Double Game
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A Libertine Tale

by

Louis de Cahusac

Translated from the French
by Kate Deimling

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Double Game:
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Louis de Cahusac (1706-1759) was not a fiction writer by profession but a librettist who worked with the composer Jean-François Rameau. Cahusac’s flirtation with fiction writing takes place in the context of the café society of eighteenth-century Paris, where gossip, fiction, and music were an evening’s entertainment, and participants were sometimes asked to tell a story in exchange for dinner. *Double Game* was published in the *Recueil de ces Messieurs* (Collection of these Gentlemen) (1745), produced by the *Académie de ces Dames et de ces Messieurs* (Academy of these Ladies and these Gentlemen), a loose association of writers and *bons vivants*. The guiding spirits of this group were the actress Mademoiselle Quinault and the archeologist and art collector the count de Caylus. Other members included, in addition to Cahusac, Claude de Crébillon (libertine novelist), Charles Collé (writer of satirical songs and poems), and Charles Pinot Duclos (historiographer and writer). The *Recueil* was published without individual authors’ names, but in her correspondence, the novelist Françoise de Graffigny provides a key to its authorship, and she attributes *Double Game* to Cahusac. This attribution is confirmed by a reference within the tale: relating the amateur acting troupe’s choice of the play
Zenēide, the author comments, “it was preferred, not because they judged it the best of the genre, but because it was the latest thing. This choice was the result of memory, not of taste.” Such a depreciatory assessment of this play would seem surprisingly hostile, if Cahusac were not himself the author of Zenēide.

In Cahusac’s story, the libertine genre—which can be defined as a story of seduction—is represented in its most lighthearted mode. As a cynical marquis seduces a young girl, the reader is prepared for her disgrace and disappointment, but no harm ever comes to her. Unlike Dangerous Liaisons (the novel whose publication in 1782 shuts down the libertine genre with its dark exploration of seduction, betrayal, and love), this story does not take affairs of the heart too seriously. Cahusac takes an old metaphor—the world as a stage—and puts it front and center by setting his story in an amateur theater troupe. As the marquis attempts to seduce his protégée, the irony is heavy: “But will I play my role well?” asks the naïve Mademoiselle d'Argy. Indeed, everyone in this tale plays a role, from the very first scene, in which the future spouses examine each other at church, both attempting to display their charm and beauty as nonchalantly as possible. A theorist of music and dance, Cahusac also writes scenes as if they were theater. At the story’s end, he describes the positions and emotions of four characters who stand frozen and aghast. This silent scene reflects the notion that the most powerful moments in life and in literature escape the power of language and rely on gesture, a belief also put forth by Diderot in his writings on the theater.

Cahusac also offers a critical commentary on aristocratic French society. He remarks ironically on the long acquaintance of a young couple about to be married (they have only spied each other once at church) and on the precautions taken to set up
the match (the finances of both families are scrupulously compared). He mocks the social types of the fop and the coquette, who are equally concerned with frivolity and appearance. He comments on the poor education given to the d’Argy siblings at the convent and the collège (boys boarding school), institutions that were frequently criticized by Enlightenment thinkers.

But despite all these critiques, and despite the long build-up to the characters’ meeting, Cahusac leaves us with the feeling that none of this is so serious. After threatening to become a melodramatic climax, the story’s final scene turns instead into a comedy, with the husband declaring, “We have been playing a double game. We are all wrong, or, to put it better, none of us is.” The author seems to throw up his hands with his character, recognizing the inevitability of infidelity in Parisian society and leaving his characters to their own devices and desires. This is not a story written to enhance its author’s reputation or to sell a book; it exists for pure enjoyment, and closes the curtain on its final scene with no delay, analysis, or regret.

Kate Deimling
Double Game
History is only a simple picture for fools, but it is a fruitful source of instruction for men who think. There is a very fine moral to be taken from this story (were it nothing but a tale). This is my sole motive for writing it down.

The Marquis de Girey was twenty-two years old when he married a rich heiress of fifteen. The marriage was accomplished with the ordinary precautions, that is, the possessions were examined first with great care, there were long disagreements over the benefits, & these first difficulties having been smoothed over, the rest went quickly.

The Marquis was led by an elderly relative, who had some hidden interest in making this marriage happen, to a church chosen in advance, to see from afar the young lady who was intended for him. According to custom, she had been secretly informed of this; therefore she had taken care to get ready at five o’clock in the morning. At church, she stood up much more straight than usual, seemed to stare at a prayer book that she had picked up for show (and which was always open to the same page), constantly looked to the side, curtseyed deeply to everyone she knew, smiled as often as propriety would allow at all the little comments that her governess, who believed herself very skillful,
whispered in her ear, passed with affectation in front of the Marquis when she left, blushed when she greeted him (although it had been agreed upon that she was not supposed to know who he was), was delighted to discover that he noticed her fine figure, beautiful eyes, charming mouth, and graceful demeanor, and finally went home, persuaded that her face had met with success.

The Marquis, who had found quite to his liking the little thing who was intended for him, put on all the airs that he deemed most appropriate for showing that he was a good-looking man: he gave her a look of conquest, took tobacco twenty times (to show off his beautiful hands and a stunning jewel), constantly adjusted his huge jabot to give himself graces, laughed indecently to show off teeth that Capron\(^1\) had made passable with great difficulty, spoke very loudly to persuade of his wit; in a word, through his plan to appear very charming, he did everything required to show that he was nothing but a vain fool.

Based on these respective precautions, they suited each other very much; on Monday the articles of marriage were drawn up, and after this long relationship, they were joined on Tuesday by eternal bonds.

This couple—mutually enchanted, always having some important secret to say to each other, both forgetting the rest of the world—spent three months in the throes of a kind of passion that everyone took for love. They themselves were fooled; they truly believed they were in love, they said so and repeated it constantly to each other. These quick desires that they owed to their youth, to new

\(^1\) Famous dentist in eighteenth-century France.
senses, to their withdrawal from anything that would have distracted them—with no experience, they confused all this with the triumphant impressions that sympathy makes on hearts, that the connection of personalities strengthens, which leads to the most tender feelings, that time may very well weaken, but that it can never erase, which one day may no longer be love, but which always becomes a deep and solid friendship, when a long series of years dulls the sharpness of desire.

Time quickly dries up the source of the kind of happiness that intoxicated this young couple. When happiness is based on desire alone, it seems that it's over as soon as it starts; in this way the mutual proof of so-called love that they gave each other without restraint dealt a mortal blow to their union; pleasure used up rapidly all the capital of their ardor, their first intensity grew weak, the intoxication disappeared, languor followed ecstasy; coldness and boredom preceded by a few days a definite distance, & finally disgust took over imperiously and definitively by the end of the fourth month. If during the last days there were some less unpleasant moments, they can be compared to the last spark of a candle that is extinguished, leaving only an unpleasant smell.

Separate living quarters, different social circles, mutual neglect: these were the convenient arrangements that happened all by themselves. Monsieur de Girey gave in to all his whims, reveled in all kinds of foibles, and picked up every ridiculous trend appropriate to his wealth, his age, and his birth; the Marquise immersed herself in good society, listened with pleasure to all the empty compliments with which she was inundated, abandoned herself without
restraint to the craze of pleasing men (a mistake twenty times more deadly to reputation and tranquility than loose behavior itself); she enjoyed the glory of being the object of every Court conquest, and the sad victim of the envy, the hatred, and the slander of all women, pretty or ugly, who had pretensions.

I will skip over their affairs rapidly; the story of a Coquette is the story of all Coquettes; and the incidents in the life of a Fop are the same ones that have occurred and will always occur to those who enter upon this brilliant path.

In this way, they lived (according to their respective sexes) more or less on the same basis; their behavior turned on the same axis; the mechanism of one is the mechanism of the other. Great flightiness, continual empty-headedness, a great deal of treachery with no remorse, a limitless source of egotism and reciprocal scorn: these are the general impulses that move the two machines. The picture of a Coquette is always the worthy pendant of that of a Fop; both of them display the traits (with a few nuances) of all the Coquettes and of all the Fops who have been or will be born: they are like the confessions of upstanding people, differing only in the greater or lesser number of instances. Therefore I will report only a particular incident, that in all likelihood does not occur in the life of all those who like Monsieur and Madame Girey are the heroes of high society.

The Marquis was in the country, where he acted in plays with the incredible superiority that chic people have over the best Actors; he was the premier Actor of this selective troupe, who regularly destroyed Molière,
Crébillon, & Voltaire three times a week; & indeed, except for his memory, which, due to lack of exercise failed him quite often, except for some false liaisons, which slipped furtively into his pronunciation, & except for a rather large number of lines shortened, or lengthened, that took the place of those in the play without his noticing, it must be admitted that he was a very fine Actor.

He was built for the theater: true, his arms were long, but basically more or less attractive, his voice was sepulchral, but moving; he lacked physiognomy and he did not communicate with his eyes, but this slight defect was overcome by the charms of a mouth that was always cheerful, even in moments of great sadness. He was tireless, always wanting to act, never giving up, eternally ready to put on new plays, familiar with the theater, sure of his entrances and those of others, appreciating the abilities of all the Actors, unaware merely of his own, studying the entire Play, prompting skillfully the person with whom he was on stage, in a word, knowing his role quite badly, and almost always confident about those that were none of his concern. With all these qualities it is clear that the Marquis was regarded in his troupe as a man whose usefulness was matched only by his superiority.

It is known that the most easygoing group, after acting in plays for only two weeks, usually takes on all the foibles, all the ridiculous trends of a real troupe: independence, contrariness, a desire to outshine others, the love of applause, the urge to be number one—these things take over everyone’s mind, without anyone noticing, and become the dominant tone. Early on politeness, consideration, friendship, and sometimes even love,
disappear. Soon there is nothing but anarchy, in which the weaker is subjugated by the stronger, the latter is quickly overthrown by a new party, who fears him and wants to destroy him. The women who try to take over the government rule as Queens, the men, who think themselves to be more sure of their taste, contradict bitterly; some complain of inappropriate haughtiness, others cry out against rude stubbornness. Everybody talks at the same time, making suggestions in a tumult, making decisions without seeing them through; the troupe first came together in the interest of pleasure; one month later it is broken up by disagreements. Often these disagreements turn into dangerous arguments and they almost always produce eternal enemies.

This particular group had at first fallen into this common problem, but finally they rose above all these petty issues that transform pleasure into work, make enjoyment disappear, and destroy all the pleasantness of social interaction.

The extraordinary talents of the Marquis had contributed to the establishment of peace, without anyone realizing it; the other Actors felt so much beneath him that their respect had tacitly granted to him absolute control; such is the privilege of rare talents: they dampen jealousy, they remove all hope of superiority, and thereby subjugate all those of inferior talent. In a theater troupe, that is the essential point; troupes that operate democratically are only a chaos that nothing can clear up, except for their destruction. If a Tyrant subjugates them, he is Cromwell ending the troubles that tear apart the heart of England.
Therefore, the Marquis of Girey decided on all the internal and external arrangements of his troupe like a sovereign; all the Actors listened to him with a kind of submission, and the Actresses with indulgence; all of them referred to him for the choice of plays, the distribution of roles, and the manner of acting them. Madame de Girey herself, who by very extraordinary chance found herself in the same place as her husband, yielded almost always to his opinions, as if she were not his wife: how could the others resist such a powerful example?

They were three leagues from Paris at the house of a woman of rather advanced age, but whose mild character, great wealth, and constant taste for pleasure lent charm to the site of the Marquis' brilliant talents. All the conveniences of the city and all the pleasures of the country were combined at the house of Madame d'Autreron. The park was large, the garden designed artistically, the woods were charming; good food, guests in large numbers, and frequently from high society, were pleasures that could always be found at her estate. The theater had brought even more guests; it had also been the pretext for numerous visits; but, as freedom was the first law of this pleasant place, the numbers of people never formed what is called a mob; it was like a civilized city where one only saw those whom one wanted to see; this multitude divided itself into several separate societies, which did no harm to one another, and which naturally combined to contribute to the amusement of all.

Thus the Marquis and his wife, although they were in the same house, did not have to endure one another; they saw each other even less than if they were in Paris; each
had his occupations and his entertainments. Madame de Girey conquered the men, the Marquis ruled over the women; in truth, they did sometimes find themselves together in the gardens, as people run into each other in the Tuileries; there were occasions when chance placed them at the same table; they had to see each other for the theater, of course, but chance, necessity, or duty never took them into each other's apartments. Nothing in this convenient situation could remind them of their mutual obligations; they hardly had a chance to notice that they hated each other; if they hadn't had the same name, no one in this large society could have suspected them of knowing each other.

They had already put on several plays with great success; the serious and the amusing, the high and low comic styles had all succeeded. Aristocratic Actors are not of little talent, such as is limited to a single genre. They embrace everything, and excel in it. The Marquis realized this advantage, and thought that his troupe's glory would be complete if they produced one of those delicate works based on light playfulness: theatrical miniatures, happy tales of sentiment designed for a charming Actress, unique in her naïveté, voice, and beauty. Such plays are charming children of nature to whom this lovely Actress seems to lend her charms, whom she beautifies, whom she alone can embody, who are based upon her charms, and who are more or less likeable according to their greater or lesser degree of similarity to her.

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Public gardens that were the fashionable place to stroll in Paris.
The Marquis had in mind to try one of these plays; his idea was well-received. *Zeneïde*³ popped into the head of the first person to speak up; it was preferred, not because they judged it the best of the genre, but because it was the latest thing. This choice was the result of memory, not of taste.

All the women wanted to act in the play & they all wanted the same role. Competition began, the argument heated up, it was even going to become serious. When it is a matter of grace, of desirability, of beauty, things can have consequences even among the most reasonable women.

The Marquis had his own solution for quickly settling the difficulties.

"Oh, Ladies," he said persuasively, "why these silly arguments? You are all admirable, your talents are well known, applauded, admired, your charms are equal to them, but we need you for the overall effect. What do you think of this: Mademoiselle d'Argy has nothing to do. She is the prettiest child you can imagine; she seems to be made for just these little roles; she is nature, ingenuity itself. Let us use her for this genre. Madame d'Autreron will allow it, I'm sure. I admit that I have a very high opinion of my idea, we will make something of Mademoiselle d'Argy, I promise you; she has not yet acted, but so much the better! She won't have to lose a bad style; she has just come from the Convent,⁴ & this is also an advantage, she will not imitate others; her charms, her style will be her own; it's

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³ One-act comic play by Cahusac, first performed in 1743.
⁴ Girls were often schooled in convents until their parents deemed them ready to enter society or to be married.
only a question of teaching her. I will take this responsibility, if you like, & I promise to have her ready to act in a week at the latest. I tell you, she will be charming, I’m sure of it. Don’t you agree?...

“But who will play the role of Olinde?” interrupted Madame de Girey.

“I will, of course,” replied the Marquis.

“You? Of course not,” replied the Marquise. “Don’t even think of it, you are much too tall, the role must be given to young d’Argy.... Yes, certainly,” she continued, realizing that the Marquis was on the verge of interrupting her, “he has a very charming face, Olinde is supposed to be no more than sixteen years old, & that is more or less his age; it will be perfect. I suppose that I will play Gnudie? This will all go swimmingly, provided that Madame d’Autreron will take the role of the Fairy.”

As soon as Madame Girey had finished speaking, everyone agreed with her without further examination. The Marquis let himself be taken along by the current; in any case, he had a secret reason for not contradicting her. Imagine what strength this took: he gave in to the opinion of his wife.

Perhaps the reader suspects what the young d’Argy and his sister were like. One had been raised in a Convent, the other had only left the Collège5 a few days before. Madame d’Autreron was their aunt. They had lost their mother not long after their birth. Monsieur d’Argy, an outstanding gentleman, who loved her and had been loved

5 Male adolescents were frequently educated in collèges, boarding schools run by Jesuits or other religious orders.
by her, survived her only two years. It seems that fate strikes these tender unions most frequently, for fear that society could be spoiled by this sort of example.

Madame d’Autreron, their closest relative, had naturally found herself obliged to take responsibility for their education. A Convent and a Collège had relieved her of it. Mademoiselle d’Arty was fourteen years old, her brother was just over fifteen. Cupid was not more handsome than he; his sister had all the graces of Hebe: lovely features, a perfect figure; the freshness of youth was almost superfluous on her, for it was already clear that her charms would be beautiful at any age. Madame d’Autreron, who was the soul of kindness, had invited them to let them take part in the pleasures of Autumn; she loved them, but with love that is merely weakness; she was flattered to see them so likeable, she showed them off to take credit for them, she adopted and claimed for her own what was the work of nature. Seeing them cherished, praised, doted on was her greatest joy. Excessive praise, inappropriate indulgences, fancy clothing, charming jewels—Madame d’Autreron showered them with everything that could make them happy. She refused them nothing but that charitable attention so necessary at a certain age, that lucid perceptiveness that can predict danger and prevent it, that prudent advice that takes the place of experience, those skillful and attentive eyes, which alone can save youth from the terrible traps into which the first flames of passion make it fall. However, despite the guardianship of Madame d’Autreron, the siblings were the opposite of unbearable. Nature, or chance, seemed to have spared them so far from the effects that blind love produces on almost all children.
Even the Collège and the Convent had taken nothing away from their good qualities; both of them came out with an almost worldly air and with their innocence intact.

Monsieur de Girey already looked upon Mademoiselle d’Argy as his prey, as this type of conquest was missing from all his other triumphs; but he believed it to be more difficult than others, and he armed himself with all the precautions that he believed necessary to make his plan succeed.

He was wrong. A knowledgeable woman, no matter how violent her penchant for love, moves less quickly toward her defeat than a young innocent person, whose heart is free of suspicion. What cruel advantages an artful man has over a simple heart, which cannot fear or predict that someone is trying to seduce her! What rapid progress can be made by a Fop who wants to make himself lovable, who combines sophisticated phrases with social standing, who looks sincere and is a smooth talker, and above all who has the strength to force himself to be polite, in the heart of a young person who has seen nothing but a Convent, who has heard nothing but reprimands, who has always obeyed? Praised constantly, touched by the respect that is shown to her, inebriated by assurances of her beauty, she thinks she has suddenly been transported into a new world. The poison slides quickly into her heart, her imagination is inflamed, her heart stirs, everything—vanity, artifice, nature—takes up arms against her, everything strengthens the lover’s hand. It is only by a kind of miracle that she can remain reasonable. If her head doesn’t turn after a week, she is a rare, extraordinary person, a paragon.
Mademoiselle d’Argy was no paragon. The Marquis had taken it upon himself to teach her to play her role; thus everyone was unsurprised, or, rather, no one even noticed, that he spent whole hours with her, that he spoke with her, that he followed her constantly, that he had eyes, attention, consideration only for her.

Filled with gratitude, Madame d’Autreron could not stop thanking him, & Mademoiselle d’Argy, whose heart was really innocent, who truly believed she was very indebted to Monsieur de Girey, praised him all the time for the patience with which he deigned to teach her; she was sincerely touched, because she was flattered. At her age, seeing a man with the dignity, the reputation of the Marquis stay near her, sacrifice all his time for her, limit all his attention to a little girl like her, what incredible kindness! Yet how to resist the lure of thinking that such flattering attention was not due only to the Marquis’ good heart? Mademoiselle d’Argy was surely extremely grateful; but she attributed to herself some of the attention that flattered her, feeling she deserved it; & this trap that egotism held out for her was a thousand times more dangerous than Monsieur de Girey’s so-called merit.

The Marquis saw his progress, he had thought out his plan, it was the first time in his life that he had acted with some caution. Until then—sure of himself, completely persuaded of the low opinion he should have of the women whom he wanted to overcome he had conquered without skill, and his triumph had always struck him as inevitable. But Mademoiselle d’Argy seemed to be a more important and more enjoyable conquest; he would not have been more fearful had he truly been in love. Thus he used all his
charms and all his experience against her. Sure that she was completely ignorant of everything that he wanted to teach her, after having entertained her mind with a continually renewed gaiety, and captivated her confidence by consideration, attention, and signs of special friendship, without bothering with all those little sayings that are called sweet nothings, he imagined that it was time to strike with full force, persuaded that pleasure, vanity, and curiosity would complete his triumph.

Therefore he suggested to Mademoiselle d'Argy that they meet just before the end of the day in a gazebo that was in the most secluded part of the woods surrounding the gardens of the house. “I have to explain to you,” he said, “a thousand things that you will find as enjoyable as they are useful. Surely you are not suspicious of me? That would be wrong. Be assured that you will not be disappointed to have done me this favor: people are always bothering us in this house....”

“Oh, indeed, yes,” replied Mademoiselle d’Argy, “I can’t have a quiet moment with you, everyone wants to take you away, & it annoys me. ... But will I play my role well?” “Like an angel,” replied the Marquis, “you have my word; let me take care of everything, and count on me.”

The arranged time arrived. The day had seemed unbearably long to Mademoiselle d’Argy. She did not know the source of her impatience, she did not even attempt to determine it; she was simply impatient, and that was all. On the pretext of the role that she had to study (still not knowing why she took one), she slipped away, & ran quickly to this much-desired gazebo.
The Marquis was there already, & Mademoiselle d'Argy could boast that she was the only woman whom he had not made wait.

"Finally," said the Marquis, rushing to her, & seizing her ecstatically, "I can see you freely...."

"You are squeezing me too hard!" said Mademoiselle d'Argy in a naïve tone that showed her perfect ignorance, & indeed he held her tightly. This first moment of pleasure had been so extreme, it had struck the Marquis' heart so deeply, that all his strength seemed to have moved into his arms: his entire person was plunged into a kind of enchantment that had taken away his voice; his eyes looked Mademoiselle d'Argy up and down eagerly, and she also felt unknown movements, without knowing the cause, that took her far from herself. A strange fire had slipped into her veins, it ran rapidly through them; it was reflected on her face, & put into her eyes a charming vivacity, that added new pleasures to the delightful situation of the Marquis.

The ecstasy ended. Mademoiselle d'Argy let herself fall onto a bed of grass, & she looked fixedly at Monsieur de Girey, who had thrown himself at her feet. She broke the silence.

"I don't know what's going on," she said naïvely, "why did you hold me so tightly? Indeed, you don't think...."

"Don't be angry," replied the Marquis, "I love you too much to want to displease you, & you are too lovely for me to treat you as a child. People here don't know what you're worth," he continued, seeing that this beginning surprised her. "Already you are at an age when you should be like the others, & because of your beauty, and a thousand charms
that you have and they do not, you should be treated like a reasonable person, even if you were two years younger. Still in the Convent, still the little d’Argy girl! It’s outrageous. They play with you, they entertain you as if you were still interested only in dolls, as if everything else were above you. I find it shocking. You are intelligent, very much so; your face is charming, it’s simply adorable. They take advantage of your docile nature, everyone controls you, & your most wonderful years are lost in a continual dependence; they let you languish in a humiliating childishness from which I want to free you....."

"I have certainly noticed all that," exclaimed Mademoiselle d’Argy, who was bursting with pride during this long speech, "and I have been quite angry about it; but my time will come..."

"It has already come," interrupted the Marquis, "& it will be your fault if you don’t take advantage of it."

"Oh," she continued, "if I were in charge, I know exactly what I would do."

"What would you do?" he said, "speak, confide your plans in me."

"Well, first of all," she replied, "I would be married, then I would go into society, I would have a beautiful carriage, many diamonds, magnificent clothes...."

"Oh, that’s not the problem!" replied Monsieur de Girey, "one is always free when one wants to be, & if you want, you can make me the most fortunate of men, and be happy yourself. ...."

"Tell me how," said Mademoiselle d’Argy excitedly.

"By ruling over my heart always," answered the Marquis tenderly, "by trusting in my good faith, by
consenting to experience the most intense and the greatest happiness that one can enjoy on earth.”

During this speech, Monsieur de Girey had remained at Mademoiselle d’Argy’s feet; he held her knees with the ardor of a man inflamed by desire, & animated by hope; his hands left this position only to grasp those of Mademoiselle d’Argy; he gave them a thousand fiery kisses, his eyes bespoke only pleasure; he was handsome, tender, affectionate, he had won her confidence: Mademoiselle d’Argy was astonished, moved, enchanted; she felt as if she were on a throne. The vivid but confused impressions of the words, the position, and the caresses of the Marquis did not give her the time to figure out what was occurring in her heart—her senses alone triumphed. Without experience, ignorant of everything, desiring to learn everything, her heart felt the impression of the gaze, the ecstasy, the movements of the Marquis and reflected them immediately in her eyes and on her face. A deep silence had followed this conversation; it preceded by a few moments the final lesson that Monsieur de Girey intended to give his adorable pupil. Love and desire were going to reveal to Mademoiselle d’Argy the most secret mechanisms of happiness; the Marquis, sure of his triumph, was moving with quick steps toward felicity, when a noise at the door of the gazebo forced him to turn his head. What was his surprise upon seeing Madame de Girey!

From a nearby alley she had heard a conversation in the cabinet that seemed animated; she knew for herself what mysteries were frequently celebrated in this isolated place. The desire to learn about a new affair had led her to approach with the greatest caution. At first she was
satisfied to listen; but as the voices of the actors were a bit changed by the situation, it was impossible for her to recognize them. Her curiosity was doubled by this first difficulty; the respectable silence that soon followed the end of the conversation made her decide that she could risk putting her head just inside the door of the gazebo, & it was this movement that had awakened Monsieur de Girey.

A man cannot describe the strange emotion that always springs from the heart of the most reasonable woman when she catches her husband—even if she does not care for him, even if she hates him—in the situation that love & imprudence had placed Monsieur de Girey. The Marquise had a completely settled way of thinking about him; he was the man who she thought interested her least in the world. It was nevertheless completely sincerely that she burst into expressions of the most violent anger. The most bitter reproaches came from her mouth with a fury that completely stunned the Marquis, who had already been disconcerted by her sudden appearance.

Mademoiselle d'Argy had quickly gone from the most tender inebriation to the most acute fear; pale, unable to speak, with downcast eyes, she had remained immobile in the same position where Madame de Girey had found her, & as for the Marquise, her eyes blazing, she looked on this picture with all the signs of the most violent fury. It was as if shock, spite, anger had absorbed her heart; she had kept the same position that her curiosity had caused her to take. As the gazebo was approachable only by a little path, her head was inside the door, and the rest of her body outside, in the alley. As she caught her breath, more reproaches and insults were about to come from her mouth, when she felt
herself held tightly, and suddenly, before she had the time to turn around, someone said aloud: "Oh, my beautiful Marquise, will you forgive me for making you wait so long! It was that old Baroness who kept me. How I despise her!"

These unexpected words left Madame de Girey powerless to interrupt. The fool who spoke to her took her surprise for coldness. "Don't hold it against me, I beg you," he continued impetuously, throwing himself at her feet, "I adore you, you know it. Let's go into the gazebo, it has witnessed your kindness and my happiness, come along. Let it witness my tenderness, my ecstasy, my gratitude."

During this time, the Marquis had overcome his first confusion; furious as well, he comes forward, he sees his wife stunned with emotion in the arms of young d'Argy. Terror had changed locations, it had abandoned the gazebo where it had just ruled, to take over the whole heart of Madame de Girey. The agitated, ashamed, unsure Marquis; his fearful, confused wife; the confused young d'Argy; his trembling sister—they surely made a strange picture, that I would have liked to have seen, that I imagine, but that I cannot describe; it changed. A peal of laughter, which the Marquis was unable to hold back, brought to life all these characters; Madame de Girey responded with a similar burst of laughter, the young d'Argy threw himself into the arms of the Marquis, his sister smiled, blushed, & ran to Madame de Girey, who extended her hand in very good style, & and who caressed her as tenderly as if she had sincerely loved her.

"We've been playing a double game," said Monsieur de Girey, "we are all wrong, or, to put it better, none of us
is. Let's drop the matter; all four of us should keep quiet, & and above all let's be good friends.”

One can easily imagine that Madame de Girey subscribed to this arrangement, & the agreement was truly fulfilled by the Marquis and his wife. From that day on they lived as if they had not been married.

It is not known whether Monsieur de Girey subsequently found more secure means to see Mademoiselle d'Argy; but it was reported that she played the role of Zeneïde excellently, & that since then she made a very good marriage. As for Madame de Girey, pressing matters soon took her to Paris; it was noticed that young d'Argy followed her there; at first people talked about it, subsequently they became accustomed to it, & when they left each other, it was in such good style, that, despite the spirit of the times, they had no need to reproach each other for bad behavior.
KATE DEIMLING holds a Ph.D. in French from Columbia University and wrote her dissertation on French libertine literature of the eighteenth century. She came across “A Deux de jeu” in the rare books collection of the University of Rochester library. Favorite French authors of the period are Diderot and Crébillon. A writer and French-to-English translator and interpreter, Kate is originally from New Orleans and lives in Brooklyn with her husband, two children, and cat.
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