

*XVIII – When a Woman Is Loved She Need Not Be Told of It*

I have been engaged in some new reflections on the condition you are in, Marquis, and on the embarrassment in which you continue. After all, why do you deem it necessary to make a formal declaration of love? Can it be because you have read about such things in our old romances, in which the proceedings in courtship were as solemn as those of the tribunals? That would be too technical. Believe me, let it alone; as I told you in my last letter, the fire lighted, will acquire greater force every day, and you will see, that without having said you love, you will be farther advanced than if you were frightened by avowals which our fathers insisted should worry the women. Avowals absolutely useless in themselves, and which always encumber a passion with several nebulous days. They retard its progress. Bear this well in mind, Marquis: A woman is much better persuaded that she is loved by what she guesses than by what she is told.

Act as if you had made the declaration that is costing you so much anxiety; or imitate the Chevalier – take things easy. The way the Countess conducts herself with him in your presence

seems to be a law in your estimation. With your circumspection and pretended respect, you present the appearance of a man who meditates an important design, of a man, in a word, who contemplates a wrong step. Your exterior is disquieting to a woman who knows the consequences of a passion such as yours. Remember that as long as you let it appear that you are making preparations for an attack, you will find her on the defensive. Have you ever heard of a skillful general, who intends to surprise a citadel, announce his design to the enemy upon whom the storm is to descend? In love as in war, does any one ever ask the victor whether he owes his success to force or skill? He has conquered, he receives the crown, his desires are gratified, he is happy. Follow his example and you will meet the same fate. Hide your progress; do not disclose the extent of your designs until it is no longer possible to oppose your success, until the combat is over, and the victory gained before you have declared war. In a word, imitate those warlike people whose designs are not known, except by the ravaged country through which they have passed.