

Foul dustball, perfidious chamber pot,
Do you mean to imply that . . .

LYSE: Go there, see for yourself, Isabelle and Clindor
are . . .

MATAMORE:

Poodle, cease your yap!
Trullish chambermaid, do you think
That such a gross Leviathan as myself would stoop
To spy upon my future Queen,
The soon-to-be Empress of my limitless realms
In some seedy grape arbor with my little minion,
Thinking to catch them at illicit palaverings?
It is grotesque! It is vile!
It is loathsome!
Where's the arbor?

LYSE: Down this path.

MATAMORE:

I knew that already. I am there.
Thus saying thus, swept the Offended Matamore
away.
(He exits)

LYSE:

The tender scene he'll interrupt
Is better torn asunder by this poltroon
Than by poor, love-torn, and dangerous Adraste.
There still is time—
I pray that madness travels faster
Than the spirit of revenge.
(She exits)

Change of scene: in the arbor. Clindor and Isabelle enter.

ISABELLE:

My father's turned to stone,

A monolith on which is carved
The awful words: Adraste and Isabelle Will Wed.
He'd rather see me dead than married to a serving
man.

It's not safe for you in this tyrant's house;
At any strange noise, we have to run.

CLINDOR: I can protect myself.

ISABELLE:

Since we last met you've become as irreplaceable
As the blood in my veins, as the air I breathe,
As my dreams at night, as my memory of joy.
Protecting you, I keep myself alive.

CLINDOR:

My father's house is barred to me.
I have nothing to offer you, except . . .

ISABELLE:

Except your love, which is all I desire.
The wanderings of the heart will at last find rest,
The vagaries of love will cease,
Here, here will be home forever,
For you, for me . . . my only, only love.

Leaping from his hiding place, Matamore enters.

MATAMORE:

Let Jove in heaven with thunderbolt split
This usurperous dog, this treacherous equerry!
I . . .
(He faints)

ISABELLE: Oh God! Is he dead?

CLINDOR:

No, not dead, merely
Overcome by prolixity.

Let me talk to him.

MATAMORE:

Unspeakable machiavel!
False-foreswearing Judas-lips!
Et tu, Delamont?

CLINDOR:

Thunder more softly,
I beg you, dread Goliath.

MATAMORE:

I have no need to shout.
You know what you have done.
A crime so ghastly I cannot bear to pronounce it.

CLINDOR: I have stolen Isabelle.

MATAMORE:

Precisely. You have two choices:
One: To be seized by the heels and flung
Straight through the celestial crystalline spheres
Into an abyss where the elemental fire will consume
What parts of you remain unripped by broken
crystal—

CLINDOR: Sounds bad.

MATAMORE:

It is. Or Two:
To be transformed by a spell I know
Into that lowliest of creatures, the Naked Mole Rat,
Thereafter to be stepped on by my puissant boot
After which your skin will be made into a little
Ratskin purse for Isabelle to wear,
Embroidered with the words:
Thus died Delamont, traitor to his lord.

CLINDOR: Actually, there's a third choice.

MATAMORE: There is?

CLINDOR: Yes. I could beat you to a bloody pulp.

MATAMORE: I see. And which of the three will you choose?

CLINDOR: Guess.

MATAMORE:

Look, you've obviously learned
A great deal from me. The ignominious deaths
I've mentioned ill-befit so well-trained
A soldier as yourself. Say you're sorry,
Promise to abjure the sight of Isabelle forever
And we part as friends. Do you prefer that?

CLINDOR: I'd prefer to throw you in the river.

MATAMORE: I can't swim.

CLINDOR: That's too bad.

MATAMORE:

Your spirit is astonishing! My warrior heart
Cannot but thrill to hear so brave a boast!
Spoken like a soldier! I am magnanimously moved;
I give her to you
As one warrior, however greater, to another warrior,
However less. I have so many lovers, I can share.

ISABELLE:

It breaks my heart to lose the chance
To be your concubine, but I take solace
In knowing how relieved
The Queen of Iceland will be.

MATAMORE:

She will; her icebound beauty,
Great as it is,
Was never match, my Isabelle, for you.

ISABELLE:

Pronounce on us, colossal Matamore,
Your blessing and your benediction,
A thing my father won't provide . . .

MATAMORE:

Let me be your father, then, if that's
The role I'm meant to play.

Pledge each other your vows.
I stand, for once, as silent witness.

ISABELLE:

And I, for once, obey you, Father,
And join my heart, Clindor, to yours.

CLINDOR:

Confirm that vow by giving me . . .

Adraste and Lyse enter. Adraste has his sword drawn.

ADRASTE:

Your hand on hers, slave, is profanation.
Your punishment, to lose that hand.

Adraste slices the air with his sword. Clindor pushes Isabelle away. The others scatter.

CLINDOR (*Pulling a dagger from his boot*):

Her name upon your lips is even greater profanation;
Your punishment, to speak no more.

They begin to fight in earnest.

PRIDAMANT: This isn't dangerous, is it, it looks dangerous . . .

ALCANDRE: I'll make it disappear if it upsets you.

PRIDAMANT (*As they fence*): No, wait, let me . . . Oh! Look at that! Look at him go. It's wonderful! Thrust! Thrust! Thrust! Thrust! Parry, hah! I . . . oh I must be careful not to get overexcited . . . Wow! What technique he has, he fences like an aristocrat, elegant but not foppish, not affected, what a fighter he . . .

Adraste knocks Clindor's sword out of his hands.

Oh, he's dropped his sword, how clumsy, he was always so easily distracted, I . . . Careful, fool, careful, put a little life in it, boy, for the love of God you can do better than that, head up, eyes front, straighten your spine, stop slouching around and . . . after him, after him, do something right for once, you . . . Oh!

Clindor stabs Adraste.

ADRASTE: Isabelle!

Adraste dies horribly.

Clindor dips his hand in Adraste's blood, and tastes it, raises his hand to the sky. Blackout.

The lights restore.

PRIDAMANT: What's happened? Where's Clindor?

ALCANDRE: In prison, of course, where murderers go.

PRIDAMANT: He's not a murderer! I know the law! Self-defense, he was attacked!

ALCANDRE: He killed a nobleman. He has no means. No lawyer to defend him. It's gone badly for him, I'm afraid. The penalty is death.

PRIDAMANT: You lied to me. You said it turned out well. I feel . . . a dreadful little tingling in my heart. My valerian drops . . .

ALCANDRE: My servant will get you some water. Then he must go.

The Amanuensis brings Pridamant a glass of water.

PRIDAMANT: Go where?

ALCANDRE: Across the threshold to the other side. From here to there. He's eager to go.