

The thread of his unholy variations! Justice
And unhappiness!
That's how it has to end.

PRIDAMANT: They're all in league against him! I don't
want to watch anymore.

ALCANDRE: But he's your son. Surely you want to see
how he fares in this sea of sharks.

PRIDAMANT: Not really, no. It's too upsetting, and I
don't like what's going on.

ALCANDRE: But it's history, it's memory, it's all already
happened, and your closing your eyes can't alter that—

PRIDAMANT: I can leave!

ALCANDRE: Oh, well, your tricky heart, I understand;
the tension, you find this bit too alarming, it agitates
unnecessarily—allow me to make a small adjustment....

*(He motions in the air, and LYSE is struck by a sudden
change of heart.)*

LYSE: On the other hand:
If revenge tastes sweet, as they say it does,
Does this taste so like brass because
As much as I'd love to spoil his plan
I'm still in love with this catlike man
Whose cruelty's all of an animal kind,
A matter of muscle, rather than mind,
And though he deserves to be knocked down flat,
There's nothing accomplished by killing the cat.
I must recant my treason,
Unravel the weave of this deadly design,
Undo what I've done....

(MATAMORE enters.)

MATAMORE: I have it, I have it, my epigram,
Sweet Isabelle, I....

LYSE: And for that purpose,
Here comes the very King of Undoing. *Begin*

MATAMORE: Ha. Isabelle gone. Her scullion, alone.
What's become of your mistress, scullion?

LYSE: My mistress, Sir, has become....
I cannot say it.

MATAMORE: Your reticence is commendable, jade.
But speak. You must;
For Matamore's gaping ears
Even the stumps of trees divulge
Such secrets as tree stumps possess.
Tell me, poppet, where's she gone.
That gleaming, beaming, peerless wonder?

LYSE: She's down in the arbor making love to your
servant.

MATAMORE: I beg your pardon?

LYSE: Isabelle, that gleaming, beaming wonder,
Is at this moment in the arbor with your serving man,
And they're not pressing grapes.

MATAMORE: Do you mean to imply...?

LYSE: I do.

MATAMORE: Affronterous pimple!
Presumptuous homuncula!
Foul dustball, perfidious chamber-pot,
Do you mean to imply that....

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

MATAMORE: Poodle, cease your yap!
Trullish chambermaid, do you think
That such a gross Leviathan as myself would stoop
To spy upon my future queen,
The soon-to-be-empress of my limitless realms
In some seedy grape arbor with my little minion,

Thinking to catch them at illicit palaverings?
It is grotesque! It is vile!
It is loathsome!
Where's the arbor?

LYSE: Down this path.

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

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

(Change of scene: in the arbor. CLINDOR and ISABELLE enter.)

ISABELLE: My father's turned to stone,
A monolith on which is carved
The awful words: Adraste and Isabelle will wed.
He'd rather see me dead than married to a serving man.
It's not safe for you in this tyrant's house;
At any strange noise, we have to run.

CLINDOR: I can protect myself.

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

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

ISABELLE: Except your love, which is all I desire.
The wanderings of the heart will at last find rest,
The vagaries of love will cease,

Here, here will be home forever,
For you, for me...my only, only love.

(Leaping from hiding place, MATAMORE enters.)

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

ISABELLE: Oh, God! Is he dead?

CLINDOR: No, not dead, merely
Overcome by prolixity.
Let me talk to him.

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

CLINDOR: Thunder more softly.
I beg you, dread Goliath....

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

CLINDOR: I have stolen Isabelle.

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

CLINDOR: Sounds bad.

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

LYSE: In the attic! There are rats in the attic!

MATAMORE: Oh, I know, man-sized rats,
My strength from battling them
Is sorely taxed; I thought the house
Would start and wake at the sounds our battle made:
Their screams of rodent agony, my shouts of glory
As I waved my sword....

LYSE: The footman said he heard noises in the attic....

MATAMORE: It was I.

LYSE: He said it sounded like someone weeping.

MATAMORE: It must have been someone else.

LYSE: Who?

MATAMORE: The rats. They wept.

LYSE: Weeping rats?

MATAMORE: Weeping rats; a gruesome sight.

LYSE: You were so frightened by the murder of Adraste
You've spent four days in the attic? What did you eat?

MATAMORE: Kitchen scraps and garbage, stolen at night.
Hannibal, they say, when crossing the Alps,
Would eat the dung of his elephants. So, though it was
hard

For a man like me to root in the trash heap for mouldy
meat,

I knew I was in good company.

And I didn't retire to the attic for fear,
But rather as a place of reflection. I needed time to think.

LYSE: And in these four days, your belly full of garbage,
What conclusions did you reach?

MATAMORE: That this life of love and violence is too
much

For a man no longer young.

LYSE: It's wearing hard on everyone;
We're all suddenly growing old.

MATAMORE: But youth has its advantage still—
In these games of passionate exertion
My young apprentice, Delamont,
Has learned so well he far surpasses me.
I never killed a man.

I resign my place to him.

I plan to become a desert monk, a hermit in a cave.

LYSE: There are no deserts in France.

MATAMORE: I thought the moon.

LYSE: The moon?

MATAMORE: Yes, that moon, there.

I've given up hope for this cannibal world;
No good will come of it, or of its creatures,
But ah! the moon....

It's cold and bleak, they say;

Perhaps in a cave, on a comfortable rock,
Viewing the expanse of some lifeless lunar desert,
I'll learn to dream smaller, less tumultuous dreams.

LYSE: If you do learn, come back
And give me instruction....

MATAMORE: I can't, mop-and-bucket;
I'm not coming back. But think of me up there,
My peaceable catechism, draw patient forbearance
From that silvery light.

LYSE: I saw a moon-map once; there's a sea
I remember called Tranquility....

MATAMORE: Yes, yes, I'll find that sea,
Where respite's granted every wanderer
Weary of war, sick of desire....

I'll drink a cup of its water for you.

Adieu, adieu, remember me... (He exits.)