

**BLACK SLAVERY,
OR THE HAPPY SHIPWRECK**

PREFACE (1)

In the Dark Ages men made war; in the most Enlightened Age, they want to destroy themselves. Will there ever be a science, a regime, an epoch, or an age when men will live in peace? The Learned may dwell upon and lose themselves in these metaphysical observations. I, a woman, who have only studied the good principles of Nature, I no longer set forth man's nature; my rude learning has taught me to judge things only after my soul. My works, therefore, bear but the color of human nature.

Here, at last, is my Play, which avarice and ambition have proscribed, but which just men approve. What must my opinion be of these varying opinions? As an Author, I am permitted to approve this philanthropical work; but as an earwitness of the disastrous accounts of the troubles in America, I should abhor my Work, if an invisible hand had not performed this revolution in which I did not participate except to prophesy its occurrence. However, you blame me, you accuse me without even having seen Black Slavery, accepted in 1783 by the Comédie-Française, printed in 1786, and performed in December 1789. The Colonists, whose cruel ambition was effortlessly satisfied, won over the Comedians, and you can be sure . . . that the interception of my Play did not hurt their receipts; but it is neither the Comedians nor the Colonists whom I wish to put on trial, it is rather myself.

I denounce myself publicly; here I am under arrest: I am going to plead my own case before this august Tribunal, frivolous . . . but redoubtable. I deliver myself to a vote of conscience; I shall win or lose by a majority.

The author and friend of the truth who has no interest but to remind men of the charitable principles of Nature, who respects laws and social conventions no less, is still an estimable mortal, and if her writings do not produce all the good that she had hoped for, she is to be pitied more than blamed.

It is, therefore, important for me to convince the Public and the detractors of my Work, of the purity of my maxims. This work may lack talent but not morals. It is by means of these morals that public opinion must reconsider my case.

When the Public has read my Play, conceived in a time when it was to appear as a Novel drawn from an old Fairy tale play, it will recognize that it is the faithful tableau of the current situation in America. I give you, today, in the fourth year of the Republic, my Play such as it was approved under the despotism of the press. I offer my Play to the Public as an authentic document, which is necessary for my vindication. Is my work inflammatory? No. Is it insurgent? No. Does it have a moral? Yes, without doubt. What, then, do these Colonists want from me when they speak of me in such unsparing terms? But they are wretches; I pity them and shall respect their deplorable fate; I shall not even permit myself to remind them of their inhumanity: I shall permit myself only to mention all that I have written to preserve their properties and their most cherished interests: my Play is proof thereof.

I shall now address myself to you, slaves, men of color; perhaps I have an incontestable right to blame your ferocity: cruel, you justify tyrants when you imitate them. Most of your Masters were humane and charitable, and in your blind rage you do not distinguish between innocent victims

and your persecutors. Men were not born in irons, and now you prove them necessary. If force majeure is on your side, why exercise all the fury of your fiery lands? Poison, irons, daggers, they say you invent the most barbarous and atrocious tortures with no effort. What cruelty! what inhumanity! Ah! How you make them moan, they who wanted to prepare you, by temperate means, a kinder fate, a fate more worthy of envy than all those illusory advantages whereby the authors of the calamities in France and America have misled you. Tyranny will follow you just as crime clings to depraved men. Nothing will reconcile you with yourselves. Fear my prediction, you know whether it be well-founded or not. My pronouncements are based on reason and divine justice. I retract nothing: I abhor your Tyrants, your cruelties horrify me.

Ah! If my counsel reaches you, if you recognize its worth, I dare believe that your untamed wits will be calmed and that my counsel will restore harmony, which is indispensable to the colonial commonwealth and to your own interests. These interests consist only in social order, your rights within the wisdom of the Law; this Law recognizes that all men are brothers; this august Law that cupidity had plunged into chaos has been finally extricated from the dark. If the savage, a ferocious man, fails to recognize this Law, then he is made for irons, to be tamed like a brute. Slaves, people of color, you who live closer to Nature than Europeans, than your Tyrants, recognize these gentle laws and show that an enlightened Nation was not mistaken to treat you like men and give you rights that you never had in America. To draw nearer to justice and humanity, remember, and never lose sight of this, your Fatherland condemns you to a frightful servitude and your own parents put you up for sale: men are hunted in your frightful climes like animals are hunted elsewhere. The true Philosophy of the enlightened man prompts him to snatch his fellow-man from the midst of a primitively horrible situation where men not only sold one another, but where they still ate each other. The true man has regards for all men. These are my principles, which differ greatly from those of these so-called defenders of Liberty, these firebrands, these incendiary spirits who preach equality and liberty with all the authority and ferocity of Despots. America, France, and perhaps the Universe, will owe their fall to a few energumens that France has produced, the decadence of Empires and the loss of the arts and sciences. This is perhaps a fatal truth. Men have grown old, they seem to want to be born again, and according to the principles of Brissot, animal life suits man perfectly; I love Nature more than he, she has placed the laws of humanity and wise equality in my soul; but when I consider this Nature, I often see her in contradiction with her principles, and everything then seems subordinate. Animals have their Empires, Kings, Chiefs, and their reign is peaceable; an invisible and charitable hand seems to conduct their administration. I am not entirely an enemy of M. Brissot's principles, but I believe them impracticable among men: I have treated this matter before him. I dared, after the august Author of *The Social Contract*, provide Man's Original Happiness, published in 1789. I wrote a Novel, and never will men be pure enough, great enough, to recover this original happiness, which I found only in a blissful fiction. Ah! If it were possible for them to achieve this, the wise and humane laws that I establish in this social contract would make all men brothers, the Sun would be the true God that they would invoke; but always fickle, the Social Contract, Original Happiness and the august Work of M. Brissot will always be chimeras and not a useful instruction. Imitations of Jean-Jacques are defaced in this new regime, what, then, would those of Madame de Gouges and M. Brissot be? It is easy, even for the most ignorant, to make revolutions in paper notebooks; but, alas! every People's experience, and now the French experience, teaches me that the most learned and the most wise do not establish their doctrines without producing all kinds of troubles.

I stray from the aim of my Preface, and time does not permit me to give free reign to philosophical reasons. It was a question of justifying Black Slavery, which the odious Colonists had proscribed and presented as an incendiary work. Let the public judge and pronounce, I await its decree for my justification.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

ZAMOR, educated Indian.

MIRZA, young Indian, Zamor's lover.

M. DE SAINT-FREMONT, Governor of an island in the Indies.

Mme DE SAINT-FREMONT, his wife.

VALERE, French gentleman, Sophie's wife.

SOPHIE, M. de Saint-Frémont's natural daughter.

BETZI, Mme de Saint-Frémont's maid.

CAROLINE, Slave.

INDIAN, M. de Saint-Frémont's slave steward.

AZOR, M. de Saint-Frémont's valet.

M. DE BELFORT, Major from the garrison.

JUDGE

M. de Saint-Frémont's MAN-SERVANT.

OLD INDIAN

SEVERAL INDIAN PLANTERS of both sexes, and Slaves

GRENADIERS AND FRENCH SOLDIERS

The scene in the first act is a deserted island; in the second, a large, neighboring city in the Indies, and in the third, a nearby Plantation.

BLACK SLAVERY OR THE HAPPY SHIPWRECK

ACT I

Shore of a deserted island, surrounded by steep cliffs, from which the high sea is visible in the distance. On one side in front is the open door of a hut surrounded by fruit trees from the region: the entrance to a seemingly impenetrable forest fills the other side. Just as the curtain rises, a storm agitates the waves: a ship has just broken to pieces on the rocks. The winds die down and the sea becomes calm.

Scene 1: ZAMOR, MIRZA

ZAMOR: Dispel your fears, my dear Mirza; this vessel is not sent by our persecutors: as far as I can judge, it is French. Alas! it has just broken to pieces on these rocks, none of the crew has escaped.

MIRZA: Zamor, I fear only for you; punishment does not frighten me; I shall bless my fate if we end our days together.

ZAMOR: O my Mirza! How you move me!

MIRZA: Alas! What have you done? my love has rendered you guilty. Without the unhappy Mirza you would never have run away from the best of all Masters, and you would not have killed his confidential agent.

ZAMOR: The barbarian! he loved you, and that made him your tyrant. Love rendered him fierce. The tiger dared charge me with the chastisement that he inflicted upon you for not wanting to respond to his unbridled passion. The education that our governor had given me added to the sensibility of my rude manners and rendered the frightful despotism that commanded me to punish you even more intolerable.

MIRZA: You should have let me die; you would be beside our Governor who cherishes you like his child. I have caused your troubles and his.

ZAMOR: Me, let you perish! Ah! Gods! Hey! Why remind me of the virtues and kindnesses of this respectable Master? I have performed my duty to him: I have paid for his kindnesses, rather with the tenderness of a son, than the devotion of a slave. He believes me guilty, and that is what renders my torment more frightful. He does not know what a monster he had honored with his confidence. I have saved my fellow-men from his tyranny; but, my dear Mirza, let us destroy a memory too dear and too fatal: we no longer have any protectors save Nature. Benevolent Mother! You know our innocence. No, you will not abandon us, and this deserted spot will hide us from all eyes.

MIRZA: The little that I know, I owe to you, Zamor; but tell me why Europeans and Planters have such advantage over us, poor slaves? They are, however, made like us: we are men like them: why, then, such a great difference between their kind and ours?

ZAMOR: That difference is very small; it exists only in color; but the advantages that they have over us are huge. Art has placed them above Nature: instruction has made Gods of them, and we are only men. They use us in these climes as they use animals in theirs. They came to these regions, seized the lands, the fortunes of the Native Islanders, and these proud ravishers of the properties of a gentle and peaceable people in its home, shed all the blood of its noble victims, sharing amongst themselves its bloody spoils and made us slaves as a reward for the riches that they ravished, and that we preserve for them. These are their own fields that they reap, sown with the corpses of the Planters, and these crops are now watered with our sweat and our tears. Most of these barbaric masters treat us with a cruelty that makes Nature shudder. Our wretched species has grown accustomed to these chastisements. They take care not to instruct us. If by chance our eyes were to open, we would be horrified by the state to which they have reduced us, and we would shake off a yoke as cruel as it is shameful; but is it in our power to change our fate? The man vilified by slavery has lost all his energy, and the most brutalized among us are the least unhappy. I have always shown the same zeal to my master, but I have taken care not to make my way of thinking known to my comrades. God! Divert the presage that still menaces these climes, soften the hearts of our Tyrants, and give man back the rights that he has lost in the very bosom of Nature.

MIRZA: How we are to be pitied!

ZAMOR: Perhaps our fate will change before long. A gentle and consoling morality has unveiled European error. Enlightened men gaze compassionately upon us: we shall owe them the return of this precious liberty, man's primary treasure, of which cruel ravishers have deprived us for so long.

MIRZA: I would be happy to be as well instructed as you; but I only know how to love you.

ZAMOR: Your artlessness charms me; it is the imprint of Nature. I leave you for a moment. Go and gather some fruit. I am going to take a walk down to the shore to collect the debris from this shipwreck. But, what do I see? A woman who is struggling against the waves! Ah! Mirza, I fly to her rescue. Must excessive misfortune excuse us from being humane? *(He descends toward the rock)*

Scene 2: MIRZA

MIRZA: *(alone)* Zamor is going to save this poor unfortunate soul! How can I not adore such a tender, compassionate heart? Now that I am unhappy, I am more conscious of how sweet it is to soothe the misfortunes of others. *(She exits toward the forest)*

Scene 3: VALÈRE

Valère, alone, enters from the opposite side

VALÈRE: Nothing in sight on the agitated waves. O my wife! You are lost forever! Hey! Could I survive you? No: I must be reunited with you. I gathered my strength to save your life, and I have only escaped the fury of the waves. I breathe but with horror: separated from you, each instant redoubles my sorrow. I search for you in vain, in vain do I call out your name: Your voice resounds in my heart, but it does not strike my ear. I fly from you. *(He descends with difficulty)*

and falls at the back of the Theatre propped up against a boulder) A thick cloud covers my eyes, my strength abandons me! Almighty God, grant me strength that I may drag myself as far as the sea! I can no longer hold myself up. (He remains immobile from exhaustion)

Scene 4: VALÈRE, MIRZA

Mirza, rushing up and catching sight of Valère

MIRZA: Ah! God! Who is this man? Suppose he were coming to lay hands on Zamor and separate me from him! Alas! What would become of me? But, no, perhaps he does not have so evil a scheme; he is not one of our persecutors. I am suffering. . . Despite my fears, I cannot help myself from coming to his aid. I cannot see him in this state much longer. He looks like a Frenchman. *(To Valère)* Monsieur, Frenchman. . . He does not respond. What to do! *(She calls out)* Zamor, Zamor. *(With reflection)* Let us climb upon the rock to see if he is coming. *(She runs up to it and immediately climbs down)* I do not see him. *(She returns to Valère)* Frenchman, Frenchman, answer me? He does not answer. What help can I give him? I have nothing; how unhappy I am! *(Taking Valère's arm and striking his hand)* Poor stranger, he is very ill, and Zamor is not here: he has more strength than I; but let us search in our hut for something that will revive him. *(She exits)*

Scene 5: VALÈRE, ZAMOR, SOPHIE

Zamor, entering from the side by the rock, and carrying Sophie who appears to have fainted in his arms, garbed in a white dressing-gown, belted, and with her hair disheveled

ZAMOR: Regain your strength, Madame; I am only an Indian slave, but I shall help you.

SOPHIE: *(In a dying voice)* Whoever you may be, leave me. Your pity is more cruel to me than the waves. I have lost what was most dear to me. Life is odious to me. O Valère! O my spouse! What has become of you?

VALÈRE: Whose voice is that I hear? Sophie!

SOPHIE: *(Noticing Valère)* What do I see. . . It is he!

VALÈRE: *(Getting up and falling at Sophie's feet)* Almighty God! You have returned my Sophie to me! O dear spouse! Object of my tears and my tenderness! I succumb to my suffering and to my joy.

SOPHIE: Divine Providence! you have saved me! Complete your work, and return my father to me.

SCENE 6: VALÈRE, ZAMOR, SOPHIE, MIRZA

Mirza, bringing some fruit and water; she enters running, and surprised to see a woman, she stops.

ZAMOR: Approach, Mirza, there is nothing to fear. These are two unfortunates like us; they have rights on our souls.

VALÈRE: Compassionate being to whom I owe my life and my spouse's life! You are not a Savage; you have neither the language nor the manners of one. Are you the master of this Island?

ZAMOR: No, but we have been living here alone for several days. You seem like a Frenchman to me. If the company of slaves does not seem contemptible to you, they will gladly share the possession of this Island with you, and if destiny wills it, we shall end our days together.

SOPHIE: *(To Valère)* How this language interests me! *(To the slaves)* Generous mortals, I would accept your offers, if I were not going farther to look for a father whom I shall perhaps never find again! We have been wandering the seas for two years, and we have found no trace of him.

VALÈRE: Well then! Let us remain in this spot: let us accept the hospitality of these Indians for awhile and be persuaded, my dear Sophie, that by dint of perseverance we shall find the author of your days on this Continent.

SOPHIE: Cruel destiny! We have lost everything; how can we continue our search?

VALÈRE: I share your sorrow. *(To the Indians)* Generous mortals, do not abandon us.

MIRZA: Us, abandon you! Never, no, never.

ZAMOR: Yes, my dear Mirza, let us console them in their misfortunes. *(To Valère and Sophie)* Rely upon me; I am going to examine the entire area by the cliff: if your lost goods are among the debris from the vessel, I promise to bring them to you. Enter our hut, unhappy Strangers; you need rest; I am going to try to calm your agitated spirits.

SOPHIE: Compassionate mortals, we must repay you for so much kindness! You have saved our lives, how shall I ever acquit myself toward you?

ZAMOR: You owe us nothing, in helping you I obey only the voice of my heart. *(He exits)*

Scene 7: MIRZA, SOPHIE, VALÈRE

MIRZA: *(To Sophie)* I like you, though you are not a slave. Come, I shall care for you. Give me your arm. Ah! what a pretty hand, so different from mine! Let us sit here. *(Gaily)* How happy I am to be with you! You are as fair as our Governor's wife.

SOPHIE: Yes? You have a Governor on this Island?

VALÈRE: It seems to me that you told us that you live here alone?

MIRZA: *(With frankness)* Oh! It is quite true, and Zamor has not deceived you. I spoke to you of the Governor of the Colony, who does not live with us. *(Aside)* I must be careful of what I am going to say; for if he knew that Zamor has killed a white man, he would not want to remain with us.

SOPHIE: (*To Valère*) Her ingenuousness delights me, her countenance is sweet, and prejudices in her favor.

VALÈRE: I have not seen a prettier Negress.

MIRZA: You mock me; I am not for all that the prettiest; but, tell me, are all French women as fair as you? They must be so; for Frenchmen are all good, and you are not slaves.

VALÈRE: No, Frenchmen have a horror of slavery. One day more free they will see about tempering your fate.

MIRZA: (*With surprise*) More free one day, how so, are you not free?

VALÈRE: We are free in semblance, but our irons are only the heavier. For several centuries the French have been groaning under the despotism of Ministers and Courtiers. The power of a single Master is in the hands of a thousand Tyrants who trample the People underfoot. This People will one day break its irons and, resuming all its rights under Natural Law, it will teach these Tyrants what the union of a people too long oppressed and enlightened by a sound philosophy can do.

MIRZA: Oh! Dear God! There are then evil men everywhere!

Scene 8: ZAMOR (*on the cliff*), SOPHIE, VALÈRE, MIRZA

ZAMOR: The worst has happened, unhappy Strangers! You have no hope. A wave has just swallowed up the remains of the equipage along with all of your hopes.

SOPHIE: Alas! What shall become of us?

VALÈRE: A vessel can land on this Island.

ZAMOR: You do not know, unhappy Strangers, how dangerous this coast is. There are only unfortunates like Mirza and me, who have dared to approach it and overcome all perils to inhabit it. We are, however, only two leagues from one of the bigger towns in the Indies; a town that I shall never see again unless our tyrants come and tear us away from here to make us suffer the punishment to which we are condemned.

SOPHIE: Torture!

VALÈRE: What crime have you both committed? Ah! I see; you are too educated for a slave, and the person who gave you your instruction has paid a high price no doubt.

ZAMOR: Monsieur, do not hold your fellowmen's prejudices against me. I had a Master who was dear to me: I would have sacrificed my life to prolong his days, but his Steward was a monster whom I have purged from the land. He loved Mirza; but his love was scorned. He learned that she preferred me, and in his fury he had me suffer frightful treatment; but the most terrible was to demand that I become the instrument of his vengeance against my dear Mirza. I

rejected such a commission with horror. Irritated by my disobedience, he came at me with his naked sword; I avoided the blow that he wanted to give me; I disarmed him and he fell dead at my feet. I had but the time to carry off Mirza and to flee with her in a longboat.

SOPHIE: How I pity him, this unhappy man! Though he has committed murder, this murder seems worthy of mercy to me.

VALÈRE: I am interested in their fate; they brought me back to life, they saved yours: I shall defend them at the cost of my days. I shall go myself to see his Governor: If he is a Frenchman, he must be humane and generous.

ZAMOR: Yes, Monsieur, he is a Frenchman and the best of men.

MIRZA: Ah! If all the Colonists were like him, we would be less unhappy.

ZAMOR: I have belonged to him since I was eight years old; he took pleasure in having me educated and loved me as if I had been his son; for he never had one, or perhaps he was deprived of one: he seems to regret something. Sometimes you hear him sighing; surely he strives to hide some great sorrow. I have often surprised him in tears: he adores his wife, and she him in kind. If it depended only upon him, I would be pardoned; but they need an example. There is no hope of a pardon for a slave who has raised a hand against his Commander.

SOPHIE: (*to Valère*) I do not know why this Governor interests me. The account of his sorrows lies heavy on my heart; he is generous, clement; he can pardon you. I shall go myself and throw myself at his feet. His name? If only we could leave this Island.

ZAMOR: His name is Monsieur de Saint-Frémont.

SOPHIE: Alas! This name is unknown to me; but no matter, he is a Frenchman: he will hear me, and I hope to move him to mercy. (*To Valère*) If with the longboat that saved them, we could guide ourselves into port, there is no peril that I would not brave to defend them.

VALÈRE: I admire you, my dear Sophie! I approve of your plan: we have only to make our way to their Governor. (*To the Slaves*) My friends, this step barely discharges us of our obligation to you. Happy if our entreaties and our tears move your generous Master! Let us leave, but what do I see? Here are some slaves who are examining us and who are hurrying toward us. They are carrying chains.

SOPHIE: Unhappy lovers, you are lost!

ZAMOR: (*Turns around and sees the Slaves*) Mirza, the worst has happened! They have found us.

Scene 9: THE SAME, AN INDIAN, SEVERAL SLAVES (*running down from the rock*)

INDIAN: (*To Zamor*) Scoundrel! At last, I find you; you will not escape punishment.

MIRZA: May they put me to death before him!

ZAMOR: O my dear Mirza!

INDIAN: Put them in chains.

VALÈRE: Monsieur, listen to our entreaties! What are you going to do with these Slaves?

INDIAN: A terrible example.

SOPHIE: You are taking them away to put them to death? You will take away our lives before tearing them from our arms.

VALÈRE: What are you doing? My dear Sophie! We can place all our hope in the Governor's indulgence.

INDIAN: Do not flatter yourself. The Governor must set an example for the Colony. You do not know this cursed race; they would slit our throats without pity if the voice of humanity spoke in their favor. That is what you must always expect, even from Slaves who have received some instruction. They are born to be savages and tamed like animals.

SOPHIE: What frightful prejudice! Nature did not make them Slaves; they are men like you.

INDIAN: What language do you speak, Madame?

SOPHIE: The same which I would speak before your Governor. It is gratitude that interests me in these unfortunates, who know better than you the rights of pity; he whose position you uphold was no doubt a wicked man.

ZAMOR: Ah! Madame, cease your entreaties; his soul is hardened and does not know kindness. It is his daily task to make this rigor conspicuous. He believes that he would not be performing his duty if he did not push rigor to cruelty.

INDIAN: Wretch!

ZAMOR: I fear you no longer. I know my fate and shall submit to it.

SOPHIE: How their misfortune renders them interesting! What would I not do to save them!

VALÈRE: *(To the Indian)* Take us away with them, Monsieur. You will oblige us to withdraw from here. *(Aside)* I hope to move the Governor to mercy.

INDIAN: I consent with pleasure, especially as the danger leaving this Island is not the same as that risked to reach it.

VALÈRE: But Monsieur, how were you able to land here?

INDIAN: I risked everything for the good of the Colony. See if it is possible to pardon them. We are no longer the Masters of our Slaves. Our Governor's life is perhaps in danger, and order will be restored on the plantations once these two poor wretches are punished. *(To the Negroes)* Negroes, fire the cannon, and let the prearranged signal announce to the Fort that the criminals are taken.

ZAMOR: Let us go Mirza, we are going to die.

MIRZA: Ah! God! I am the cause of his death.

ZAMOR: Our good action in saving these Strangers will cast some charm on our last moments, and we shall taste at least the sweetness of dying together.

Zamor and Mirza are led away; the other characters follow them, and they are all about to embark. The next moment the ship carrying them goes past.

END OF ACT ONE.

BLACK SLAVERY OR THE HAPPY SHIPWRECK

ACT II

A Company Drawing-room with Indian furnishings.

Scene 1: BETZI, AZOR

BETZI: Well, Azor, what do they say about Mirza and Zamor? They are searching for them everywhere.

AZOR: There is talk of putting them to death on the rock by the plantation; I even believe that preparations for their punishment are being readied. I tremble that they may find them.

BETZI: But the Governor can pardon them. He is their master.

AZOR: That must be impossible; for he loves Zamor, and he says that he never had any complaint with him. The whole Colony is asking for their death; he cannot refuse it without compromising himself.

BETZI: Our Governor was not made to be a Tyrant.

AZOR: How good he is to us! All Frenchmen are the same; but the Natives of this country are much more cruel.

BETZI: I have been assured that we were not originally slaves.

AZOR: Everything leads us to believe that. There are still climes where Negroes are free.

BETZI: How fortunate they are!

AZOR: Ah! We are really to be pitied.

BETZI: And no one undertakes our defense! We are even forbidden to pray for our fellow men.

AZOR: Alas! the father and mother of the unfortunate Mirza will witness their daughter's punishment.

BETZI: Such ferociousness!

AZOR: That is how they treat us.

BETZI: But, tell me, Azor, why did Zamor kill the Steward?

AZOR: I was assured that it was from jealousy. You know quite well that Zamor was Mirza's lover.

BETZI: Yes, it was you who informed me of it.

AZOR: The Commander loved her too.

BETZI: But he ought not to kill him for that.

AZOR: That is true.

BETZI: There were other reasons.

AZOR: That may well be, but I am unaware of them.

BETZI: If we could let them escape, I am sure that Monsieur and Madame de St-Frémont would not be angry.

AZOR: I think that too, but those who would serve them would put themselves at great risk.

BETZI: No doubt, but there would not be a death penalty.

AZOR: Perhaps, I still know that I would not risk it.

BETZI: We should at least talk to their friends; they could win over the other slaves. They all love Zamor and Mirza.

AZOR: There is talk of arming the entire regiment.

BETZI: It is hopeless.

AZOR: On the contrary, we must urge them to obey for the good of our comrades.

BETZI: You are right; do it if you can, for I would never have the strength for it.

Scene 2: THE SAME, CORALINE

CORALINE (2): (*Running*) O my dear comrades! What bad news I bring you! It is certain that cannon fire has been heard and that Zamor and Mirza are captured.

AZOR: Come, that is not possible, Coraline.

BETZI: Almighty God!

CORALINE: I was at the port when they announced this unfortunate news. Several Colonists were awaiting impatiently a ship that could be seen in the distance. It finally entered port, and all the planters surrounded it immediately. I ran away, trembling. Poor Mirza! unhappy Zamor! our tyrants will not pardon them.

AZOR: Oh! You may take my word for it; they will soon be dead.

BETZI: Without a hearing? Without a trial?

CORALINE: Trial! We are forbidden to be innocent and to justify ourselves.

AZOR: What generosity! And, in the bargain, they sell us like cattle at the market.

BETZI: A commerce of men! O Heaven! Humanity is repulsive.

AZOR: It is quite true, my father and I were bought on the Coast of Guinea.

CORALINE: There, there, my poor Azor, whatever our deplorable fate, I have a presentiment that we shall not always be in irons, and perhaps before long . . .

AZOR: Well then! What shall we see? Shall we be masters in our turn?

CORALINE: Perhaps; but no, we would be too wicked. Indeed, to be good, one must be neither master nor slave.

AZOR: Neither master, nor slave; Oh! Oh! And what do you want us to be? Do you know, Coraline, that you no longer know what you are saying, though our comrades assure us that you know more about this than we do?

CORALINE: There, there, my poor boy, if you knew what I know! I read in a certain Book that to be happy one need only be free and a good Farmer. We lack but liberty, let them give it to us, and you will see that there will no longer be masters or slaves.

AZOR: I do not understand you.

BETZI: Neither do I.

CORALINE: My God, how kind you both are! Tell me, was Zamor not free? And because of that, did he want to leave our kind Master?; we shall all do the same thing. Let the Masters give liberty; no Slave will leave the workshop. Imperceptibly, the rudest among us will instruct themselves, recognize the laws of humanity and justice, and our superiors will find in our attachment, in our zeal, the reward for this kindness.

AZOR: You speak like a man! You sound like the Governor . . . Oh! One must have wit to retain everything that others say. But, here is Madame.

BETZI: Here is Madame, let us be silent!

CORALINE: We must not tell Madame that we fear that Zamor has been captured. That would grieve her too much.

AZOR: Oh! Yes.

Scene 3: THE SAME, MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT: My children, I need to be alone. Leave me, and do not enter unless I call for you, or you have some news to announce. *(They exit)*

Scene 4: MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT: *(Alone)* My spouse has gone out on account of this unfortunate matter: he went to one of the plantations where his attendance was requested. Since this catastrophe reigns in the minds of our slaves. All maintain that Zamor is innocent, and that he only killed the Commander because he saw himself forced to; but the Colonists have gathered to ask for the death of Mirza and Zamor, and Mirza and Zamor are being sought everywhere. My husband really wanted to pardon Zamor, though he pronounced his judgment, as well as that of poor Mirza, who is to perish with her lover. Alas! Expectation of their punishment throws me into a profound sadness. I am thus not born to be happy! In vain am I adored by my spouse: my love cannot conquer the melancholy that consumes him. He has been suffering for more than ten years, and I cannot divine the cause of his sorrow. It is the only one of his secrets which he has not entrusted to me. When he returns I must redouble my efforts to wrench it from him. But I hear him.

Scene 5: MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT, M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT: Well, then! My dear, did your presence dispel this unrest?

M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT: All of my slaves have returned to their duties; but they ask me to pardon Zamor. This matter is quite delicate, *(Aside)* and as a crowning misfortune, I have just received heart-rending news from France.

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT: What are you saying, my dear, you seem to reproach yourself. Ah! If you are only guilty with regard to me, I forgive you so long as your heart is still mine. You look away; I see the tears in your eyes. Ah! My dear, I no longer have your trust; I am becoming tiresome to you; I am going to retire.

M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT: You, become tiresome to me! Never, never. Ah! If I could have strayed from my duty, your sweetness alone would have brought me back to your feet, and your great virtues would render me still more in love with your charms.

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT: But you hide a secret worry from me. Confess it to me. Your stifled sighs make me suspect so. France was dear to you; she is your Country . . . Perhaps an inclination . . .

M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT: Stop, stop, dear spouse, and do not reopen an old wound that had closed beside you. I fear distressing you.

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT: If I were dear to you, you must give me proof of it.

M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT: What kind of proof do you demand?

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT: The kind that reveals the causes of your affliction to me.

M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT: This is what you want?

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT: I demand it; be forgiven, by this complaisance, for this secret that you have kept from me for so long.

M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT: I obey. I am from a Province where unjust and inhuman laws deprive younger children of the equal share that Nature gives to children born of the same father and mother. I was the youngest of seven; my parents sent me to the Court to ask for employment; but how could I have succeeded in a country where virtue is a chimera, and where nothing is obtained without intrigue and baseness. However, I made the acquaintance of a worthy Scottish Gentleman who had come in the same purpose. He was not rich, and had a daughter in a Convent: he took me there. This interview turned fatal for both of us. The father, after several months, left for the army: He enjoined me to go and see his daughter, and even said that she could be entrusted to me when she wanted to go out. This worthy friend, this good father, did not foresee the consequences occasioned by his imprudence. He was killed in battle. His daughter was all alone in the world, without family or friends. She saw only me, and appeared to desire only my presence. Love rendered me guilty: Spare me the rest: I swore an oath to be her spouse; there is my crime.

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT: But, my dear, did you determine by yourself to abandon her?

M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT: Who, me? to have abandoned such a fine woman? Ah! The longest absence would never have made me forget her. I could not marry her without the consent of my whole family. She became the mother of a daughter. Our liaison was discovered; I was banished. They procured me a commission as Captain in a regiment that was leaving for the Indies and made me embark in it. Not long after I received the false news that Clarisse was dead, and that only my daughter remained. I saw you every day; with time your presence weakened the impression that Clarisse's image still made on my heart. I requested your hand, you accepted my vows, and we were united; but by an over-refinement of barbarity, the cruel relation who had deceived me informed me that Clarisse was still living.

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT: Alas! At what fatal price have I the honor of being your spouse! My dear, you are more unhappy than guilty. Clarisse herself would forgive you, if she were witness to your remorse. We must conduct an intensive search, so that your property and mine may acquit us toward these unfortunates. I have no other relations but yours. I am making your daughter my heiress; but your heart is a treasure that it is not in my power to surrender to another.

M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT: Ah! Worthy spouse, I admire your virtues. Alas! I see only Clarisse who was capable of imitating them. It is thus at opposite ends of the earth that I was destined to meet the fairest and the most virtuous of your sex!

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT: You deserve a companion worthy of yourself; but, my dear, consider that in marrying me you consented to take the name of my father, who, by giving you his name, had no other aim save yielding his position to you as to an adopted son. You must

write your relations, especially your most faithful friends, that they renew the search, and give us prompt news of these unfortunates. I believe, my dear, that I shall have the strength to leave you in order to seek the daughter whom you fathered. I already feel a mother's compassion for her; but at the same time I shudder. O my dear, my dear! If I had to separate from you! If Clarisse tore you from my arms!. . . Her misfortunes, her virtues, her charms . . . Ah! Forgive, forgive my despair, forgive me, dear spouse, you are not capable of abandoning me and making two victims for one.

M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT: Dear spouse! O half of myself! Cease breaking this heart which already grieves too much. No doubt Clarisse is no longer alive, as it has been two years now that all of the funds that I send to France for her and for my daughter are sent back to me. What has become of them is not even known. But someone is coming; we shall resume this conversation later.

Scene 6: M. AND MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT, A JUDGE

JUDGE: Monsieur, I have come to inform you that the criminals are captured.

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT: What! So soon! Time would have erased their crime.

M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT: (*Grieved*) What a frightful example I am obliged to give!

JUDGE: Remember, Monsieur, your father-in-law's disgrace in this instance. He was constrained to give up his position for having exercised it with too much kindness.

M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT: (*Aside*) Unhappy Zamor, you are going to perish! I have thus raised you from childhood only to see you dragged off to be tortured. (*Aloud*) That my good offices should become fatal for him! If I had left him in his rude manners, perhaps he would not have committed this crime. He had no vicious inclinations in his soul. Honesty and virtue distinguished him in the bosom of slavery. Raised in a simple and hard life, despite the instruction that he had received, he never forgot his roots. How sweet it would be for me to be able to justify him! As a simple planter, I would perhaps be able to temper his arrest; but as Governor I am forced to deliver him to the full rigor of the law.

JUDGE: They must be put to death at once, more especially as two Europeans have incited a general revolt among the Slaves. They depicted your Commander as a monster. The Slaves listened avidly to these seditious speeches, and all have promised not to execute the orders that they were given.

M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT: Who are these foreigners?

JUDGE: They are French citizens who were found on the coast where these criminals had taken refuge. They claim that Zamor saved their lives.

M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT: Alas! These unfortunate French citizens were no doubt shipwrecked, and gratitude alone has produced this indiscreet zeal.

JUDGE: You see, Governor, sir, that there is no time to lose, if you want to avoid the total ruin of our plantations. There is hopeless disorder.

M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT: I do not have the good fortune of having been born in your climes; but what sway the unfortunate hold over sensitive souls! It is not your fault if the manners of your country familiarized you with these harsh treatments that you exercise without remorse on men who have no other defense save their timidity, and whose work, so ill recompensed, increases our fortunes by increasing our authority over them. They have a thousand tyrants for one. Sovereigns render their People happy: every Citizen is free under a good Master, and in this country of slavery one must be barbaric in spite of oneself. Hey! How can I help abandoning myself to these reflections, when the voice of humanity cries out from the bottom of my heart: "Be kind and sensitive to the cries of the wretched." I know that my opinion must displease you: Europe, however, takes care to justify it, and I dare hope that before long there will no longer be any slaves. O Louis! O adored Monarch! Would that I could this very moment put under your eyes the innocence of these condemned souls! In granting their pardon, you would render freedom to those too long unrecognized; but no matter: you want an example, it shall be done, though the Blacks assure us that Zamor is innocent.

JUDGE: Can you believe them in this?

M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT: They cannot deceive me, and I know more than they the virtues of Zamor. You want him to die without a hearing? I consent with regret; but you will not be able to reproach me for having betrayed the interests of the Colony.

JUDGE: You must do it, Governor, sir, in this matter in which you see that we are threatened with a general revolt. You must give the orders to arm the troops.

M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT: Follow me; we shall see what decision should be made.

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT: My dear, I see you go in sorrow.

M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT: My presence is necessary to restore order and discipline.

Scene 7: MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT: (*Alone*) How I pity these wretches! The worst has happened! They are going to die. What chagrin for my spouse; but a greater chagrin agitates me once more. All that bears the name of a French woman terrifies me! If it were Clarisse! Oh! Unhappy me, what would be my fate? I know the virtues of my spouse, but I am his wife. No, no! let us cease in our deception! Clarisse, in misfortune, has greater rights on his soul! Let us hide the trouble that agitates me.

Scene 8: MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT, BETZI (*rushing up*)

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT: What news is there, Betzi?

BETZI: (*With exaltation*) The Governor is not here?

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT: No, he has just gone out, speak?

BETZI: Ah! Let me regain my senses . . . We were on the terrace; from time to time we glanced sadly at the plantation. We see Mirza's father arrive from afar with another Slave; amid them was a foreigner, her hair disheveled and sorrow coloring her face: her eyes stared at the ground, and though she walked quickly, she seemed very preoccupied. When she was near us, she asked for Mme de Saint-Frémont. She informed us that Zamor had saved her from the fury of the waves. She added: I shall die at the feet of the Governor if I do not obtain his pardon. She wants to implore your assistance. Here she is.

Scene 9: THE SAME, SOPHIE (followed by all the Slaves)

SOPHIE: (*throwing herself at the knees of Mme de Saint-Frémont*) Madame, I embrace your knees. Have pity on an unhappy stranger who owes everything to Zamor and has no other hope but in your kind actions.

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT: (*aside*) Ah! I breathe again. (*Aloud, while lifting Sophie to her feet*) Rise, Madame, I promise to do all that is within my power. (*Aside*) Her youth, her sensibility, touch my heart beyond words. (*To Sophie*) Interesting Stranger, I shall use every means to make my spouse grant the pardon that you demand. Believe that I share your sorrows. I sense how dear these unfortunates must be to you.

SOPHIE: Without Zamor's help, as intrepid as it was humane, I would have perished in the waves. I owe him the good fortune of seeing you. What he did for me earns him my heartfelt assurance of his natural rights; but these rights do not render me unjust, Madame, and the testimony that they render to your rare qualities shows well enough that Zamor and Mirza cannot be reproached with a premeditated crime. What humanity! What zeal in succoring us! The fate that pursues them was to inspire them with fear rather than pity; but, far from shunning peril, Zamor has dared all. Judge, Madame, if with these feelings of humanity, a mortal can be guilty; his crime was involuntary, and to acquit him as innocent is to treat him as he deserves.

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT: (*to the Slaves*) My children, we must unite with the Colonists and ask that Zamor and Mirza be pardoned. We have no time to lose: (*To Sophie*) and you, whom I am burning to know, you are a French woman, perhaps you could . . . but moments are dear to us. Go back beside these unfortunates; Slaves, accompany her.

SOPHIE: (*Transported*) Ah! Madame, so many kindnesses at once! Alas! I should like, as much as I desire it, to prove my gratitude to you. (*She kisses her hands*) Soon my spouse will come and acquit himself of his obligation to you. Dear Valère, what happy news I am going to tell you! (*She exits with the Slaves*)

Scene 10: MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT, BETZI, CORALINE

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT: (*Aside*) I find a resemblance in the features of this Stranger . . . What a chimera! . . . (*Aloud*) And you, Coraline, summon M. de Saint-Frémont's Secretary.

CORALINE: Ah! Madame, you are unaware of what is happening: he has just commanded your doors closed by order of the Governor. Everything is ablaze . . . Listen, Madame . . . There is the call to arms . . . and the sound of bells . . . *(The alarm must be heard in the distance)*

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT: *(Going with fright to the back of the theatre)* Wretched! What is to become of me? What does my husband do?

BETZI: I tremble for my comrades.

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT: *(Having given way to the greatest sorrow)* God, my Spouse is perhaps in danger! I fly to his aid . . .

CORALINE: Set your mind at rest, Madame, there is nothing to fear for the Governor. He is at the head of the regiment. But even if he were in the midst of the tumult, all the Slaves would respect his life. He is too cherished for anyone to want to harm him. The Slaves bear ill will only against some planters: they reproach them with the punishment of Zamor and Mirza; they are certain that without these planters Zamor and Mirza would not have been condemned.

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT: *(Agitated)* What! They are going to put them to death.

CORALINE: Alas! Soon my poor comrades will be no longer.

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT: *(With alacrity)* No, my children, they shall not perish: my husband will be moved by my tears, by this Stranger's despair, who, perhaps better than I, will know how to move him. His heart does not need to be incited to do good; but he can take everything upon himself. *(Aside)* And if this French woman were to give him news of his daughter! Almighty God! he would owe everything to these victims who are being dragged off to torture. *(Aloud)* Let us go, Betzi, we must join my husband, tell him . . . But how to enter into an explanation just now? I must see him myself. Where is he now?

CORALINE: I do not know precisely with which regiment he is: the entire army is in rout. They say only that M. de Saint-Frémont restores calm and order wherever he passes. It would be very difficult to find him just now. We have but to return to the plantation, if we have not already been forestalled. But the roads are broken up or cut off. It is hardly conceivable that they could have done so much damage in so little time.

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT: No matter. I fear neither danger nor weariness when the lives of two unfortunates are at stake.

END OF ACT TWO.

BLACK SLAVERY OR THE HAPPY SHIPWRECK

ACT III

A wild spot from which two pointed hills are visible, bordered by clusters of shrubby trees for as far as the eye can see. On one side is a steep cliff whose summit is a platform and whose base is perpendicular to the fore-stage. All of the characters come on stage from the side of one of the hills so that the audience can see them enter. A few Negro huts are scattered here and there.

Scene 1: VALÈRE, ZAMOR, MIRZA

VALÈRE: Free! Both of you are free! I hasten to your chief. It will not be long before my wife reappears before our eyes. She will no doubt have obtained your pardon from M. de Saint-Frémont. I leave you for a moment but do not lose sight of you.

Scene 2: ZAMOR, MIRZA

ZAMOR: O my dear Mirza, our fate is deplorable! It is becoming so frightful that I fear this Frenchman's zeal to save us will only harm him and his wife. What a devastating idea!

MIRZA: The same idea pursues me: but perhaps his worthy wife will have succeeded in moving our Governor to mercy; let us not grieve before her return.

ZAMOR: I bless my death since I die with you; but, how cruel it is to lose one's life a culprit! I have been judged such, our good master believes it; that is what makes me despair.

MIRZA: I want to see the Governor myself. This last wish must be granted me. I shall throw myself at his feet; I shall reveal everything to him.

ZAMOR: Alas! What could you say to him?

MIRZA: I shall make him know the cruelty of his Commander and of his ferocious love.

ZAMOR: Your tenderness for me blinds you: you want to accuse yourself to render me innocent! If you scorn life at this price, do you believe me miserly enough to want to preserve it at your expense? No, my dear Mirza, there is no happiness for me on earth if I do not share it with you.

MIRZA: It is the same for me; I could no longer live without seeing you.

ZAMOR: How sweet it would have been for us to prolong our days together! This spot reminds me of our first encounter. It is here that the tyrant received his death; it is here that they are going to end our lives. Nature seems to stand in contrast with herself in this spot. Formerly she smiled upon us: she has lost none of her attractions; but she shows us both the image of our past happiness and the horrible fate to which we shall be victim. Ah! Mirza, how cruel it is to die when one is in love.

MIRZA: How you move me! Do not distress me more. I feel that my courage abandons me; but this good Frenchman is returning to us; what shall we learn from him?

Scene 3: ZAMOR, MIRZA, VALÈRE

VALÈRE: O my benefactors! You must run away. Avail yourselves of these precious moments that your comrades procure for you. They are blocking off the roads; respond to their zeal and their courage. They risk themselves for you; flee to another clime. It is quite possible that my wife will not obtain your pardon. Several troops of soldiers can be seen approaching: you have time to escape by this hill. Go and live in the forests: your fellow men will receive you in their bosom.

MIRZA: This Frenchman is right. Come, follow me. He loves us; let us profit from his advice. Run away with me, dear Zamor; do not fear returning to live in the heart of the forest. You scarcely remember our laws, but soon your dear Mirza will recall their gentle impression for you.

ZAMOR: Well! I yield. It is but for you that I cherish life. (He embraces Valère) Farewell, most generous of men!

MIRZA: Alas! I must leave you, then, without the pleasure of throwing myself at your wife's feet!

VALÈRE: She will share your regrets, you can be sure; but flee this fatal spot.

Scene 4: THE SAME, SOPHIE, SLAVES

SOPHIE: (*Rushing into Valère's arms*) Ah!, my friend, thank Heaven: these victims shall not perish. Madame de Saint-Frémont promised me they would be pardoned.

VALÈRE: (*With joy*) Almighty God! What supreme happiness!

ZAMOR: Ah! I recognize her fair soul in these proceedings. (*To Valère*) Generous foreigners, may Heaven gratify your wishes! The Supreme Being will never abandon those who seek his likeness in good works.

VALÈRE: Ah! How happy you make our days!

MIRZA: How fortunate we are to have succored these French citizens! They owe us much; but we owe them even more.

SOPHIE: Madame de Saint-Frémont has assembled her best friends. I have instructed her of their innocence; she exerts all possible zeal in saving them. I had no trouble interesting her on their behalf; her soul is so fair, so sensitive to the troubles of the unfortunate.

ZAMOR: Her respectable husband equals her in merit and goodness.

SOPHIE: I did not have the good fortune of seeing him.

ZAMOR: *(Alarmed)* What do I see! A throng of soldiers arriving! Ah! All is over! You have been deceived, generous Frenchman; we are lost.

Sophie: Do not become alarmed; we must first find out . . .

VALÈRE: I shall risk my life to defend them. Alas! They were going to run away when you came to reassure them. I am going to ask the Officer in charge of this detachment what his mission is.

(A Company of Grenadiers and one of French Soldiers line up in the back of the Theatre, their bayonets extended. A troop of Slaves with bows and arrows stands in front of them; the troop is headed by the Major, the Judge, and M. de Saint-Frémont's Slave Steward.)

Scene 5: THE SAME, MAJOR, JUDGE, INDIAN, GRENADIERS AND FRENCH SOLDIERS, SEVERAL SLAVES

VALÈRE: Monsieur, may I ask you what matter brings you here?

MAJOR: A cruel function. I come to execute the death sentence pronounced against these wretches.

SOPHIE: *(Upset)* You are going to have them put to death?

MAJOR: Yes, Madame.

VALÈRE: No, this frightful sacrifice will not be carried out.

SOPHIE: Madame de Saint-Frémont promised me they would be pardoned.

JUDGE: *(Harshly)* That is not within her power, the Governor himself could not grant them their pardon. Desist therefore in your stubborn wish to save them. You make their punishment more terrible. *(To the Major)* Major, sir, execute the order that you were given. *(To the Slaves)* And you, lead the criminals to the top of the rock.

INDIAN COMMANDER: Draw your bows!

VALÈRE: Stop! *(The Slaves listen only to Valère)*

JUDGE: Obey. *(The Major signals to the Soldiers; they run with their bayonets, which they point at the Slaves' chests; not one Slave budges)*

ZAMOR: *(Rushing up to meet them)* What are you doing? Only I deserve to die. What have my poor comrades done to you? Why slaughter them? Turn your arms against me. *(He opens his jacket)* Here is my breast! Cleanse their disobedience in my blood. The Colony asks only my death. Is it necessary that so many innocent victims who were not parties to my crime perish?

MIRZA: I am as guilty as Zamor; do not separate me from him: take my life out of pity; my days are bound to his destiny. I want to die first.

VALÈRE: *(To the Judge)* Monsieur, grant a stay of execution, I beg of you. I assure you they are to be pardoned.

MAJOR: *(To the Judge)* Monsieur, we can take this up ourselves; let us await the Governor.

JUDGE: *(Harshly)* I listen to nothing save my duty and the law.

VALÈRE: *(Furious)* Barbarian! Though your position makes the soul callous, your being even more cruel than the laws have prescribed, degrades what you do.

JUDGE: Major, sir, have this impudent man taken away to the Citadel.

MAJOR: He is a Frenchman: he will answer to the Governor for his conduct; I am not required to take orders from you in this matter.

JUDGE: Then execute those you were given.

SOPHIE: *(With heroism)* This excess of cruelty gives me courage. *(She runs and places herself between Zamor and Mirza, takes them both by the hand, and says to the Judge)* Barbarian! Dare to have me assassinated with them; I shall not leave them; nothing can wrench them from my arms.

VALÈRE: *(Transported)* Ah! My dear Sophie, this act of courage makes you even dearer to my heart.

JUDGE: *(To the Major)* Monsieur, have this impudent woman removed: you are not fulfilling your duty.

MAJOR: *(Indignant)* You demand it; but you will answer for the consequences. *(To the Soldiers)* Separate these foreigners from these slaves.

(Sophie screams while clasping Zamor and Mirza to her breast.)

VALÈRE: *(Furious, running after Sophie)* If there is the slightest violence against my wife, then I cannot be held responsible for my actions. *(To the Judge)* And You, Barbarian, tremble, you may be sacrificed to my righteous fury.

A SLAVE: Were they to put us all to death, we would defend them.

(The Slaves line up around them, forming a rampart, the Soldiers and Grenadiers approach with their bayonets)

MAJOR: *(To the Soldiers)* Soldiers, stop. *(To the Judge)* I was not sent here to order carnage and bloodshed, but, rather to restore order. The Governor will not be long, and his prudence will best indicate what we must do. *(To the Foreigners and the Slaves)* Take heart; I will not use force; your efforts would be useless if I wanted to exercise it. *(To Sophie)* And you, Madame, you may

stand aside with these wretches; I await the Governor. (*Sophie, Zamor and Mirza, exit with several Slaves*)

Scene 6: VALÈRE, MAJOR, JUDGE, INDIAN, GRENADIERS AND SOLDIERS, SLAVES

VALÈRE: I cannot abandon my wife in this state. Do your utmost to sway M. de Saint-Frémont. I do not need to recommend clemency to you; it must reign in your soul. Warriors have always been generous.

MAJOR: Rely upon me; withdraw and appear when it is time. (*Valère exits*)

Scene 7: THE SAME, EXCEPT VALÈRE

MAJOR: (*To the Judge*) There, Monsieur, is the fruit of too much harshness.

JUDGE: We are losing the Colony today because of your moderation.

MAJOR: More exactly; moderation is what may save the Colony. You know only your cruel laws, but I know the art of war and human nature. These are not our enemies whom we are fighting; these are our Slaves, or rather our Farmers. You would have them put to the sword to drive them to defeat, but, in this instance, imprudence would take us further than you think.

Scene 8: THE SAME, M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT, (*entering from one side of the stage and Valère from the other*)

Two Companies of Grenadiers and Soldiers escort several Slaves in irons.

VALÈRE: (*To M. de Saint-Frémont*) Ah! Monsieur, hear our prayers: you are a Frenchman, you will be just.

M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT: I approve of your zeal; but in these climes zeal becomes indiscreet; it has even caused much trouble. I have just witnessed the most frightful attempt on a Magistrate. I had to use violence, contrary to my nature, to stop the slaves in their cruelty. I know all that you owe to these wretched creatures; but you do not have the right to defend them, nor to change the laws and manners of a country.

VALÈRE: I have at least the right that gratitude gives to all fair souls: whatever harshness you feign, my heart appeals to your heart.

M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT: Cease your entreaties, it pains me too much to refuse you.

VALÈRE: Your worthy wife had made us hope against hope.

M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT: She herself, Monsieur, is convinced of the absolute impossibility of what you ask.

VALÈRE: If it is a crime to have killed a monster who made nature shudder, this crime, at least, is excusable. Zamor was defending his own life, and that is his natural right.

JUDGE: You abuse the Governor's complaisance: you have already been told this. The laws condemn them as homicides; can you change the laws?

VALÈRE: No; but the laws could be tempered in favor of an involuntary crime.

JUDGE: Do you really think that? Temper the law in favor of a slave! We are not here in France; we need examples.

M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT: The worst has happened; the general order must be executed.

VALÈRE: These words make my blood run cold and lie heavy on my heart . . . Dear wife, what will become of you? Ah! Monsieur, if you knew her sensibility, her misfortunes, you would be moved; she had placed all her hopes in your goodness; she even flattered herself that you would give her some particulars on the fate of a parent, her sole support, of whom she has been deprived since childhood, and who must be settled in some part of this Continent.

M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT: Be assured that I shall do everything in my power to help you; but, as for the criminals, I can do nothing for them. Unhappy Stranger! Go and console her: she interests me without my knowing her. Deceive her even, if need be, so that she does not witness this frightful torture: tell her that they want to interrogate these wretches, that they must be left alone, and that their pardon depends perhaps upon this wise precaution.

VALÈRE: (*Weeping*) How we are to be pitied! I shall not survive their loss. (*He exits*)

Scene 9: THE SAME, EXCEPT VALÈRE

M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT: How this Frenchman grieves me! His regrets on behalf of these unfortunates increase mine. They must die, and in spite of my leaning towards clemency . . . (*With reflection*) Zamor saved this foreigner; she is a French woman, and if I believe her husband, she is searching for a parent who lives in these climes. Would he be afraid to explain himself? His sorrow, his searches, his misfortunes . . . Unfortunate, if it were she . . . where is nature going to mislead me! And why am I surprised? This Foreigner's adventure is so much like my daughter's . . . and my cankered heart would like to rediscover my daughter in her. It is the fate of the wretched to cherish hope and to find consolation in the slightest connections.

JUDGE: Major, sir, advance your Soldiers. (*To the Indian*) Commander, sir, escort the Slaves, and line them up as customary.

(The Indian exits with the armed Slaves, while a troop of the others throw themselves at the feet of M. de Saint-Frémont)

Scene 10: THE SAME, EXCEPT THE INDIAN

Armed Slaves are replaced by unarmed Slaves

A SLAVE: (*Kneeling*) Monseigneur, we have not been among the rebels' number. May we be permitted to ask for the pardon of our comrades! To redeem their lives we would suffer the most terrible chastisements. Increase our arduous toil; reduce our food rations; we would endure this punishment with courage. Monseigneur, you are moved to tears, I see the tears in your eyes.

M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT: My children, my friends, what are you proposing? (*To the Judge*) How do you want me to respond to this act of heroism? Ah! Heavens! They show such greatness of soul, and we dare to regard them as the meanest of men! Civilized men! You believe yourselves superior to Slaves! From infamy and the vilest state, equity and courage raise them in one instant to the ranks of the most generous mortals. You see the example before your eyes.

JUDGE: They know your heart well; but you cannot yield to your inclination without compromising your dignity. I know them better than you; they promise everything in these moments; besides, these criminals are no longer in your power; they are delivered to the rigor of the law.

M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT: Well, then, I abandon them to you. Alas! Here they are. Where can I hide? How cruel this duty is!

Scene 11: THE SAME, INDIAN, ZAMOR, MIRZA

ZAMOR: There is no longer any hope; our benefactors are surrounded by soldiers. Embrace me for the last time, my dear Mirza!

MIRZA: I bless my fate, since the same torment reunites us. (*To an old man and an old Slave woman*) Adieu, dear authors of my days; do not cry for your dear Mirza; she is no longer to be pitied. (*To the Slaves of her sex*) Adieu, my companions.

ZAMOR: Slaves, Colonists, listen to me: I have killed a man; I deserve to die. Do not regret my punishment, it is necessary for the good of the Colony. Mirza is innocent; but she cherishes her death. (*To the Slaves, in particular*) And you, my dear friends, listen to me in my last hour. I leave this life, I die innocent but fear rendering yourself guilty by defending me: fear especially this factious spirit, and never deliver yourselves into excess to escape slavery; fear breaking your irons with too much violence; time and divine justice are on your side; stand by the Governor and his respectable spouse. Pay them by your zeal and your attachment for all that I owe them. Alas! I cannot fulfill my obligation to them. Cherish this good Master, this good father, with a filial tenderness as I have always done. I shall die happy if I can believe at least that he will miss me! (*He throws himself at his feet*) Ah! My dear Master, am I still permitted to name you thus?

M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT: (*With intense sorrow*) These words wring my heart. Wretched man! What have you done? Go, I no longer hold it against you; I suffer enough from the fatal duty that I fulfill.

ZAMOR: (*Bows and kisses his feet*) Ah! My dear master, death holds nothing frightful for me. You still cherish me; I die happy. (*He takes his hands*) May I kiss these hands for the last time!

M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT: (*Full of pity*) Leave me, leave me, you are breaking my heart.

ZAMOR: *(To the armed Slaves)* My friends, do your duty. *(He takes Mirza in his arms and climbs upon the rock with her, where they both kneel. The Slaves aim their arrows)*

Scene 12: THE SAME, Mme DE SAINT-FRÉMONT *(with her Slaves)*, GRENADIERS AND FRENCH SOLDIERS

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT: Stop, Slaves, and respect your governor's wife. *(To her husband)* Mercy, my friend, mercy!

Scene 13, and final: THE SAME, VALÈRE, SOPHIE

SOPHIE: *(To Valère)* You restrain me in vain. I absolutely want to see them. Cruel one! You deceived me. *(To Mme de Saint-Frémont)* Ah! Madame, my strength abandons me. *(She falls into the arms of the Slaves)*

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT: *(To her husband)* My friend, you see this French woman's despair; would you not be moved?

SOPHIE: *(Recovering herself and throwing herself at the feet of M. de Saint-Frémont)* Ah Monsieur! I shall die of sorrow at your feet if you do not grant their pardon. It is within your heart and depends upon your power. Ah! If I cannot obtain it life no longer matters to me! We have lost everything. Deprived of a mother and of my fortune, abandoned at the age of five by a father, my consolation was in saving two victims who are dear to you.

M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT: *(Aside, in the keenest agitation)* My memory . . . these features . . . that time . . . her age . . . What confusion stirs my soul. *(To Sophie)* Ah Madame! Respond to my marked attention; may I ask you the names of those who gave you birth?

SOPHIE: *(Leaning on Valère)* Alas!

VALÈRE: Oh my dear Sophie!

M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT: *(More warmly)* Sophie . . . *(Aside)* She was named Sophie. *(Aloud)* What name did you utter . . . Speak, answer me, for pity's sake, Madame, who was your mother?

SOPHIE: *(Aside)* What confusion agitates him, the more I examine him . . . *(Aloud)* The unfortunate Clarisse de Saint-Fort was my mother.

M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT: Ah! My daughter, recognize me. Nature did not deceive me. Recognize the voice of a father too long absent from you and from your mother.

SOPHIE: Ah! My father! I am dying. *(She falls into the arms of the Soldiers)*

M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT: O my daughter! O my blood!

SOPHIE: What did I hear? Yes, yes it is he . . . His features are still etched in my soul . . . What good fortune makes me find myself in your arms once more! I cannot express all the feelings that agitate me. But these wretched creatures, O my father, their fate is in your hands. Without their help your daughter would have perished. Grant to nature the first favor that she asks of you. Planters, Slaves, fall at the knees of the most generous of men; one finds clemency at the feet of virtue. (*All kneel, except the Judge and the Soldiers*)

SLAVES: Monseigneur!

PLANTERS: Governor, sir!

M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT: What do you demand of me?

ALL: Their pardon.

M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT: (*Moved*) My children, my wife, my friends, I grant it to you.

ALL: What happiness! (*The Grenadiers and soldiers genuflect*)

MAJOR: Brave warriors, do not blush at this show of sensibility; it purifies, not vilifies, courage.

MIRZA: Bless me! You change our unhappy fate; our happiness runneth over; manifestations of your justice never cease.

M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT: My friends, I give you your liberty and shall look after your fortune.

ZAMOR: No, my master; keep watch over your kindnesses. The most precious kindness for our hearts would be to live in your midst along with all that you hold most dear.

M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT: What! I have found my daughter again! I clasp her in my arms. A cruel fate thus ends its pursuit of me! O my dear Sophie! How I fear to learn of your mother's cruel fate.

Sophie: Alas! My poor mother is no longer! But, dear father, how sweet it is for me to see you. (*To Valère*) Dear Valère!

VALÈRE: I share your happiness.

MME DE SAINT-FRÉMONT: My daughter, see in me only a tender mother. Your father knows my intentions, and you will soon learn them yourself. Let us concern ourselves only with the marriage of Zamor and Mirza.

MIRZA: We are going to live to love each other. We shall live happily ever after.

ZAMOR: Yes, my dear Mirza; yes, we shall live happily ever after.

M. DE SAINT-FRÉMONT: My friends, I have just granted you your pardon. Would that I might also give liberty to all your fellow men, or at least temper their fate! Slaves, listen to me; if ever your destiny were to change, do not lose sight of the love of the public good, which until now has been unknown to you. Know that man, in his liberty, needs still to submit to wise and humane laws, and without disposing yourselves to reprehensible excesses, place all your hopes in a benevolent and enlightened Government. Let us go, my friends, my children, so that a general holiday may be the happy presage of this sweet liberty.

END.

1. My decision to respect Gouges's use of capitalization in the Preface and throughout the play should be seen as a decision to respect the author's originality: Gouges's capitalization of substantives has no apparent system inasmuch as the same nouns are not always capitalized, the word "Slave" being a prime example. Furthermore, rendering the inconsistencies in Gouges's use of capitalization points out the unstable practice of punctuation in eighteenth-century English, and adds to the general recreation of that ethos in my translation.
2. An obvious inadvertency as the character is called Caroline throughout the entire play.