

# Side #1: Emilie

## 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: ♥<sup>2</sup>)*

*(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:  $F=mv^2$  remembers this now...)*

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

*(She erases the <sup>2</sup>:  $F=mv$ )*

Now it's "dead."

*(She squares it again:  $F=mv^2$ )*

EMILIE. *(cont.)* And alive again. Mathematically speaking. But there is something sweeping about this notion: '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.

## Side #2: Emilie

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EMILIE

EMILIE. Oh well, thank you for being such a gentleman.

VOLTAIRE. For everything I did for myself, that I *needed* for myself, I'm sorry. I'm sorry I ruined *your* version of how *my* life would happen. I'm sorry!

EMILIE. You betray me, in my own house, twice?! You trash my work, you lie to me, you ruin everything we built, everything that mattered, wrecked it, ripped it up, ripped it, ravaged it – everything that made sense – GONE!

*(She realized she has just ripped Newton's Principia, pages scatter on the floor.)*

~~VOLTAIRE. I'm sorry, I forgot that.~~

*(EMILIE whistles to MADAM who charges V and slaps him hard. MADAM nods to EMILIE and leaves.)*

I would suggest, if you wish to retain my friendship and the immediate privileges that arrangement entails, not least of which is keeping you out of jail on an alarming number of occasions, that you refrain from any form of literary bribery until I am quite out of range. You have betrayed me and broken my heart. Get the hell out of my house.

*(VOLTAIRE leaves. A moment to pick up the pages, salvage the precious book.)*

*(EMILIE wipes through all the marks under LOVE – as well as the <sup>2</sup> of the ♥.)*

EMILIE. One must study throughout.

*(VOLTAIRE and SOUBRETTE, as Marie-Louise, enter and she lets him have his way.)*

*(EMILIE senses their behavior but won't acknowledge them.)*

Study not only affords women a chance at the glory denied them in so many other pursuits –

*(They knock something over, challenging Emilie's focus as Emilie make a few marks under PHILOSOPHY.)*



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?

# Side #4: Voltaire w/Emilie

EMILIE

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(EMILIE turns to us, furious.)

EMILIE. *But it doesn't.* Easy is ignorance, is a myth. That the greatest thinkers were ever remotely, even for a second *satisfied*, is mythology. Newton was not content, he was ravenous, he was wracked, he was *not done*, and I'm sure he was furious on his deathbed because of it.

Because the only thing that lasts – the only thing that you can count on to be there for you? Not people, not love...Physics.

That's the only thing that works like God is supposed to: Fair and constant.

*Let's move on.*

(Pause. Nothing happens.)

Please?

(Nothing.)

EMILIE. (cont.) The scene in which Emilie gets a break? Or a friend?

(V approaches her cautiously. She sighs, to us...)

Of course, physics often promotes *circular* behavior... here I go again.

VOLTAIRE. Marquise. It's been too, too long. Months without a word...

EMILIE. (totally lying) Has it been? Hadn't noticed. So busy with the Newton.

VOLTAIRE. (trying to apologize sincerely) Yes. Well. Emilie. I came here to – to tell you – to ask you if you could – we could...*have* each other again.

EMILIE. Oh, V, I'm done with "having."

VOLTAIRE. I don't mean – I mean that I need you. Extensively. And I know that I was, on occasion in the past, unthinking.

But I'm broken open, empty without you. You are my... buoyancy. Without you I sink.

EMILIE. You sank yourself.

VOLTAIRE. I know I did. And it wrecked me. Please. Take me back.

EMILIE. The world can't go back, it'd be rude if *we* did.

VOLTAIRE. Then forward. As friends.

EMILIE. (*scoffs*) Friends?

VOLTAIRE. *Eventual* friends?

(*beat*)

Because you love me.

(*She glares.*)

Eventually?

(*Beat*)

EMILIE. The Marquis and I have been invited to Luneville.

VOLTAIRE. Luneville? Ugh. Dreadful place –

EMILIE. The Duke's a fan of your work.

VOLTAIRE. – with surprisingly good taste.

EMILIE. My husband will come later, but you're welcome to join me. If you won't be a pain.

VOLTAIRE. I suppose I could summon up my best behavior.

EMILIE. That won't be any fun.

VOLTAIRE. There's my girl.

EMILIE. Not yours. But glad you're back.

(*to us*)

And part of me thinks that Physics has some heart after all.

(VOLTAIRE *smiles, ushers her into...*)

The scene at a new court, with old friends made new.

(*The royal court of Luneville. MADAM, SOUBRETTE, GENTLEMAN [as Saint-Lambert], create a tableau of the court.*)

(VOLTAIRE and EMILIE are greeted with applause and they each are separated for conversation – EMILIE with SOUBRETTE and MADAM; and VOLTAIRE with GENTLEMAN.)

MADAM. It is very special of you to join us, Marquise.

SOUBRETTE. We've all heard of you, it's true.

EMILIE. We're so honored to be here.

# Side #5 Emilie e Daughter (Player 2)

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EMILIE

(SOUBRETTE enters as Gabrielle, Emilie's daughter.  
Young but regal.)

EMILIE. (cont.) She is all woman, and will have a much easier life for it. She is loyal, demure, and...entertainable. She is marrying a prince today.

The scene in which –

SOUBRETTE. The scene in which the daughter is seen and finally heard. On her wedding day.

SOUBRETTE. I wanted to be like you. I still do.

EMILIE. No you don't. Your life will be much better than mine. Marrying royalty makes you –

SOUBRETTE. Just another wife.

EMILIE. It makes you queen. And everyone wants to be queen.

SOUBRETTE. Everyone wants to *choose* to be queen. Why don't I get a choice?

EMILIE. Because you don't need one.

SOUBRETTE. You got one.

EMILIE. I'm an exception. And being exceptional is exhausting. You don't want that.

SOUBRETTE. How do you know?

EMILIE. Didn't those nuns teach you to respect your mother?

SOUBRETTE. My mother is a picture in my locket. I don't know you. You shipped me off to a convent. Now you marry me off to a prince. I don't have a mother, and I don't have a life that's mine, and that's your fault.

EMILIE. My *fault* that you have a future? You should be grateful that your father and I *arranged* for such a –

SOUBRETTE. *Bargained*. You bargained *me* for such a life.

EMILIE. Gabrielle, there are so many other girls who would've begged –

SOUBRETTE. But I'm not other girls. I'm your girl. Your girl.



EMILIE. And that makes you lucky. So live your lucky life. It will be easier, by far –

SOUBRETTE. You keep saying *easier*. I don't want easier. You didn't care what was easy. You wanted what you wanted, and you gave me up for it.

EMILIE. I didn't. I didn't give you up.

SOUBRETTE. You chose books over me. I want a choice. *Your choice.*

EMILIE. You don't want –

SOUBRETTE. *I do.*

EMILIE. You don't want my life.

SOUBRETTE. You never gave –

EMILIE. You want an easy life.

SOUBRETTE. Never gave me –

EMILIE. A good life.

SOUBRETTE. A chance. You got one. And you could've given me mine. Instead. You gave me what every other *kept* woman gives her stupid daughter. Instead of what you know, here's what I know...

*(SOUBRETTE changes her tone.)*

SOUBRETTE. A girl does not slouch. Does not speak in excess. Does not question or laugh loudly. She marries rich. She obeys. She submits. And she–

EMILIE. I'm sorry.

SOUBRETTE. She has –

EMILIE. I'm sorry.

SOUBRETTE. And she has an easy life. Good luck with yours.

*(SOUBRETTE starts to leave, then comes back for a harsh hug. The lights crackle and plummet out to blackness.)*

*(Immediately the lights rise. SOUBRETTE is gone. EMILIE is alone.)*

EMILIE. And I see what I missed: myself in her. What have I done? What any thoughtless *man* would do. I assumed and missed a woman of my own...element.

I'm sorry. I am so sorry.

# Side #6: Emilie w/ Jean Francoise Player 3 ~~Player 3~~

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EMILIE

VOLTAIRE. How's the book coming?

EMILIE. Excellent. How's the play?

VOLTAIRE. Marvelous.

EMILIE. Good.

VOLTAIRE. I just love it here.

Don't you just love it, Monsieur?

GENTLEMAN. Oh. Yes. Quite.

VOLTAIRE. Good boy. Heel.

EMILIE. Coming to cards?

VOLTAIRE. I look forward to losing.

EMILIE. Maybe you'll get lucky.

VOLTAIRE. Maybe I will.

The Duke calls you, boy. Wouldn't dally.

*(V exits.)*

GENTLEMAN. I adore you.

EMILIE. I can tell.

GENTLEMAN. This is the most astonishing -

EMILIE. Astounding -

GENTLEMAN. Complete surprise.

EMILIE. I didn't expect.

GENTLEMAN. I can't resist.

EMILIE. I hope you don't.

GENTLEMAN. Everyday.

EMILIE. Yes.

GENTLEMAN. Forever.

EMILIE. God yes.

GENTLEMAN. You are... You are...

EMILIE. Speak, soldier-poet.

GENTLEMAN. The surprise of my life. The hope of my heart.

*(SOUBRETTE runs on and takes EMILIE's place as they kiss. GENTLEMAN and SOUBRETTE exits.)*

*(EMILIE makes many marks under LOVE.)*

# Side #7 (Soubrette) Player 1

EMILIE

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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  $F=mv^2$ .)

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.

# Side #8: Phys 4 (Mairan)

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EMILIE

**EMILIE.** "But sometimes truth is snuffed out by bombast. Like the essay by Monsieur Mairan, current secretary of the Academy, denouncing *force vive* with unfounded proofs."

**VOLTAIRE.** *Emilie...*

*(V tries to stop her from saying this last bit, but...)*

**EMILIE.** "He is a course in how *not* to proceed through your studies."

**VOLTAIRE.** That's a mistake.

**EMILIE.** What?

**VOLTAIRE.** That last part? You just insulted the secretary of the Academy.

**EMILIE.** He's an idiot.

**VOLTAIRE.** And the *secretary* of the Academy.

**EMILIE.** Then he'll understand it's just friendly critical discourse.

*(As EMILIE goes to put a mark under PHILOSOPHY...GENTLEMAN, still as Mairan and quite upset, turns.)*

**GENTLEMAN.** Madam Marquise,

Though you somehow found yourself published on the topic of Force Vive, you rush to judgment like any woman confronted with ideas beyond her skill. My dear, you simply did not understand my mathematics, nor did you properly read my own writing as you misquote me throughout. I would be happy to guide you through my reasoning, if you would permit me at your little Leibniz academy in the fields. But as my equations prove there is no need to square force: Newton is right, Leibniz is wrong, and you, my dear, are out of your element. All you need to do, Madam, is to read, and reread, and perhaps you could bring us something worth our time.

*(A moment for his own satisfaction)*

**EMILIE.** *(to us)* It is an honor just to merit a response. But I'll break him anyway.

# Side #9: Player 5 (Madam)

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EMILIE

EMILIE. These rules will make you happy, she'd say.

MADAM. A girl does not slouch, does not speak in excess, or laugh loudly attracting negative attention. Do not look your betters in the eye. Do not read in public.

MADAM. Take a man's right arm, not left.

MADAM. When introduced to him, smile, bow, and repeat his name. In that order.

MADAM. Do not take cheese at dinner parties. Powder your wig persistently. Display your bust enthusiastically. Be demure.

MADAM. Do not *question*. Comment, only.

MADAM. This is how things are.

MADAM. The proper technique of fanning! Hold away from one's face, snap the wrist, raise the arm, and flap like a bird.

EMILIE. So I play peacock?

MADAM. Emilie.

EMILIE. You just said!

MADAM. You'll never marry.

EMILIE. Then I can stop all this.

MADAM. The *mouth* should be kept closed when...*thinking*.

EMILIE. Why?!

MADAM. No questions!

EMILIE. But the world is bigger than this!

MADAM. Not for you. So follow the damn rules.

It's easier. And *easy* makes us happy.

(MADAM *exits*.)