



## Dangerous Liaisons

*Pierre Choderlos de Laclos (1741 - 1803)*

Read by:	Multiple readers	Format:	MP3 CD in DVD case
Length:	18 hours 40 minutes	Catalog:	DB-1142
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Style:	Collaborative	MSLP:	\$11.99
Genre:	Fiction		

*Dangerous Liaisons*, also known as *Dangerous Connections*, by Pierre Choderlos de Laclos, is a masterpiece of 18th century literature. An epistolary novel consisting of four volumes of letters written by and to the various characters, it was viewed as scandalous when it was first published in 1782 for its frank and pitiless exploration of seduction, revenge and malice. The story centers on the rivalry of two aristocrats, Marquise de Merteuil and Vicomte de Valmont, who use seduction to manipulate and humiliate others. Merteuil seeks to corrupt the virtuous young Cecile de Volanges, while Valmont has his sights on seducing the married Mme de Tourvel. Spite and revenge drive each to pursue the object of the other's desire, the rivalry escalates to war, and the two duel to settle the score. One dies, and damage, guilt

and suffering inhabits the lives of the survivors.

*Les Liaisons dangereuses* is thought by some to have been a depiction of the decadent French aristocracy just prior to the French Revolution, and it easy to imagine in hindsight the revolution being inspired by the damnable behavior of the amoral libertines. There is another perspective, however, that sees the book as a morality tale of sorts that shows how the wages of sin give rise to dishonor, disfigurement and death, and it is worth noting that the book was widely distributed and enjoyed by the conservative nobles of the Ancien Regime in spite of (or perhaps because of) its scandalous reputation.

**Pierre Choderlos de Laclos** (October 18, 1741 – September 5, 1803) was a French writer, official and military officer famous for *Les Liaisons dangereuses* (*Dangerous Liaisons*) and also known as the inventor of the modern artillery shell. Born and raised in Amiens, he attended military academy and climbed the ranks as an artillery officer in various postings. Bored by the military, he began writing poetry, comic opera, and other works before starting on *Dangerous Liaisons* in 1779. His goal was to “write a work which departed from the ordinary, which made a noise, and which would remain on earth after his death”.

He was an active freemason and helped Louis Phillippe II, Duke of Orleans, lead the Grand Orient of France, the largest Masonic order in France. He left the army in 1788 to serve the Duke of Orleans, undertaking diplomatic duties during the French Revolution. He left the Duke to serve in the Republican Ministry of War. He eventually joined the party of Napoleon Bonaparte and was appointed Brigadier General in the army of the Rhine in 1800. He died of dysentery and malaria in 1803 while serving as Commander-in-Chief of the Reserve artillery in Taranto, Italy.