ride out; they would have come for the women.

When I reached camp, there was terrible screaming, some huts afire, many shots, much smoke. I shouted for Hia-Leah through the crying--thick cries of terror and brutal anger. Royanerkowa lay slumped beside his hut, already dying; his aged wife knelt beside him, rocking and weeping. Hawk-Braking had found his horse and was, with difficulty--one leg taken at the knee years before--defending his family. I could not find Hia-Leah!! She was not at our hut; she was not--.

I heard her scream; over the blind rush of fury in my own blood, the wild shrieking, I yet heard her. She had been dragged some distance from the camp; two of the men were upon her--one to hold, the other to rape her.

I was not a man thinking; perhaps I was not a man at all. I had no weapon and cared not: I was going to kill this animal who was inside her. I seized him, pulled him from off her, threw him onto his back, and leapt atop him--my hands gripping his neck. I forced my thumbs into the soft place in his throat. Blood poured from his gaping mouth, his tongue stretched forth, and he was dead. Yet could I not release him. In madness, I continued to strangle him--wishing I could pull his heart up through the hideous hole in his throat. I had forgotten Hia-Leah; I had forgotten the other man. This one had died too quickly; I was killing him again.

"Mish-na-yAth!"

I heard her calling, and the blast of the bullet as it left his gun. Then the burning as it blew through my back and from my chest. I fell beside the man I had murdered, bleeding into the earth. All that

was in me, rushing into the earth. The ground was cold, much colder than snow--save for the heat flooding from my chest. The pounding of my blood ceased; it was all, all easing out of me. I was feelingless, too weak to see--tho' for a few moments, I could yet hear the shattered syllables of Hia-Leah weeping.

Too much! Too much blood has gone into the earth. More will follow, in stern and steady streams. If you, *mes amis*, choose to forget.

LE DANSE: A QUADRILLOGUE

François-Émil

Oh, God. My God! Hurt me if you must;
help me if you can.

Marie

In what way?

François-Émil

Maman?

Marie

Mais oui, mon petit oiseau. In what way
would you be helped--or hurting?

François-Émil

In any way that leads me to the truth.

Marie

Come to me. I need your touch. I want
you to nuzzle my breasts.

François-Émil

Maman, I cannot. You know that I can not.

Marie

You have been with the flesh again, my
son. There are traces of it yet about
you.

Martha

Perhaps it is simply that he will not.

François-Émil

Martha! You have lost Jefferson?

Martha

How can one lose what is already gone? He
is not here.

François-Émil

Nor my Hia-Leah.

Hia-Leah

But I am, husband.

François-Émil

Hia-Leah, my woman-in-love! You have not
left me?

Hia-Leah

Where could I go without you? How should
I go, without you?

Marie

Something is amiss in this "touching"
scene.

Martha

I am forced to agree, Madame.

Hia-Leah

These women do not know you, my love?

Marie

Not know him? Silly child. You think
that I do not know him? I bathed him with
scented water; I massaged him with oils.
It was I who planted passion in him!

Martha

No. The last was left to me.

Hia-Leah

You have no right to the memory of his
flesh. Do not speak of it! I carried his
life in me.

Martha

So did I!

Marie

But I first.

Hia-Leah

You bore death. You could not carry his
seed. Your love for him was feeble.

Marie

Feeble! I made him. I gave him music.
Dance. Poetry. I gave him God!

Hia-Leah

I gave him children. He lives in them
now. We walk in one flesh, even now.

Marie

I taught him love.

Martha

That is not so. He came to me a boy who
could not love, a cripple: a boy knowing
only guilt, ugly blame--.

Hia-Leah

And left you the same. My innocence
restored his.

Martha

Innocence? Mere ignorance! The ignorance
of a ram in his musky rut.

François-Émil

Enough! Or may God forget us all.

Marie

Surely, *c'est un fait accompli*.

Martha

With me, he knew the restraint and balance
of romance. You but made him savage.

Hia-Leah

You shamed him. You brought shame upon
his loving and your own. Both of you!

François-Émil

Let it not be thus. We must forgive--.

Martha

Forgive whom? God?

François-Émil

Martha!

Martha

Not God? Than whom? You? Alright then,
I forgive you. Let God forget that!

Hia-Leah

To whom do you belong? Are you not
my husband? Make an answer,
Mish-na-yōth.

François-Émil

To you, my wife--but to God first.

Marie

François-Émil! *Mon petit oiseau!*

François-Émil

Oui, Maman?

Marie

What is this strange name she calls you?
I do not like it! Hold me. Kiss me, my
son.

François-Émil

Maman, you know that I cannot. Even so,
there would be nothing for you to feel.

Hia-Leah

I feel you, my husband. Do you know my
touch?

François-Émil

I remember. Oh, my God. I cannot forget.
That I cannot forget!

Marie

And mine, my son? You must know your
mother.

François-Émil

Yes, Maman.

Martha

But I am nothing to you? Divinely for-
gotten?

-
François-Émil

No. I loved you.

Martha

Oh, so unforgiven?

Hia-Leah

Husband! You cannot love these frail
women. I forbid you to say such things!

François-Émil

Please, Hia-Leah, cannot we have truth?
There is little else for us here.

Hia-Leah

There is love.

François-Émil

Which has no meaning without truth.

Hia-Leah

Even tho' the children of our children
walk the earth?

François-Émil

It is for them. For them we must have
truth.

Marie

Your children are dead. Why do you not
tell her, François-Émil?

Hia-Leah

No!

Marie

It is true, and he knows it.

Hia-Leah

Oh, yes: Mirakah, Hia-Nakta, Ohannash-
tay--they are dead. As are we. But the
children of their children--.

Marie

They are all dead.

François-Émil

Maman!

Martha

How do you know this to be so?

Marie

I can see his thoughts.

Hia-Leah

Is this true? Than our love has lost its
meaning in this truth.

François-Émil

Hia-Leah! My bride, my life--you cannot
know what you are saying!

Hia-Leah

Then I shall say nothing.

François-Émil

Hia-Leah, please do not--.. Do not break
my heart again!

Marie

So you think you loved her?

François-Émil

Maman, I did! I do love her. She was all my life. Maman, God has been kind enough to let me forgive myself for our sin. Has He let you?

Marie

You have left your manners in the woods, François-Émil Sebastien! Unless you retrieve them, I shall converse no further either.

François-Émil

Something has kept you here, Maman. I am but asking. . . .

Marie

Then seek your answer in my silence!

Martha

So you are left with only me. Perhaps I
did love you.

François-Émil

Did you?

Martha

I wanted you.

François-Émil

Yes.

Martha

And you needed me.

François-Émil

Yes.

Martha

Is that so terrible? Is God so
unforgiving?

François-Émil

I think it is not God who forgives or
fails in the forgiving.

Martha

No?

François-Émil

It is we ourselves.

Martha

By God's choice.

François-Émil

Yes.

Martha

Then it is still His fault.

François-Émil

How can you say this? You who walk in
this nothingness as I--how can you say
this?

Martha

You have named the reasons.

François-Émil

Again, you are confusing me--as of old.

Martha

I mean this nothingness is God's doing. I
know I did not choose it.

François-Émil

But you did! As have I. You have chosen
it--because you could not go on.

Martha

And why was that?

François-Émil

That is what I am asking.

Martha

Because I loved you?

François-Émil

I am hoping not.

Martha

You would prefer that I simply wanted you?

François-Émil

No! Yes. Ah, Martha!

Martha

What?

François-Émil

You have still this gift for confusing me.

Martha

But you like it.

François-Émil

No!

Martha

But you must. You always did.

François-Émil

No, Martha, no; not now. I am not the same.

Martha

But you are. It excites you. Don't lie to me. It was you who asked for truth.

François-Émil

I MUST have truth!

Martha

Why? Does that excite you, too?

François-Émil

You are going to make me angry, Martha.

Martha

How is that?

François-Émil

By confusing me!

Martha

By exciting you.

François-Émil

No!

Martha

You are excited now.

François-Émil

That is not possible.

Martha

Is it not? You are tremendously aroused.

François-Émil

I have no body. How can I be?

Martha

But you are, aren't you?

François-Émil

You want me to say yes, so I say it. Yes.

Martha

I only want the truth for you.

François-Émil

You make me feel dizzy.

Martha

And you like that.

François-Émil

Martha, why are you doing this?

Martha

Because you want me to.

François-Émil

No!

Martha

No? I think you do.

François-Émil

You are wrong then! Stop!

Martha

You want me to fall silent, as well?

François-Émil

No. No, Martha. Only do not torment me.

Martha

You were always ready for love.

François-Émil

Please do not be talking of this.

Martha

Your penis was responsive as a butterfly--.

Marie

A bird.

Martha

Yes.

François-Émil

Martha! Maman!

Martha

What do you want with us? I think I know,
but I would prefer to hear you say it.

François-Émil

I want only the truth.

Martha

I think I know something you desire even
more. You desire that I should fall upon
my knees beside you. You want me and your
mother and your poor, ignorant wife on our
knees, so that we may all pray to God--for
confusion!

François-Émil

Martha, why are you so angry!

Martha

I am not.

Marie

Why are you angry with my son?

Martha

I assure you, I am not.

François-Émil

Forgive me.

Martha

No. I cannot.

François-Émil

Why?

Martha

Because you have done nothing wrong.

François-Émil

But I have, Martha, I have!

Martha

You have done nothing you could avoid, and
you know it. You are ashamed of your own
innocence.

François-Émil

My innocence?

Martha

Yes. I seduced you. Admit it.

François-Émil

Yes.

Martha

Say it.

François-Émil

You seduced me.

Marie

And I, my son.

François-Émil

Yes, Maman.

Martha

We are seducing you now.

François-Émil

C'est impossible!

Martha

You are longing to make love. You are in
agony even now because you cannot.

François-Émil

Marth, we are beyond such things!

Martha

No, we are not.

François-Émil

There can be no desire without flesh!

Martha

You are lying.

François-Émil

There is only memory.

Martha

Memory and desire.

François-Émil

You are tormenting me, *encore!*

Martha

It is your desire that torments you. And
the memory of your innocence.

François-Émil

No more of this. Please, no more.

Marie

François-Émil, when did you develop this
reluctance for truth?

François-Émil

I was not innocent! I am not innocent.

Hia-Leah

Of what are you guilty, my husband?

Martha

Even she speaks!

Marie

In time, we are each forced.

François-Émil

I have lied. I lied to you, Hia-Leah.

Hia-Leah

I know. And I forgive you. I knew, and I
forgave you.

François-Émil

But I cannot forgive myself!

Marie

God has not been "kind enough" to let you?

François-Émil

I think it is God's wish, and yet I cannot
bend to it!

Marie

Ah, you were ever the proud boy!

Martha

Proud of his innocence--and, at once,
ashamed!

François-Émil

Impossible!

Marie

Yet quite likely. In matters of love, you
were given to extremes. Always in
opposition to yourself.

Martha

Yes. He was altogether too complex. Too serious.

Marie

Toujours, toujours!

Hia-Leah

You would condemn him for his earnest loving?

Marie

And you did not find him *un peu trop serieux--au sujet de sexe?*

Hia-Leah

At the first, perhaps. Before I had given him back his innocence.

Martha

Oh? And just how was this feat accomplished? This "immaculate restoration"?

Hia-Leah

My husband is a shy man. I know he would not have me say.

Martha

He would not have you speak the truth?

Hia-Leah

What use to you? What good to him? There are some truths best left unspoken. With his wife, he could not be "too serious."

François-Émil

No, Hia-Leah, for you nature was even as mine.

Hia-Leah

I curse these women for being less than sincere in their loving of my husband!

Marie

Have we not, my dear, enough curses to bear already?

Martha

He was not your husband, then. He was but
a most vulnerable boy.

Marie

My son.

François-Émil

I was not a boy with you, Martha.

Martha

No? I was thirty to your twenty: I
commanded your love. That is what shames
you in us--your innocence!

François-Émil

I was a simple man, and yet I betrayed
Jefferson.

Martha

At my command. You would not have done
so, otherwise.

François-Émil

No.

Martha

You are only guilty of having let my
passion make good use of yours.

François-Émil

That is not true.

Martha

If not, it yet pleases you to think so.

François-Émil

No! That is terrible thing to say!

Martha

But true. You wanted me to control you.
You wanted me to determine when and how
you would be aroused. You wanted me to
rape you--so that you could retain your
innocence. Deny your desire. You want
these things even now, and, even now, you
deny it.

François-Émil

Martha, that is cruel--and untrue. I
never wanted to be forced--.

Martha

But you did! And you were.

François-Émil

It is true that I was--.

Martha

By me. As by your mother.

Marie

What did he tell you of our love?

Martha

In that time, I knew nothing of it.

Marie

You thought him a virgin?

Martha

Certainly not!

Marie

What then?

Martha

A boy accustomed to men.

François-Émil

Martha, do not make mock of me. This has
no purpose.

Martha

And what of Thomas?

François-Émil

We were friends. He was as a father to
me.

Martha

Yes. And?

François-Émil

And what? I am not knowing.

Martha

He thought you were in love with him.

François-Émil

No!

Martha

He was not afraid for his wife. You must
have given him something of that
impression.

François-Émil

I did nothing! He trusted you. He trusted me. We were friends. I did not feel much the man by comparison, but you cannot say I was complete failure!

Martha

No, assuredly. Ultimately, you got what you wanted: a woman to force and absolve you.

François-Émil

No!

Martha

And why do you think he trusted you?

François-Émil

Because I was of good name and family.
Because I was honest--.

Martha

Honest!

François-Émil

Stop this. Only please stop this. You
are being most unkind.

Martha

He must have wanted you.

François-Émil

Never! Not in that way!

Martha

Poor Thomas. I suppose he could not
confuse you sufficiently. . . .

Hia-Leah

Leave this! My husband was no woman.

Martha

It was he who asked for the truth. I have
no taste for it.

Hia-Leah

Yes! And so you give lies! Lies to break
his soul. You know nothing of the man in
him!

François-Émil

I had but nineteen years--.

Martha

In which to perfect a certain meticulous
shyness?

François-Émil

I knew little English. I was--.

Martha

You were filled with desire. Longing to
be forced to prove it.

Hia-Leah

Can a woman force a man?

Marie

Bien sûr!

Hia-Leah

Is this so, my husband?

François-Émil

In many ways, many ways.

Hia-Leah

But how?

François-Émil

By confusing him--.

Martha

There is your answer!

François-Émil

It is not! It is not entirely true.

Martha

Oh, that I will admit. I could only
seduce you because of your desire. You
very much wanted me.

François-Émil

I needed you--

Martha

But this you could not ac-
cept. So I had to force you
into confusion. Only then
could you have your passion
AND your innocence. Don't
deny it!

François-Émil

--to want me.

François-Émil

I will not deny that you are confusing me.

Martha

Which is why you are aroused.

François-Émil

I am not! I cannot be!

Martha

Nonetheless, you are.

Marie

François-Émil, I believe she is right.

Else you would not attempt to cover
yourself with such anger.

François-Émil

Oh, God--!

Hia-Leah

And, if it be forced, of what use is his
love?

Martha

Forced OR freely given, what good is his
love to any of us now?!

Hia-Leah

To me, it is of greater value and
sweeter--even than before.

François-Émil

Hia-Leah?

Marie

I love my son, but you, my dear, are mad--
or jesting.

Martha

How say you, Émil? Is this rarefied
desire more to your liking? It seems no
easier for you to confess! Does it sting
you less?

Hia-Leah

Why do you badger him? Has he not
suffered enough?

François-Émil

Not enough.

Hia-Leah

Why? Why do you say this?

Marie

You have done nothing!

François-Émil

I killed a man.

Hia-Leah

In defense of me! There is no man who
would not have done the same to save his
wife.

François-Émil

Christ would not have done so.

Martha

And you compare yourself to Him?

François-Émil

Every man must.

Marie

Then every man is damned.

François-Émil

Perhaps it is just--.

Martha

But that is not what Christ sought! I
think you would crucify Him again.

François-Émil

No!

Marie

Christ had no wife to defend. What woman
would have married Him--knowing His
intent?

François-Émil

Maman--.

Marie

Had there been such a woman, things might have gone quite differently. But there was none; thus, He could not have killed for Her.

François-Émil

I killed--.

Hia-Leah

But to protect me!

François-Émil

No.

Martha

No??

Marie

But to save your vanity?

François-Émil

Maman? My mother--.

Martha

But he was himself slain!

Marie

So much the better.

Martha

So much the more like Christ?

Hia-Leah

Like the son of SI-monbar-kök-bah?

François-Émil

I something related, my wife.

Marie

Mon petit oiseau--il est très, très fier.

From pride, he slew; from pride, was
slain.

Martha

That cannot be! He was charmingly
uncertain--.

Marie

All on the surface. Only on the surface!
It was a way of getting what he sought. A
means of seduction.

François-Émil

Maman, I was often confused--.

Martha

Aroused!

François-Émil

No, Martha!

Marie

You were proud. A peacock!

Martha

But I have seen him blush in response to
the least praise. No man can fake a
blush!

Marie

'Twas but the pride flowing to his cheeks.

Martha

No, no. He was the most easily
embarrassed of men--.

Marie

Because of his intense pride!

Martha

Émil, surely she is wrong in this. Why do
you say nothing? I have seen you with
other men. I watched him with my husband-
-always listening, shifting in his seat,
yet unable to speak!

Marie

Not "unable." Unwilling.

François-Émil

Maman, *s'il te plaît*. I was among great men. Often were they saying things I could not comprehend. I was uncertain.

Martha

Uncertain? Then you were aroused?

François-Émil

Martha!

Marie

You are saying now that my son desired your husband? I thought--.

Martha

He desired confusion. So does he yet! The source is of little consequence.

Hia-Leah

Must my love listen to the chatter of women who know nothing?

Martha

And what do you know?

Hia-Leah

I know my husband.

Marie

You know, at most, what he knows--which is not as much as I who made him.

Martha

I say it was not pride--but shame in desire that damned him.

Marie

He was very PROUD of his innocence. Yet it was a pride he must have overcome--else he would have had no wife. And what makes you think my son is damned? Are you?

Martha

Why, we are all damned.

François-Émil

Not Hia-Leah. NOT Hia-Leah!

Martha

She, first of all!

François-Émil

She is innocent. She has done nothing!

Martha

Beasts are not blessed. And she is, in any case, not innocent of you.

Marie

Il est du scorpion. Watch the tail!

Martha

What nonsense! Mere superstition.

Marie

Have you seen what happens when a scorpion is placed in the cage of a lion? The lion, if she has wisdom, backs to her corner.

Martha

That is but analogy.

Marie

If you can say such, by analogy, you are readily deceived!

Martha

What say you, Émil? Are the mystic stars not false astronomy? Mathematics in the hands of magicians? I believe these were once your words. What do you say now?

François-Émil

Nothing. Nothing.

Marie

Silence is a dangerous sign in him.

Martha

Ha! Once, I could crush him with a single
word--did so more oft' than I intended.
What "danger" is he to me now?

Marie

Do not dare guess. If, in truth, you are
not yet damned, you may have a great deal
to lose.

Martha

Now you sound as if you thought he were
the Messiah!

Marie

Hia-Leah, dear child, I would know of my
son's death. What can you tell me?

Hia-Leah

Is it permitted, my husband, that I speak
when you are silent?

François-Émil

My love, I am thinking God will hear no
one else.

Hia-Leah

We buried him on the spot where he had
fallen, placing with him those things he
would need or most had loved.

Martha

How thoughtful.

Marie

Do not let her trouble you. She is but a
jealous wind. At the end, his body was
yours. Even I know only its beginning.
If you wish, I will speak of that--but I
would first know the nature of his final
rites.

Martha

Yes. Since they undoubtedly damned him!

Hia-Leah

My brave and angry man! We placed with you the sword of Jefferson, the little mirror you would need for shaving. There was not enough food for the dead that day, but we managed to spare a small bowl. I wept to see so pitiful a meal for you--tho' thinking aloud, "My husband does not eat much; even this will last him a long while."

Marie

You gave to the dead what was essential to life?

Hia-Leah

So that we might meet again.

Martha

Indeed, you might meet the sooner for
giving o'er your food to worms!

Hia-Leah

Mirakah sent with you two books.
Ohannashtay gave you his wooden soldier--
the one you had brought him from the
French camp. Little Hia-Naktah took time
in finding her gifts: she placed in your
stiff, white hands a sprig of holly and
one of mistletoe. I cut my hair and lay
it at yor feet.

François-Émil

Hia-Leah!

Hia-Leah

We buried all the dead where they lay and
left that place forever.

Martha

But you survived. There must have been
other men. How many men came after him?

Hia-Leah

This man--this and no other--shared my
bed, until his death.

Martha

And after? What happened afterward?

Hia-Leah

There were many.

Martha

How many?

Hia-Leah

Many. Because there was little to eat.

Marie

You sold his love?

Hia-Leah

No. I would not.

Martha

Then why so "many"?

Hia-Leah

Because I would not trade his love. I shared many beds for meat, but I would not marry.

Martha

Do you hear, Émil? Your savage wife was also, it seems, a whore!

Marie

Your foul tongue cannot harm her, *chère* Martha, but you should look to the storm it brews in him.

François-Émil

The children, Hia-Leah? What became of our children?

Hia-Leah

Ohannashtay was killed with me at The End-Of-Everything. I do not know of Hia-Naktah; she married another tribe.

François-Émil

Mirakah?

Hia-Leah

She died with child long before. She had born several.

François-Émil

What. . . what became of them?

Hia-Leah

They fell at The End-Of-Everything.

Martha

What of your other children?

Hia-Leah

I know nothing of the one who died to me
while living.

Martha

I mean, the others.

Hia-Leah

There were no others.

Martha

"Many men" and no children?

Hia-Leah

My flesh had no flesh to give--once his
was gone.

Marie

What was this "End-Of-Everything?"

Hia-Leah

A place. And a terrible time.

François-Émil

Everyone--it cannot be that everyone died!

Hia-Leah

Yet it was just so.

François-Émil

The children? The children cannot have
been murdered!

Hia-Leah

The men. The women. Their children. All
together. The legions of the Town
Destroyer would not listen. We died
without a sound. The women made no plea
and did not weep. We fell in silence.

François-Émil

Oh, God! My God! We are lost!

Marie

You knew that your children were dead.
Why this sudden discomposure?

Hia-Leah

Our tribe may yet survive in another.
Hia-Naktah and the . . . other one--they
were not there. They may yet live in
their children--.

François-Émil

They do. I have seen them. And yet it
does not matter! All the tribes are lost.

Marie

Explain yourself, my son. I saw clearly
that you thought your children dead. Now,
you tell us they are living--but you are
filled with remorse!

François-Émil

Because, Maman, I did not know then that
their life meant nothing. I only feared
it. Now I see that ALL the tribes are
lost! I see that only now.

Hia-Leah

Their lives mean nothing? This cannot be!
Our love breathes in them. It is not
lost!

François-Émil

I would it were not true.

Martha

Does anyone have a glass of sherry?

Marie

And how would you presume to drink it?

François-Émil

Martha, are you mad?

Martha

Only damned, my dear. Damned. As are we
all. Don't you finally understand?

Marie

My son, she is raving, and I fear as much
for you. Your people were not the first
to be slaughtered--unlikely to be the
last.

François-Émil

Then what meaning has our life? Our
loving?

Marie

That is for you to discover.

François-Émil

How can I discover what is lost?

Hia-Leah

It is NOT lost!

Marie

Listen to your wife, François-Émil. I
believe she has the Grace to save us both.

Martha

Grace?! Sheer ignorance!--and no sherry.

Marie

Walk in your own hell, if you insist.

Leave these two ALONE!

Martha

And you--you do not know Hell?

Marie

I know its tenets well enough--and its
tenants.

Martha

Do you not recognize yourself?

François-Émil

Do not speak so to my mother!

Martha

Your mother--who was not your mother!

Marie

There is something of substance in her shallow wrath, my son. How can you foresee the fate of Man, when you cannot, with certainty, trace your own past?

Hia-Leah

You have heard the end. What of his beginning?

Marie

My husband and I detested one another and so had for years.

François-Émil

Maman, what does it matter?

Marie

When he brought you into the house, I was certain I could hate you with my very soul--and escape the least guilt, for I had suffered such wrongs that I thought I deserved--that I had earned the right to torment.

Martha

You did what you did deliberately?

Marie

In action, I was helpless. My thoughts were deliberate, but I never carried them out.

Martha

You thought to do worse?!

Marie

The Devil's minion has yet a conscience to lend! I was not such a bad mother; was I, François-Émil?

François-Émil

No, Maman. No.

Martha

And would you have had your wife so treat
your sons? Not that I suppose much
matters in the forest!

Hia-Leah

It was not our custom--.

Martha

And do you guess that it was THEIRS?

Marie

It was not so uncommon as you suggest.
And, in any case, as you have declared, he
was not my son.

Martha

Yet he was a child!

Marie

Girart came in from the storm with you
soaking.

Hia-Leah

"Girart"? That was his father's name?

Marie

That was my husband's name.

Hia-Leah

I never heard him speak it.

Martha

Nor I.

Marie

Girart came in from the storm. The baby
was not crying. He was drenched--as was
my husband. 'Twas impossible for them to
be otherwise on such a night. You were
only a few days old. Soaking. Silently
awake.

Hia-Leah

He made no cry?

Marie

The child did not cry.

Hia-Leah

I would think him the son of a hunted
people.

Marie

Girart placed this small creature in my
arms and turned to the wet nurse without a
glance for me. I held in my heart only
loathing--.

Martha

I take it his nurse was more than a hand-
servant?

Marie

Her insipience was insufferable--tho' only
for three months.

Martha

Since when have the French bothered to
sleep with their spouses?

Marie

Perhaps most are too busy comforting *les*
americains!

Hia-Leah

Did you feel nothing for the child?

Marie

Would I had not! I glanced down in my
anguish, my despair. It was beyond
imagination! You blinked up at me--and
smiled.

François-Émil

Maman. . . .

Martha

Inconceivable. He could not have done
so--not at that age.

Marie

There was no reason for this tiny thing to have pitied me, but he smiled. Oh, it was an awkward expression--a sudden twist of the lips--as it remained.

Martha

He used it often!

Marie

Never to more advantage.

Martha

Here is at least one who would contradict you in that.

Marie

I ceased to hear Girart or the giggles of his wet-nurse. Their conversation had passed from the baby to their own affairs. For the moment, all I knew was that *mon petit oiseau* was very quiet, staring with intent. I could have broken! I longed to die. I did not want to love you, yet I did!

François-Émil

Forgive me, Maman. Forgive me.

Marie

You crushed your eyebrows together--or, rather, the little places where they soon would be--on an instant of pain. You winced, wrecked my heart, ruined us both--forever.

François-Émil

Maman!

Marie

I walked up the stairs to our rooms
without Girart noticing. Your tiny hands
remained clasped, I thought, around a hope
only I had felt before. thus, we were
first alone together. Quietly.

Martha

Most romantic!

Marie

I lay him upon my bed. He coughed. Ah,
'twasn't a cough. It was merely the sound
a half-drowned infant boy must make as he
struggles, unable to roll onto his little
chest and ease his lungs.

Hia-Leah

Like Ohannashtay. You were not a strong
boy?

Marie

He was very strong--or he would never have survived that night. Girart had ridden many miles from the north-east. He did not take a coach. I asked when he left why he would not take the carriage, but he did not answer.

François-Émil

The north-east? Besançon? Maman, who--?

Marie

I lit the lamp. I lit it carefully, almost fearfully--as before I had only seldom done when a night awoke in dream.

Hia-Leah

Yet he made no sound?

Marie

None. Other than this cough.

François-Émil

Maman, please: who lived in the north--?

Marie

He had been without attention for a long time. I peeled back the layers of cloth-- all damp and sticking--and looked then first 'pon all his innocence, his perfection, and his seed-of-death.

Martha

"Seed of death"? What is this? Some Frankish superstition?

Marie

The eyes of love see the end in the beginning. My own twins I had not tended; I left them entirely to their nurse. But the woman now below in the arms of my husband would never touch this child. In this, I was decided. Knowing nothing of what I was about, I began to clean him.

François-Émil

I did not know Papa had friends in the north-east. In what city? Who were they, Maman?

Martha

Why, Émil--I thought it did not matter!

Marie

His little face crumpled again with pain as I tried to tend him. Still, he did not cry out. With such misery between his legs, the child must have been suffering. Why was he not crying? I thought I might yet hate him--if only he were to cry.

Hia-Leah

The woman who bore him, hid him. I have seen this in children of the hunted.

Marie

I looked without understanding on his genitals. They seemed swollen and hurt. But he made no complaint. There was a strange cut on the tiny penis--which looked to be infected--and he had soiled himself. I soon saw that the cut was not accidental. This was circumcision. I could not imagine Girart with a Jewess. I knew my husband too well. Whose child then was this? Why had he brought it into our house?

Martha

Émil was circumcised?

Marie

You, his lover, did not know this?

Martha

I--I never noticed.

Marie

Quelle horreur! How terrible for my son!

François-Émil

Maman, I did not want her to--.

Hia-Leah

You are speaking of the way my husband differed from other men?

François-Émil

Hia-Leah--.

Hia-Leah

This was not, after all, common among your people?

François-Émil

No.

Hia-Leah

You lied to me even in this? Why did you lie?

François-Émil

I felt different enough. I did not wish
to seem even the freak of my own race--.

Martha

And what race was that?

Marie

The little creature could not answer for
himself. He watched my face with such
focus that I felt uneasy. Then he smiled
again. Even so! You smiled again. His
tiny fingers stretched forth and sought
the plan of brocade on my coverlet. Whose
child was this?

François-Émil

You do not know, Maman? Even you do not
know?

Marie

I have only my suspicions.

François-Émil

You must know more than I.

Hia-Leah

It is unjust that he should wait beyond
death for such knowledge. Please tell
him!

Marie

But I do not know. I only suspect.

Martha

Obviously, his mother was Hebrew.

Marie

Or he was circumcised so to seem one of
them. Perhaps to protect him.

Martha

From whom? Who is more vulnerable than a
Jew?

Marie

Any son of Hapsburg who hasn't a crown.

Martha

More dangerous than vulnerable, I should
think!

Hia-Leah

Who is Hapsburg?

Martha

Much of Europe. Mostly German. Émil,
what if you were German!

François-Émil

No! I was not.

Marie

You may have been, my son; we do not know.
Perhaps Austrian, perhaps Spanish--.

Hia-Leah

My husband was Tuscaroran.

Marie

In any case, there was money. Much money.
I never learned from whom, but it was for
you. Pierre--.

François-Émil

Mon oncle? He was my father?

Marie

No, no. He hadn't so much money. Yet his
marriage to Madeleine could not explain
his attentions. I thought, and still
think, he was sent by someone.

Martha

Did you not ask who sent him?

Marie

Of what interest is this to you?

Martha

I loved him!

Marie

You simply never "noticed" him?

Hia-Leah

Who can have been my husband's mother?

Marie

I do not know.

Martha

Why disguise him? Why send money for his
keeping? Why not--?

Marie

I know only that Girart received a great
deal of money--all for you, my son, tho'
you were never to see it. This much I
discovered, but never the source.

François-Émil

Why did you not tell me, Maman?

Marie

You were but a boy. What good would it have done to tell you that you were cheated?

François-Émil

But you knew he was not my father. You suspected someone--.

Martha

Someone. There was certainly someone!

Marie

Yes. Some man. Some woman. Someone with considerable wealth to spend on a child he did not want--yet would not abandon. A child whose keeping concerned her, whose whereabouts she wished always to know--.

François-Émil

Maman, why did you tell me nothing?!

Marie

Where there can be no certainty--the less knowledge, the less confusion. You were already a boy torn--.

Martha

There must have been a rabbi--someone to perform the circumcision, someone you could have traced--.

Marie

I tried. I found no one. No one who would admit to any knowledge.

Martha

What about your husband? Could you not question him?

Marie

Girart was not a man with whom a helpless woman argues openly. And he, of course, maintained that this child was but the product of his own aberrant loins. For the boy's sake and my own, I said little, but I knew it was not so. It could not have been.

Martha

If your husband so hated the Jews, how is it he would raise one?

Marie

That thought did not escape me, yet he might have done so for the money. His activities required it.

Martha

Émil, you must surely have made efforts of your own.

Marie

My dear, how so? He presumed the truth of Girart's claim upon him, and my husband gave ample evidence of his ability to sire--if not rear--.

François-Émil

That is not entirely true, Maman.

Marie

He gave you cause to think he was not your father?

François-Émil

Oui, Maman--after you had left us.

Marie

Of what nature? What did he tell you?

François-Émil

That he was not. . . . That he was no part of me.

Marie

Surely this was but the speech of a bitter man.

François-Émil

I thought not, but *mon oncle* deemed it best that I not prove too curious.

Marie

You talked to Beaumarchais about this?

François-Émil

Many time, many of times.

Marie

And he told you nothing?

François-Émil

Maman, I had no reason to think he knew.

I but asked how I might seek my parents.

He advised that I not look.

Martha

Assuming Émil was of royal lineage and a threat to someone--why not have the child killed?

Marie

Ah! It is clear you know nothing of the aristocracy!

Martha

My blood may be common, but I have reason! Besides, I suspect one learns something from intimate observation--.

Marie

Yet, as confessed, you notice little!

Martha

Why then? Why not have him slain? You have said yourself that an uncrowned prince is ready prey!

Marie

Easy to slay, yes--not so easy to
resurrect, should he prove of use.

Martha

Yet surely he was of no use! Else why
abandon him in the first place?

Marie

You reason like a republican. There is no
certainty in such matters! What if the
heir who seems most favorable were to
perish--or prove intractable? You cannot
create a new one in a moment! It is best
to keep him in reserve. Ignorant of his
heritage, to be sure, but safe--even at
great distance.

Martha

Bah! I think he was simply a Jew. The
son of some wealthy Jew.

Hia-Leah

May a white man not be forgiven his tribe?
What is this thinking? My husband was
Tuscaroran.

Martha

That is laughable!

François-Émil

Do not speak to her in that way!

Hia-Leah

You do not know the Tuscarora.

Martha

Then may I be relieved of yet another blot
of ignorance!

Hia-Leah

When a man is taken, he is most often
killed.

Marie

Why wasn't my son killed--being white and
among your enemies?

Hia-Leah

When at first he did not die, the women
would not have him slain a second time.

François-Émil

I should have died.

Hia-Leah

But he refused.

Martha

How could he? A man is dead when he is
taken by God!

Hia-Leah

That is as I said: "When a man is taken,
he is most often killed."

Martha

Taken by God!

François-Émil

She is saying I was killed, but I did not
die.

Martha

Oh, pardon me! That logic is flawless!

Hia-Leah

At first, the men were afraid of him.
Only the ghost-dancer and the women would
come near.

François-Émil

Afraid? Was it so?

Hia-Leah

Yes--because Ruffled Owl's arrow did not
kill you. That was most strange.

Marie

Why were the women unafraid?

Hia-Leah

We WERE afraid! But it is the women who
must decide such things--when a man is
taken and will not die.

Martha

And this "ghost dancer"? What is that?

Hia-Leah

A man who sings and listens to the spirits
who hear him.

Marie

A poet?

François-Émil

A poet, a healer, and a priest.

Marie

Ah, a Poet! Too bad there are none left.

François-Émil

There are still some who sing, some who listen. And I am thinking there were never very many.

Hia-Leah

The ghost-dancer was a powerful, lonely man. I would rather see my son become a woman--than to take up singing.

Marie

My son had a beautiful voice. Did you never hear him sing?

Hia-Leah

I heard him singing--long after his death--to-me.

Marie

You had the most lovely of voices, *mon petit oiseau*. It deepened as he grew, but it never lost the lilt of a boy.

François-Émil

I sang, Maman, but I did not know how to listen.

Marie

When you were a child, you often described for me a woman--a figure who sat and spoke with you. You even asked me once if she could be God!. Do you remember?

François-Émil

I would rather not speak of it.

Marie

She came to you most often after you--after you had seized, so I thought little of this vision and the voice--.

Martha

Émil was epileptic?

Marie

As a boy, if he were very ill or fatigued--he would sometimes suffer these attacks--.

Martha

Yes, yes! It happened once while he was staying with us--at our house in Philadelphia! We thought it was the fever--.

Marie

I had hoped he would grow out of it--.

François-Émil

Please, Maman. I do not like to think of it. It was most humiliating for me--.

Marie

My son, you should not be ashamed of something you could not help!

François-Émil

Sometimes I think, Maman, we only feel
guilty for those things we cannot change.

Martha

I remember that poor Betty was frightened
out of her wits! Thomas tried to hold you
to the bed--.

François-Émil

Please, Martha--.

Martha

It was terrible. There was scarcely any
flesh left on your back. They had whipped
you so horribly--.

François-Émil

Please, these are not things I would
willingly recall.

Martha

Weak and with a raging fever, you were yet
flailing about so that even a man his size
could not--.

François-Émil

Have pity on me, Martha!

Marie

I do not understand your shame, my
son--.

François-Émil

What good is a man who cannot even control
his own body? Who must awake with the
knowledge that he has disgraced himself
before his great friend, his own wife--?

Hia-Leah

Your body was sweet to me, *Mish-na-*
yeth--even when you were not in it.

Marie

So this continued to haunt him?

Hia-Leah

It was even as you said: if he were very ill. But the ghost-dancer said it was not an evil thing. Tho' my husband spoke strangely afterward.

Martha

Yes! You said some very peculiar things to Thomas--.

François-Émil

Oh, God! Have mercy on me, Martha!

Hia-Leah

The ghost-dancer thought it was perhaps the reason you did not die.

François-Émil

It was the ghost-dancer who healed me.

Hia-Leah

Yet even he could not have tended the
Dead. It was you who refused to walk
among Them. And this no one could
understand.

Marie

But so it was with my son?

Hia-Leah

He did not die when he was killed.

Martha

That is ridiculous. He must not have been
mortally wounded!

Hia-Leah

But he was.

François-Émil

The arrow pierced my liver.

Hia-Leah

It is the place where life sits.

Marie

How did he survive?

Hia-Leah

The ghost-dancer said that his spirit
walked about the hut for many days--until
it found a new place in his heart. But my
husband told me later that he does not
know if this were true. He remembers only
that his Christ would not take him.

Martha

Fancy Christ not receiving a Jew.

François-Émil

Martha, please, do not say that. I was
not--.

Marie

So the boy was circumcised. You make too much of it. Surely it was no great matter: 'tis but a bit of skin the Jews give to God. In any case, we know not how he came to lose it.

Hia-Leah

Who are the Jews?

Marie

The loathed. And the chosen of God.

Hia-Leah

The people of Si-monbar-kök-bah?

François-Émil

Yes, my wife.

Hia-Leah

Then our blood met in an earlier love?

François-Émil

Perhaps, but I was not--.

Marie

Who was this "Simon"?

Hia-Leah

Long before, when the Tuscarora and the Cherokee were yet one people, other men came from the sea--.

Martha

White men?

Hia-Leah

Some white. Some dark. All weak with hunger and thirst. In legend, they became one with my ancestors.

Marie

Simon Bar Kochba? François-Émil, was he not the Jew who led a revolt against the Romans?

François-Émil

I do not know, Maman. I was not the scholar of Latin you were wishing.

Hia-Leah

The wife of one of these men bore a son-- Rhō-nan-kōb, the Unspoken. Afterward, the ancient peoples were divided. The Tuscarora began walking to the north in spring; the Cherokee, to the west. For a time, they wintered together, but there were too many differences.

Marie

The other name I do not recognize.

Hia-Leah

It was forbidden to speak it.

Marie

Why was that?

Hia-Leah

He butchered himself to save his people.
It was feared that others might follow--.

François-Émil

Hia-Leah is innocent. She does not
know--.

Martha

You must have told her of Christ. You
with your pretty cross dangling from your
neck--even in bed. That much I noticed!

Marie

The cross I gave you?

François-Émil

Yes, Maman. Martha, I--.

Martha

He would not take it off.

Marie

Even in bed?

Martha

Even in bed.

François-Émil

Martha, of course, I told her. I spoke often of my faith. I--.

Martha

Then she is NOT innocent. She is but savage. And damned!

François-Émil

Do not judge my wife! You do not know her! You know nothing of our people. You know nothing AT ALL!

Marie

I have never heard you so much in anger,
mon petit oiseau--.

François-Émil

Please do not be calling me by that name
any longer!

Marie

No? Why should I not?

François-Émil

It is gone.. Gone. Fovever.

Marie

A name need not disappear. If it it not
"unspoken." It may live long after the
flesh, even as we--.

François-Émil

STOP!

Hia-Leah

Christ was the white Rhō-nan-kōb.

Martha

There! Deny that that was blasphemy!

Marie

I find it most intriguing that an
adulteress who considers herself damned
should be so zealous--.

Martha

Adulteress? How dare you call me that!

Marie

But you have earned the title--

Martha

No more than you!

Marie

--in shaming my son.

François-Émil

Enough! Enough! I cannot bear it!

Martha

But someone must.

Marie

What do you know of this "Rhō-nan-
kōb," *mon petit*--François-Émil?

François-Émil

Little. Nothing. The women kept his
legend.

Hia-Leah

It was said that his spirit came before
the dawn. Far to the east--from his
father's land, not the land of his mother.
A most unnatural thing. Perhaps that was
why his words were banished.

Martha

Why was he not worshipped? If he took his
own life in order to save--?

Hia-Leah

A most evil deed!

Martha

Why?!

Hia-Leah

Have your people no respect for living?

Martha

Certainly! And that but increases the nobility of such a sacrifice!

Marie

Christ did not kill himself. He was slain.

Hia-Leah

In this, then, he differs from the Unspoken.

Marie

But He could have prevented it.

Hia-Leah

And so they are the same. Christ is but the white sacrifice.

Marie

He allowed Himself to be slain in order to save others. From sin. But they slew Him to save themselves--from Him.

Hia-Leah

He was a threat to them?

Marie

No. Only His words.

Hia-Leah

I know them. My husband has told me.

They are easy words. Not dangerous.

Simple words.

Marie

Yes.

Hia-Leah

Christ was a simple man--like my husband.

Martha

So! Émil played Christ! I should have
guessed as much. No wonder you were thus
content among the heathen!

François-Émil

No, no! Hia-Leah, I never said that I was
like Him!

Hia-Leah

But you spoke like this Christ, my
husband.

Martha

Yes, small wonder you were so happy in
your new part that you never bothered to
return--never thought of me!

Marie

At last, she reveals herself.

Hia-Leah

He spoke of love and honor. And not to
kill. He said this many times.

Martha

And I suppose your people were surprised
when he ascended not unto heaven!

François-Émil

I spoke OF Christ, Hia-Leah. I was but repeating His words. Please! Please, do not mistake me in this!

Martha

Did you perform any miracles? Aside from a lover's lies?

François-Émil

You did NOT love me, Martha.

Martha

Didn't I? And what of Thomas? What of Washington? What of the Revolution--and your oath? You left your general in the snow, Émil, and did not bother to return. So much for your "honor"!

François-Émil

I did not know, for many months, where I was. . . .

Martha

You deserted. You deserted me. Thomas, Washington. It was assumed you had been captured by the British--for there was no horse, no trace of a rider.

Hia-Leah

My husband was no coward. It was as I told you: he was killed, but did not die.

Martha

Washington sent your few things to Monticello. It was Thomas's intent to return them to France after the war. He never spoke of desertion--.

François-Émil

I was not a traitor!

Martha

Not to Thomas? Ironically, he never doubted you.

François-Émil

I was badly injured. I was taken many,
many miles to the north. I tried once to
escape, but I could not find my way. I
was afoot in strange country.

Martha

I wonder how many more men died simply
because you could not find your way home!

François-Émil

That is unfair, Martha. You are being
most unfair!

Martha

Did you not think of it?

François-Émil

I was not so important!

Martha

Did you not think of me?

François-Émil

Martha, Martha! I had no intention--no
desire to abandon you! Tho' you did not
love me.

Martha

Not love you? Then why could I not sleep
for the waking horror that stalked me?

François-Émil

Forgive me. May God forget me, if you
cannot.

Martha

Do you suppose that we did not think of
you at the mercy of the English? What
would they not do to a French spy?--a gun-
runner? And whilst I wept, you were
playing Christ in the wilderness! Oh, you
might at least have sent a letter!

Marie

By what post? A note in a bottle?

François-Émil

I did write. More than once. I wrote to
Washington. To Jefferson. To Abigail.
And to you, Martha.

Martha

You wrote to me?

François-Émil

Yes, Martha. I left letters at every fort
and encampment we came upon. Tho' I had
small hope of them being received--no
thought of an answer.

Martha

Then--then what became of these letters?

François-Émil

I do not know. Perhaps they lie buried
with the men who carried them. Perhaps no
one bothered to ride forth.

Martha

But you never thought of returning?

François-Émil

Think of it? Often. Even over the years.

But I could not leave my wife, my
children.

Hia-Leah

My husband was Tuscaroran.

Marie

I am pleased, my son, that, in time, you
found your place.

François-Émil

Merci, Maman. Merci.

Marie

A Tuscaroran! No wonder you had no ear
for Latin.

François-Émil

Maman, I think it would have been no other
way with me--had I lived in Rome!

Marie

I would know something of my son's people.
Did "Rhō-nan-kōb" leave words, Hia-
Leah?

Hia-Leah

Most were cut from the tongue.

Marie

And the ones remaining--can you remember
them?

Hia-Leah

It is an ugly thing to do so. They have
power to curse the earth. To bring about
the Once-In-All, Forever. And it is not
time.

François-Émil

Do not press her, Maman. The Tuscarora
forget nothing without reason.

Marie

Tell me what you can, then, of the
Unspoken.

Hia-Leah

He urged others to follow him. But they
were not anxious. The earth had their
ears first.

Marie

What was the cause of his death?

Hia-Leah

The people were at war against themselves:
Tuscarora against Cherokee. The Unspoken
placed himself between the warring
brothers and--.

François-Émil

Hia-Leah, please: this frightens me!

Martha

Why are you so anxious, Émil?

François-Émil

I fear that she may damn herself--if she speaks of these things.

Martha

But have you not declared her damned with the rest of her race, the rest of humankind?

François-Émil

Lost, not damned.

Hia-Leah

My husband, may we not find ourselves in this truth? If we are lost?

François-Émil

You know more than I. In the lessons of our people, as in many things, you are yet my teacher.

Hia-Leah

You were the teacher, *Mishna!*

François-Émil

Only to children. Only to the little ones. I have scarce a man's knowledge. Much less a woman's!

Marie

What did he then? This Rhō-nan-kōb?

Hia-Leah

He placed himself in the midst of the warriors--and struck a blow against himself for each man that fell. He said this was even what they did unto themselves by fighting.

Marie

But they would not listen?

Hia-Leah

It was not until the axe had severed his head from his shoulders that the fighting ceased. It was then that those words were heard--which were, after, never to be spoken until the true End-Of-Everything.

Martha

He spoke--with his head cut from his shoulders? And by his own hand? This is a tale worthy of the old Saxons!

Hia-Leah

That is the legend of Rhō-nan-kōb, a son of the people of Sī-monbar-Kōk-bah. Those you call the Jews.

Marie

But what did he say? With his head thus severed?

Hia-Leah

I will not repeat his words. It is
forbidden to speak them, until it is time.

Martha

If these words were "unspoken," how did
you come to know them?

Hia-Leah

They were in my blood. They are in the
blood--of my living children.

François-Émil

God lends us time to find their meaning
for them. And a little time yet, Hia-
Leah.

Martha

Time?

Marie

To what end?

François-Émil

Love. The end of everything.

FROM ONTARIO TO OKLAHOMA

Chataqua

Red lightning and snow.

White whirl-winds

Deep in a green valley.

A black bar against heaven

Crosses the comet:

Something transmogrifies,

Translates.

I see a man.

At the death of dawn,

He remains--

In sun and shadow, just the same

And always at my shoulder,

Strangely singing.

At a loss for his words,
I scribble the syllables
And trace dusty Latin matins,
Lyrics of old Provence,
A chanting--
"ge hūnk shtēa noktay"--
The fall and sweep of sorrow.
To speak would be the last leap,
Yet I cannot listen, unmoved
By such a familiar tune.
"Who are you?"
His memory rolls over me,
And I lend him my pen.

[Boston

October, 1775]

Ma chère Martha,

Forgive me if I am ashamed and stay away. I feel a fool and am only glad that Jefferson is kind and has told no one. I do not think that I can see him. *Mais c'est pire maintenant parce que je ne peux pas te voir!*

Please tell me what I must do.

Forgive me, but I see his face as last we met, and I am ashamed. I cannot think how you could love me now. I cannot think even that I am a man.

I stay here with Adams who speaks of loyalty and honor in such ways that I cannot bear to hear him, after this. I turn away, and he thinks me brooding on the new nation. Instead, I am thinking that I have disgraced you, that I have betrayed as well my first friend in le

nouveau monde, and that I have brought shame upon myself.

Franklin asks me to return to France and speak again with our friends there. I think I shall go. There is ship in two weeks time. *Mais--partir sans te voir?!*

You say it is true that Jefferson has forgiven us, but would he--if he knew that my soul is yours and that, without you, I am no man?

I live in fear that Adams will ask why I do not visit the Jeffersons for these two months now. What shall I say to him, if he does? *Tu me dis*, I should come again to your house, that Jefferson is not angry. *C'est encore le pire!* Why does he not strike against me? Why does he not betray me to our friends?

Et je crois que tu--you must think me the coward, as I do not fight him for you. And so I think, aussi. Je suis un lâche, un lâche et un idiot--mais aucunement un homme.

I could not speak when he confessed his knowledge to us. I felt you wanted me to say something, *n'importe quoi!* but I could not. *C'est très, très difficile pour lui et moi: nous aimons la même femme, mais nous nous aimons aussi.*

If I had not been dishonest to him-- if I had said, from the first, that I loved you--perhap I could speak of us with him now. But I cannot because I did not. *Ses yeux me brûlent, et je pense:* he is thinking of the long nights the three of us spendt talking. He is thinking of the nights he returned to the library, leaving

us--as he believed--to our own rooms.
Even in his house I betrayed him, *et il le
savait!*

Forgive me. Please tell Jefferson I
sail in *deux semaines*. Will you send word
to me afore then? Will you write to me?

Je t'aime toujours,

François-Émil

[Philadelphia

October 28, 1775]

*Mon amie, mon amoureuse, ma chanson
d'amour!*

I have received your lettre only
today--but I promise Franklin that I will
sail! And it is only two days away.

What can I do now? I must leave
this country that, even in such short
time, I have come to feel my own--*et aussi*
the ONLY woman I am ever to love!

*Si je pouvais seulement voler vers
toi! Mais je ne peux pas.* If I was bird,
cloud--even only the wind that (?) I see
now whispering against petals of the roses
in Abigail's beloved garden--I should have
your forgiveness and, mayhap, Jefferson's
aswell.

I know that he loves you. I know
that you love him also. I am only a thing
in the way, *peut-être*. . . . You say I

give you strength, *mais tu as--YOU HAVE* far more than I who does not suffer, does not bleed. Is your pain great? Please do take the laudanum. I have used it and know it is not such a powerful thing-- compared to pain. You should not be so *du* afraid.

I like also Betty, but she jokes me too much. I think she thinks I am the fool. *Elle a raison!* If Jefferson loves her more than you, it is not for her strength. And she has not your beauty *ni ton esprit!* *Elle a plein de ressentiment aussi, naturellement.*

We have not this question of slaves in France--at least not in the same way. No man there believes an *homme inférieur à cause de sa race seulement.* One man wishes another under him--as one would

wish a horse to gallop: *ce n'est pas*
parce qu'il pense que le cheval est
inférieur, mais simplement à cause du fait
qu'il désire le monter! Mon père a des
enfants illégitimes. I do not know
 them all, but I know they are my brothers.
 They have not my situation--most of them--
 but they have my blood.

I cannot believe that he has not
 spoken of us to you. Why does he not
 speak? Please be telling him I shall
 write to him *de Paris*. Please beg him,
 for me, to forgive.

Your passion burns in me, but so do
 his eyes. Would I be right to come when
 he has not yet told me that he has
 forgiven? But the choice is not mine,
chère amie: it is Franklin's and that of
 our nation! The ship comes and I must be

going. I shall write, and I shall try to
learn this English better--but it still
seems *étrange* to say "I love you,"

quand je t'aime,

François-Émil

[Paris

December, 1775]

Dear Martha,

It is hard to write from France--in English! but I have promised me to try. I will rip my only words to you apart before I will be writing in Franch. (You tell me to practice, I do!)

Paris is beating under the snow, under my foot-fall. There is much happening. . . I live with friends here, have not seen my family. I do not go them because I have not much time. I write, but they do not write me. My father is not much for language. I do not seen Pierre, but I see his plays--and they are WONDERFUL! Louis is like them, too.

I love you, but my heart breaks on the words because I cannot feel them in this language! English is very--very restrictive for me. Of cours, I do not

know it well yet, but more than that. Our language does other things, and I keep missing them in English. Please forgive as you know I have not your *intelligence*. (That is not Franch only, is it? I shall be checking my dictionary. . . . Ah! I am safe: it is Franch, of course, but the English have stolen it! I shall be wishing them to steal more words, I fear me, before I can be finishing my letter.) Please know that there would be other things here--if I did not practice!

J--- aches me with his silence. I know letters are written but never sent; letters are lost; and yet I know, aswell, he would write if he thought I were a man. Please do not hurt me with talk of him before he is to say that he has forgiven.

I am looking at the poem you me
 gave--Donne's song beginning "Goe, and
 catche a falling star." As you knowing,
 almost all of my English is Donne's or
 your's! But this poem is all wrong for
 me. It is all too hard against Petrarch,
 and you know (are knowing?) my love of
 him.

Will I EVER realy know this
 language? My Latin is good, I think,
 because of my mother and the Church. It
 helps with this English much, but. . . .

This recalls me of a boy who worked
 in our stables at home. He could not read
 or write in Franch, but I teached him the
 Latin because he would read the Bible. He
 became the better scholar! and I would go
 to him--if I could not be going to my
 mother--for questions aboute the Latin. I

am wishing he would be here now, so I
could be teaching him English!

A Franchman would not say things
that Donne says here--at least not in the
same fashion. Would an American say such
things and in the same manner? Perhaps I
have fear only that you wish I know this
poem MORE THAN FOR LEARNING OF ENGLISH! I
am knowing that you love J---. How could
you not be loving him? He is a god! and
I am but a stupid, stupid boy. But I have
no one excepting you and shall not.
Therefor, I suppose I could speak this
poem--although I would not speak it of
you!

My poor grammar will bore you, I
fear me! But, as you sayd, I must
practice while I am not hearing so much
the English. I have my dictionary at all

time--even as I sleep. My home is
America, and if we Americans must speak
English, I shall be speaking it! But must
we ALWAYS be speaking the English only?
Why do we not speak "American"? Shall we
not be making a NEW language?

Certainely, I must write English--
untill I begin to learn. Am I beginning?
I feel that I am, but I have fear of many
mistakes! I am, in fact, ashamed to give
this you, but I must--if only to prove
that I practice! J--- would be laughing
if he saw this letter; his Franch is very
good. Please do not read it to him.

Does J--- speak of me to you? He
must speak, my love; do not have fear that
I will hurt if you tell me. It was wrong
of me to say such thing. I want any words
from him--no matter if they are hard. It

aches me that he does not write. Do not wish. . . do you wish him not to? My beloved, please know that I AM MAN HONEST.

I think when I return I shall join W---, although I am not much the fighter. (I lose allways--so it seems! Perhaps we have better chance of winning, if I do not much fighting!) You ask of the killing. I cannot kill--and so I have told J--- and the others. But I will (would?) die. I ride fast and well, and I can talk. (I think poor A--- is glad I return to France, so he does not ALWAYS be hearing me talk!) I HATE the English, but I cannot kill them. I have SWORN me not to do this one thing.

Is it not wrong to kill? I, too, am thinking: is it not wrong or right for me

to die instead? But this death is nothingness, if it is not a leaning into those which live after. Is this not Gode?--this LEANING? If a man dies into the future, may God forgive him? Would He forgive me? Even if I was the soldier who talked too much but did not kill? I know He will forgive W--- who has many men killed. I suppose He can forgive me, aswell. I pray to Him to let me keep my promise, because I have fear also of the shame I would feel if W--- NEEDED me to kill and I could not. Mayhap he would not think me the man. I could not bear his eyes, if he thought me a coward.

I do not know AT ALL. I know nothing. But to me it seems (it seems me?) that perhap it is important to decide whether God wants this killing or not.

Forgive me. I do not speak against W---.
I could NEVER so be doing. (There was a
word to me from him in F---'s letter! Can
you believe he would so honor me?)

You have reason: women give and do
not take life. Is this meaning you are
our proper masters (mistresses? is
meaning lovers, is not?)? Even this Bible
is written wrongly? Is that true? I hear,
in it, the Word of God in the wrong voice?
Tell me. TELL me! I MUST know. Forgive
me, but it is almos Christmas, and I can
never not be thinking of Him aswel.

I caress you in my deepest heart,

François-Émil

Please do not be forgetting that I go by
CARON here. It would mean great problems
for me if you should forget--because of
this business I do with the talking.

[Paris

February, 1776]

Mes chers amis,

I fold two letters--one for each of you--in the envelope that I am addressing to you both. If either of you is not my true friend, let that one ask to read the other's lettre, as well. I can think of NO OTHER WAY to be freeing us from this pain. Forgive me for doing this to all of us for so long.

Perhaps now we have each again our honor?

[Paris

February 14, 1776]

Dear Jefferson--

Forgive me writing. Martha says if I wish that you write, I must be the first. We Franch would not be doing it this way, but I take her word--as I wish to be American! But it is I who have done harm you, and I do not think it good that I should even be ASKING you to forgive. I was hoping (hoped?) that you could tell me you were not hating me, then I could write and beg that you hear. I have shamed Martha and yourself and myself, as well. It is all ME doing this--not her fault, not your's. My reason is not good, *mais c'est j'espère, quelque chose que vous comprendrez.*

When I was the child, my step-mother used me for her pleasure of the body. I was being shamed by this and hurt; I could

never be a man with women--until Martha.
I am not being certain that I ever shall
again. If I am to be WITHOUT THIS LOVING
FOREVER, I would choose it--before I would
be hurting you! (I ask only that you not
be telling this to Martha; she does not
know these things of my past.) But,
Jefferson, how can I this be promising--
EVEN IF I NEVER SEE HER AGAIN? I cannot
BE not loving her! Jefferson, forgive me;
I LOVE her. She is the ONLY WOMAN--. I
could easier teach my horse to fly than I
could teach my heart NOT to hold hers!
And, as you are knowing, the body is only
a small part in this. If in this loving
of her I am your enemy, Jefferson, I am
betraying you NOW--tho' the vast Atlantic
ROLLS BETWEEN MY BED AND MARTHA'S!

I ask God to forgive me for wanting more that YOU should forgive! Jefferson, *mon ami*, PLEASE do be writing to me. I will be doing as you tell me--if it is in my power as a man. ,

Your humble servant,

François-Émil

Pierre says he thinks he has PERSUADED Louis that his plays are not so bad--AS PLAYS. Louis shares only some of OUR attitudes, but he is agreeing that Pierre is very good playwright! More word soon!

[Paris

February 20, 1776]

Dearest Martha:

How wonderful was your letter to me!

I have such joy and will be failing, I fear me, to express it as I should! I have written to Jefferson as you see. I hope he forgives, but I am hoping aswell that you will not ask what I have written to him. *Je crois que c'est la seule façon de rétablir la confiance entre nous.* I should have thunk of it (thought me of it?) before!

I have read the "Holy Sonnets," and Donne has hurt me deeply. Please be looking at his Sonnet XI. How can he be saying these things--when Christ was Himself a Jew? Martha! I do not understand him! Is it only my poor grammar in this English?? What was causing Donne to think man's flesh "vile"?

(Such an UGLY word--even in Franch!) And what was causing him to be thinking that God does not "suffer woe"--even OUTSIDE of us? No, Martha, I can never be reading Donne again. Forgive me, but it aches me too much.

You have it against Petrarch that he worships Laura? But, *peut-être*, he was hearing--as I hear--this Voice from God? Am I so stupid in this? Tell me, my love! I do not wish to remain wrong; I would be having answers! Betty aches me with her joking of me always. I know she is not thinking me the man. . . . How does she teach you not to love Petrarch? (I like much your *plaisanterie*: "Maybe I made a mistake teaching Betty to read"! Is very funny.)

I would be happy to die in the name of the Voice that I hear--if I believed me. I do not care what others do to me. I have suffered some; pain is not a new thing with me. You say that "death is not beautiful," but I am telling you, Martha, there are certain lives that are more horrible than ANY death with honor. You must accept this from me *seulement à cause du fait que* I have traveled more, perhaps. You must think me not a soldier as W--- is soldier. You must think me more the soldier as Jeanne d'Arc--tho' I embarrass me to think she was being the woman, I the man! And, too, I am not a great *général--* as either of them. I am only a man-of-the-line: an *homme seulement*. When I am going to *la guerre*, I shall be talking always WITH MY SWORD SHEATHED! You are

saying this will "make it easy for them to kill" me, but, *certainment*, I could not be facing worse danger than even W---'s noble horse! (Have you seen him?) If this animal has courage to face the English *désarmé*--then so must Émil. I am glad I would not be the one to carry W---; but I would be very, very honorèd to speak for him!

Avec tout mon amour,

François-Émil

If Pierre finishes his new play soon, I may be coming to America *en avril*!

[Paris
March, 1776]

Chers amis!

Pierre is such good playwright that Louis will after be seeing every performance! He is sharing most our attitudes now. Pierre makes much profit and is it investing in "Rodrigue, Hortalez, et Cie." I come myself in but few weeks time to be seeing that the first shipment goes well. I arriving Boston *en avril ou mai!* I will from there to Philadelphia.

May I be seeing you both *encore?*

François-Émil

[Boston
April, 1777]

Ma chère Martha!

I shall follow this letter to be near you for the baby! Ah, Martha, you cannot know what this means for me! I am only of fear that things will not go easy for you. I am hoping that you are well, as you say. If I find you are not eating, I shall become angry and force you to eat! But you must take good care of yourself for me untill I arrive. Listen to Betty and to Jefferson.

I want that certains things be clear about our baby before it is born. We must talk, but I want to say the few things now--so you can be thinking of them. *Je crois qu'il est très important que cet enfant ait le nom de Jefferson.* While I am very excited about being a father, I think no one aside from us should ever

know. *Particulièrement*, I do not want THE CHILD to know.

I am hoping to be with *notre enfant* often as I can, but I want this child to think always that Jefferson is "father." I can think of no other man I would prefer, myself, and so I want to give my child the BEST father--which is not me.

I get excited thinking on this! To take the baby into the sun for the first time, to see the flowers, to breathe this beautiful new air! I am so PROUD to have a child in this land! I am silly, *peut-être, mais j'ai beaucoup de joie!* I cannot wait to see this baby--to see what God has been kind enough to give us! I long so simply to see the baby SMILE for the first time. All the while, I think of doing things with the baby as it grows.

(I am thinking of nothing else, and I am boring Adams! He does not know my reason for taking such interest in Jefferson's unborn child.)

I know I should ne be coming to Monticello, but perhaps Jefferson will forgive me this. He is not angry I am coming to be with you--with both of you-- for this; is he?

I ask only the one thing: I want to be the one who will teach this child to mount a horse. I ask this only because that I am not bad, myself, and it would give me great happiness to see the child ride better than I! I fear Jefferson will not take interest in such a small thing, and so I ask to be the one.

If I do not end and post this, I shall arrive too soon! Take care of you,

*ma chère ami, for me--et cet enfant de
Jefferson.*

Avec tout mon amour,

François-Émil

What a beautiful time it is to be born!
How happy to see the world first in the
late spring of a new nation!

[September,

1777]

Mes chers amis--

I follow Washington like an ailing dog these two months now. There is little for me to be doing. *La guerre* does not go so ill against us--*c'est simplement mon esprit, mon coeur.*

I pray, Martha, to the soul of the baby that you and Jefferson have lost. He MUST be more happy with God than even our new land could have made him. Why else has he been taken from us? Why else will I not be having his smile to look for when this struggle is over?

Forgive me, but the weather has turned suddent cold, and we must be dreading the winter already.

Je sais que c'est très difficile-- witting to a man whose horse is always moving! *mais. . .* please try. There is

no knowing when I will receive them, but I
could not bear to think letters would
NEVER be coming.

Pray for *mon Général*. He works very
hard--sometimes all the night--and has
joked that he shall become as thin as I!
And I am telling him, "but never so stupid
et melancolique--grâce à dieu!"

May God forgive me and protect you
both,

François-Émil

[Valley Forge

December, 1777]

Ma chère Martha,

I wonder if you are thinking as I
thet it is hard to write under present
circumstances. And yet I must write! I
must at least hope thet these marks upon
the page will find you. (Please forgive
poor grammar, *encore*.)

It is not so good here. We do not
have the supplies or the men the General
was expecting. I am to ride to see about
these tomorrow. I feel the fool--all this
back and forth going, seemingly for
nothing! I am supposed to be a soldier,
and all I do is talk.

Others no longer are speaking. Many
men have died here, and both sides depend
upon supplies that do not come. Why do
they not come?

*Mais, toi! Je pense que je mourrais
sans les images de tes yeux! I see them--
through them--through all of this.*

The fighting is as difficile as the
winter; both have grown colder, for the
men have little to eat, although there is
much food for us--enough for the officers.
Washington has given up a present from his
wife--a blanket of Scottish weave--to a
man of the line. *Seulement un homme.*
That man is dead now. When I walked out
this morning, I saw another soldier had
taken the blanket. I said nothing to him.
You--even your quick eyes!--could not have
told the twill of it by then. 'Twas all
covered with mud and the first man's
blood. A pitiful thing for a man to cover
himself with.

I have a good warm blanket and a clean cot, so you must not worry. I am really seldom in danger--except when I talk, and you know how that is! And there are spies in the forests, but they do not shoot well. (Perhaps it is good that we shall be thin this winter--'twill give 'em less a target! as *mon général dirait.*)

The General is sending a messenger with the post-bags this morning, so I must not keep you too long. They ride out, but never return. It is a simple thing for them: the men ride out, but they do not wish to come back. Only those you send reach us. The General has begun to pick the younger ones for messengers--those he feels would not survive here, any the way. Do they find you before they go home?

Please have jefferson urge that we be sent more men! Not many here would leave the General, but he is beginning to fear that he will only see them die of the hunger. We are knowing that the King's men will receive reinforcements, mayhap by February. We can hold (*je crois*) against those who are here now. Is there no word from Louis? Nothing of the Alliance?

Forgive me. I have not writen well. It is so uneasy for me--what with the men riding out and never returning. Please forgive me if I am ashamed, but we are facing such things here that I feel guilty even for the memory of your kisses. And yet that is what keeps me alive! All that I am is unknown to any man about me, but we are all like that, *je suppose*: phantoms seeming to freeze in the snow,

mais, actuellement-- warm in the arms of a woman. If I was the poet, I could say it better; perhaps then Jefferson would believe the General. Please try to make him listen. We do not care what sort of men they are; the General will teach them to be soldiers. Even I--.

The General's post is ready. I must be giving my letter to the boy; I hope he finds you!

Je t'aime, je t'aime!

François-Émil

I shall be giving the boy a little money and tell him you will do the same, if this lettre reaches you. *Je t'aime tant que je vis!*

Trial By Error: Jury Of Peers

"Poor, poor dear--

What's happened here?

You're such an intelligent woman!"

"Wanna' know what *I* think?

See a shrink. Wake up!

And use some reason."

"You ARE clever! How funny!

I bet this farce

Will make you a lot of money!"

"I went crazy once--

Before the divorce;

Of course, you're not married. . . ."

Row, row, row your boat!
Rhō-nan-kōb is full of soap--
And 'Hyena'? A laughing matter!"

"I'd carry a gun if I were you.
If you want one,
I have a friend with several."

"Are you on drugs?
Try Jesus. God lends hope--
In the very worst of cases."

"Interesting. I've gotta' go.
If you figure it out,
Let me know."

"Thank heaven you pose no threat,
And yet--
Somehow you *do* seem dangerous."

"What will Pepe Le Pew
Say to you next?
Get some rest--away from the bottle!"

"Are you delerious?--or joking?
Be careful:
Some people think you're serious."

"That sort of thing doesn't happen.
If it could, I agree that it would--
But it can't; therefore, it doesn't."

Undisciplined Ego

Magnificence has the power
To rescue the insignificant.
The majestic endures--
Mud and all.

"Would you mind standing on one foot
With your hands behind your head
And counting backward from one hundred?"

Science is but the proof
Of artistic truth:
Mathematics establishes metaphor.
At what cost? The great loss of time.

"I believe you are intoxicated.
Please put your hands behind your back
While we get the cuffs on."

CLANG!

A knick-knack knocks

The world over.

Whose is it?

"Sherif, Yousif--

Sheriff's Office."

(What's the first word,

But don't ask when.)

"Where you been?"

"Mama! --MA!"

(Maw of the Mayhap,

Soul-center of Synchronicity:

STILLWATER!)

"Bre'r Rabbit--

He done hide in de' briar patch,

'Cuz here come de' monkey wid' de'

match!"

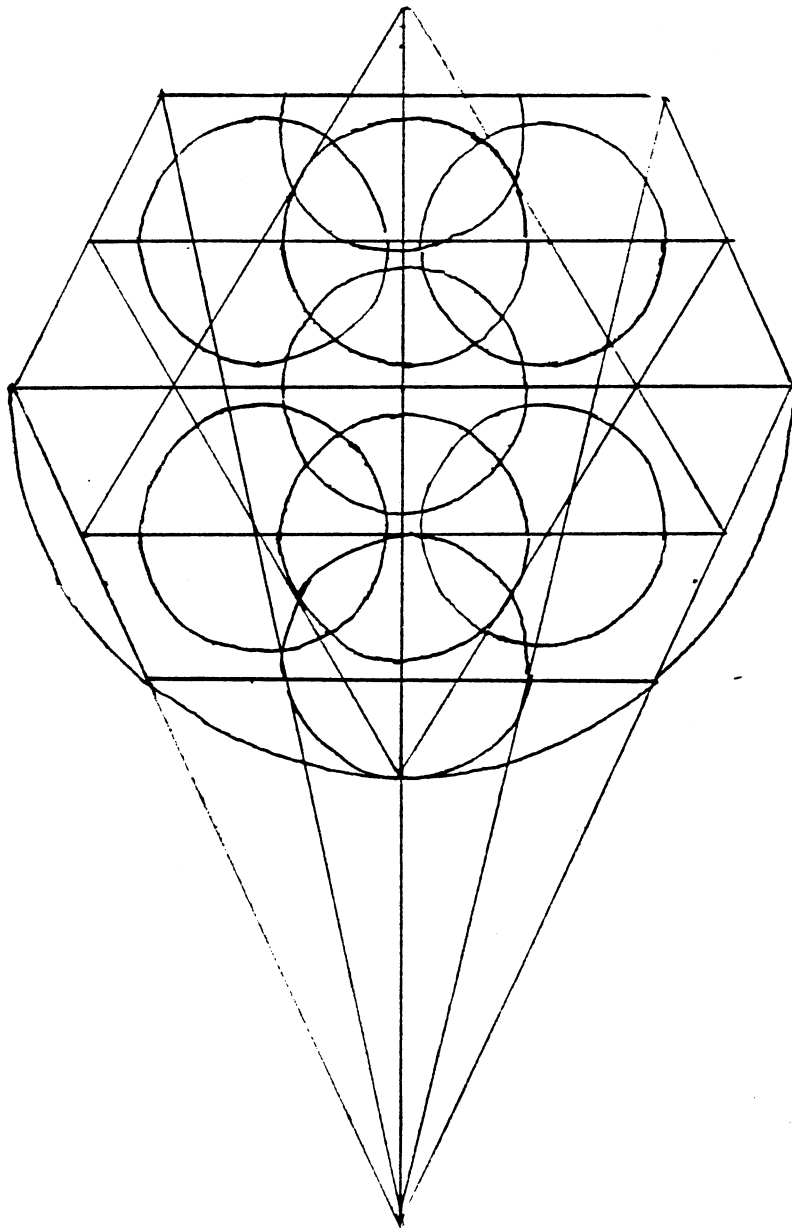
Never is a long way--and a hard place to find:

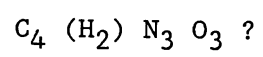
Any voodoo will do.

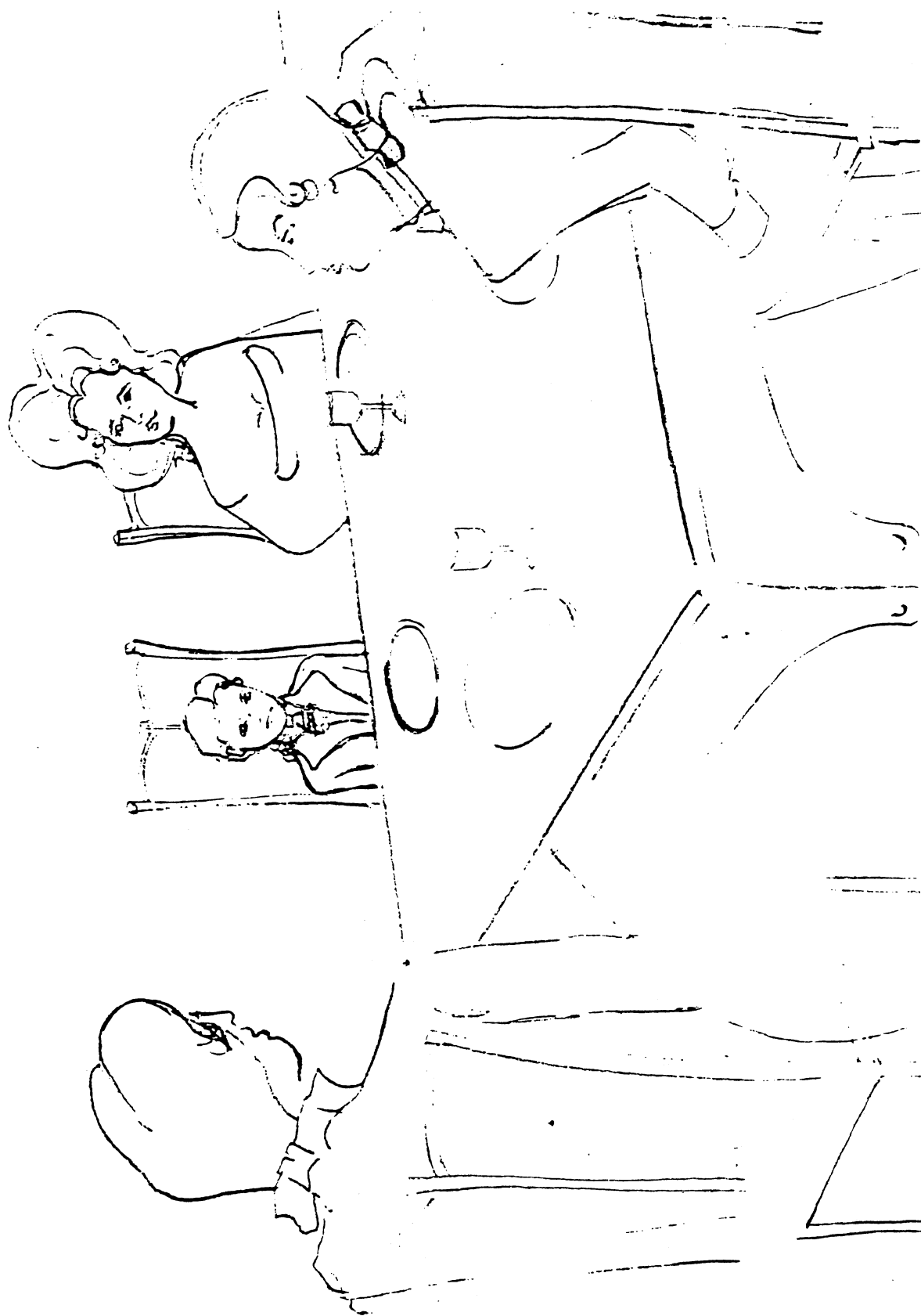
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Malkuth Yesod Tifereth Netsah Hod Tifereth Hesed Tifereth Gevurah Tifereth Hokmah Tifereth

Binah Tifereth Kether











Communion

Do you know what it is

To see a man--forgetting he must ride tomorrow--

Kill his horse so that he may eat

And cover himself for the night?

Do you know what it is

To swear before the stare of the holy stars

That you shall not murder--

Yet see slaughter frost your breath in the ghost of a moment?

Do you know something of anything?

OCCIDENTAL FITS

Aura.

Across the synapse of syntax,

One at-tensional phrase

Explodes into significance:

The presence of the past is prescient.

Fitt the first: *ABCs*.

Amon: Adam, Abraham.

Apollo is unmanned by years;
His broken phallus
Haunts the Louvre.
Breathless in marble or hollow-eyed bronze,
Even Aphrodite's breasts are frozen.
Time preferred the statues
To the gods within.

Baal: Babel, Balthasar

Barbarians--Rome over,
Burning in runes
Bright with the blood of Bacchus--
Why were they so bold
In the breaking of bones?
Time tamed them,
Bore their sons, away.

The Crack of Dawn: Smoky Craters, Crete.

The crying in the wilderness

Shall outlast Christ's wounds.

The manifest West--

Crippling crown of civilization--

Cannot heal itself.

Time holds the crux

And the cure.

Second Paroxysm.

The failure of history is no mystery:

Its script is too broad,
Even where it is certain.

The simple fact of a man
Is lost among nations.

Even races, generations
Are written off the page.

Is there another course?

Another seizure.

She's been two hundred years

Without a word--

Waiting, brooding, breeding, brewing

AMERICA.

The dead walk; they whisper:

"Aldeberan, Achernar--

Ad Astraea!"

She dare not answer.

Status Epilepticus.

Over the shoulders of gargoyles,

I saw Paris

While d'Arc, uncovenanted,

Burned in Rouen.

What was at stake?

Elizabeth lifted Excalibur

From the lake, laughed

On the crucifix of sex:

She was England's instant.

Iroquois maiden

Sprang at winter foot-fall,

Raped by stranger's arrow.

Old Glory flags,

Gored by shame. It's over.

Uriel, outside the urinal.

AEIOU--and sometimes why.

Eplilepsilogue.

Bang and Crunch Debate the Universe

Crunch: It was mine first!

Bang: Wud'n either!

Crunch: Was so! Give it back!

Bang: Take it; I dare ya'!

* * *

Crunch and Bang: Uh-oh. . . .

Ology

Ontology, epistemology--

Synonymy.

Time was when Ontario was Oklahoma;

The "great lake" stretched across Stillwater.

This is no mythical geography--

Primordial hydrology--

But simple fact.

A place shape-shifts

With the distant ink-antations of cartographers.

U'hnia'ka'r becomes Niagara:

One misheard word inscribes a lie forever.

The sun dies

In the Not-west;

The system is no longer solar.

In the land of the brave and the broken,

There is fire on the lake.

VITA

Marinelle Grace Ringer
Candidate for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Thesis: THE PRETERIT-PRESENT; OR, A BIG BOOK WITHOUT
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