

Quills by Doug Wright

RENEE PELAGIE

(Renée Pélagie is the wife of The Marquis de Sade, The Charenton Asylum's most notorious inmate. Renée is extremely grief stricken that her husband's sadomasochistic pornography has tarnished her reputation, she cannot go anywhere in public without being recognized as the madman's wife.)

Everywhere I go, the same scenario ensues. The other evening, at the opera, I was seated in my box, a few scant meters from the stage. In the midst of her aria, the soprano spotted my face in the crowd. She stopped, midnote. The orchestra ceased its play, and the diva cried, "Look! Here in our midst, Satan's bride!" Slowly, a thousand opera glasses turned to stare in my direction. I bolted to the door. Stricken, I hauled myself into the nearest church. There, I pleaded for absolution from my husband's sins. When I left, the very pew in which I sat was yanked from the floor by a trio of priests and carried into the courtyard. There, as they intoned the sacred rite of exorcism, they burned the very wood I had sullied with my behind. Oh, Doctor, forgive my hysteria, but I am a woman plagued!