

Summary of Volume 1, Chapters 5-12

- As they're traveling, Valancourt gives all of what little money he has to a poor shepherd woman with children, a move that St. Aubert admires.
- Valancourt separates from the St. Auberts, each party going their own way.
- When the St. Auberts reach a small town, they receive a letter from Monsieur Quesnel, who informs them that they are financially ruined—all their money has been lost.
- St. Aubert grows sicker and weaker and finally dies in the house of a kind peasant where he and Emily have taken refuge for the night.
- Before he dies, St. Aubert tells Emily about secret papers he's hidden under the floorboards back at home. He makes her promise to burn them without looking at them.
- Emily goes to stay at a nearby convent temporarily. At her father's funeral, she faints for a second time, overcome with grief.
- Emily ends up journeying back home.
- She surprisingly meets Valancourt at the old fishing house. Remember—it turns out he's from a good family that lives in the area.
- Emily definitely wants to look at the papers her father told her about, but after a struggle with her conscience, she burns them. But she finds another packet with the miniature painting of the woman (not her mother) that she had seen her father looking at before they set out on their travels.
- Valancourt comes to see Emily at her house, but is rebuffed by Madame Cheron, St. Aubert's worldly sister, who has come to take charge of Emily. After asking Emily how rich Valancourt is and finding out he has nothing, Madame Cheron sends V. packing.
- Madame Cheron takes Emily to her home in Tholouse, where Emily discovers that her aunt is very mean and cares only about wealth and connections. Madame Cheron begins entertaining some sketchy Italian noblemen at her house, including our main villain, Count Montoni.
- Meanwhile, Valancourt writes a letter to Mme. Cheron, asking for her permission to pay his respects to Emily, but Mme. Cheron refuses and scolds Emily severely for exchanging "love letters" with V., which isn't true.
- Madame Cheron throws a ball, Valancourt shows up, but dances with a different woman than Emily. The aunt finds out that Valancourt is related to her wealthy friend, and suddenly her attitude toward the young man changes. She encourages Valancourt and Emily to hang out together, which they do, and of course, they fall deeply in love and become engaged.
- Meanwhile, Emily discovers that Mme. Cheron, surprisingly, has married Montoni very quickly in a secret wedding. Madame Cheron announces that the whole family is going to Venice, Italy, with Montoni and that Emily must end things with Valancourt. The two have a long, tearful good-bye. Although Valancourt proposes a secret marriage, Emily refuses.