

*LV – A Happy Ending*

I am delighted with everything you have done, and you are charming. Do not doubt it, your behavior, my entreaties, and better than all, love will overcome the resistance of the Countess. Everything should conspire to determine her to accept the offer you have made of your hand. I could even, from this time on, assure you that pride alone will resist our efforts and her own inclination.

This morning I pressed her earnestly to decide in your favor. Her last entrenchment was the fear of new infidelities on your part.

“Reassure yourself,” said I, “in proof that the Marquis will be faithful to you, is the fact that he has been undeceived about the other women, by comparing them with her he was leaving. Honest people permit themselves only a certain number of caprices, and the Marquis has had those that his age and position in society seemed to justify. He yielded to them at a time when they were pardonable. He paid tribute to the fashion, by tasting of all the ridiculous things going. Henceforth, he can be reasonable with impunity. A man cannot be expected to be amorous of his wife, but should he be, it will be pardoned him as soon as people see you. You risk nothing, therefore, Countess; you yourself have put on the airs of a society woman, but you were too sensible not to abandon such a rôle; you renounced it; the Marquis imitates

you. Wherefore forget his mistakes. Could you bear the reproach of having caused the death of so amiable a man? It would be an act that would cry out for vengeance.”

In a word, I besought and pressed her, but she is still irresolute. Still, I do not doubt that you will finish by overcoming a resistance, which she, herself, already deems very embarrassing.

Well, Marquis, if the anxiety all this has caused you, gives you the time to review what I have been saying to you for several days past, might you not be tempted to believe that I have contradicted myself? At first I advised you to treat love lightly and to take only so much of it as might amuse you. You were to be nothing but a gallant, and have no relations with women except those in which you could easily break the ties. I then spoke to you in a general way, and relative to ordinary women. Could I imagine that you would be so fortunate as to meet a woman like the Countess, who would unite the charms of her sex to the qualities of honest men? What must be your felicity? You are going to possess in one and the same person, the most estimable friend and a most charming mistress. Deign to admit me to share a third portion of your friendship and my happiness will equal your own. Can one be happier than in sharing the happiness of friends?