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SF PERUSALS

Emilie:
La Marquise Du Châtelet Defends Her Life Tonight

by Lauren Gunderson

A Samuel French Acting Edition



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FOUNDED 1830

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Commissioned and first produced by South Coast Repertory with support from the Elizabeth George Foundation

EMILIE was first produced by the South Coast Repertory in Costa Mesa, California on April 24, 2009. The performance was directed by David Emmes, with sets by Cameron Anderson, costumes by Nephelie Andonyadis, lighting by Lonnie Rafael alcaraz, original music and sound design by Vincent Olivieri, movement direction by Gabriela Estrada, and dramaturgy by Kelly L. Miller. The production stage manager was Jennifer Ellen Butler. The cast was as follows:

EMILIE . . . . . Natacha Roi
VOLTAIRE . . . . . Don Reilly
MADAM . . . . . Susan Denaker
GENTLEMAN . . . . . Matthew Humphreys
SOUBRETTE . . . . . Rebecca Mozo

CHARACTERS

(In order of appearance)

EMILIE DU CHÂTELET – forty, dressed in no particular era, confident and curious

VOLTAIRE (V) – fifty, dressed immaculately in 18th-Century fashion, charming, boyish

PLAYERS

SOUBRETTE – a young woman, mid-twenties, plays **EMILIE** and others:

MARY-LOUISE – simple and stupid

DAUGHTER – direct and strong

GENTLEMAN – a handsome man, thirties, plays **JEAN-FRANÇOIS** and others:

JEAN-FRANÇOIS – young and doting, sincere

THE MARQUIS – serious but warm, very formal

MAUPERTUIS – sexy and academic

MARAIN – snide and proud

MADAM – a slightly older woman, fifties, plays **MOTHER** and others:

MOTHER – serious and wounded

MADAM GRAFFIGNY – obnoxious and rich

A NOTE ON CASTING

The play has been successfully played with 7 actors instead of 5. This requires splitting Gentleman and Soubrette into 2 parts each.

SETTING

A blank theater space. Discovered written on/in this space at the beginning: LOVE, PHILOSOPHY, and F=mv. This is memory - as much or as little set as you want.

Eventually: Centerstage chalkboard, a doorframe, two desks, chairs, and a bed – all of these are mobile. All sets and set-pieces should be reminiscent of a French 18th century aesthetic.

AUTHOR'S NOTES

Tableau – Any choreographed tableau or scene without specific dialogue should be presented with music of the era or in the style of, say, Lully or Rameau

Tally – Emilie will be keeping a tally between LOVE and PHILOSOPHY (far into the 1700's science was known as "natural philosophy")

Touch/Presence – Emilie can't touch anyone ever and she can't leave the stage.

Lights – Lights go out when Emilie touches someone – When Emilier-eturns from the blackout, she is always breathless. She goes back to that dark place again, and resurfaces. It shouldn't look pleasant or easy.

Writing – Emilie must also have the capability to write on the walls – chalk or something more inventive. By the end of the play the space should be full.

PRONUNCIATION

Leibniz = *LIE – bnitz*
Marquis = *MAR – KEY*
Cirey = *Sear – EE*
Marquise = *MAR – KEYZ*
Maupertuis = *MAW – pear – TWEE*
Marian = *MAR-AH*
Huygens = *HOW-gens*
Principia = *Prin-KIP-ee-uh*

A BRIEF DEFINITION OF FORCE VIVE and SQUARING

Force Vive ($F=mv^2$) is a scientific concept that was hotly debated in the 17th and 18th centuries. Proposed by Gottfried Leibniz over the period 1676–1689, the theory was controversial as it seemed to oppose the theory ($F=mv$) advocated by Sir Isaac Newton. In Leibniz's view, Newton's equation of was incorrect because it eventually becomes zero, meaning that the force stops and is "dead." Newton explained that God would add more energy to keep the universe going. Leibniz's squaring of velocity meant that force keeps going and doesn't need outside replenishment of energy (i.e. it was "alive"). During the French debates on the subject, Newton's equation became known as "Force Morte," (Dead Force) while Leibniz's equation was called "Force Vive" (Living Force). However, Leibniz's theory was not clearly explicated and lacked a detailed experimental proof, and Newton proved too powerful of an intellectual celebrity to overcome.

By advocating for Leibniz's squaring of Force, Emilie Du Châtelet translated Leibniz's idea in a way that was easily understood and added the decisive evidence on squaring of a Dutch researcher, William 'sGravesande. Today, due in part to Du Châtelet's work, we understand that the two equations are describing different things – Newton's equation describes the Conservation of Momentum ($F=ma$ – Force equal Mass times Acceleration), while Leibniz's equation became what is understood as Kinetic Energy ($E=mv^2$) – Energy equals Mass times Velocity squared).

Scholars see Du Châtelet's legacy as including her advocacy of squaring and her French translation of Newton's Principia. These and her other writings prompted scientists of the following centuries to regard energy as being proportional to mv^2, and she can be traced to Einstein's development of $E=mc^2$.Thank you to Dr. Judith Zinsser, whose mentorship and book, *Emilie Du Chatelet: Daring Genius of the Enlightenment* (Penguin, 2007), gave me so much of the world of this play.

See EmilieLaMarquise.com for more helpful dramaturgy and images for this show.

ACT ONE

(Blackness. Then a single light. **EMILIE** *is in this light. She is a little stunned to be here. She breathes – also stunning.)*

EMILIE. Breath.

(She flexes her hands, testing, getting her bearings.)

Body.

Again.

(She steps out of her spotlight, then steps back in.)

Space.

And Time.

Again?

Life again?

But I'm dead. I'm here. You're here. You're dead? No. Poor logic. Back to facts.

(She starts with the basics…)

There are things called *living* and things called *dead* that exist as people. Hearts and the squaring of hearts.

(She draws a simple heart. Then squares it: $\heartsuit^2$*)*

(She finds **F=mv** *is written.)*

Then there are things called 'living' and things called 'dead' that exist as *Force* and the squaring of Force. Motion, mass. Squared.

(She squares it: $\mathbf{F=mv^2}$ *remembers this now…)*

Force Vive, it's called. *The Living Force.* "Living" because of that little 2.

(She erases the ^{2}*:* **F=mv***)*

Now it's "dead."

(She squares it again: **F=mv²***)*

EMILIE. *(cont.)* And alive again. Mathematically speaking. But there is something sweeping about this noton: 'when you square it, you give it life.'

(A new energy into…)

I died thinking two things: One – I'm not done. Two?

(She points to the ².*)*

Two. A number that seems the symbol of a double. But made small and set on high? Is an imperative to expand, extend exponentially – a life-like dynamic – *yes!* Squaring adds *life* – that's why we called it Living Force – that's what I fought for. *That* number in *that* equation was my life's work –

No, my life's *question.* And I died without an answer.

I died thinking: Living and the Living Force…so what?

(She gets it now…)

And that's the impossible question that brought me here:

(She touches the ².*)*

What do we mean?

(sees that **LOVE** *and* **PHILOSOPHY** *are written)*

And I realize it's a bold attempt to quantify such things…

But Time and Space are generous tonight.

So I ask…

Of all my loving –

(She marks under **LOVE**.*)*

and all my knowing –

(She marks under **PHILOSOPHY**.*)*

What matters, what lasts? If lasting even matters. What's the point?

Asking tricky questions is what I do best.

EMILIE. *(cont.)* Tonight, I may finally know and finally, finally rest.

(Music and lights flood the space revealing **VOLTAIRE** *and the* **PLAYERS** *in a tableau that would be titled: "Love and Philosophy.")*

My name is Emilie.

(She points to **SOUBRETTE**.*)*

I think that one's me, too.

(The trio rushes into another tableau where **VOLTAIRE** *voraciously kisses* **SOUBRETTE**.*)*

Definitely me.
Let me see if I can set this stage.

(Points to herself.)

Emilie.

(Points to **SOUBRETTE**.*)*

Also me. Somehow.

(Points to **GENTLEMAN**.*)*

Perhaps my husband. Or Newton.

(Points to **MADAM**.*)*

One of the many courtiers that find me generally intolerable. Or my mother.

(Points to **VOLTAIRE**.*)*

And this one. You'll know his name. François-Marie Arouet. Voltaire.

(The tableau shifts into an adoration of **VOLTAIRE**, *the genius.)*

I love this man. And lucky for you we fight in English so you'll be sure not to miss a thing.

*(***EMILIE** *turns to* **VOLTAIRE**, *starts to speak, but the* **PLAYERS** *hand* **EMILIE** *and* **VOLTAIRE** *scripts from which they read right now.)*

VOLTAIRE. "The Life and Love of Emilie La Marquise Du Châtelet." By me. Voltaire.

(turns to her, in character)

"What happened to my life before you? I'd hunted for love, but found only mirages."

EMILIE. *(not "on script")* Wait. Why are we starting here?

VOLTAIRE. A scene in which Voltaire declares his love.

(in character)

"I love you."

EMILIE. *(not "on script")* This isn't the – Start at the beginning.

VOLTAIRE. *(continuing anyway)* "And when love stares you down it is the only thing in the heavens with light."

EMILIE. *(on script)* "Love is science, then."

VOLTAIRE. "Love is *magic*."

EMILIE. "One should be able to tell the difference."

(off script)

Who wrote this?

VOLTAIRE. *Excuse me.*

EMILIE. *(reads unenthusiastically)* "You distract me, handsome hero."

VOLTAIRE. "A distraction is just an opportunity arising, goddess of the mind."

EMILIE. Goddess of the – ?

VOLTAIRE. "Athena and Aphrodite would bow to your feet –"

EMILIE. *(off script)* Okay – *Stop.* Stop. This isn't right.

(Realizes as she looks at her script)

Because *this* isn't *my* story.

(to **V***)*

This is *yours.*

(She tosses the script. **V** *is insulted.)*

EMILIE. *(cont.)* And tonight is *mine*.

From now on? My story. My life. Because Time and Space have obliged tonight, and they really don't do that very often, and you never know how much of them you're going to get, and I'm *going* to get an answer tonight even if I die trying – *again* – so we need to start at the *beginning*, and start *now*!

(Music – something big)

The scene with the father.

*(***GENTLEMAN** *enters, as* **EMILIE***'s father.)*

My father was a hero to me. Very simply he allowed me: myself. One of the larger gifts one can be given.

(She marks under **LOVE***.)*

I learned that he'd loved a woman at court–

*(***SOUBRETTE** *enters as this woman.)*

And shunned all others at Versailles to hear her talk about the stars. But. He was a fool, cheated on her with a richer woman, lost her to another man, and cracked his own heart for good.

*(***SOUBRETTE** *exits.)*

He married my mother out of convenience – a fact not lost on her.

*(***MADAM** *enters as* **MOTHER***.)*

My mother sees my education as a waste of time. She thinks my father is rewarding everything she is not.

*(***EMILIE** *marks under* **PHILOSOPHY***, which irritates* **MADAM***, who exits.)*

*(***SOUBRETTE** *enters now as Emilie.* **GENTLEMAN** *leaves.)*

Which is true. I steal my brother's tutor, learn English, Latin, celestial mechanics, all the math there is. My tutors can't keep up.

*(***EMILIE** *puts a mark under* **PHILOSOPHY***.)*

EMILIE. *(cont.)* I host the best minds in France and my husband pays for them. Did I mention I was married? We're skipping ahead.

*(***GENTLEMAN** *enters as Marquis Du Châtelet.)*

My husband. A good man. And just. And calm, thank god. I mean the highest compliment when I call ours a true and unique…friendship.

*(***EMILIE** *almost marks under love but doesn't.* **GENTLEMAN** *kisses* **SOUBRETTE***'s hand and exits.)*

But he has wars to manage. And I have a name to uphold. And the children. Did I mention I had children? Three. Fascinating creatures raised by the nursemaid which leaves me free to study…

*(***GENTLEMAN***, as Maupertuis, and* **SOUBRETTE** *study.)*

With my mentor, Maupertuis. The first man outside my family that respects me, challenges me…

(They kiss all over the books.)

An academic relationship. Not without its own distinctive benefits.

*(***SOUBRETTE** *stops groping – she's had a thought and abandons* **GENTLEMAN** *to check her books.)*

*(***GENTLEMAN** *is a little perturbed.)*

Maupertuis is my only vein into the heart of academia. I need him, but he doesn't need me.

*(***GENTLEMAN** *distances himself from* **SOUBRETTE***.)*

As a lady I'm in no position to run out to cafés and mingle with these minds, or god help me, *think out loud…*

(A doorframe appears. **GENTLEMAN** *goes through it.)*

*(***EMILIE** *changes* **SOUBRETTE** *into man's clothes as…)*

EMILIE. *(cont.)* But I want to go where science is *done* – which is not in courts or academies, but in The Café Gradot – an all-male, all-night establishment wherein my sex is restricted to various services unbecoming of my class. And my patience.

So we do what we must.

*(***EMILIE** *sends* **SOUBRETTE** *through the doors.)*

*(***EMILIE** *marks under* **PHILOSOPHY**.*)*

Women determine the fate of great nations, of the human race itself, but for us there is no place where we are trained to think, much less to think for ourselves. And if we insist, we are mocked, scorned –

(Just as **SOUBRETTE** *is kicked out again.* **SOUBRETTE** *exits.* **EMILIE** *erases the mark under* **PHILOSOPHY.***)*

*(***GENTLEMAN** *appears through the door.)*

The men of letters laugh, the men of court frown.

*(***MADAM** *appears.)*

And the women…oh they of much gossip and little substance. They are the vipers and hate me because I dare to ask "why" and, more dangerously, "why not?"

But court is essential. So I spend all of my time pleasing those whom I don't even like. I am rich, secure, and…*painfully bored.* And court couldn't care less.

*(***MADAM**, **GENTLEMAN** *scoff at her and exit.)*

Then. I meet V. Who cares.

(Enter **VOLTAIRE**. *She underlines the* **v** *in* $\mathbf{F=mv^2}$.*)*

V for velocity. That sounds about right. Monsieur Velocity.

His reputation hits first. Bard. Bastard. Rebel poet twice locked in the Bastille, always exiled somewhere, and *still* the toast of Paris.

*(***V** *sees* **EMILIE**, *likes what he sees.)*

A chance meeting, but these things are always chance. Until they aren't.

EMILIE. *(cont.)* I see him at a salon discussing Newton, the opera a few times, at court a few more, ballet, gardens, the pâtisserie near my house. It was after we met at Mass that I knew for certain chance had become choice.

The scene at the opera.

(At the opera. Some crackling music/vocals. **VOLTAIRE** *moves to her and they sit. They both know that they're being watched.)*

*(***SOUBRETTE** *joins* **GENTLEMAN**, **MADAM**, *as audience.)*

VOLTAIRE. Madam Marquise. It is a pleasure to see you. And be seen with you.

EMILIE. We seem to be making a habit of it.

VOLTAIRE. I do love that pâtisserie. How was your éclair?

EMILIE. Much like you I'm afraid: too sweet, not quite filling. How was your tarte?

VOLTAIRE. Couldn't stop myself. Speaking of which, you're not bored by my growing infatuation with you?

EMILIE. On the contrary. I think it's good for your health.

VOLTAIRE. My health? You barely know me, Madam.

EMILIE. I know your reputation. And your work, Monsieur.

VOLTAIRE. You do?

EMILIE. Of course I do.

VOLTAIRE. Of course you do.

EMILIE. Most of your operas by heart. Though I thought that last one was a bit wordy.

VOLTAIRE. Now you tease.

EMILIE. If honesty is game-play.

VOLTAIRE. Everything's a move, my dear.

EMILIE. A dear perhaps, but not yours yet.

VOLTAIRE. I hear a "yet."

EMILIE. And missed the "not."

VOLTAIRE. My god…

EMILIE. You have one?

VOLTAIRE. Only muses.

EMILIE. They're a fickle bunch.

VOLTAIRE. *(falling for her)* Madam, you are…

EMILIE. Speak, poet. The anticipation tortures the air –

VOLTAIRE. *(sincere)* Goddess.
Unstoppable.
I fear –

EMILIE. What's to fear?

VOLTAIRE. A dangerous thing.

EMILIE. For you or me?

VOLTAIRE. We may be in this one together.

EMILIE. You presume too much.

VOLTAIRE. I do.

EMILIE. Well, stop it. I am not that easily deduced.

VOLTAIRE. I *know* that you're a devastating force at cards, you're married to a military creature, and you scare off any allies at court with your excruciating habit of reading.

EMILIE. You're not scared then?

VOLTAIRE. I don't plan on playing you in cards. And don't tell anyone but…I read too.

EMILIE. Well then, perhaps we do have…like minds, mutual interests.

VOLTAIRE. Very mutual, very interesting. And I'm a quick study.

EMILIE. Not too quick – that'd disappoint.

VOLTAIRE. Well, we can discuss your varied preferences over wine tonight?

EMILIE. Monsieur, you're very charming, but you don't get to know my preferences until I know yours. What do you think of Descartes?

VOLTAIRE. A…revolutionary mind.

EMILIE. Leibniz?

VOLTAIRE. Metaphysical mind, unfortunately German.

EMILIE. Newton?

VOLTAIRE. Genius. The world is complete.

EMILIE. And me?

VOLTAIRE. Genius. The world is complete.

*(***EMILIE** *grabs* **V***'s knee suggestively –)*

(Immediately upon their first physical contact, the lights, music, and all breath in the space are gone with a crackle and a spark. Blackness.)

(One light turns on. **EMILIE** *is alone, baffled, scared.)*

EMILIE. I'm sorry. I didn't realize…

(She looks at her hands.)

(With another crackle the lights and music and players return. **VOLTAIRE** *calmly walks to his previous position.)*

VOLTAIRE. Genius. The world is complete.

*(***EMILIE** *goes to touch him –* ***she gets one hand on him and the lights go out more violently****.)*

(One light comes on again. **EMILIE** *is alone, breathless.)*

EMILIE. Descartes was right: mind and body are distinct. In this case profoundly so.

I understand now. No touch.

Touching life is like having it. And I realize that I don't.

This time, my life is not *really* life or mine.

(to God or whoever is in charge:) But I'll take it anyway!

(With another crackle the lights, **V** *and* **PLAYERS** *return.* **EMILIE** *guides* **SOUBRETTE** *to replace her in the scene.)*

EMILIE & SOUBRETTE. And me?

VOLTAIRE. Genius. The world is complete.

*(***SOUBRETTE** *touches* **V** *successfully. The* **PLAYERS** *are scandalized.)*

*(***EMILIE** *marks under* **LOVE**. *Thinks about it. Then marks under* **PHILOSOPHY**, *too.)*

EMILIE. And with a new variable in this glorious equation, the world takes off. Which always makes such a mess.

VOLTAIRE. A scene in which Voltaire woos the unconvinced Marquise.

*(***EMILIE** *and* **VOLTAIRE***, as well as* **GENTLEMAN** *and* **MADAM***, are playing cards in* **EMILIE***'s house.* **GENTLEMAN** *and* **MADAM** *eavesdrop avidly.)*

I love you –

EMILIE. My husband is a general–

VOLTAIRE. – in a thousand ways.

EMILIE. – directly under the King.

VOLTAIRE. I'm blushing – I don't blush.

EMILIE. I'm required at Versailles.

VOLTAIRE. When you say 'orbit,' I can't control myself.

EMILIE. Really. Orbit.

VOLTAIRE. God help me.

EMILIE. You're ridiculous.

VOLTAIRE. It's a great way to live. Come away with me.

EMILIE. I can't.

VOLTAIRE. Teach me.

EMILIE. You are a most thrilling wreck but I can't, and you know I can't.

VOLTAIRE. You toy with me. I'm just a puppet to you.

EMILIE. You're a playwright. An *actor*. What can I say?

VOLTAIRE. That you've met your match.

EMILIE. You shouldn't waste your time.

VOLTAIRE. Not a moment wasted with you. Your very breath fuels my *fire*.

EMILIE. That's nice. I win.

(She wins the card game and takes his money. **GENTLEMAN** *and* **MADAM** *exit.)*

VOLTAIRE. You don't care for me at all.

EMILIE. V.

VOLTAIRE. You'll crush me and I'll die, and you don't care at all.

EMILIE. V.

VOLTAIRE. Yes, Siren?

(He pouts.)

EMILIE. Look at me.

VOLTAIRE. It will set me on fire to do so, but I'll risk it.

EMILIE. I'll explain my hesitation.

VOLTAIRE. Rejection of my noble intentions?

EMILIE. I'm married. What's noble?

VOLTAIRE. They're *sincere* intentions. I can't help it.

EMILIE. That would be your reputation.

VOLTAIRE. I can't help the urge to bite every corner of your frame…

EMILIE. V…

VOLTAIRE. And read every thought in your head…

EMILIE. And if I give you any sign of my true feelings…I'm afraid you'd tackle me.

(A moment. A smile. Then he tackles her with a kiss. ***The lights plunge her into darkness****.)*

(The single light points out **EMILIE***. She makes another mark under* **LOVE***.)*

(As the lights crackle back on, we see **VOLTAIRE** *and* **SOUBRETTE***, as* **EMILIE***, with much fewer clothes on, grinning, grinning, grinning.)*

(During this, they dress each other, the picture of affection.)

EMILIE & SOUBRETTE. I'd like to have a rule.

VOLTAIRE. A rule?

SOUBRETTE. For you and I. *Just* for you and I.

VOLTAIRE. I'm not good with rules. I find them insistent.

SOUBRETTE. This one's easy. Well. It's simple.

VOLTAIRE. Those are not identical meanings.

SOUBRETTE. One rule.

VOLTAIRE. What simplicity would you have me swear to?

EMILIE & SOUBRETTE. Honesty.

(Pause)

VOLTAIRE. So cruel.

SOUBRETTE. Not punishment. Freedom. Say only what we mean, and mean everything we say.

VOLTAIRE. But…I'm an actor.

SOUBRETTE. To everyone else you are.

VOLTAIRE. We don't have to be honest with everyone else?

SOUBRETTE. God no. We have to survive at court.
But when it's us…love me, mean it, and say it. Or else damn the whole thing.

VOLTAIRE. A daunting experiment.

EMILIE & SOUBRETTE. A worthy one.

VOLTAIRE. You might get hurt.

SOUBRETTE. So might you. All for the deepest kind of knowing.

VOLTAIRE. The deepest kind, the kindest cruelty of the heart and mind –

SOUBRETTE. No poetry. Everyone else gets the show. I get the truth.

EMILIE. The truth.

VOLTAIRE. And that's what we want.

EMILIE & SOUBRETTE. That's what we want.

VOLTAIRE. And we want that badly.

EMILIE & SOUBRETTE. Yes, we do.

VOLTAIRE. Then we'll have it. For you.

SOUBRETTE. And you.

EMILIE. And you.

*(***SOUBRETTE** *and* **VOLTAIRE** *are now dressed, kiss, exit.)*

*(***EMILIE** *puts a few marks under* **LOVE**.*)*

EMILIE. And though tame for a moment, the laws of the heart are based in such violence. They are starved and overwhelmed and just destructive to good behavior. The laws of the universe are clean and *predictable.* To know the universe? Be diligent. To know the heart? Be brave.

And so we brave each other – But we're still learning.

*(***VOLTAIRE** *enters with books, upset.)*

VOLTAIRE. I'm a child with all this.

EMILIE. You can't be the best at everything.

VOLTAIRE. Yes I can.

EMILIE. Fine. You know Newton couldn't write a sonnet worth a damn.

VOLTAIRE. You're dismissing this.

EMILIE. You're being a baby.

VOLTAIRE. Kiss me.

EMILIE. V.

VOLTAIRE. Fuck me.

EMILIE. Would you stop. I'm your colleague one minute, then your – what – whore?

Next time you enter a room be kind enough to let me know which way you currently see me.

VOLTAIRE. Currently I see you as…crusty.

I'm going out.

EMILIE. I know the Calculus is hard, and that translation is awful. Just go back to the Latin.

VOLTAIRE. I don't like Latin.

EMILIE. You understand it, V. Just review the equations. On that sheet.

(He goes to the sheet. She doesn't.)

VOLTAIRE. Emilie.

EMILIE. I laid it out for you.

VOLTAIRE. *Emilie.*

EMILIE. I'm writing, V, what?

VOLTAIRE. To whom are you writing??

EMILIE. Maupertuis.

VOLTAIRE. About what?

EMILIE. Orbit of Venus.

VOLTAIRE. Fine.

EMILIE. We have work to do and I'm trying to do it.

VOLTAIRE. With him. Not with me. Just. Fine.

(He starts to walk out.)

EMILIE. V.

VOLTAIRE. I'm ill.

EMILIE. You're not ill.

VOLTAIRE. Felt it all week.

EMILIE. You're frustrated, not sick.

VOLTAIRE. Don't bother.

EMILIE. Are you jealous that I'm sharing orbits with another man.

VOLTAIRE. Do not mock me, woman. You'll have plenty of time to write to your younger, meatier friends about all the things I'm too daft to understand, when I die from being sick. Which I am. At least I'll get a statue.

(pause)

EMILIE. Sit.

(He nearly "faints." **MADAM** *enters.)*

Some very hot tea and lemon. Warm towels.

MADAM. Is he all right?

EMILIE. Oh, I think he'll pull through.

MADAM. *(with complete lack of verve)* Saints be praised.

*(***MADAM** *leaves.* **V** *smiles and tries to kiss her.)*

EMILIE. Too sick for math, too sick for that.

*(***V** *settles.* **EMILIE** *picks up a book. In her own thoughts.)*

VOLTAIRE. I just forget that you care. And that I care that you care. It's quite insidious this cycle we're in. I just need time.

EMILIE. *(thinking out loud re: her book)* Time and space are absolute.

VOLTAIRE. I can't force you to love me.

EMILIE. But force is not, in Newton's equation.

VOLTAIRE. But you really should.

EMILIE. Newton *multiplies* speed by mass – so all force eventually cancels out – so there's *no more* energy.

VOLTAIRE. I'm so tired.

EMILIE. So the cosmos stops.

VOLTAIRE. You wear me out.

EMILIE. Which *isn't true.*

VOLTAIRE. It's true!

EMILIE. So Newton thinks *God* intervenes just to keep us going?
That's ridiculous.

VOLTAIRE. And I know it's ridiculous for a celebrity to admit, but I *need* you.

EMILIE. God doesn't need to *intervene* – why bother making the cosmos if you have to keep it *tuned.*
Leibniz wrote about this – *Force Vive.* Energy that's not a *multiple* of speed, but speed *squared* – which means energy is exponential – which means it doesn't run out – which means God doesn't need to wind us up!

(He notices that she's not listening.)

VOLTAIRE. I talk about myself for one minute…

*(***EMILIE** *looks to the* $F=mv^2$*.)*

EMILIE. Maybe God's in the squaring.

VOLTAIRE. God? We were doing Calculus.

EMILIE. It's all connected.

VOLTAIRE. Connected to what?

EMILIE. To each other!

VOLTAIRE. To whom?

EMILIE. To the universe!

VOLTAIRE. The universe?

EMILIE. The universe!

VOLTAIRE. I don't care about the universe if you don't love me!

Just say you do so I can rest.

(She gestures for **SOUBRETTE** *to take over.)*

EMILIE & SOUBRETTE. I love you!

EMILIE. Now shut up so I can think.

*(***V** *grabs* **SOUBRETTE** *[as Emilie] into a hug.)*

*(***EMILIE** *marks under* **LOVE** *and* **PHILOSOPHY**.*)*

EMILIE. And I start to think that both love and energy are surprisingly exponential. It would be easier to rest, to release, to stop like Newton's equation expects us to. But even complicated love doesn't give up that easily…

*(***GENTLEMAN** *appears as The Marquis Du Châtelet, Emilie's husband.)*

GENTLEMAN. *(to us, not entirely sincere about this…)* The scene in which Emilie's husband returns and is…happy for her.

(He bows, she courtesies, they stand as friends.)

You're happy then?

EMILIE. I am. Are you? I never ask that.

GENTLEMAN. Property, children, the king's favor. A wife I'm proud of. That's a good life by all accounts.

EMILIE. And you look so handsome. Wars aren't all that bad are they? You're fooling all of us ladies with all that talk of battles and bravery.

GENTLEMAN. Of course not. Very serious. The campaign –

EMILIE. A joke, dear. Joking.

GENTLEMAN. Oh. Well.

You look – healthy. I mean lovely. Sturdy, well-fed.

EMILIE. You're making me feel a bit bovine, dear, but thank you.

GENTLEMAN. Sorry. Soldier talk.

EMILIE. Which doesn't require much flattery, I see.

GENTLEMAN. Yes. No. Well.

The children are growing up into willful creatures like their mother.

EMILIE. And kind like their father. Gabrielle is pretty enough. I think she'll marry well.

GENTLEMAN. I'll certainly see to that. And Florent is proving his skill in military language?

EMILIE. And mathematics. He could be a scholar.

GENTLEMAN. Doesn't have it in him.

EMILIE. If he kept studying he could be something.

GENTLEMAN. He may have your mind, but he's got my name. That makes him a general. Stop the tutor at sixteen. I'll take it from there.

EMILIE. As you see fit.

(Small pause)

GENTLEMAN. Will Voltaire be joining us at the opera tonight?

EMILIE. Seeing as how he wrote it, I expect he'll be there.

(Small pause)

GENTLEMAN. Is he…treating you well?

EMILIE. He's good…for me. Not like your kind of good. You are the earth, he's more of the…elements. Thunder and lightning and…well.

GENTLEMAN. I'm glad you're sufficiently captivated. I know you're hard to entertain.

EMILIE. I am not. I'm quite agreeable. With decent books. And competent card players. And – you're right, I must be exhausting.

GENTLEMAN. You are. I miss it.

EMILIE. Thank you, dear.

(They don't know what to say. **SOUBRETTE** *[as Emilie] enters replacing her again.)*

GENTLEMAN. Off we go?

EMILIE & SOUBRETTE. Off we go.

*(***GENTLEMAN** *takes* **SOUBRETTE***'s arm and exits.* **EMILIE** *watches him go. Turns to us.)*

EMILIE. This is where it gets confusing, because *that*'s Love too.

(She makes another mark under **LOVE***.)*

Not the fire kind, but the *bread* kind, the comfort kind. We have nothing in common but our offspring, but he is a *good* man and he loves me. Quietly and sure.

(She makes another mark under **LOVE***.)*

And it's ludicrous that safety bores us so.

*(***VOLTAIRE** *enters in a flurry.)*

VOLTAIRE. *(to us)* The scene in which Voltaire is almost imprisoned in the Bastille…again.

(to **EMILIE***, rushed)*

They're on their way. Here to arrest me. Right now.

EMILIE. What did you do?

VOLTAIRE. The markedly brilliant letters I wrote praising the English. The king is mad that I'm so stunningly *right*, that he wants me killed. Which is so French, that the irony is completely lost on him.

EMILIE. You weren't supposed to publish those.

VOLTAIRE. *They* weren't supposed to. The printers! I hate printers.

EMILIE. You can't humiliate a king like that.

VOLTAIRE. I hate kings.

EMILIE. All of Paris is probably reading it.

VOLTAIRE. And I really hate Paris.

EMILIE. You love Paris when it loves you. You *knew* you were playing with fire. Stop playing with fire! Don't you learn?

VOLTAIRE. Only makes me smarter.

EMILIE. Where will you go?

VOLTAIRE. I don't know.

EMILIE. They're coming *now* and you don't *know*?!

VOLTAIRE. Come with me.

EMILIE. Come with you *where?*

VOLTAIRE. ANYWHERE. NOT here! Come!

EMILIE. No!

VOLTAIRE. Now!

EMILIE. GO, V! Before you can't. GO now GO!

VOLTAIRE. And so I go. Not knowing when I'll see you again. I go.

EMILIE. *Wait.* Wait. I have a chateau in Cirey. A family estate. It's a wreck. Barely habitable.

VOLTAIRE. Still waiting for how this helps me.

EMILIE. You'd be safe there.

VOLTAIRE. And you'd be there? I want you there. I need you there.

EMILIE. Stop wooing. I can't think.

VOLTAIRE. Your resident poet? Harmless, literary.

EMILIE. My husband could be convinced.

VOLTAIRE. I'll pay anything.

EMILIE. That might help.

VOLTAIRE. And you'll come?

EMILIE. I don't know.

VOLTAIRE. You're coming.

EMILIE. *They're* coming! You GO!

VOLTAIRE. Say you'll come!

EMILIE. I won't SAY anything to you EVER AGAIN – Which is what happens when you go to the Bastille!

VOLTAIRE. Meet me at Cirey.

EMILIE. GO.

VOLTAIRE. Come.

EMILIE. NOW!

(He goes, comes back for a passionate kiss. But she ducks his advance just in time to avoid another black-out. **VOLTAIRE** *continues offstage.)*

EMILIE. The scene in which he tries every method of roping me in…to my *own* house.

*(***VOLTAIRE** *appears. These are their letters.)*

VOLTAIRE. Dearest Emilie, I am safe at your chateau. Thank you. It's a dump. Come to me.

EMILIE. I am a lady of stature. I can't.

VOLTAIRE. Did I mention that you are my heart beating? Also, your husband likes me and/or my money. Come.

EMILIE. I can't run off to the country.

VOLTAIRE. The renovations are majestic!

EMILIE. How will I work? The books I need.

VOLTAIRE. I know all the booksellers.

EMILIE. The equipment I need.

VOLTAIRE. I've already had it shipped.

EMILIE. The spine of the thinking elite is here –

VOLTAIRE. We'll invite them.

EMILIE. – and the court –

VOLTAIRE. Not them.

EMILIE. – and the gossip if I left, my daughter's suitors, my family name, and – and the world doesn't work like that!

VOLTAIRE. That's why we make our own. Love and Philosophy await.

(Beat)

EMILIE. You are an irritating man. I'm on my way.

VOLTAIRE. You are?

EMILIE. It seems I love you desperately.

VOLTAIRE. Desperation can be quite enjoyable. Be my muse.

EMILIE. If you'll be mine.

VOLTAIRE. Genius. The world is…

EMILIE & VOLTAIRE. Complete.

(She breathes and turns to us.)

EMILIE. The moment I leave Paris to live in the country and *study*…with *him?* That's when I switch from eccentric to rebel over night.

*(***EMILIE** *walks to* **VOLTAIRE***, who turns to her.)*

The scene in which I come home.

(They are at Cirey – and it's abuzz! The **PLAYERS** *are busy servants in the house.)*

VOLTAIRE. Now. The house is in a good state. The grounds are fertile, the orchards ripe, and the peasants pleased. I've stocked the stables, imported an Italian gardener and garden, and built a new wing.

EMILIE. A new wing?

VOLTAIRE. Everything painted as you like.

EMILIE. Blue and yellow?

VOLTAIRE. Green and white. We'll adjust.

*(***MADAM***, as a servant, runs off with these new orders.)*

My room is connected to yours, as is the library.

EMILIE. I brought a carriage-full of books.

VOLTAIRE. I brought three.

EMILIE. Luxury!

VOLTAIRE. And I threw in a chapel for good measure.

EMILIE. Can't hurt.

VOLTAIRE. The entire East wing is for experiments, and I've already sent for a barrage of tools and measures.

EMILIE. Air pump?

VOLTAIRE. Yes.

EMILIE. Thermometers?

VOLTAIRE. Of course.

EMILIE. Calibrated Vacuum Bell.

VOLTAIRE. I'll find out what that is then make sure it's on the next shipment.

EMILIE. This is a kingdom.

VOLTAIRE. Ready for a queen.

EMILIE. My king?

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