

Deleted Scene from *Necessary Sins* (Alternate Opening)

Charleston, South Carolina

October 1791

Light, light, LIGHT! her thumping heart seemed to scream in her ears. In her haste, Marguerite dropped the candlestick. It clattered over the hearth, yet René did not stir. Had her dream not been a dream?

Marguerite fumbled for the candle and thrust its end into the embers till the wick caught. She shielded the flame with her hand and rushed around her bed. She brought the candle as close as she dared to René's crib, till its glow revealed his dark curls and sleeping face.

At last Marguerite could breathe. He was here. He was safe. He was *hers*.

Of course René's mother had not come for him. Even if Marguerite hadn't killed her, the girl could not possibly know where he was. Half an ocean separated them. Even if the girl pounded on the door this very moment, no one would listen to her. She couldn't speak French, let alone English. Most of all, she was only a slave.

In the candlelight, René's skin looked nearly as white as his pillow. He belonged here with Marguerite. She was a respectable émigrée, a baroness. She could give him the life he deserved. She was his grandmother, the only mother he would ever need. If René had not forgotten that turbaned *mulâtresse* already, he would soon enough.

If only Marguerite could forget her.

Author's Note

It took me two and a half decades to write the four-book Lazare Family Saga. Over these years, I wrote at least a dozen opening scenes, set in different places and times in the point-of-view of different characters. *Where does this story begin?* I kept asking myself and exploring different answers.

Chronologically, Marguerite's choices set everything else in motion. But Marguerite is a difficult character. She's necessary, but she's not supposed to be sympathetic. I had beta readers tell me they didn't know who to root for because they didn't like anyone in Marguerite's scenes.

So this opening scene is a little trick to get you on Marguerite's side—and then yank the rug out from under you when you realize she's *kidnapped* this child she's so worried about. I suppose it's my thriller opening.

Part of me regrets losing this scene. But *Necessary Sins* really belongs to Marguerite's great-grandson Joseph, and finally I decided I should begin with him. Do you think I made the right choice?