

THE DUKE D'ALENCON A Tragedy By Voltaire

Translated and adapted by Frank J. Morlock C 2003

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THE DUKE D'ALENCON A Tragedy By Voltaire

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EText by Dagny

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CHARACTERS:

THE DUKE D'ALENCON

NEMOURS, his brother

LE SIRE DE COUCY

DANGESTE, brother of Adelaide de Guesclin

THE DUKE D'ALENCON A Tragedy By Voltaire

AN OFFICER

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The action takes place in the town of De Lusignan, in Poitou.

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ACT I

COUCY: Lord, in arriving in this abode of dangers,
I am stealing a moment from the tumult of arms.
Brother of Adelaide, and like her committed
To the party of the Dauphin, by heaven protected,
You are seeing me thrown in the contrary role;
But I am your friend more than your adversary.
You were aware of my plans, you knew my heart.
You yourself had destined me for your sister.
But I must speak to you and make you understand
The soul of a true soldier, worthy of you, perhaps.

DANGESTE: Lord, you can do anything.

COUCY: My hands are bearing the standards
Of the Prince D'Alencon to the field of Mars.
I loved him in peace, I will serve him in war.
I am fighting for him alone and not for England.
In these frightful times of discord and horror,
I have no other role than that of my heart.

ACT I

THE DUKE D'ALENCON A Tragedy By Voltaire

Not that for this hero my forewarned soul
Always intends to shut his faults from sight.
I am not blind; I see with sorrow
The indiscreet heat of his distractions.
I see that with his sense of impetuous intoxication
The abandonment to excess of a passionate youth.
And this impetuous torrent, that I stop with effort
Too often tears him from me, and carries him too far.
But he has virtues which redeem his vices.
Eh! who knows, lord, where to place his services,
If we never failed to follow and cherish
Any but hearts without weakness and perfect princes?
All my blood is his; but in the end this sword
Regrets being soaked in French blood.
The generous dauphin

DANGESTE: Dare call him king.

COUCY: Until today, lord, he wasn't for me.
It is true, I wanted to bring him my homage,
All my wishes are for him, but friendship engages me.
The Duke has my oaths; I cannot, today
Either serve, or treat or change, except with him.
The misfortunes of our times, our sinister discords,
The court abandoned to the intrigues of ministers,
All precipitated him into this role.
I cannot bend his will to my choice.
I have often, by his envenomed wounds
Revolted his pride with harsh truths.
Your sister could recall him to virtues,
Lord, and it's of that I am seeking to speak to you.
In more tranquil times I loved Adelaide,
Before when Lusignan was your happy asylum;
I thought that she might, approving my plan,
Accept without scorn my homage and my hand.
Soon she was carried off by these English.
To new destinies she was reserved.
What was I to do? Where was heaven directing my steps?
The Duke, more fortunate, saved her from their arms.
The glory of it is his, let him have the reward.
He has by too many rights deserved to please her.
He is prince, he is young, he is your avenger.
His good deeds and his name all speak in his favor.
Justice and love urge her to surrender.
I did not avenge her and I have no pretension.
I am silent. Still he must deserve her
Against all others except him, I would fight for her.

THE DUKE D'ALENCON A Tragedy By Voltaire

I would hardly give in to the children of the king himself.
But this prince is my chief; he cherishes me, I love him.
Coucy, neither virtuous nor brave by half,
Would have braved the prince and given way to his friend.
I do more: with my weak senses governed
I dare to support the tenderness of my rival.
To mark you your glory and what you owe
To heroes that you serve and through whom you live.
With a dry eye and unenvious heart I will see
This marriage which could poison my life.
I rejoin for you my service and my vows.
This arm which was for him, will fight for the two of you.
Lover of Adelaide, noble and faithful friend
Soldier of her spouse, and full of the same zeal
I will serve under him, as it will be necessary one day
When I shall command, he will serve me in my turn.
Those are my feelings: if I have sacrificed myself
Friendship directed me to do it, and especially the country.
Think that if the marriage places her under his sway
If the prince serves her, he will serve the king.

DANGESTE: Lord, how I contemplate you with astonishment!
What a rare and great example you give to the world!
What! this heart, I think it without dissimulation and evasion,
Knows only friendship and can brave love!
One must admire you, when one gets to know you;
You serve your friend; you will serve my master.
Such a generous heart must think like me;
All those of your blood are the support of their king;
But the fatal pursuit of the Duke D'Alencon

(The Duke enters.)

DUKE: (to Dangeste)
Is it she who's escaping me? Is it she who avoids me?
Dangeste, stay. You know too well
The sorrowful distractions of a heart such as mine.
You know if I love her, and if I've served her.
If I await a look for the destiny of my life,
Don't let her extend the excess of her power
To carry my passion to the last despair.
I hate these idle ceremonies, this gratitude
That her frigid timidity opposes to my constancy.
The slightest delay is a cruel refusal.
An affront that my heart will no longer pardon.

ACT I

THE DUKE D'ALENCON A Tragedy By Voltaire

It's in vain that to France, to her faithful master,
She exposes to my eyes the splendor of her zeal.
I intend that all give way to my love, to me.
Let her find in me alone her country and her king.
She owes me her life and even her honor.
And as for me, I owe her everything, since it's I who love her.
Joined by so many rights, it's too much to separate us.
The altar is ready, I am rushing to it, go there to prepare it.

(Exit Dangeste.)

COUCY: Lord, are you thinking indeed, that the destiny of the state
Depends on this day?

DUKE: Yes, you will see me conquer, or die her spouse.

COUCY: The Dauphin is advancing, and isn't far from us.

DUKE: I'm waiting for him without fearing him,
And I'm going to fight him.
Do you think my weakness has been able to beat me down?
Do you think that love, my tyrant, my conqueror,
Has choked the ardor for glory in my soul?
If the ingrate hates me, I intend that she admire me.
No question she has a sovereign empire over me.
But not enough to wither my virtue.
Ah! too severe friend, what, do you reproach me?
No, don't judge me with such injustice.
Is it some French man that love degrades?
Beloved lovers, happily, all go into battle
And from the breast of happiness fly toward death.
I will die, worthy at least, of the ingrate that I love.

COUCY: Rather let my prince be worthy of himself.
The safety of the State concerns me today.
I speak to you of yours and you speak to me of love.
The Burgundians and the English in their sad alliance
Have excavated with our hands the tombs of France.
Your fate is doubtful. Your life prodigious.

ACT I

THE DUKE D'ALENCON A Tragedy By Voltaire

For our real enemies who we subjugated
Think that it needs three hundred years of constancy
To attack by degrees this vast power.
The Dauphin is offering you an honorable peace.

DUKE: No, from his favorites I will never have it.
Friend, I hate the English, but I hate more
These cowardly councilors whose favor outrages me.
This son of Charles VI, this odious court,
These insolent fops have embittered me without possibility of change.
My soul has been too much struck by their bloody affronts.
In a word, when I drew my sword against Charles,
It's not, dear Coucy, to place it at his feet,
To abase in his court our humiliated faces,
To serve in cowardice an arbitrary minister.

COUCY: No, it's to obtain a necessary peace.
Eh! what other interest could you listen to?

DUKE: The interest of a wrath that nothing can subdue.

COUCY: You push love and anger to the extreme.

DUKE: I know it; I haven't been able to soften my character.

COUCY: You must, you can: I'm not flattering you.
But, in condemning you, I will follow all your steps.
One must show his injustice to his friend
To enlighten him, to stop him on the edge of a precipice.
I had to do it, I did it despite your wrath.
You insist on falling in, and I'm rushing after you.

DUKE: Friend, what have you told me?

(An officer enters.)

ACT I

THE DUKE D'ALENCON A Tragedy By Voltaire

OFFICER: Lord, the assault is ready.
These walls are surrounded.

COUCY: March at our head.

DUKE: Friend, I am not in any pain to resist
The bold hands that come to insult me.
Of all the enemies that must still be fought
I fear only one, she's the one I adore.

CURTAIN

ACT II

THE DUKE: Victory is ours, your efforts assured it.
Your advice guided my distracted youth.
It's you whose precise mind and penetrating eyes
Watched in a hundred different places for my defense.
Why don't I have, like you, this calm courage
So cold in danger, so calm in storms?
Coucy is necessary to me in council, in battles,
And it's up to his great soul to direct my arm.

COUCY: Prince, this fiery warrior that they see appear in you
Will be master of all, when you are his master.
You've known how to rule and you've conquered.
Having at all times this useful virtue,
He who knows how to possess himself can command the world.

ACT II

THE DUKE D'ALENCON A Tragedy By Voltaire

As for me, whose arm weakly seconded yours,
I knew my duty and I really followed it ill;
In the heat of combat I served you so little.
Our warriors marched to victory on your heels.
And to follow the Bourbons, that is to fly to glory.
The leader of the assailants storming our ramparts
Was by your valiant hands thrice hurled down,
Doubtless at the foot of the walls exhaling his fury.
And paid for this assault with the rest of his life.

DUKE: Dear friend, who is this audacious chief,
Who, seeking death, hid from our eyes?
His helmet was closed: what inconceivable charm,
Even in combat made him respectable!
Is this the unique effect of his rare valor,
Which still imposes on me, and speaks in his favor?
While I was measuring my arms against him,
I felt, despite myself, new alarms.
And I don't know what trouble arose in me,
Be it this sad love to which I am captive
Over my distracted senses its tenderness spread
Even in the breast of battle it loaned me its weakness.
So that it seemed to mark all my actions
With the noble sweetness of its impressions.
Or be it the voice of my sad country
Speaking again in secret to the heart which betrayed it
Wherein the fatal dart was thrust into my heart
Corrupting at all times my glory and my happiness.

COUCY: As for the darts whose power your soul has sensed,
All advice is vain: permit my silence.
But this French blood which our hands have shed,
But the State, the country, I must speak to you about it.
I foresee that soon this fatal war,
These intestine troubles of the royal house,
These sad factions will give way to danger
To abandon France to the foreign hands
Whose laws are odious, whose race is little loved.
We hate the usurper, we love the fatherland.
And the blood of the Capets is still adored.
Sooner or later it's necessary that this sacred throne,
Whose divided branches bent by the storm
More united and more beautiful are our sole shade.
You, situated near the throne, attached to this throne,
Though the misfortunes of the time have torn you away from it,
Have foreign connections that you must resolve;
Interest formed them, honor can dissolve them.

THE DUKE D'ALENCON A Tragedy By Voltaire

Such are my feelings that I cannot betray.

DUKE: What! she still fears to present herself before my eyes!
What! when I submit my fortune at her knees,
Concealing myself from the shouts of an importunate crowd,
And the acclamations of soldiers that follow me,
I was seeking near her a happiness which flees me,
Adelaide still avoids my presence.
She insults my passion, my perseverance.
Her calm pride, producing its harshness,
Revels in my weakness and laughs at my sorrows!
Oh! if I believed it, if this too tender love

COUCY: Lord, it's time to return to my duty.
In your name, with assiduous efforts, I am going
To honor the conquerors, to comfort the vanquished,
To calm the disputes between your forces and the English.
Now those are your interests and I know no others.

DUKE: You aren't listening to me, you are talking about duty
When my heart is pouring its despair into yours.
Go ahead then, fulfill the duties of which I am incapable.
Go, leave a wretch alone with the scorn which overwhelms him.
I am blushing before you, but without repenting,
I cherish my errors, and don't want to give them up.
Go, leave me alone, I tell you, to my profound sorrow.
The one I love flees me, and I flee the whole world.
Go, you condemn too much the distractions of my heart.

COUCY: No, I pity your weakness and I fear the fury of it.

(Exit Coucy.)

DUKE: (alone) O heaven! how happy he is, and how I envy
The free pride of that bold soul!
He sees without alarm, he sees without being dazzled,
The funereal beauty that I want to hate.
This imperious star which presides over my life,
Has neither fires nor rays that his eye doesn't challenge.

ACT II

THE DUKE D'ALENCON A Tragedy By Voltaire

And as for me, I serve her in cowardice,
And I offer to her attractions
Vows that I detest, and that are not received!
Dangeste supports her and renders her more harsh.
How I hate the two of them! Let's flee the brother at least!
Let's leave there this captive that he's bringing hereabouts.
Except for Adelaide, all here wound my eyes.

(Exit Duke. Enter the Duke de Nemours, and Dangeste from a different direction.)

NEMOURS: At last, after three years you see me again, Dangeste!
But in what parts, o heaven! in what funereal condition!

DANGESTE: Your life's in peril and this agitated blood

NEMOURS: My deplorable life is very secure;
My wound is slight, and painless,
That of my heart is deep and terrible!

DANGESTE: Give thanks to heaven that permitted
You to fall to such enemies and
Not under the terrible yoke of a foreign hand.

NEMOURS: How hard it really is to be in the hands of his brother!

DANGESTE: But raised together in happier times,
The most tender friendship united the two of you.

NEMOURS: He used to love me, that's how it begins
But soon friendship flew off with infancy.
Ah! how the cruel one separated from me!
Faithless to the State, to nature, to king
They say he's taken from a foreign race
The fierce pride and harsh character!

THE DUKE D'ALENCON A Tragedy By Voltaire

He doesn't know what he made me suffer.
And my heart is torn apart not knowing how to hate him.

DANGESTE: He doesn't suspect that he has in his power
An unfortunate brother who animates vengeance.

NEMOURS: No, vengeance, friend, doesn't enter my heart any more.
What a different care distracts my valor!
Ah! speak: is it really true what rumor
Announces in France to my disturbed soul?
Is it true that an illustrious, unfortunate creature,
A heart, alas! too worthy of captivating his prayers,
Adelaide, at last, holds him in her power?
What do they say about it? What do you know of their relationship?

DANGESTE: Prisoner like you in these odious walls,
These secret mysteries offend my sight.
And in any case, what I knew But I see him appear.

NEMOURS: O shame! o despair which I cannot master.

(Enter the Duke with his following.)

DUKE: (to his suite) After having shown this rare valor
Can he still blush to have me for a conqueror?
He's turning away.

NEMOURS: O fate! o funereal day
Which tears the rest from my sad life!
Into what hands, o heaven, has my misfortune delivered me!

DUKE: What do I hear and what tone has struck my spirit!

THE DUKE D'ALENCON A Tragedy By Voltaire

NEMOURS: Are you unable to recognize me?

DUKE: Ah! Nemours, ah! my brother.

NEMOURS: That name, formerly so dear, that name despairs me.
I know him too well, this unfortunate brother,
Your conquered enemy, your enchained captive.

DUKE: You are no longer anything but my brother,
And my heart pardons you
But, I will confess it, your cruelty astonishes me
If your king pursues me, Nemours, was it up to you
To solicit, to fulfill this odious employment?
What have I done to you?

NEMOURS: You are the misfortune of my life.
I wish that today your hand had ravished me.

DUKE: What an unfortunate effect of our civil discontents!

NEMOURS: The discontents of my heart are even more frightful.

DUKE: I would have loved to display my courage against another.
Alas! how I pity you!

NEMOURS: I pity you more
For hating your country, for betraying without remorse
Both the king who loved you and the blood you spring from.

DUKE: Stop, spare me the infamy of the name of traitor
Perhaps at that unworthy word I would forget myself.
No, my brother, never have I less deserved

ACT II

THE DUKE D'ALENCON A Tragedy By Voltaire

This odious reproach of infidelity.
I am ready to give to our sad provinces,
To bloody France, to the rest of our princes,
The august and holy example of reunion,
After having given it that of division.

NEMOURS: You! you are capable

DUKE: This day, which seemed so funereal,
Will extinguish the remaining flames of discord.

NEMOURS: This day is too horrible!

DUKE : It's going to complete my wishes.

NEMOURS: What do you mean?

DUKE: Everything is changed, your brother is too happy.

NEMOURS: I believe you; they said that with an intense love,
Violent, frantic, for that's the way you love,
Your heart has been occupied for the entire last three months?

DUKE: I love, yes, fame has published it.
Yes, I love with fury: such an alliance
Seemed to be waiting for your presence for my happiness.
Yes, my resentment, my rights, my allies,
Glory, friends, enemies, I am placing them all at her feet.
(to his suite)
Go, and tell her that these two wretched brothers,
Hurled by destiny into contrary factions,
Are going to march henceforth under the same standard and
Are only waiting for a glance from her sovereign eyes.
(to Nemours)
Don't blame any further the love to which your brother is prey.

ACT II

THE DUKE D'ALENCON A Tragedy By Voltaire

To justify myself, it suffices that you see her.

NEMOURS: (aside) Cruel! (to Duke) She loves you!

DUKE: At least she owes me it.
It was only an obstacle to the success of my plans.
It no longer is: I intend that nothing separate us.

NEMOURS: (aside)
What terrible blows the cruel one is preparing for me!
(aloud) Listen! are you only going to insult my sorrow?
Do you know me? Do you know what I dared to attempt?
In this funereal place, do you know what brought me?

DUKE: Let's forget these subjects of discord and hate.
And you, my brother, and you, be witness here
If the excess of love can carry further!
What you condemn, or rather your prayer,
The generous Coucy, the king, the whole of France,
Are all demanding together and they couldn't obtain it.
Submissive and subjugated, I am offering it to her attractions.
(to Dangeste)
You feared the homage of the enemy of kings.
You love, you serve a court that outrages me.
Well! it's necessary to give in. Dispose of me.
I no longer have allies, I am your king's.
Love which, despite you, made us for each other
Leaves me no choice, but your side.
You, run, my dear brother, go at this moment
To announce to the court such a great change.
Be free; leave and of my sacrifices
Go offer to the king the happy fruits.
Would I were able today to present at his knees
She who has subdued me, who is bringing me to him,
Who of an enemy prince has made a faithful subject,
Changed by her looks, and virtuous through her!

NEMOURS: (aside) He's doing what I want and it's ruining me.
(aloud) O too cruel brother!

THE DUKE D'ALENCON A Tragedy By Voltaire

DUKE: What do I hear?

NEMOURS: I must speak.

DUKE: What do you wish to tell me? and why such alarms?
You don't know her formidable charms.

NEMOURS Heaven is placing an eternal obstacle between us.

DUKE: Between us that's too much. Cruel, what have you said?
But of you, indeed, was she unaware?
Heaven! to what frightful trap will my honor be delivered!
Tremble!

NEMOURS: As for me, how I tremble! Ah! I've devoured too much
The inexpressible horror in which you alone have delivered me.
I've kept my distractions silent too long.
Know me, then, barbarian, and take your vengeance.
Know a despair equal to your furors.
Strike! Behold my heart, and behold your rival!

DUKE: You, cruel one! you, Nemours!

NEMOURS: Yes, for the last two years
The most secret love has joined our fates.
It's you whose furors have tried to tear from me
The sole blessing on earth I've been able to attach to me.
For the last three months you've made my life horrors.
The ills that I've experienced surpass your jealousy.
From your distraction, judge my exaltation.
The two of us borrow from this blood I came from
The excess of passions that devour the soul.
Nature has given us both a heart all aflame.
My brother is my rival and I fought him.
I silenced blood, perhaps virtue.
Furious, blind, more jealous than yourself

THE DUKE D'ALENCON A Tragedy By Voltaire

I rushed, I flew, to separate you from the one I love.
Nothing held me back, neither your superb towers
Nor the few soldiers I had for aid.
Nor the time, nor the place, nor even your courage.
I saw only my flame and your passion which outraged me.
The only thing more I will tell you about this, without this same love
I would, to serve you, willingly lose my life.
So that, if you succumbed to your contrary destiny
You would find in me the most tender of brothers.
Let Nemours, who loves you, be sacrificed for you.
Everything in the whole world, except her and my king.
I don't wish in cowardliness to appease your vengeance.
I am your enemy, I am in your power.
In my heart love was stronger than friendship.
Be cruel like me, punish me without pity.
As well, you can assure yourself of your conquest,
You cannot marry her except at the price of my head.
In the face of the heavens, I give you my word,
I make you the witness of our vows against yourself.
Strike, so that after the blow, your jealous cruelty
Drags to the foot of the altars, your sister and my spouse!
Strike, I tell you: do you dare?

DUKE: Traitor, that's enough of that.
Soldiers, let him be removed from my sight: obey!

(Coucy enters.)

COUCY: I was going to leave, Lord, a bold populace
Is rising in tumult in the name of your brother.
The disorder is everywhere. Your confused soldiers
Are deserting the flags of their astonished chiefs.
And to complete the ills, the enemy is reassembling
To march its army on the alarmed city.

DUKE: Go, cruel brother, go! you won't revel
In the fruit of your hate and your attempts.
Go back in. I am going to display their master to the factious.
Dangeste, follow me. (to Coucy) You watch over this traitor.

(Exit the Duke and his suite.)

ACT II

THE DUKE D'ALENCON A Tragedy By Voltaire

COUCY: Can it be you, Lord? Would you have given the lie
To the blood of the heroes from which you come?
Would you have violated by this cowardly insult
The laws of war and those of nature?
Could a prince forget himself to this degree?

NEMOURS: No, but am I reduced to justifying myself?
Coucy, this populace is just, it's teaching you to know
That my brother is a rebel, and that Charles is his master.

COUCY: Listen: that would be the fulfillment of my wishes
To be able to reunite the two of you today.
With regret I see France desolated
Nature sacrificed to our dissensions
The English, raising themselves greatly on our common ruin,
Threatening this state that we ourselves have weakened.
If you have a heart worthy of your race
Let your disgrace serve the public welfare.
Bring the parties together: join yourself with me
To calm your brother and appease your king,
To extinguish the fire of our civil wars.

NEMOURS: Don't flatter yourself about that: your efforts are useless.
If discord alone had raised my arm,
If war and hate had guided my steps,
You could hope to reunite two brothers,
Each taking a contrary side.
A greater obstacle opposes itself to this reversal.

COUCY: And what is that, Lord?

NEMOURS: Ah! recognize love,
Recognize the fury which carries both of us away
Which made me bold and renders him barbarous.

COUCY: Must heaven see this? The fruit of the most noble plans

THE DUKE D'ALENCON A Tragedy By Voltaire

Annihilated by idle caprices.
Love to conquer all cruelly weakens
Blood which revolts to choke the tenderness
Of brothers who hate each other, and gives birth in all climes
To great passions the misfortune of States!
Prince, let's leave there the mystery of your loves.
I pity the two of you, but I serve your brother.
I am going to second him; I am going to join myself to him
Against an insolent populace, which is making itself your support.
The most pressing danger is the one which calls me.
I see that it can have one quite cruel ending.
I see passions more powerful than myself.
And love alone makes me shiver here with terror.
But the prince is waiting for me;
I am leaving you, and I am flying there.
Be my prisoner, but on your word.
That suffices me.

NEMOURS: I give it.

COUCY: And as for me,
I would wish that this step brought his to the king.
In the passion for pleasing, I would like to cement
A union so precious with the blood of our tyrants,
But these proud enemies are indeed less dangerous
Than this fatal love which will ruin the two of you.

CURTAIN

ACT III

NEMOURS: No, no, this populace is arming itself in vain to defend me.
My brother, stained with blood, intoxicated with vengeance

THE DUKE D'ALENCON A Tragedy By Voltaire

Became more jealous, more proud, and more cruel,
Dragging his victim to the altar before my eyes.
I didn't come to dispute my conquest
Just to be witness to this horrible celebration?
And in the despair into which I feel myself plunged,
By her flight at least my heart can be avenged.
Just heaven!

DANGESTE: Ah! Lord, where have you taken her?
What! you are abandoning her, you direct her flight!
She cannot leave except by following her spouse.
Leave me alone to confront the prince's wrath.

NEMOURS: Prisoner on my oath, in the horror which is urging me,
I am more enchained by my sole promise
Than by the heavy fetters
That the inhuman tyrants of this state could impose.
Honor delivers me to the power of my brother.
I can die for her and I cannot follow her.
She's already been escorted by obscure paths
That will soon free her from these guilty walls.
Love joined us and now love separates us.

DANGESTE: Still, you remain in the power of a barbarian.
Lord, the English are thirsty for your blood.
Is this blood still sacred to your brother?
Fear that he may grant, in his funereal wrath,
To the allies he loves, a rival that he detests.

NEMOURS: He wouldn't dare.

DANGESTE: His heart knows no check.
He threatened you: does he threaten idly?

NEMOURS: He will soon tremble: the king is coming and will avenge us.
Half of this populace are falling in with his flags.
Don't fear anything, friend. Heaven! what a frightful tumult!

THE DUKE D'ALENCON A Tragedy By Voltaire

(Enter the Duke and guards.)

DUKE: I hear him. It's himself. Stop, wretch!
Coward who's betraying me, unworthy rival, stop!

NEMOURS: He didn't betray you, but he's offering you his head.
Show to all the excess of your hate and your fury.
Go, don't waste time; heaven is arming itself as an avenger.
Tremble, your king is approaching, he's coming, he's going to appear
You only conquered me: beware still, your master.

DUKE: He can avenge you, but he cannot succor you;
And your blood

DANGESTE: No, cruel one, it's up to me to die
I did everything, it's by me your guard was seduced.
I won over your soldiers, I prepared her flight.
Punish such great attempts and crimes
For escaping slavery and for fleeing her tyrants.
But respect your brother, his wife, and yourself.
He didn't betray you, he's a brother who loves you.
He wants to serve you when you want to oppress him.
Is it up to you to punish when the crime is love?

DUKE: Let the two of them be guarded: go, let me be obeyed.
Go, I say: their sight increases my torture.

NEMOURS: Cruel one; I know the passions of our blood.
In us all the passions are furors.
I expect death from you; but, even in my misfortune,
I am sufficiently avenged: She hates you and she loves me.

(Exit Dangeste and Nemours.)

THE DUKE D'ALENCON A Tragedy By Voltaire

THE DUKE: She loves you and you are going to die!
How many horrors at once!
Love, unworthy love, you've ruined all three of us!

COUCY: He no longer knows himself, he's succumbing to his rage.

DUKE: Well! Would you suffer my shame and my outrage?
Time presses: do you want an odious rival
To carry off the faithless one and marry her in front of my eyes?
You are afraid to answer me. Would you wait until the traitor
Has raised my populace and delivered me to his master?

COUCY: I see clearly the effect the role of the king has
In these weary hearts in making faith waver.
The flame of sedition quelled
Is still alive, in hearts in secret reignited,
Believe me, sooner or later we'll see rejoined
The scattered debris of the French Empire.
The standards of France have appeared in the plain.
And you will be ruined if this agitated people
Believe treason to be safe.
Your dangers are growing.

DUKE: Cruel one, what must be done?

COUCY: Prevent them; subdue love and its wrath.
My prince, in this extremity let's still have
The strength to take a sure role.
We can conjure or brave the tempest,
Whatever you decide, my hand is always ready.
You wanted, this morning, with a happy treaty
To appease with glory an irritated monarch.
Don't be discouraged; direct, and I hope
To sign this salutary peace in your name.
But if you must fight and rush to death,
You know that a friend will not survive you.

DUKE: Friend, leave me to descend to the tomb alone.

ACT III

THE DUKE D'ALENCON A Tragedy By Voltaire

Live to serve my cause, and to avenge my ashes.
My destiny is accomplished, and I rush to be over with it.
He who really seeks death is sure to find it.
But I want it to be terrible, and when I succumb,
I want to see my rival dragged into my tomb.

COUCY: What do you mean! With what horror are you possessed?

DUKE: He is in this tower where you alone command.

COUCY: What! your brother?

DUKE: Him? Is Nemours my brother?
He braves my love, he braves my wrath,
He's delivering me to his master; he alone oppressed me.
He caused my people to rise; still he is loved.
In one day he commits all crimes against me!
Share my furious rages; they are legitimate.
You alone, after my death, will reap the fruit.
The head of these English introduced into the town
Demands in the name of his people the head of a perjurer.

COUCY: You've promised them to betray nature?

DUKE:
They've proscribed the blood of the faithless one for a long while.

COUCY: And to obey them you will pierce his flank?

DUKE: No, I won't obey their foreign hate.
I am obeying my rage and intend to satisfy it.
Does it matter to me whether it be the State or my vain allies?

THE DUKE D'ALENCON A Tragedy By Voltaire

COUCY: So then you are sacrificing him to love,
And you charge, me, me with his death!

DUKE: I wasn't expecting this prompt justice from you.
I am truly wretched, really worthy of pity.
Betrayed in my love, betrayed in my friendship.
Ah! too lucky Dauphin, it's your fate that I envy.
At least your friendship has never been betrayed.
And when you were offended Tanguy du Chatel
Served you without scruple and without hesitating.

COUCY: He paid dearly for that terrible sacrifice.

DUKE: Mine will cost more, but I wish this service.
Yes, I insist on it. My death will follow it instantly.
But, at least, my rival will perish before me.
Go, in the fate that presses me, I can still
Find friends who will keep their promise.
Others will serve me and won't urge
The excuse of ingrates, that sad virtue.

COUCY: (after a long silence)
No, I've chosen my role, be it crime, be it justice,
You shall not complain that a friend betrayed you.
I deliver myself, not you, not to you furor,
But to other reasons which speak to my heart.
I see that it is time for extreme measures
That the most holy duties can silence themselves.
I won't allow you to test the fidelity
Of someone other than myself in such moments.
And you will recognize, by the success of my zeal,
If Coucy loved you, and if he was loyal.

(Exit Coucy.)

DUKE: No, his frigid friendship won't serve me.
No, I have no friends: all hearts are ingrates.
(to a soldier)

ACT III

THE DUKE D'ALENCON A Tragedy By Voltaire

Listen, go to the tower diligently.
(speaking low to him)
You understand: fly and serve my vengeance.
My heart counted too much on the uncertain Coucy.
He saw my furor with calm.
One doesn't comfort sorrows that one scorns
It is necessary that my vengeance be placed in other hands.
You, that on our ramparts carry our flags,
Let them prepare for new perils.
(soldiers leave)
Well! so that's the end of it: a perfidious woman
Is leading me to the tomb charged with parricide!
Who, me, I will tremble at the blows to come!
I cherish vengeance and cannot taste it.
I shiver, a voice quaking and severe
Is crying in the depths of my heart. Stop: he is your brother!
Ah! unfortunate prince, mired in your hate,
Think of more holy laws. Nemours was your friend.
O days of our childhood! o past tendernesses!
He was the confidant of all my thoughts.
With what innocence and what effusions
Our hearts experienced their first feelings!
How many times, sharing my burgeoning alarms,
Did he dry my tears with a fraternal hand!
And it's I who am sacrificing him, and that same hand
Of a brother that I loved, will tear him apart.
Funereal passion whose madness distracts me,
No, I wasn't born to become barbarous.
I feel what a cruel weight the crime is
But, what am I saying? Nemours is the only criminal?
I recognize my blood, but it's his fury
He is carrying off the creature on whom my life depends.
He loves Adelaide Ah! too jealous distraction.
He loves her; is that a felony deserving of death?
But he himself, he attacks me, he braves my wrath.
He deceives me, he hates me Never mind, he is my brother.
It's for him alone to love: he living, he is happy,
It's up to me to die, but let's die generous.
I haven't heard the homicidal signal,
The organ of felonies, the voice of parricide.
There is still time.

(An officer enters.)

DUKE: Let everything be suspended.
Fly to the tower.

THE DUKE D'ALENCON A Tragedy By Voltaire

OFFICER: Lord

DUKE: What are you alarmed by?
Heaven! you are weeping.

OFFICER: I saw, not far from this door,
A body stained with blood that was being carried in secret.
It was Coucy who directed it and I fear the fate that

DUKE: (cannon fire can be heard)
What! already! what do I hear? Ah! heaven! my brother is dead!
He is dead! and I'm alive, and the earth is opening up
And lightning hasn't avenged his ruin!
Enemy of the state, factious, inhuman,
Unnatural brother, ravisher, assassin,
O heaven! I've dug out abysses around me.
How love has changed me, how many crimes it has cost me!
The veil is torn away, I knew myself ill.
I've arrived at the summit of felonies!
Ah, Nemours! ah, my brother! ah, day of my ruin!
I know that you loved me, and my arm assassinated you!
My brother!

OFFICER: Lord, Adelaide, urgently
Wishes to speak with you in secret for a moment.

DUKE: Dear friend, prevent the cruel one from coming.
I can neither sustain nor endure her presence.
I don't deserve to perish before her eyes.
(drawing his sword)
Tell her that my blood

COUCY: (entering) What furious distractions!

DUKE: Let me alone to punish myself and give myself up to justice.
(to Coucy)

ACT III

THE DUKE D'ALENCON A Tragedy By Voltaire

What! you are made the accomplice in an assassination.
Minister of my crime, did you obey me?

COUCY: Lord, I had promised to serve you.

DUKE: Wretch that I am! your rough severity
Combated the weakness of my hand a hundred times.
Did you have to give in to my sad wishes
When my passion directed you to crimes?
You obeyed me only to destroy my brother!

COUCY: Had I refused this bloody ministry,
Your blind wrath wasn't swiftly
Going to charge another hand with the care of avenging you?

DUKE: Love, only love, always master of my feelings,
By separating me from my reason would perhaps have excused me.
But you, whose wisdom and reflections
Have calmed all passions in your breast,
You whose firm and rigid mind I'd often feared,
Calmly permitted a parricide!

COUCY: Well! since shame and repentance
By which virtue speaks to those able to betray it
With such just remorse has penetrated your soul,
Because despite the excess of your blind passion
At the price of your blood you wanted to save,
This blood that your madness wanted to deprive you of,
I can in that case explain myself. I can in that case inform you
That Coucy knew in the end how to protect you from yourself.
Know yourself, Lord, and calm your sorrows.
(Dangeste enters)
(to Dangeste)
But keep your remorse and dry your tears,
Let this day be salutary to all three of you.
Come, appear, prince, embrace your brother!

(Nemours appears.)

THE DUKE D'ALENCON A Tragedy By Voltaire

DANGESTE: Lord

DUKE: My brother

DANGESTE: Ah! heaven!

DUKE: What could he have thought?

NEMOURS: (coming forward to the middle of the stage)
I dare yet to see you again, to pity you and to embrace you.

DUKE: My crime is even greater since your heart forgot it.

DANGESTE: Coucy, worthy hero who gave him life.

DUKE: He gave it to all three of us.

COUCY: An unworthy assassin,
Before my eyes, raised his hand against Nemours.
I struck down the barbarian, and still foreseeing
The blind madness of the passion which is devouring you,
I made them swiftly give the odious signal,
Certain that in time your eyes would be opened.

DUKE: After this grand example and this exemplary service
The reward that I owe you is to make myself worthy of you.

NEMOURS: The two of us would like to serve you next to the king.
What is your plan? Speak.

THE DUKE D'ALENCON A Tragedy By Voltaire

DUKE: To punish myself,
To surrender all three of us to an equal justice.
To expiate before you, by the greatest sacrifice,
The greatest of crimes in which the fatality
Of love and wrath precipitated me.
I loved Adelaide and my cruel passion
Is again stirring itself up for her in my desolated heart.
Coucy knew to what degree I adore her attractions
When my jealous rage ordered your death.
Still persecuted by the fire that possesses me
I adore her yet more, and my heart gives in to her.
I'm tearing my heart out by making you happy;
Love each other, but at least the two of you forgive me.

NEMOURS: Ah! your brother at your feet, worthy of your clemency,
Equals your blessings by his gratitude.

DANGESTE: Yes, Lord, with him I embrace your knees.
The most tender friendship is going to rejoin me to you.
You are paying us too well for the sorrows we've suffered.

DUKE: Ah! it's too much to display to me my misfortunes and my losses.
But you've all taught me to follow virtue.
My heart has not surrendered piecemeal.
(to Nemours)
I am your brother in everything; and my softened soul
Imitates your example and cherishes its fatherland.
Let's go inform the king, for whom you battled,
Of my crime, my remorse and your happiness,
Yes, I wish to equal your faith, your zeal,
Towards blood, country, to faithful friendship.
And make you forget after so many torments
All my distractions through the strength of virtues.

CURTAIN