PART I

LETTER V

All powerful Heaven, I had a soul for sorrow, give me one now for felicity! Love, soul's very life, come and sustain mine which in the point of fainting. Ah, virtue's charm that defies all definition! Invincible force of the voice of one's beloved! Fortune (happiness), pleasure, exstasy, how bitter-sweet your features! Who could withstand their blow? How can I contain the torrent of delights that inundates my soul? How set to rest the fears of a timid loved one? Julie... no! my Julie on her knees! my Julie shedding tears!... she before whom the entire universe should bow beg the man who adores her not to outrage her name or dishonor his own! I would be indignant with you if such a thing were possible, for fears that do dishonor to us both. Chaste and celestial beauty, you must learn better how to judge your dominion. For, if I worship the charms of your person, is it not because they are the image of that spotless soul which gives them life, and whose every feature bears the mark of its divinity? You tremble that you may yield to my attacks? But what attacks has she to fear who cloaks with honor and respect every sentiment she inspires? Is there upon this earth a man so vile as to dare to tamper with your love?

allow, oh allow me to savor to the full the unexpected happiness of being loved.... beloved by such.... earthly thrones, how far beneath me now do you appear! Let me reread a thousand times that precious letter where your love and sentiments are written down in characters of fire; where, despite the agitation of a troubled heart, I see with within an honest soul the tumultuous passions still preserve the saintly character of virtue. What monster, having read that touching letter, could bring himself to take advantage of your state, and demonstrate by the most indelible of acts the profound contempt with which he holds himself? No, dearest love, you have nothing to fear from a loyal friend who is incapable of deceiving you. Although my reason be forever lost, although the tumult in my senses increases every instant, from this moment your person will be for me the most bewitching but the most sacred trust ever bestowed on mortal man. My passion and its object shall both remain inalterably pure. More repugnant still than the vilest incest is the thought of sullying your chaste beauty with a sacriligious touch, and your safety is no more inviolable with your father than with the man who loves you.
I would shrink more from touching your chaste beauty with impure hands than from the vilest incest, and your safety is no more inviolable in the keeping of your father than in that of your lover. Oh, if ever that fortunate lover were to forget for one instant when with you... What, could Julie's lover have an abject soul? No, when I cease to love virtue, my love for you will end; and when I commit my first offense, I shall no longer want your love.

I beseech you then in the name of the tender and pure love that binds us to set your fears at rest; let that be the pledge of my restraint and respect; let that be its own guarantee. Why should your fears exceed my desires? To what other happiness could I aspire when my whole heart is barely sufficient to contain the one it now enjoys? We are both still young, it is true; we are in love for the first and only time in our lives, and know as yet but little of what passions are; but is honor, who conducts us, a deceitful guide? Is that experience necessary which can only be obtained through vice? I may be deluding myself, but I feel that only right and honest sentiments are rooted in my heart. I am not a vile seducer as you called me in your despair, but a simple and sensitive man, who easily says all that is in his heart, but holds nothing there for which he has need to blush. To sum up everything in one word, I abhor crime even more than I love Julie. I know not, no I do not even know whether the love that you awaken is compatible with a forgetfulness of virtue, and if any but an honest soul could be fully sensitive to all its charms. For myself, the more I fall under their spell, the more I am inspired to good. what noble deed, which I would never have undertaken for its own sake, would I not do now to make myself worthy of your love? Ah, confide yourself into the passion (love) you inspire, which you know so well how to purify. Believe that it is sufficient that I adore you to make me forever respectful of the precious trust you have placed in my hands. Ah, what a heart will I possess! True happiness, aureole of our beloved (all we love), triumph of a love that does credit to itself, how preferable are you to all its pleasures!