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## Cast of Characters

*The Illustrious Theater Company (L'Illustre Theatre):*

JEAN-BAPTISTE POQUELIN, known as MOLIÈRE, age 32 at this time, playing Sganarelle

BÉJART, playing Gorgibus and Alcantor

MADELEINE BÉJART, playing Sabine and La Comtesse

ARMANDE BÉJART, playing Lucinda and Dorimène

LA GRANGE, playing Valère and Lycaste

LA THORILLIÈRE, playing Dr. Toxin and Geronimo

BRÉCOURT, playing Dr. Prophylactus and Alcidas

DE CROISY, playing Dr. Mortice and Maphurius

GROS-RENÉ, playing Dr. LaFlush, and a Servant

BEAUVAL, playing The Notary and Pancrace

CATHERINE DE BRIE, playing A Gypsy

MARQUISE-THÉRÈSE DU PARC, playing a Gypsy

*The Court:*

KING LOUIS XIV

THE HERALD

# MOLIÈRE PLAYS PARIS

INCLUDING:  
*THE LOVE DOCTOR*  
AND *THE FORCED MARRIAGE*

translated and adapted by Nagle Jackson

FROM THE PLAYS BY MOLIÈRE

## PART ONE

### THE LOVE DOCTOR

*(We are onstage in the Salle des Gardes of the Old Louvre, Paris, October 24, 1658. MOLIÈRE and his troupe have just performed Nicomède, a classical piece by Corneille. They are in classical Roman costume. As lights come up, they are taking their curtain call, a deep company bow. The lights dim, indicating that the curtain has fallen. We hear sound: tepid applause.)*

**MADELEINE.** Listen to that. God, I hate polite applause.

**LA GRANGE.** Better than tomatoes.

**BÉJART.** You can eat tomatoes.

*(Curtain goes up; they bow grandly. Curtain falls.)*

**MADELEINE.** *(To MOLIÈRE:)* I've told you a hundred times: don't do Tragedy! Our Paris debut! And you were stuttering again. You always do when you try tragedy.

**MOLIÈRE.** I stammered. I always stammer. I'm known for my—

*(GROS-RENÉ, a burly "old-timer" who doubles as stage manager when not acting, comes onstage from the wings.)*

**GROS-RENÉ.** No need for another call.

*(Sound: applause has ceased.)*

**MOLIÈRE.** Oh god...

**GROS-RENÉ.** Sorry, old son. We shat.

**ARMANDE.** *(Young, very pretty.)* We did not "shat"!

**MADLEINE.** The "great" Molière! And they know that's not your real name.

**MOLIÈRE.** Well you thought it up.

**MADELEINE.** I did?

**MOLIÈRE.** That night in Provence. After we had a huge hit with—... (*Light bulb.*) ... Gros-René! Quick! Get out the comedy house!

**GROS-RENÉ.** What?

**MOLIÈRE.** With the balcony and the—...the comedy house!

**GROS-RENÉ.** Now??

**MOLIÈRE.** I'm going out front. (*To the others:*) Stay here.

*(He steps through the front curtain into a solo spot, and addresses the audience:)*

Royal Sire...Monsieur Le Prince...ladies and gentlemen. We thank you for your attention. The tragedy of *Nicomède* by Monsieur Corneille is...new to us. We hope it was also new to you...

And now—as a sort of dessert after the main course—we beg your indulgence. Let us show you the sort of thing we have been doing these past thirteen years in the provinces. Perhaps a bit “rough” for your refined tastes, but...well, we think it may amuse you.

*(Sound: from the audience a male voice: “Bravo!”)*

Sire, ladies and gentlemen, give us a moment or two and then a farce from the house of Molière: *The Love Doctor!*

*(Sound: hearty applause.)*

**GROS-RENÉ.** (*To the company:*) *Love Doctor.* You heard him. Get ready!

*(Great commotion. Music is heard being played on the other side of the curtain. Some of the men in the company haul out the main scenic elements: a flat representing a two story provincial house. Steps behind it go from lower level to the window above. A big drainpipe extends down one side of the house. MOLIÈRE has come back behind the curtain. ARMANDE greets him passionately. Most of the others have gone off to change costume.)*

**ARMANDE.** You were wonderful, Jean-Baptiste!

**MOLIÈRE.** Costume! Costume! Help me out of this horrible rag!

*(She lifts off his Roman toga and he looks faintly ridiculous in 17th century underwear.)*

Of course your sister is right; we should never have played *Nicomède*. Madeleine is always right. It's enough to drive a man mad!

**ARMANDE.** Try living with someone like that!

**MOLIÈRE.** Don't be naïve, Armande; I did.

**ARMANDE.** Yes, but she wasn't your big sister. She was your—

**MOLIÈRE.** You realize, of course, our whole future depends on this stupid little farce.

**ARMANDE.** It's not a stupid little farce. It's one of your best.

**MOLIÈRE.** I tell you I was meant for greater things than this. My God, it's just sex, sex, sex. Sex and slapstick.

**GROS-RENÉ.** (*Who is crossing with props:*) Sounds good to me... (*He exits other side of stage.*)

**ARMANDE.** Just stay calm, darling. They love you. I love you.

**MOLIÈRE.** (*Suddenly all smiles:*) Do you? Do you really? My angel! I want to make your life so beautiful, after all this...squalor. You should be surrounded by beauty.

**ARMANDE.** Then please the king.

**MOLIÈRE.** Yes! Everything depends on "Louis."

(*MADELEINE calls from offstage:*)

**MADELEINE.** Jean!

**MOLIÈRE.** (*Sotto voce:*) But remember: not a word about our plans. Not yet.

(*They embrace. MADELEINE, in comedy costume, enters holding Molière's "Sganarelle" costume.*)

**MADELEINE.** Here. Put this on. And stop being an old fool.

**ARMANDE.** What's the matter with you?

**MADELEINE.** (*To ARMANDE:*) And you stop being a young fool. And go get your Lucinda dress!

(*She pushes ARMANDE offstage.*)

**MOLIÈRE.** The way you push her around...really.

**MADELEINE.** She's my baby sister.

**MOLIÈRE.** She's no baby.

(*MADELEINE is helping him into his costume, something they have done a thousand times and it shows.*)

**MADELEINE.** When did you notice that?...arm...arm!

(*He slips his arm into a sleeve.*)

**MOLIÈRE.** You should treat her like a woman, Madeleine.

**MADELEINE.** You're doing enough of that for all of us.

**MOLIÈRE.** Jealousy! At your age.

**MADELEINE.** Look, Jean: we had fifteen good years together. You wanted to end it. Fine. But why chase after my...little sister?

**MOLIÈRE.** I'm not "chasing after" Armande. We fell in love. It happens. One night I saw her standing by the costume wagon and—  
**WHY ARE WE TALKING ABOUT THIS NOW??**

*(GROS-RENÉ and BÉJART have entered. BÉJART, the father of MADELEINE and ARMANDE is the elder dean of the troupe.)*

**BÉJART.** Check those stairs, Jean-Baptiste. We haven't used this set in months. And don't talk so loud. The Court has ears, you know.

**GROS-RENÉ.** It's their third most important organ. Clear stage, everyone! Madeleine ready off right. Jean-Baptiste, just off!

*(MADELEINE goes to her father; their pre-show ritual.)*

**BÉJART.** One for the money...

**MADELEINE.** Two for the show...

**BOTH.** Rutabaga, Rutabaga  
Off we go! *(They kiss.)*

*(MADELEINE goes to MOLIÈRE, kisses him.)*

**MADELEINE.** Good luck, darling.

**MOLIÈRE.** *(They tweak thumbs.)* Merde, merde and double-merde.

**BÉJART.** Merde Royale!

**GROS-RENÉ.** Places!

*(MOLIÈRE and MADELEINE exit. BÉJART stands at the door of the house set. GROS-RENÉ holds his stage manager's staff with which he now pounds the stage floor repeatedly to quiet the audience. He then give the traditional "one-two-three" and on the third knock, the curtain rises—indicated by a brightening of the lights. GROS-RENÉ exits as The Love Doctor begins.)*

**GORGIBUS (BÉJART).** How strange life is!... And as the ancient writer said: "Trouble breeds trouble." Look at me. I had but one wife...and now she's dead.

*(He weeps.)*

*(SABINE [MADELEINE] enters.)*

**SABINE.** How many wives did you expect?

**GORGIBUS.** That's not the point. She's gone. And every time I think of her...I weep. True, I never really approved of her, and we fought

all the time. But death changes everything. She's gone. Actually gone! I'm devastated. And I've only got one child left with me, my daughter. Now she's my greatest problem. She just mopes around. Total depression, and I can't snap her out of it. Can't even find out what's causing her alarming melancholy. I tell ya, it's not normal!

(LUCINDA [ARMANDE] enters, moping.)

Ah! Here she is. She doesn't even see me. She sighs. She lifts her eyes to heaven... God bless you, dear... What's the matter?... How are you feeling today?... Still down in the dumps and won't tell me why. Come on, now. Tell Daddy. Open up your pretty little heart to Poppa. Tell little Daddykins all the little thoughts in your tiny little mind. Come on. Courage. Let me give you a kiss. There.

(Pause. Nothing.)

Look, this is killing me! Why don't you tell me what's upsetting you? Just tell me and I'll fix it. Just tell me what you want; it's yours. I swear it. You name it; you got it. Maybe you're worried your friends have nicer clothes than you? ...You want something more fashionable? ...No. Maybe you think your room needs sprucing up. I could get you one of those fancy mahogany cabinets with the... No. Maybe you want to learn something! I could hire a music teacher. I'll buy a guitar, and we could—... No.

(Beat.)

Maybe you're in love and want to get married.

(She nods enthusiastically.)

**SABINE.** Aha! That's it. See, that wasn't so hard. So, monsieur, all you have to do is—

**GORGIBUS.** (To SABINE:) Shut up! (To LUCINDA:) Get out, you ingrate! Not another word. One thing I cannot stand, it's obstinacy!

**LUCINDA.** But, father, you said you wanted to know what's wrong—

**GORGIBUS.** I have suddenly lost all feelings of affection for you.

**SABINE.** But, sir, the reason she's depressed is—

**GORGIBUS.** She's a little hussy and she'll be the death of me.

**LUCINDA.** Father, all I want is—

**GORGIBUS.** So this is what I get for having raised you, fed you.

**SABINE.** Now, sir, really—

**GORGIBUS.** I feel nothing but rage. Terrifying rage against her!

**LUCINDA.** But father—

**GORGIBUS.** How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is—

**SABINE.** But—

**GORGIBUS.** She's a criminal!

**LUCINDA.** But—

**GORGIBUS.** An ingrate!

**SABINE.** But—

**GORGIBUS.** A sly little coquette who won't even tell me what she wants.

**SABINE.** She wants a husband!!

*(He pretends not to hear.)*

**GORGIBUS.** I shall abandon her.

**SABINE.** A husband.

**GORGIBUS.** I loathe her.

**SABINE.** A husband.

**GORGIBUS.** I renounce her.

**SABINE.** Husband.

**GORGIBUS.** Speak not to me of her.

**SABINE.** Hus—

**GORGIBUS.** Not a word.

**SABINE.** Hubby.

**GORGIBUS.** I said not a word!

**SABINE.** Husband, husband, hubby, spouse! MAN!!

*(GORGIBUS exits.)*

True what they say: no one's deafer than someone who wants to be.

**LUCINDA.** So! All I have to do is tell him and he'll get me whatever I want. Ha!

**SABINE.** My god, what a terrible man. What I wouldn't give to put one over on him. But why on earth didn't you tell me what the matter was?

**LUCINDA.** And what good would that have done? Why tell you a secret...a secret I know I'll have to keep all my life? The refusal my father sent to that dear man who asked for my hand...you think that didn't squash the last flicker of hope in my heart?

**SABINE.** You mean that stranger? That guy who wrote your father?

**LUCINDA.** Oh, I know. It's not considered "proper" for a girl to speak her mind these days, but I tell you this, Sabine: If I could choose just one thing I want in life, it'd be him! We've never even spoken to one another so he's never really told me how much he loves me—but every time I've been someplace where he's seen me... his every gesture...his every glance, has been filled with such...such tender affection...oh god, I can't resist him! And just look where it's gotten me.

**SABINE.** You leave things to me. Now that you've finally told me all this, I feel really sorry for you. Well, we won't leave a stone unturned. You think you're up to this?

**LUCINDA.** Up to what? What can I possibly do against the authority of a father?

**SABINE.** Don't be naïve. As long as you keep your...honor intact, why not break loose from that tyrant? What's he expect you to do, anyway? You're old enough to marry. He can't hold on to you forever. What's he gonna do, have you bronzed? Now, you let me handle this and— Whoops! Here he comes. Follow me. (*Melodramatically:*) I have a plan...

(*They exit. GORGIBUS enters.*)

**GORGIBUS.** You see, sometimes it's better not to hear what you don't want to hear. Oh, the injustice of it! You work hard, you amass a fortune, you bring up a beautiful daughter and then...woosh! You're supposed to give her away to some nobody who probably hasn't a *sou*. No, no. I'll keep my daughter and my fortune, thank you very much.

(*SABINE enters frantically.*)

**SABINE.** Oh misery! Oh horror! Oh, how can I ever tell this to Monsieur Gorgibus?

**GORGIBUS.** What's this?

**SABINE.** Poor man! What will he do when he hears this?

**GORGIBUS.** What's going on?

**SABINE.** My poor little mistress!

**GORGIBUS.** Oh no!

**SABINE.** Ahhh!

**GORGIBUS.** Sabine—

**SABINE.** What misfortune!

**GORGIBUS.** Sabine—

**SABINE.** O cruel fate!

**GORGIBUS.** Sabine!

**SABINE.** (*Feigning surprise.*) Ah! Monsieur...

**GORGIBUS.** What's going on?

**SABINE.** It's...it's your daughter.

**GORGIBUS.** (*Crying hysterically.*) Is she...is she... Ah!... AHH!

**SABINE.** Please don't cry like that, monsieur; it makes me laugh.

**GORGIBUS.** What?!...look, just tell me what's happened.

**SABINE.** Your daughter, struck to the quick by your words and your terrifying rage...ran into her bedroom and, overcome with despair, threw open the window that looks out onto the river...

**GORGIBUS.** And then??

**SABINE.** Lifting her eyes to heaven, she said: "No. No, it is impossible to live with my father's wrath. As he renounces me, so let me die!"

**GORGIBUS.** And she threw herself into the river!

**SABINE.** No, she closed the window. Then quietly, gently, got into her bed. She wept bitterly and then suddenly...she turned pale as a ghost. Her eyes rolled back in her head, her heart ceased beating, and there she lay...cradled in my arms.

**GORGIBUS.** Ah...my daughter!

**SABINE.** So I slapped her around a little. Finally revived her, but it's touch and go. I don't think she'll last out the day.

**GORGIBUS.** Oh my god, my god! Doctors! We've got to get doctors! Lots of doctors! All the doctors! Oh, my daughter, my daughter... (*Exit, screaming.*)

**SABINE.** Amazing. Male stupidity is absolutely—

(VALÈRE [LA GRANGE] enters.)

**VALÈRE.** What's all the commotion? Is she all right?

**SABINE.** Who are you? Ah. "The Stranger."

**VALÈRE.** Not any stranger than you. And my name is Valère. (*He hands her his card.*)

**SABINE.** You're the guy Lucinda's in love with?

**VALÈRE.** She is? She really is?! (*Sings.*) "She really loves me!"

**SABINE.** Shh! Now listen: we're pulling a fast one on her father 'cause he's being such a jerk. So Lucinda—

**VALÈRE.** Lucinda! What a beautiful name... (*Sings:*) "Lucinda..."

**SABINE.** Enough with the opera!

**VALÈRE.** Right. So, she's pretending to be sick.

**SABINE.** How'd you know?

**VALÈRE.** I'm quick.

**SABINE.** And we've got to get someone to pose as a doctor.

**VALÈRE.** Why?

**SABINE.** So he can recommend rest and "a change of scene." Fresh air. The little garden house. Follow me?

**VALÈRE.** The garden house?... Oh!! "The little garden house!"

**SABINE.** Where you two can meet. We can pay off a priest and get you married before old piss-and-vinegar catches on.

**VALÈRE.** But where can we find a doctor who'd do that?

**SABINE.** You got a servant?

**VALÈRE.** Sure. But he's an idiot. Hopeless. (*Beat.*) He'll do it. I'll get him right away.

**SABINE.** Yeah, but don't dawdle. Monsieur's got the entire medical profession coming over.

**VALÈRE.** But how will my man, a mere servant, compete with those learned men?

**SABINE.** Are you kidding?

**VALÈRE.** You're right. I'll go find him. (*Exit.*)

**SABINE.** He's not a bad kid. I've seen worse.

*(Music. The four doctors: TOXIN, PROPHYLACTUS, MORTICE, and LA FLUSH, [LA THORILLIÈRE, BRÈCOURT, DE CROISY, and GROS-RENÈ] march on in their doctoral robes and hats. GORGIBUS follows and shows them into his house. The doctors go in. GORGIBUS remains outside. During all this SABINE weeps demonstratively.)*

**SABINE.** Ah, my poor lady...ah, my poor little lamb... Excuse me, monsieur, but do you really need four doctors? It usually only takes one to kill somebody.

**GORGIBUS.** Be quiet. Four opinions are better than one.

**SABINE.** Well, if you really think they'll help her die...

**GORGIBUS.** What?! Doctors help you die?

**SABINE.** Oh sure. I once had it explained to me. You should never say “So-and-so died of fever and a severe chill,” but: “So-and-so died of four physicians and a pharmacist.”

**GORGIBUS.** Don’t be silly. And don’t offend the doctors.

**SABINE.** Just wait and see. It’ll be very instructive. They’ll tell you your daughter’s sick in Latin.

*(Doctors re-enter from house. SABINE brings on four chairs during the following:)*

**GORGIBUS.** So, messieurs?

**TOXIN.** We have examined the patient and we find several impurities. Yeah verily, yes we do.

**GORGIBUS.** Impurities? My daughter?!

**TOXIN.** Impurities of the flesh, oh yes. Corruption of the humors, yessir, you betcha.

**GORGIBUS.** *(Thoroughly impressed:)* I see...

**TOXIN.** Affirmative. Yes.

**GORGIBUS.** Yes.

**TOXIN.** Affirmative. But we’ll have a joint consultation. Right now.

**GORGIBUS.** *(To SABINE:)* Chairs...chairs...

*(She is setting them out.)*

**SABINE.** *(Seeing TOXIN:)* Ah, it’s you!

**GORGIBUS.** You know this doctor?

**SABINE.** I saw him just the other day at your niece’s house, Madame La Chose.

**TOXIN.** Oh yes. And how’s he getting along, that coachman fellow?

**SABINE.** Fine. Fine. He’s dead.

**TOXIN.** Dead?!

**SABINE.** Yep.

**TOXIN.** That can’t be!

**SABINE.** Maybe it can’t, but it is.

**TOXIN.** And I’m telling you it cannot be. Not. Negative.

**SABINE.** And I’m telling you he’s six-feet under. He’s compost.

**TOXIN.** You err.

**SABINE.** I saw him.

**TOXIN.** Impossible. Hippocrates says that his type of illness always ends on the 14th or 21st day and he's only been ill for six days.

**SABINE.** Hippocrates can say what he likes. The guy croaked.

**GORGIBUS.** Enough! You gossip! Let's leave them to their consultation. Messieurs, although I know it's not usual to pay in advance, still—

**MORTICE.** Oh, never.

**LA FLUSH.** How very rude.

**PROPHYLACTUS.** Wouldn't dream of it.

**TOXIN.** Please. Keep your money.

**GORGIBUS.** But just so I don't forget...

*(He pulls out purse. Each doctor takes some money. They completely empty his purse. GORGIBUS and SABINE exit. The doctors sit.*

*Long pause.*

*Various scratching, nose blowing, etc. Perhaps a gentle fart. Then:)*

**PROPHYLACTUS.** How about all this traffic.

**MORTICE.** Oh yes.

**LA FLUSH.** Terrible.

**TOXIN.** Never seen anything like it.

**PROPHYLACTUS.** Paris has gotten so big now. Takes forever... *(He stands.)* TAKES FOREVER— *(Sits again, he will do this often to make his point.)* —to make my rounds.

**TOXIN.** Well, of course I've got a wonderful mule, yes I do, but you'd never believe the number of miles, mule-miles, we put in every single day. Yes indeedy.

**PROPHYLACTUS.** Well, I've got a horse and he's— *(Stands.)* HE'S A REMARKABLE ANIMAL *(Sits.)* He really is.

**TOXIN.** You know how I got here today? We started out on the Boulevard Saint Germain. From the Boulevard Saint Germain across the river to the Marais. From the Marais to the Rue Saint Honoré, and from the Rue Saint Honoré to the Tour Saint Jacques, yes indeedy. *(Pause.)* Then from the Tour Saint Jacques to the Richelieu Gate and from the Richelieu Gate to here, you see. *(Pause.)* And from here—

**PROPHYLACTUS.** Well my horse and I did just as much. And after this— *(Stands.)* —AFTER THIS— *(Sits.)* I've got to go out to Passy.

**TOXIN.** *À propos*, where do you stand—

(PROPHYLACTUS *stands*.)

—er, on the debate between Artemius and Theosophat?

**PROPHYLACTUS.** Oh. (*Sits*.)

**TOXIN.** I mean it affects all of us.

**PROPHYLACTUS.** Well, I'm all for Artemius.

**TOXIN.** Me too. And—

**PROPHYLACTUS.** (*Stands*.) ARTEMIUS! (*Sits*.)

**TOXIN.** Even if his diagnosis did kill the patient whereas Theosophat's diagnosis was correct, still, Theosophat didn't follow accepted procedure and you just don't contradict the classical authors, no you don't. Unh-uh. Negativo.

**PROPHYLACTUS.** Nothing more degrading than dying in an irregular manner.

(TOXIN *waits for him to stand, but he doesn't*.)

**TOXIN.** Exactly. After all a dead man is only a dead man, but a—

**PROPHYLACTUS.** (*Stands*.) IRREGULAR MANNER. (*Sits*.)

**TOXIN.** Why, I had a patient die on me just the other day. "Hurry up" they all said to me. "Do something!" And he kept saying, "Save me! Save me!". But I hadn't gone from first cause to second cause, from major deliberation to minor, so he just had to wait. He was very brave. Died beautifully. Form is everything. Form endures.

(GORGIBUS *enters*.)

**GORGIBUS.** Messieurs, my daughter is getting worse! Please. Tell me what you've decided.

**TOXIN.** Doctor La Flush?

**LA FLUSH.** (*Sneezing*;) Ah...choo!... After you. (*He giggles*.) Oh, that's funny! Did you hear that? "Ah-choo, after you"! Ha!

(*The DOCTORS roll about in mirth*.)

**GORGIBUS.** Doctors! Please!

**TOXIN.** Sorry. Doctor Mortice? (*Long pause*.) Doctor Mort—

**MORTICE.** I'm thinking...

**TOXIN.** I see. Doctor Prophylactus?

**PROPHYLACTUS.** No, no. You go ahead Doctor Toxin.

**TOXIN.** I insist.

**PROPHYLACTUS.** I refuse to be first.

**TOXIN.** (*Bowing:*) Monsieur.

**PROPHYLACTUS.** (*Bowing:*) Monsieur.

**GORGIBUS.** Please! Doctors! Forget the courtesies. This is an emergency!

(*Simultaneously:*)

**TOXIN.** The thing about your daughter is—

**PROPHYLACTUS.** In our humble opinion—

**MORTICE.** To explain succinctly—

**LA FLUSH.** After due consultation—

**GORGIBUS.** Please! One at a time.

**TOXIN.** Monsieur, we have consulted concerning the illness of your daughter, yes we have, and it is my opinion, you see, that her illness proceeds from an overheating of the blood. I recommend that we bleed her as soon as possible, yes I do, yes I really mean it, yes.

**PROPHYLACTUS.** Whereas I, on the other hand, feel her illness is a result of putrefaction of the humors caused by— (*Stands.*) EXCESS BILE— (*Sits.*) and I recommend an immediate round of enemas.

**TOXIN.** An enema will kill her.

**PROPHYLACTUS.** Bleeding will cause instant death. (*Stands.*) INSTANT! (*Sits.*)

**TOXIN.** (*To PROPHYLACTUS:*) Well, aren't you the clever one.

**PROPHYLACTUS.** Yes I am and I'll take you on anytime.

**TOXIN.** Remember that poor patient of yours who croaked last Thursday?

**PROPHYLACTUS.** What about that nun you sent to her reward on Friday?

**TOXIN.** (*To GORGIBUS:*) You have my opinion.

**PROPHYLACTUS.** And you've heard my judgment

**TOXIN.** If you don't bleed her right away, she's a goner. Yes. Affirmative. I say so!

(*He exits.*)

**PROPHYLACTUS.** And if you do bleed her she'll be completely dead in less than an hour. (*Stands.*) LESS THAN AN HOUR! (*He starts to leave, turns.*) COMPLETELY DEAD! (*Exit.*)

**GORGIBUS.** Who can I believe? Good sirs, I beg of you. Tell me, without anger or passion: what's the best course to follow for my poor daughter?

**MORTICE.** (*Slowly stands.*) Well, monsieur. Of course. In these. Cases. One. Must...Proceed with. Caution. With...cir...cum...spec...tion. Do. Nothing. Rash.

(*Pause.*)

As Hip...poc...cra...tes said...Pre...cip...i...tous haste. Makes...

(*Snores. He has fallen asleep on his feet.*)

(*During all the above, DR. LA FLUSH has been seething, getting madder and madder. Now he leaps to his feet. He speaks in fits and starts, words tumble together, mass confusion.*)

**LA FLUSH.** But that's the point, dammit, dammit, dammit! Time to love the pheasants...I mean, I'm above the peasants...I mean Time is of the essence!

We've got to check her condition, watch her emission, make an incision and reach a decision. We've got to—...we've got to— ...My God, the curl is drying... I mean the pearl is frying... I mean the girl is dying!

**GORGIBUS.** (*Aside:*) One goes like a tortoise; the other's hare-brained.

**MORTICE.** (*Wakes up:*) Patience...

**LA FLUSH.** Patience?! I'm losing my patients! Where are all my patients?! Patients are funny... I mean, patients are money!

**GORGIBUS.** Please, Doctor La Flush—

**LA FLUSH.** Get out your scalpel! Take out her tonsil! Take out the garbage! Take out the cat! We've got to mend her bloomers. Blend her humors. A little more blood, a little less bile, a whole lot of phlegm and a great big smile! We've got to act! We've got to attack! We've got to distract...extract...contract...that's a fact... Peck on her chart feet! I mean, check on her heartbeat!... Beat on her heart... Feet on her hearth...

(*He begins to wind down, slumping to the floor:*)

...heat on her part...heath...peathe...Yarch...gyrxgeegle...gullig...yelm...

(*He dies.*)

**GORGIBUS.** My God, he's dead!

*(During the above, TOXIN and PROPHYLACTUS have returned, attracted by the noise)*

**TOXIN.** What a way got go: acute diagnosis.

**MORTICE.** May...he...rest...in—

**PROPHYLACTUS.** Let's get him out of here. Dead doctor. Very bad for business.

**GORGIBUS.** But my daughter!

**TOXIN.** Don't be so selfish, for heaven's sake. She can die tomorrow.

*(They carry LA FLUSH out, GORGIBUS chasing them.)*

**GORGIBUS.** Get out! Get out!! The whole pack of you! My poor daughter! My poor little girl...

*(He exits into house. VALÈRE and SGANARELLE [MOLIÈRE] enter. VALÈRE is carrying a doctor's robe and hat.)*

**SGANARELLE.** Ask me to do something I know. Send me down to City Hall to find out what time it is. Ask me to check the price of butter, water your horse...something you know I can handle.

**VALÈRE.** All I want you to do is pretend you're a doctor.

**SGANARELLE.** Me? A doctor? I'm always at your service, sir, but playing doctor? *(Bowing:)* Your servant, sir, no. What are you trying to do? You wanna make a fool of me?

**VALÈRE.** If you pull it off I'll give you ten *pistoles*.

**SGANARELLE.** Ten *pistoles*?... Well, I won't say I couldn't, but...Oh, come on! I'm not...what...subtle enough, you know? But if I did do this, where would I be going?

**VALÈRE.** Right here. To Monsieur Gorgibus' house to examine his daughter. Ah, but you're such an oaf you'd probably screw up the whole business.

**SGANARELLE.** Hey! What're you talkin'? Don't worry about a thing. I can kill somebody good as any doctor in Paris. Still...it's kinda hard, all that rigmarole. What if I can't cut it?

**VALÈRE.** Nothing could be simpler. Gorgibus is a plain, unrefined kind of guy. He'll be totally confused as long as you keep talking about Hippocrates and Galen. Just sort of lord it over him.

**SGANARELLE.** You mean I've got to talk philosophy? Mathematics? Aw, let me at him! If he's as simple as you say, I can handle it. Just

give me the robe...and the hat... (VALÈRE *does.*) ...and my medical license.

**VALÈRE.** What medical license?

**SGANARELLE.** Ten *pistoles*.

**VALÈRE.** Oh, right.

*(He pays him as SABINE enters from house.)*

Now, here's the important thing: get him to move her out to the garden house.

**SGANARELLE.** Garden house? Ooooh, you sly dog...

**SABINE.** Well, thank God. You'll do it?

**SGANARELLE.** *(Bowing:)* *Absolutissime!*

**VALÈRE.** Bravo.

**SABINE.** Here he comes. He's frantic. And if we don't do something soon, my poor mistress will have to pay dead. *(To VALÈRE:)* Go away.

*(VALÈRE exits. SGANARELLE puts on doctor disguise— robe and hat, adding a large false nose. GORGIBUS enters.)*

Good news, monsieur! We've found a wonderful doctor. Best in the world. He comes from another country and knows all the latest secrets. Some friends recommended him and sent him here. He's brilliant. I wish I were sick just so he could cure me.

**GORGIBUS.** Where is he?

**SABINE.** Right here.

**GORGIBUS.** Ah. I am your most humble servant, doctor. I want you to see my daughter who is desperately ill. I put all my hope in you.

**SGANARELLE.** Hippocrates says...and Galen also proves most vividly...that people who do not feel well...are sick. You are right to put your confidence in me. I am the greatest, the cleverest, the most medical doctor around, be it animal, vegetable or...sensible.

**GORGIBUS.** I'm delighted.

**SGANARELLE.** Please don't be thinking I'm your run-of-the-mill, ordinary type doctor. All those others? A bunch of frauds! I've got very special, very...if I may say so...peculiar talents.

*(He makes magical gestures in the air.)*

Salamalec...Salamalec...Veni, vidi, vici...Funiculi Funicula...Per omnia saecula saeculorum...

Now let's have a look at you.

*(He checks GORGIBUS' pulse.)*

**SABINE.** Hey! He's not sick; it's his daughter!

**SGANARELLE.** No difference. Father and daughter are of one blood. The adulteration of one makes infection in the other. Monsieur Gorgibus, might I see some urine?

**GORGIBUS.** What?

**SGANARELLE.** From the afflicted party?

**GORGIBUS.** Oh, sure. Sabine, quick. Go get Lucinda's urine.

*(SABINE exits.)*

Doctor, I'm so afraid she may die.

**SGANARELLE.** Hey! We'll have none of that. She better not fool around, dying without proper medical treatment! What's she think this is, some kinda joke?

*(SABINE returns with a glass of pale yellow liquid. SGANARELLE holds it up to the light.)*

Hmm. This here urine shows me...definitely... *(Sniffing it:)* ...inflammation of the intestines... Still, it has good nose...excellent color... considerable breeding... *(He drinks it.)* Not bad.

**GORGIBUS.** Doctor!

**SGANARELLE.** Don't be alarmed. Your common doctors just look, but me? I taste. It's the flavor tells you what's really going on here.

*(He turns to SABINE who, unseen by GORGIBUS, shows him the empty white wine bottle she has been concealing in her apron.)*

But to tell the truth...there really wasn't enough there to make a good diagnosis. Tell her to pee again.

**SABINE.** Oh, please. I barely got that out of her.

**SGANARELLE.** Well, that's a fine thing! Tell her she must piss copiously.

*(SABINE exits.)*

Copious piss is what we need here. If only patients would piss properly, I'd be a very happy doctor.

*(SABINE returns with a tiny amount of liquid.)*

**SABINE.** That's all you get.

**SGANARELLE.** What?? Monsieur Gorgibus, your daughter is giving me drip-drops here. You got a piss-poor daughter, Gorgibus. We're gonna have to give her a pissative. Now, please, may I see the patient?

**SABINE.** Yes. She's up now. I'll have her come here. (*Calling:*) Lucinda!

(*LUCINDA enters from house.*)

**SGANARELLE.** So, mademoiselle, you're ill?

**LUCINDA.** Yes sir.

**SGANARELLE.** Too bad. A sure sign of ill health. Any specific pain? Headache?

**LUCINDA.** Yes sir.

**SGANARELLE.** Oh good! Yes, as the Great Doctor, in his chapter on animal husbandry says...oh, lots of things. And because these humors which are consanguineous are also conjunctive...leading sometimes to conjunctivitis...so, for example, the opposite of joy is melancholia. And just as the spread of bile in the body turns a body yellow, so if a body meet a body comin' through the bile, there is nothing more detrimental to one's health...than sickness. And so, therefore, and also *ergo*, we can say, along with the Great Doctor aforementioned: your daughter's sick. I shall now prescribe a regimen of treatment.

**GORGIBUS.** Quick! A table. Pen, ink, paper!

**SGANARELLE.** Anyone know how to write?

**GORGIBUS.** Don't you?

**SGANARELLE.** Oh, I don't remember now. I've got so much on my mind, you know, I forget half of what I— ...Now, first it's absolutely necessary that your daughter have lots of fresh air.

**GORGIBUS.** We've got a lovely garden. And a little garden house if you think that would be suitable.

**SGANARELLE.** Perfect. *Perfecto! Perfectissimo!* I want her moved there *instantissime. Presto!*

**GORGIBUS.** Quick! Quick! To the garden!

**SABINE.** To the garden!

**LUCINDA.** To the garden!

(*LUCINDA and SABINE exit.*)

**SGANARELLE.** See? She's feeling better already. And now I must take my leave of you.

**GORGIBUS.** Why?

**SGANARELLE.** There's an eighty-year-old woman across town I've got to see. She's in labor.

**GORGIBUS.** What??

**SGANARELLE.** Yeah, well I sent her to the country last year for some fresh air.

**GORGIBUS.** And her husband?

**SGANARELLE.** He went with her of course. He's eighty-five.

**GORGIBUS.** Eighty-five?!

**SGANARELLE.** Yes. It looks like twins. So, I'm off.

**GORGIBUS.** (*Taking out purse:*) Oh please, Doctor, I owe you this.

**SGANARELLE.** Please sir! True doctors accept no money.

**GORGIBUS.** Oh, but—

**SGANARELLE.** Please. (*Taking the money:*) Don't insult me. Good-bye, monsieur.

(*He exits.*)

**GORGIBUS.** Goodbye... Hmm... Eighty-five and still— ...Fresh air... Maybe I should take up gardening.

(*He exits into house. VALÈRE enters.*)

**VALÈRE.** I don't know what's become of Sganarelle. I haven't heard a word. I don't even know where to—

(*SGANARELLE enters in his valet costume, carrying disguise.*)

Ah, thank goodness. What's happening?

**SGANARELLE.** Wonder of wonders! I did so well old Gorgibus thinks I'm a really terrific doctor. I met him and "examined" his daughter—

**VALÈRE.** (*Shaking him violently:*) You scoundrel!

**SGANARELLE.** (*Pulling away:*) Hey!! What'd you expect? I'm a doctor. So I prescribed fresh air and they've moved her out to the little garden house. Far away from the old fool's watchful eye. You can visit her anytime.

**VALÈRE.** Ah, how happy you've made me! (*Sings:*) "I'm happy! I'm so happy!" (*Speaking:*) Not a minute to lose. I'll go find her right away. (*Exit, singing:*) "Happy..."

**SGANARELLE.** You gotta admit: that Gorgibus is a real idiot. Taking me for a—

(*GORGIBUS enters from house wearing gardening hat and apron.*)

(*Aside:*) Ahh! All lost! But I'll think of something...

**GORGIBUS.** (*Seeing him:*) Good day, young man...say, wait a minute—

**SGANARELLE.** (*Bowing:*) Monsieur, your servant. You see before you a young man in despair. You don't happen to know, by chance, a doctor who just arrived in this city and has been working some really remarkable cures?

**GORGIBUS.** I certainly do know him. He just left my house.

**SGANARELLE.** Well, I'm his brother, monsieur. We're twins. People often mistake us. For each other.

**GORGIBUS.** You damn well fooled me. What's your name?

**SGANARELLE.** Narcissus, at your service sir. Now, you must know, I was in his office today and I spilled two vials of rare medicine by accident. He fell into a fury, threw me out of the house and said he never wants to see me again. So here I am, just a poor kid on the street with no job and no one to turn to. (*Sobs.*)

**GORGIBUS.** Now, now. I'll make it up between you. He's a very dear friend of mine, you see. I'll speak to him just as soon as I see him. In the meantime, why don't you make yourself at home in my house? I expect him back any moment.

**SGANARELLE.** Much obliged, monsieur. You are too kind.

**GORGIBUS.** Go right in and make yourself comfortable.

(*SGANARELLE exits into house.*)

Now, let's see...there are some gardening tools here somewhere...

(*He reaches the side of the house as SGANARELLE sneaks back out of the house and puts on the Doctor disguise. GORGIBUS sees none of this.*)

**SGANARELLE.** (*As Doctor:*) I tell ya! When people don't follow doctor's orders...

**GORGIBUS.** Doctor!

**SGANARELLE.** She had triplets; I distinctly told her: twins.

**GORGIBUS.** Doctor, please. I must ask you a great favor.

**SGANARELLE.** Now what?

**GORGIBUS.** Doctor, I just met your brother who is so upset—

**SGANARELLE.** He's a scoundrel!

**GORGIBUS.** Now, now. He's really contrite, doctor. So upset at having upset you.

**SGANARELLE.** He drinks, you know.

**GORGIBUS.** Really? Oh now, doctor, he's close to despair.

**SGANARELLE.** Not another word about him. What impudence, tracking you down to patch things up for him! Don't mention his name.

**GORGIBUS.** Please, doctor, do this for me. I sort of promised the young man...I'll make it up to you somehow. Please?

**SGANARELLE.** Well...Your sincerity wins me over even though I swore I'd never pardon him. So. All right. Here's my hand. (*They shake hands.*) I forgive him. You don't know how it kills me to do this. I hope you appreciate it. Goodbye, monsieur Gorgibus. (*Exit.*)

**GORGIBUS.** Your most obliging servant sir... I must go tell that poor boy the good news.

(*He goes into house. VALÈRE enters.*)

**VALÈRE.** I never thought Sganarelle would be this successful! He's a wonder.

(*SGANARELLE enters as valet.*)

Ah, there you are! I can't tell you how much I owe you! I'm so happy. So—

**SGANARELLE.** Don't sing! It's easy for you, all this, but I ran into old Gorgibus and had to pull a real fast one to— Get out! Here he comes!

(*VALÈRE exits. GORGIBUS enters from house.*)

**GORGIBUS.** There you are! I've been looking all over to tell you I've spoken with your brother. He forgives you. But just to be sure, I want to see the two of you embrace before my very eyes. Now, you go back in the house, and I'll go fetch him.

**SGANARELLE.** Oh, monsieur Gorgibus, you'll never be able to find him. And I don't dare stay here and wait. You've never seen him when he's angry.

**GORGIBUS.** (*Pushing him into house:*) You certainly will stay here. And just to be sure, I'm going to lock you in! I'll get him. You'll see; he's not angry at all.

(*GORGIBUS locks SGANARELLE in house and exits. SGANARELLE re-appears at upstairs window.*)

**SGANARELLE.** Damn! Caught like a rat in a trap! How'll I get out of here? I see a big storm coming when Gorgibus figures things out. I'll be beaten. I'll be sent to jail. Then the galleys...tied to an oar next to some big smelly southerner...tattooed for life... Criminal Number 50924... What am I doing?! I gotta get outta here! What the hell, I've pulled off everything so far. I'm in this deep; let's go all the way! 'Tis I, Sganarelle, King of the Con Artists.

*(He jumps from the window to drainpipe, slides down and exits. GORGIBUS enters.)*

**GORGIBUS.** I can't find that doctor anywhere. Where on earth could he have gotten himself? 'Course, he is a foreigner. He might have gotten lost. He might have fallen into the river...

*(SGANARELLE enters as Doctor.)*

Ah, Doctor! Just the man I'm looking for. Dear Doctor, it's just not enough to tell me you forgive your brother. I beg of you—for me—embrace him. He's in my house and I've been looking all over for you.

**SGANARELLE.** Is this some kind of joke? It's not enough that I forgave him? Please! I never want to see him again.

**GORGIBUS.** Doctor, please... For the love of God!

**SGANARELLE.** Oh dear... Well, I just can't seem to refuse you anything. All right. Tell him to come out here.

**GORGIBUS.** Bravo!

*(GORGIBUS goes into house. SGANARELLE removes disguise, climbs up the drainpipe and enters upstairs window, as:)*

**GORGIBUS.** *(From within:)* Oh, young man... Young man! Narcissus!... Wonderful news... wonderful news! Wonderful, wonderful... *(At window:)* Your brother awaits you out front. He's promised to do me this favor.

**SGANARELLE.** Monsieur, please. Ask him to come up here. I must ask his forgiveness in private. I know him. Out there, in public, he'll accuse me of a hundred things. Trust me.

**GORGIBUS.** Oh, very well...

*(He exits window area and we hear his voice as he goes downstairs. SGANARELLE climbs out window, slides down drainpipe and puts on his disguise.)*

...such a lot of fuss. I'm glad I never had a brother. Why can't people just get along, that's what I want to know. Why are they all so stubborn...?

*(Coming out of house:)*

...Ah, Doctor. You're brother says he too ashamed and he asks you to come in and forgive him in private. Go right in, I implore you. Don't refuse me. It would give him so much pleasure.

**SGANARELLE.** Dear, dear, dear... what won't I do to make you happy? But just you watch how I take care of him.

*(Exits into house...reappears at window.)*

There you are, you wretch!

*(He disappears to one side and we hear:)*

Oh, my brother! Please forgive me. I promise; it wasn't my fault.

*(He reappears in window.)*

Not your fault? You depraved, good-for-nothing bar-fly! I'll teach you a thing or two. Coming in here, filling poor Monsieur Gorgibus with your lies and nonsense...

*(Disappears.)*

But, brother—

*(Reappears.)*

Shut up! Ninny!

*(Disappears.)*

All I ask is that you—

*(Reappears.)*

Quiet! You villain! How you've avoided the gallows I'll never understand. Drunk! Thief!

*(VALÈRE enters and, unseen by the other two, observes the action.)*

**GORGIBUS.** *(Yelling up to window:)* Doctor, please! Tell your brother to come to the window.

**SGANARELLE.** What? Why would you want to look upon such an upstart? Besides, I don't want him anywhere near me.

**GORGIBUS.** Doctor, don't refuse me. Not after all you've done already.

**SGANARELLE.** Ah well. You have such power over me, Monsieur Gorgibus. I just can't seem to refuse you. Show yourself, ingrate!

*(He disappears, returns without disguise.)*

Monsieur Gorgibus...I'm so grateful to you—Aahh!

*(With his left arm he pulls himself out of window frame. Reappears in disguise.)*

So. There you've seen this...this image of debauchery!

**GORGIBUS.** Yes, but I must see you together. Remember? I asked for that: to see you embrace one another.

*(Pause.)*

**SGANARELLE.** You'll never know how difficult this is...But for you...very well. First, however, I demand that he beg pardon for all the trouble he's caused you.

*(Disappears; reappears without disguise.)*

Oh, Monsieur Gorgibus, I beg pardon for having inconvenienced you. And I promise you, dear brother mine, in the presence of Monsieur Gorgibus standing there, that I shall improve myself, that you shall never again have cause for complaint. I beg you. Please. Let by-gones be by-gones.

*(He embraces his robe and hat which he has draped over his left arm like a puppet.)*

**GORGIBUS.** Bravo! What a wonderful sight to behold!

*(SGANARELLE leaves the window.)*

Ah, how happy I am! Two brothers re-united...my daughter on the mend...How grand life can be! And to think just an hour ago I was in such a state.

*(SGANARELLE comes out of house as Doctor.)*

**SGANARELLE.** Monsieur, I could not bear to have that rascal come down with me. It's too humiliating. I don't dare be seen with him in town, my reputation you know. You may see him out as you wish. And now, sir, I bid you good afternoon.

**GORGIBUS.** Good afternoon, doctor. I'll see to your brother right away.

*(GORGIBUS enters house. VALÈRE whistles to SGANARELLE who throws his robe and hat to him, and climbs up to the window BUT he forgets to remove his fake nose. VALÈRE tries vainly to tell him, then beats a hasty retreat. GORGIBUS meets SGANARELLE in the window.)*

**SGANARELLE.** Ah, Monsieur Gorgibus, how can I ever thank you. You've done a great act of charity today. Heaven will bless you. *(No response.)* ...I will bless you. *(Still nothing.)* ...Everyone will bless you...

*(Long pause.)*

**GORGIBUS.** Might I ask you a question?

**SGANARELLE.** Of course, Monsieur Gorgibus. Anything.

**GORGIBUS.** Why are you wearing your brother's nose?

*(Pause.)*

**SGANARELLE.** Well, somebody has to.

*(He leaps out of window.)*

So long, Monsieur Gorgibus, it's been swell...

*(He exits. GORGIBUS races downstairs within house and comes out front door.)*

**GORGIBUS.** Villain! Scoundrel! I'll see you hang for this! Where is he? Imagine pretending to be... O my god! He wasn't really a doctor! My daughter! Even if she's feeling better, she's still sick! Oh, these doctors, these doctors!!

*(VALÈRE enters, disguised as a doctor.)*

**VALÈRE.** Somebody calling for a doctor?

**GORGIBUS.** Who are you?

**VALÈRE.** I'm new in town. Someone said you're looking for a doctor.

**GORGIBUS.** Well, I am...but I don't know... You look pretty young to be a doctor.

**VALÈRE.** Knowledge is not measured by the length of beard, sir.

**GORGIBUS.** To tell you the truth, I'm fed up with your profession.

*(SABINE enters, unnoticed.)*

**VALÈRE.** Ah sir, I'm not like all the rest with their bleeding and emetics and enemas and such. No, I cure with words. With sounds and sweet music. With magical charms and astrological energies. *(He intones a high note:)* La!

**SABINE.** Ah, Monsieur Gorgibus, what a find!

**GORGIBUS.** You think so?

**SABINE.** Is this the new doctor I've heard so much about?

**VALÈRE.** Yes it is.

**SABINE.** Hadn't you heard about him?

**GORGIBUS.** No. *(Looking up at window:)* I've been busy.

**SABINE.** Monsieur, your daughter is nearby. Shall I bring her to him?

**GORGIBUS.** Well...oh all right, do so.

*(SABINE exits.)*

**VALÈRE.** Your daughter is gravely ill.

**GORGIBUS.** Yes, but how did you know?

**VALÈRE.** Vibrations. Your house gives off very bad vibrations.

**GORGIBUS.** Well, it's been through a lot today.

(SABINE and LUCINDA enter.)

**SABINE.** Here she is.

**GORGIBUS.** Bring up a chair...that's right... Sit there, Lucinda. We've got another doctor. A real one. He says he can cure you just with words.

**VALÈRE.** But you must step aside, monsieur, and let me speak privately with her.

**GORGIBUS.** Why?

**VALÈRE.** Monsieur! Some decency, please. A doctor has to ask a young lady certain things which are...well, not for a man to hear.

**GORGIBUS.** Oh?... Oh! Oh yes, of course. How thoughtless of me.

**SABINE.** (To GORGIBUS:) And take off those ridiculous clothes. One would think you were a peasant.

**GORGIBUS.** They're for gardening.

**SABINE.** Please, monsieur. The doctor will think you're a real idiot.

**GORGIBUS.** Oh, very well. (Exit into house.)

**VALÈRE.** Well done, Sabine! Now go. Tell my man to fetch a notary.

**SABINE.** A notary?

**VALÈRE.** Don't ask questions. Just do as I say.

**SABINE.** But—

**VALÈRE.** Doctor's orders! (SABINE exits.) My angel!

(GORGIBUS enters from house without hat and apron.)

Now, tell me young lady... Sir?

**GORGIBUS.** Yes. Yes, I understand...

(He goes to the other side of the stage.)

**VALÈRE.** My darling, after such a long time gazing at you from afar, hoping to meet you—

**LUCINDA.** You already told me that.

**VALÈRE.** Do you wish, my treasure, to realize forever the happiness we feel now?

**LUCINDA.** And do you wish, monsieur, to be forever faithful, and preserve the happiness we feel now?

**VALÈRE.** To the death!

**GORGIBUS.** What was that?! She's dying??

**VALÈRE.** No, no, no. Please! (*GORGIBUS retires. Sotto voce:*) To the death. And you will soon see the proof. If you like, we can be married today!

**LUCINDA.** (*Leaping up:*) Ahh!!

**GORGIBUS.** Look at that; she's feeling better already.

**VALÈRE.** (*Going to GORGIBUS:*) I have already put into motion, sir, one of my special cures. As the mind holds power over the body, and since most cures originate there, it is my practice to cure the mind first. I have spoken to her, observed her every nuance and, through the knowledge endowed to me by heaven, I have divined a mind impaired, an imagination deformed, a depraved desire to be...married. Personally, I think there's nothing more ridiculous or wasteful than this modern mania young people have to get married.

**GORGIBUS.** What a sensible young man!

**VALÈRE.** Oh, I could never bear it myself.

**GORGIBUS.** What a splendid doctor!

**VALÈRE.** However, we have to humor her and since she's so fixed on this notion and since her condition demands immediate attention, I'm taking advantage of her temporary confusion. I've told her... (*He giggles.*) ...I've told her I've come here to... (*Giggles.*) ...to ask you for her hand in marriage!

(*They both laugh.*) The minute I said that she became a new person. Her eyes brightened. And if you'll just go along with the deception—for a few days—you'll see she'll get right back to her old self.

**GORGIBUS.** Fine. Fine! I'm all for it.

**VALÈRE.** And then, afterwards, we can complete her cure along more traditional lines.

**GORGIBUS.** What a wonderful idea! (*Crossing to LUCINDA:*) My dear, this man has asked to marry you and I've given my consent.

**LUCINDA.** You have?!

**GORGIBUS.** I have.

**LUCINDA.** For real?

**GORGIBUS.** Absolutely.

**LUCINDA.** (*To VALÈRE:*) And you...you really want to marry me?

**VALÈRE.** Of course.

**LUCINDA.** And father consents?

**GORGIBUS.** With pleasure, my daughter.

**LUCINDA.** Oh, how happy you've made me! If it's really true.

**VALÈRE.** True as can be, mademoiselle. I've been in love with you for days. And to tell the truth... *(He winks at GORGIBUS.)* ...I just put on this disguise in order to see you.

**LUCINDA.** Ah, sir, this tells me you really do love me, and I am deeply touched.

**GORGIBUS.** *(Aside:)* What an idiot! She fell for it!

**LUCINDA.** Will you then, father, give me this man as my husband?

**GORGIBUS.** Of course! Here, let me join your hands.

**VALÈRE.** Oh, but sir—

**GORGIBUS.** *(Whispers to VALÈRE:)* It's just for show. *(Aloud:)* That's right, join hands. There.

**VALÈRE.** *(To LUCINDA:)* And accept, please, this ring. It has great healing powers, I assure you.

**LUCINDA.** Oooh! And, please, let's draw up a marriage contract so it's all official.

**VALÈRE.** But of course. *(Aside to GORGIBUS:)* I've sent for an apothecary. He'll pretend to be a notary.

**GORGIBUS.** Splendid! *(Aside:)* The man's a genius.

*(SABINE enters.)*

**VALÈRE.** Ah, Sabine. At last. You brought the notary?

**SABINE.** Here he is.

*(The NOTARY [BEAUVAL] enters in secretarial robes. SABINE goes into house and brings out a small writing table.)*

**LUCINDA.** I can't believe this!

**GORGIBUS.** *(Aside, laughing:)* Neither can anyone else! Oh what an idiot... *(To NOTARY:)* Now, Master "Notary"... *(He nudges NOTARY in the ribs; NOTARY is appalled.)* ...we must draw up a marriage contract for these young persons.

**NOTARY.** Very well.

**GORGIBUS.** *(Dictating:)* Take a contract: "Be it known by all parties that I, Monsieur Gorgibus of Paris, freely and with full heart, give my daughter Lucinda to..." What's your name?

*(VALÈRE gives the NOTARY his business card.)*

**VALÈRE.** Here.

**THIS PLAY IS  
NOT OVER!**

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## PART TWO

### THE FORCED MARRIAGE

*(Onstage, the set for "The Forced Marriage." Two houses, one up left, one up right. Midstage, a well surrounded by a circular bench. MLE. DE BRIE and MLE. DU PARC are seated on the bench in gypsy costumes. They are putting on ankle bracelets, paring toenails, etc.)*

**DE BRIE.** I can't believe real gypsies go through all this.

*(Pause.)*

**DU PARC.** Did you know that after you're dead your toenails keep growing?

**DE BRIE.** No, I didn't know that.

**DU PARC.** Well, it's true.

**DE BRIE.** So that means on Judgment Day everyone's gonna be stumbling around with these enormous toenails.

**DU PARC.** Your hair keeps growing, too. All your hair. *(Beat.)* Your nose hair, your ear hair, your—

**DE BRIE.** Please!

*(Pause.)*

**DU PARC.** Did you see when Madeleine came in tonight?

**DE BRIE.** "Hell hath no fury."

**DU PARC.** She's changing dressing rooms. Doesn't want to be anywhere near Armande.

**DE BRIE.** You know, if Armande's really going to become "Madame Molière," and if all those rumors start up again about you-know-what—

**DU PARC.** There won't be an empty seat in the theater.

**DE BRIE.** That's the good news; the bad news is Little Miss Sweet-Face will be taking over my roles, and that I refuse to put up with. I'll go over to the Bourgogne.

**DU PARC.** Catherine!

**DE BRIE.** They could use some new women. Some of those old cows are pushing fifty.

*(GROS-RENÉ enters with his staff.)*

**GROS-RENÉ.** Clear away, ladies. Catherine, don't leave such a mess! The King may be coming again tonight.

**DE BRIE.** And here we are—playing gypsies! In bare feet.

**GROS-RENÉ.** I hear he's got a "thing" for bare feet.

**DU PARC.** Really?

**GROS-RENÉ.** Get off the stage! (*The ladies exit.*) Jean-Baptiste! Are you ready?

(*MOLIÈRE enters, followed by MADELEINE.*)

**MADELEINE.** You've got to listen!

**MOLIÈRE.** Not now! And what are you doing here, anyway? You're not in this play.

**MADELEINE.** You keep avoiding me. I just want you to listen for a moment. I've always given you good advice.

**MOLIÈRE.** Yes, yes. (*To GROS-RENÉ:*) How's the house. Is he here?

**MADELEINE.** I'm the first one who reads your scripts, who tells you what people want to see. Remember: you're "Molière" because of me.

**MOLIÈRE.** And Armande is going to be Madame Molière because of me.

(*A fanfare is heard from out front.*)

The King?

**GROS-RENÉ.** Must be.

**MADELEINE.** Jean, it's your life I'm talking about. And this company, because your life is this company.

**MOLIÈRE.** My life is not my own? Is that what you're saying?

**MADELEINE.** Exactly. And that's why—

(*LA THORILLIÈRE enters in his GERONIMO costume.*)

**LA THORILLIÈRE.** The King! That's twice in a row. My god, we must be good!

**MOLIÈRE.** Of course we're good.

(*ARMANDE runs on.*)

**ARMANDE.** I just heard! Is it true?

**MOLIÈRE.** (*Embracing her:*) Yes. He's here.

(ARMANDE and MOLIÈRE go through their thumb-tweaking ritual, along with a few kisses. MADELEINE, observing this, slowly exits.)

**MOLIÈRE & ARMANDE.** *Merde, merde, and double merde.*

(ARMANDE starts to exit.)

**MOLIÈRE.** Is that a new costume?

**ARMANDE.** Yes! I had it made specially. Isn't it heaven? *(She runs off.)*

**MOLIÈRE.** *(To himself:)* ...must've cost a fortune...

(LA THORILLIÈRE goes over to MOLIÈRE and shakes his hand.)

**LA THORILLIÈRE.** Kill 'em.

**MOLIÈRE.** Fuck 'em. *(To GROS-RENÉ:)* Are they seated?

**GROS-RENÉ.** Almost. Places, please.

**MOLIÈRE.** *(Quietly, to LA THORILLIÈRE:)* Pierre...

**LA THORILLIÈRE.** Huh?

**MOLIÈRE.** Am I making a fool of myself?

**LA THORILLIÈRE.** What?

**MOLIÈRE.** Should I marry that wonderful girl?

**LA THORILLIÈRE.** What is this?! A rehearsal?

**MOLIÈRE.** What do you mean?

**LA THORILLIÈRE.** Well, the scene we're just about to play...

**MOLIÈRE.** Oh...right.

**GROS-RENÉ.** Places, please!

*(They go to places. GROS-RENÉ raps his staff several times for silence, then the traditional 1-2-3, and exits. The curtain rises. SGANARELLE [MOLIÈRE] is coming out of his house. GERONIMO [LA THORILLIÈRE] observes him.)*

**SGANARELLE.** *(Speaking into house:)* I'll be back shortly. Look sharp. You've all got chores to do. This is a big day! If anyone calls bringing money, come and get me right away. If anyone calls asking for money, tell 'em I've left town.

**GERONIMO.** Prudent advice.

**SGANARELLE.** Ah, Monsieur Geronimo, how *à propos*. I was just coming to find you.

**GERONIMO.** Why?

**SGANARELLE.** To tell you about a plan I've got in mind. To get your opinion.

**GERONIMO.** Gladly. I'm pleased to be asked, and we can talk out here in the sunshine.

**SGANARELLE.** Let's put our hats on, and our heads together. (*They sit on bench.*) It's a matter of some importance and one should never act without consulting one's friends, I always say.

**GERONIMO.** I'm very honored to be chosen. You can tell me anything.

**SGANARELLE.** But first I must ask you not to flatter me. Just tell me, flat-out, what you think.

**GERONIMO.** Just as you wish.

**SGANARELLE.** There's nothing worse than a friend who won't speak candidly.

**GERONIMO.** Ah, you're right about that.

**SGANARELLE.** In this day and age one finds so few who are sincere.

**GERONIMO.** True. Very true.

**SGANARELLE.** Promise me, Monsieur Geronimo: speak with absolute candor.

**GERONIMO.** I promise.

**SGANARELLE.** Swear on our friendship.

**GERONIMO.** I swear. Just tell me what this is all about.

**SGANARELLE.** I want you to tell me...if you think I ought to get married.

**GERONIMO.** (*Amazed:*) Who? You??

**SGANARELLE.** Yes, me. Me. Myself. What d'you think?

**GERONIMO.** I must ask you first...one thing.

**SGANARELLE.** What?

**GERONIMO.** Just how old would you be these days?

**SGANARELLE.** Me?

**GERONIMO.** Yes.

**SGANARELLE.** Oh hell, I don't know. But I feel great.

**GERONIMO.** What?! You don't know how old you are?

**SGANARELLE.** No. Is that important?

**GERONIMO.** Well... Look, let's figure it out. How old were you when we first met?

**SGANARELLE.** Er...heavens! I was only twenty.

**GERONIMO.** Fine. And how long were we in Rome together?

**SGANARELLE.** Eight years.

**GERONIMO.** And how long were you in England?

**SGANARELLE.** Mmm...seven years.

**GERONIMO.** And in Holland after that?

**SGANARELLE.** Five years. Five and a half.

**GERONIMO.** And how long since you came back here to Paris?

**SGANARELLE.** I came back in '46.

**GERONIMO.** So, from '46 to '58 is...twelve years. And five in Holland is seventeen plus seven in England, that's twenty-four; and our eight years in Rome, that's thirty-two, and you were twenty when we met...so that makes exactly...fifty-two. So, by your own reckoning Monsieur Sganarelle, you are somewhere around your fifty-second or fifty-third birthday.

**SGANARELLE.** Me? Impossible.

**GERONIMO.** Figures don't lie. And accordingly I would have to say—candidly, as your friend—I would have to say marriage is not for you. It's something even young persons should think about very carefully, and people our age shouldn't think about at all. And since some say marriage is the greatest folly one can commit, I can think of nothing worse than coming to such folly at the time of one's greatest wisdom. So, in conclusion, let me be perfectly clear: don't even think about getting married. To give up your freedom now and take on the heaviest chains known to man... I'd think you a complete idiot.

**SGANARELLE.** And I tell you I've made up my mind. And I refuse to be ridiculed for marrying this girl.

**GERONIMO.** What girl? You've found a girl?! Oh, well, that's something else altogether. You didn't tell me that.

**SGANARELLE.** A lovely girl and I love her with all my heart.

**GERONIMO.** You love her with all your heart?

**SGANARELLE.** That's right. And I've spoken with her father.

**GERONIMO.** You've spoken with her father?

**SGANARELLE.** And we're getting married this very evening. I've given my word.

**GERONIMO.** Well then why—...? Fine. Get married. I won't say another word.

**SGANARELLE.** What, you think I can't...please a woman anymore? Forget my age; let's talk facts. How many men of thirty do you know as full of life as I am? Just look at this body. (*He walks around vigorously.*) Look at this...vigor! Have you ever seen me call for a sedan chair to go into town? Never. Look at these teeth. I've got the best teeth in Paris. I eat four meals a day. With vigor. A vigorous appetite. Known for its vigor. Feel this stomach; hard as a rock. (*He hits himself two or three times:*) Ha!... Ha!... Ha!!

**GERONIMO.** All right, all right. I was wrong. It'll be wonderful. Get married.

**SGANARELLE.** Oh sure, I used to find it repugnant just like you, but now... I've got my reasons. Beside the sheer joy of having a beautiful wife who'll cuddle and caress me, pick me up when I'm out of sorts...besides all that, it occurred to me that, living alone like I do, I'm allowing the race of Sganarelles to perish from the face of the earth. Marrying, I live again in others yet-to-come. I will see little faces looking just like me—like two peas from the same pod...the patter of little feet, little voices saying "Papa!" when I come home, telling me all their adorable little nonsense... I can see it all now... I'm there already with half a dozen little angels around me...

**GERONIMO.** ...right... Well, that's all perfectly delightful. Yes, get married. Marry as soon as possible.

**SGANARELLE.** That's your advice?

**GERONIMO.** Absolutely. You couldn't do better.

**SGANARELLE.** Ah, I'm so happy you've given me your candid opinion. Like a true friend.

**GERONIMO.** And, er...who is the lucky young woman?

**SGANARELLE.** Her name is Dorimène.

**GERONIMO.** You mean that clothes-horse? Er...I mean, that elegant and fashionable young lady?

**SGANARELLE.** Right.

**GERONIMO.** Alcantor's daughter?

**SGANARELLE.** Exactly.

**GERONIMO.** Sister of a certain Alcidas? The notorious swordsman?

**SGANARELLE.** That's it.

**GERONIMO.** Dear God in heaven!

**SGANARELLE.** What's wrong?

**GERONIMO.** A splendid choice! Marry her immediately.

**SGANARELLE.** Is there some reason I shouldn't?

**GERONIMO.** No, no! Not if you've given your word to those two gentlemen. Oh, you're really going to be married. And when I say "married," I mean married! Wed-lock. And the sooner the better.

**SGANARELLE.** I'm happy to see you so enthusiastic! I thank you for your counsel, and I invite you to the wedding this evening.

**GERONIMO.** Oh, I wouldn't miss this for the world! I'll be there. With bells on.

**SGANARELLE.** What?

**GERONIMO.** Just an expression.

**SGANARELLE.** Ah. (*Bows.*) Your servant, sir.

**GERONIMO.** (*Aside:*) Young Dorimène with Sganarelle who's fifty-three...? Ooh-hoo! What a perfect marriage! (*Exit, laughing.*)

**SGANARELLE.** This must be a good match; it makes everyone so happy. I am the most fortunate of men!

*(Enter DORIMÈNE [ARMANDE] with a SERVANT [GROS-RENÉ] holding her train. She is gaudily overdressed and showing a lot of cleavage.)*

**DORIMÈNE.** Come on! And keep my train off the ground, for heaven's sake! And don't dawdle!

**SGANARELLE.** Behold my sweet mistress...she is nigh. Ah, how lovely she is! Such demeanor, such...style. Wouldn't any man, seeing that, be just itching to marry her? Whither away, sweetheart? Sweet bride-to-be of your hubby-to-be?

**DORIMÈNE.** Shopping.

**SGANARELLE.** What?

**DORIMÈNE.** I've got stuff to buy.

**SGANARELLE.** Ah, my little lovey, we're going to be so happy! And you won't refuse me anything, will you. Just think: I can do whatever I want with you and no one can say a word. You will be mine. From head to toe I will be master of all: those sparkling bright eyes, that little turned-up nose, those appetizing lips, that pretty little chin, those little round titties and that—...well, your adorable everything will be mine, do you hear, mine! To have and to hold, especially hold. To pamper and pet. Aren't you happy my lovely little babykins?

**DORIMÈNE.** Oh, very happy, I can tell you... 'cause my father's been so strict with me it's been driving me berserk! I can't tell you how many times I've yelled at him for keeping me all cooped up, and I've asked him a hundred times to get me married, so I can get the hell out of here and do as I please! Thank God you came along.

*(She pulls her train from the SERVANT who drifts upstage and falls asleep.)*

And from now on I'm gonna have me some fun and make up for lost time. Since you're such an elegant guy and know how to do things *comme il faut*, we're gonna keep the most fashionable house in Paris. I know you're not one of those dumb husbands who try to keep their wives locked up like they were werewolves or something. I hate that. I hate being all alone, you know? I like parties and gambling, social calls and fancy dinners, getting pretty presents all the time, going for rides in a fancy carriage with four white horses and lots of servants! In a word: F-U-N! You oughta count your lucky stars you landed a live one like me.

And we won't have any arguments, 'cause you can go and do whatever you like. And, of course, I will expect the same freedom in return. In my opinion, married couples should have mutual trust and never get upset about what their partners do...or who they do it with. When we're married we're gonna be two people who know how to live. You'll never be jealous of me, and God knows I'll never be jealous of you.

*(Pause.)*

What's wrong? You've gone sort of pale all over.

**SGANARELLE.** It's nothing...slight attack of the vapors...

**DORIMÈNE.** Yeah, that's been goin' around. Listen: marriage'll take care of that. Well, bye-bye. I'm off. *(To SERVANT:)* Wake up, cretin! *(To SGANARELLE:)* I'm already late getting some decent clothes to replace these old rags. Look out Paris; I'm comin' to buy out the town! Daddy says, have all the bills sent to you. Bye!

*(DORIMÈNE and SERVANT exit.)*

**SGANARELLE.** *(Looking heavenward:)* How could this happen to me!?

*(GERONIMO enters.)*

**GERONIMO.** Ah, Monsieur Sganarelle. I'm so happy you're still here. Listen, I ran into a goldsmith who'd heard you're looking for a diamond ring for your fiancée, so he asked me to put in a good word for him. He's got one to sell and he says it's perfect.

**SGANARELLE.** That's the least of my concerns.

**GERONIMO.** Excuse me? Where's all that pre-nuptial ardor I saw a moment ago?

**SGANARELLE.** Yes, well, a few pre-nuptial scruples have come along since then. Before I take one step further I'm going back to basics... I had a dream last night that keeps coming back to me. Dreams are like mirrors, you know; they show us pictures of ourselves and what's going to happen. I was in this little boat...tossing about on a turbulent sea, and then—

**GERONIMO.** Monsieur, I have to be on my way and I really don't give a damn about dreams. Now as regards "getting back to basics," may I remind you there are two philosophers in the neighborhood—on this very street in fact—who'd be only too happy to discuss basic issues with you. On any subject. Why not tell your troubles to them? As for me, I've said all I have to say, and I rest your servant, sir. (*Bows and exits.*)

**SGANARELLE.** He's right. I should ask those philosophers what they think.

(*From offstage we hear PANCRACE [BEAUVAL]:*)

**PANCRACE.** (*Offstage:*) Piss off! You are an impertinent booby. You don't belong in the ranks of the literati!

**SGANARELLE.** Oh dear...he's in quite a lather.

**PANCRACE.** (*Enters backwards, yelling into wings:*) I have irrefutable proof that you are an ignoramus, a begetter of ignoramuses, an ignoramophile...and an ignoramafecator!

**SGANARELLE.** Must've gotten into an argument...sir?

**PANCRACE.** (*Yelling off:*) You want to argue with me and you don't even know the first principles!

**SGANARELLE.** He's so mad he doesn't even see me.

**PANCRACE.** (*Yelling off:*) Your terminology would be inadmissible in any court of philosophy!

(*He sees SGANARELLE:*) Oh.

**SGANARELLE.** Reverend Doctor, I salute you.

**PANCRACE.** Your servant, sir.

**SGANARELLE.** Might I—

**PANCRACE.** (*Yelling off:*) You know what you've done?! You've made a false syllogism!

**SGANARELLE.** If you could just—

**PANCRACE.** (*Yelling off:*) Your first principle is inept, your subordinate principle is impertinent and your conclusion is for the birds!

**SGANARELLE.** (*Sarcastically:*) Monsieur "Aristotle," might I ask what you're so angry about?

**PANCRACE.** Righteous anger. Nothing could be more righteous.

**SGANARELLE.** But about what?

**PANCRACE.** That ignoramus wants me to sustain an erroneous proposition based on a shocking misnomer.

**SGANARELLE.** Might one ask what it is?

**PANCRACE.** Ah, Monsieur Sganarelle, everything's going to hell in a hand basket these days...everything's corrupted. A shocking lack of discipline. I tell you, the elected officials whose duty it is to maintain law and order would be blushing for shame if they could hear what I just heard.

**SGANARELLE.** What?

**PANCRACE.** Can you imagine? It's too horrible. God alone could punish the offender. Imagine saying:... "the form of a hat"!

**SGANARELLE.** Excuse me?

**PANCRACE.** One must say, "the shape of a hat," not "the form." The difference must be maintained between Shape and Form, in so much as Form refers to the external disposition of animate bodies and Shape to the external disposition of inanimate bodies. And since a hat is an inanimate body one must refer to its Shape—not its Form. (*Yelling off:*) Nincompoop! Those are the rules! Those are Aristotle's rules as set down in *De Rerum Virtute!*

**SGANARELLE.** Oh for heaven's sake; I thought it was something serious. Now,—

**PANCRACE.** I'm in such a snit I can't see straight!

**SGANARELLE.** Look, just forget about the hat. I've got something serious to discuss with you and—

**PANCRACE.** (*Yelling off:*) Error, error, error! You err!

**SGANARELLE.** Fine. He was wrong. Now,—

**PANCRACE.** A proposition condemned by Aristotle!

**SGANARELLE.** I know, but—

**PANCRACE.** In black and white. In Greek!

**SGANARELLE.** Exactly. (*He yells offstage:*) You're an idiot! An impertinent idiot to argue with a Doctor of Philosophy. He even knows how to read and write!

(*To PANCRACE:*) Now listen, I've come to ask you about a matter of great concern to me. I'm planning to ally myself with a young person in holy matrimony. She's very beautiful and very well...put together. I even like her, and she's dying to marry me. Her father's in full accord, but...I'm just a little worried about finding myself in an embarrassing situation as regards...well, she's young and I'm not and, you know...things happen. I don't want to be publicly humiliated. I ask you, as a philosopher, to give me your opinion. What's your advice?

**PANCRACE.** Before I'd say "the Form of a hat" I'd say that Nature adores a vacuum.

**SGANARELLE.** (*Aside:*) This guy's driving me nuts. (*To him:*) Look here, Ph.D., you have got to learn to listen to people! I've been talking to you for ages and you haven't heard one word.

**PANCRACE.** I beg your pardon. Righteous anger consumed me. Sorry.

**SGANARELLE.** Well, forget about "hats" and listen.

**PANCRACE.** Fine. What's on your mind?

**SGANARELLE.** I must speak with you.

**PANCRACE.** Using what tongue?

**SGANARELLE.** What tongue?

**PANCRACE.** Yes.

**SGANARELLE.** The one in my mouth! What, you think I'm going to borrow someone else's?

**PANCRACE.** I mean, what idiom, what language?

**SGANARELLE.** Oh.

**PANCRACE.** Did you wish to speak Italian?

**SGANARELLE.** No.

**PANCRACE.** Spanish?

**SGANARELLE.** No.

**PANCRACE.** German?

**SGANARELLE.** No.

**PANCRACE.** English?

**SGANARELLE.** No.

PANCRACE. Latin?

SGANARELLE. No.

PANCRACE. Greek?

SGANARELLE. No.

PANCRACE. Hebrew?

SGANARELLE. No.

PANCRACE. Aramaic?

SGANARELLE. No.

PANCRACE. Turkish?

SGANARELLE. No!

*(Pause.)*

PANCRACE. Urdu?

SGANARELLE. No! No, French!

PANCRACE. Ah. French.

SGANARELLE. That's right.

PANCRACE. Please, then, stand on my other side. This ear is only used for scientific or foreign languages. The other ear is for the mother tongue.

SGANARELLE. *(Aside:)* You've got to go through such rigmarole with these people...

PANCRACE. Now. What did you want?

SGANARELLE. Consultation. A matter of some delicacy.

PANCRACE. Philosophical delicacy one presumes.

SGANARELLE. Well, it's like this: I—

PANCRACE. You wish to know, perhaps, if substance and accident are synonymous or antithetical in metaphysical discussion.

SGANARELLE. Not at all. I—

PANCRACE. If Logic is an art or a science.

SGANARELLE. No, that's not it. I—

PANCRACE. If its object is to be found in the Three Functions or in the Third Function only.

SGANARELLE. No, I—

PANCRACE. If there are ten categories or only one.

**SGANARELLE.** No. I—

**PANCRACE.** If Conclusion is the end of Syllogism.

**SGANARELLE.** Negative. I—

**PANCRACE.** If we are affected by Absolute Cause or Intended Cause.

**SGANARELLE.** No, no, a hundred times NO!

**PANCRACE.** Well then, you'd better explain yourself. I'm not a mind-reader, you know.

**SGANARELLE.** I'd love to explain myself, but you've got to listen. Now:

*(Simultaneously with PANCRACE:)*

What I want to discuss is this: I want to marry a woman who is very beautiful and very young. I've asked her father for her hand. But I'm just a little bit apprehensive. Young women today have such "modern" ideas. What if she gets tired of me and decides to...shop around? I'm not getting any younger, you know. Oh, I feel fine, but—...Are you listening to me?

**PANCRACE.** *(Simultaneous with above:)* Language has been given mankind to express thought. And just as thoughts are the images of reality, so words are the images of thought. But these images differ from other images in that other images differ markedly from the original, whereas words become the original since they are nothing more than the exterior shows, or denoters, or connoters, if you will, of explicative thought. Hence it follows that those who think well speak well. Explain to me then your thoughts using words which are the highest and most significant form of human thought.

*(SGANARELLE pushes PANCRACE into his house and leans against the door to keep him penned in.)*

**SGANARELLE.** A plague on this fellow!

**PANCRACE.** *(From within:)* Yes, language is *animi index et speculum*—the interpreter and portrait of the soul.

*(He has gone to the upstairs window, appears there.)*

It is the window which reveals our innermost thoughts. And since you are capable of talking and thinking at the same time, why, I ask you, why do you refuse to speak to me and illuminate your thoughts?

**SGANARELLE.** That's what I'm trying to do, but you won't listen!

**PANCRACE.** I'm listening. Speak.

**SGANARELLE.** Very well. I'll speak.

**PANCRACE.** Only make it brief.

**SGANARELLE.** I will.

**PANCRACE.** To the point.

**SGANARELLE.** Of course.

**PANCRACE.** Brevity is the soul of wit.

**SGANARELLE.** If you'll just—

**PANCRACE.** Avoid circumlocution. Don't just sort of ramble on and on, you know. I hate that. It always amazes me—

*(SGANARELLE has started throwing stones at PANCRACE.)*

Hey! What's the big idea?? Instead of telling me, you're resorting to— Ow!— Well this is worse than that idiot who tried to get me to say— Ouch!—"the Form of a hat"!

*(He is coming downstairs; we hear him.)*

Well, sticks and stones may break my bones, but I will prove to you *a priori* and *a posteriori*...

*(He comes out onto street. SGANARELLE still throwing rocks.)*

...that you are nothing but a blockhead...a ninny...whereas I am—and always shall be—*per omnes modo*... Doctor Pancrace! *(Exit.)*

**SGANARELLE.** What a windbag!

**PANCRACE.** *(Returning:)* A man of letters, a man of erudition...

**SGANARELLE.** Oh no.

**PANCRACE.** A man of science, a man of morals...*(Leaving:)* a man of wisdom, a man of the hour!... *(Returning:)* A man for all seasons, a man-of-war, a man versed in mythology... *(Leaving:)* philology, cartology, ontology, cosmology...*(Returning:)* an anthology without apology. An authority on mathematics and quadratics, geometrics and obstetrics... *(Leaving:)* astronomy, autonomy, the Book of Deuteronomy...

**SGANARELLE.** Get out!!

*(He is gone.)*

To hell with philosophers who don't listen. How many times have I said: Aristotle was nothing but a blabbermouth. But how could this happen to me? Well, I'll just have to try that other philosopher. As I remember, he's much more well-balanced. *(Calling offstage:)* Hello there! Ho there! Ho there!!

(MARPHURIUS [DE CROISY] enters, very quietly.)

**MARPHURIUS.** Monsieur Sganarelle? You wished to see me?

**SGANARELLE.** Ah, Professor Marphurius! I'm in need of your counsel about a certain...affair, and I am here expressly to speak with you. (*Beat.*) Ah. That's much better. He listens.

**MARPHURIUS.** But, monsieur, you must alter, please, your manner of speaking. Our philosophy ordains the total avoidance of decisive propositions. One must speak only in probabilities, eschewing...eschewing, I say, anything certain or definitive. Accordingly, you must never say "I am here", but: "It appears that I am here." "It seems as if I were here."

**SGANARELLE.** It seems?

**MARPHURIUS.** Yes.

**SGANARELLE.** Well of course it seems like I'm here. 'Cause I am.

**MARPHURIUS.** *Non sequitur.* It does not follow. Something may very well seem to be...and not be.

**SGANARELLE.** What, I'm not really here?

**MARPHURIUS.** We can't be sure. We must doubt everything.

**SGANARELLE.** So, I'm not here. Then why are you talking to me?

**MARPHURIUS.** Ah, it seems to me that you're here, and it seems as if I'm talking to you...but we have no proof.

**SGANARELLE.** Oh for heaven's sake, you're pulling my leg. Here I am; there you are and there's no "seems" about it. Look, let's just forget all these subtleties and get down to brass tacks. I'm here—

**MARPHURIUS.** Ah?

**SGANARELLE.** I'm here because I've decided to get married.

**MARPHURIUS.** (*Shrugs.*) Wouldn't know about that.

**SGANARELLE.** I just told you.

**MARPHURIUS.** Could be.

**SGANARELLE.** The lady I have chosen is very beautiful and very young.

**MARPHURIUS.** That is not impossible.

**SGANARELLE.** Would it be good or bad for me to marry her?

**MARPHURIUS.** Either one...or the other.

SGANARELLE. Oh, so now it's this game! I'm asking you, point blank: would it be wise for me to marry this young girl?

MARPHURIUS. Well, that depends.

SGANARELLE. So it might be unwise?

MARPHURIUS. Perhaps.

SGANARELLE. For the love of God, give me an answer!

MARPHURIUS. I intend to.

SGANARELLE. Good! I'm really very taken with her.

MARPHURIUS. That could be.

SGANARELLE. And her father agrees.

MARPHURIUS. Yes, that might happen.

SGANARELLE. But, "married." I..I don't want to end up...a cuckold.

MARPHURIUS. Anything's possible.

SGANARELLE. Yes, but what do you think?

MARPHURIUS. It is not impossible of course...

SGANARELLE. What would you do in my place?

MARPHURIUS. No idea.

SGANARELLE. Well, what would you advise me to do?

MARPHURIUS. Whatever you like.

SGANARELLE. This is driving me crazy!

MARPHURIUS. Personally...

SGANARELLE. Yes?

MARPHURIUS. ...I wash my hands of the whole affair.

SGANARELLE. (*Aside:*) To hell with this dreamer.

MARPHURIUS. *Que será será.*

SGANARELLE. That's it! I'll change your tune, you philosophical... mouth-breather!

*(He beats him with a slapstick.)*

MARPHURIUS. Ah! Ah! Ah!!

SGANARELLE. Here's my payment for your hogwash.

MARPHURIUS. Hogwash! What insolence! This is a categorical outrage! Beating a Doctor of Philosophy! Ow!

**SGANARELLE.** Excuse me, please. You must alter, please, your manner of speaking. You mustn't say I am beating you, but it seems as if I'm beating you.

**MARPHURIUS.** Ah! Ah!! I shall lodge a formal complaint with the local constabulary—

**SGANARELLE.** I wash my hands of the whole affair.

**MARPHURIUS.** I'll show them my bruises.

**SGANARELLE.** Yes, that might happen.

**MARPHURIUS.** Epistemological evidence: you did this to me!

**SGANARELLE.** That is not impossible.

**MARPHURIUS.** Ah! I'll bring charges!

**SGANARELLE.** *Que será será.*

**MARPHURIUS.** Oooh, just you wait! (*He exits.*)

**SGANARELLE.** My God, I couldn't get one positive, concrete word out of that fog ball. I know even less now that when I started. What am I gonna do about this marriage? Was ever any man in such a bind?

*(Music heard offstage. TWO GYPSY WOMEN, [DE BRIE and DU PARC] enter singing and dancing with tambourines.)*

**GYPSIES.**

ZINGA-ZINGA

ZING-A-LARA VOOM-VOOM

ZINGA-ZINGA

POLLY-WOLLY BOOM-BOOM...

**SGANARELLE.** Excuse me... You there. Do either of you tell fortunes?

**1ST GYPSY (DE BRIE).** Ah yes, sweet monsieur. You are looking at two fortune-tellers right here. Right here you're looking at them. That's what you're doin', you're looking at—

**2ND GYPSY. (DU PARC).** Give to me thy little hand. Do but cross my palm with a little touch of silver and we're gonna tell you a really super fortune.

**1ST GYPSY.** You betcha.

**SGANARELLE.** (*Paying them:*) Here. For both of you.

**GYPSIES.** (*Dancing around him:*)

ZINGA-ZINGA

ZING-A-LARA VOOM-VOOM!

**1ST GYPSY.** Ah, sweet monsieur...you got a beautiful...whatchamacallit...physiognomy. Yes. A really sweet physi—

**2ND GYPSY.** —face. You got a good face, sweetheart. You got a face that's gonna be somethin' big, know what I mean? You got a big face.

**1ST GYPSY.** (*Reading his palm:*) Aha...aha! I'm seeing stuff here... You're gonna get married... You're gonna get married very soon! Whoo-ee, wham-bam you're a married man!

**2ND GYPSY.** She's a nice girl...a nice, well brought-up...she's nice.

**1ST GYPSY.** Oh yes, she's a real sweetie-pie, this one. Everybody loves her. I mean everybody. Everybody loves your wife. Wherever she goes: love, love, love.

In the street, in their houses,—

**2ND GYPSY.** —and she will bring thee many friends, good sir. Many, many friends.

**1ST GYPSY.** Like I say. And she will bring thee great wealth, sweetheart.

**2ND GYPSY.** And a reputation. She's gonna get you a big reputation.

*(They laugh.)*

**1ST GYPSY.** And she'll take good care of you. Oh yes, she'll take care of you!

**SGANARELLE.** Well, this is all lovely, but, please, tell me, Catherine, I—

*(They all three realize he has gone out of character, calling CATHERINE DE BRIE by her real name.*

*Pause.)*

I mean...please tell me, oh lovely gypsy lady—

**2ND GYPSY.** What can we do for you?

**SGANARELLE.** Any danger of my becoming a...a cuckold?

**2ND GYPSY.** A cuckold?

**SGANARELLE.** Yes.

**1ST GYPSY.** A cuckold?

**SGANARELLE.** Yes. Any chance of my becoming—

**GYPSIES.** (*Dancing away:*) ZINGA-ZINGA, ETC.

**SGANARELLE.** What the hell kind of an answer is that? Come back here! I order you to tell me if I'm going to be a cuckold!

**1ST GYPSY.** You? A cuckold?

**2ND GYPSY.** A cuckold, you? Horns on the head? The whole megillah?

**SGANARELLE.** Yes, me! A cuckold! Cuckold-cuckold-cuckold!  
Horns! Laughing-stock! YES!

**GYPSIES.** (*Dancing off:*)

ZINGA-ZINGA

ZING-A-LARA VOOM-VOOM, ETC. (*They exit, laughing.*)

**SGANARELLE.** Wait a minute. Wait a minute! Come back here!  
Catherine! Thérèse!

*(They are gone. He realizes he has gone off book again. He looks around confused as if he doesn't remember where the play goes from here.)*

**GROS-RENÉ** *peeps out from the wings, holding his prompt book.*)

**GROS-RENÉ.** (*Prompting:*) "Bloody swindlers..."

**MOLIÈRE-SGANARELLE.** Huh?...oh...right... Bloody swindlers!  
Leaving me in the dark... Leaving me... I have absolutely got to  
know how this marriage thing will work out.

*(He sits for a moment and GROS-RENÉ has exited.)*

Am I making a mistake? Me? A mistake??

**LYCASTE (LAGRANGE).** (*From offstage:*) You're making a mistake!

**SGANARELLE.** Hark! Who comes here?

*(DORIMÈNE and LYCASTE enter, followed by SERVANT who carries many parcels. They don't see SGANARELLE.)*

**LYCASTE.** You can't be serious. Tell me you're joking.

**DORIMÈNE.** No joke.

**LYCASTE.** You're actually getting married?

**DORIMÈNE.** Actually.

**LYCASTE.** This evening?

**DORIMÈNE.** You got it.

**LYCASTE.** And you forget—o cruel one—you forget the love I feel  
for you? And the vows of love you swore to me?

**DORIMÈNE.** No, no, no. I still feel the same way about you, sweet-  
ie. Don't let this marriage business bother you. Love's got nothing to  
do with it. I only said yes to this guy 'cause he's loaded. Look, I don't  
have a *sou*; you're broke, too, and without cash what's the point of  
living? No price is too high for a guaranteed income. I jumped at the  
opportunity. From now on I'm on Easy Street. And I'm absolutely  
sure I'll soon be rid of the old coot. I give him six months—tops—be-

fore he drops. I guarantee it, if you catch my drift. I'm already lighting candles: "Dear God, make me a widow—soon!"

(*She see* SGANARELLE:)

Why, look who's here! We were just talking about you.

LYCASTE. (*Aside, to* DORIMÈNE:) That's the guy?

DORIMÈNE. Yeah. (*Going to* SGANARELLE:) This is the kind gentleman who has consented to have me as his bride.

LYCASTE. Ah, monsieur! Please accept my heartiest congratulations... (*He can hardly keep from laughing.*) ...and please let me know if I...if I can ever be of service to you. You're marrying a wonderful, virtuous girl. And you, mademoiselle...let me rejoice with you at his remarkable match. You couldn't do better. He's...he's perfect. Monsieur, I hope we can be great friends. I hope I can call on you often. I'd like to be a regular visitor at your house.

DORIMÈNE. (*To* LYCASTE:) You do us too much honor, sir. But I've got to dash. A million things to do. Why don't you come with, and it'll give us a chance to chat? I love to chat, don't you?

(*DORIMÈNE and LYCASTE enter into Alcantor's house, laughing and followed by the SERVANT struggling with all his parcels.*)

SGANARELLE. (*Looking heavenward:*) How could this happen to me?! That's it! I've had it with this marriage. I'm breaking it off now, no matter what the cost. Better pay now...than later. Let's see...how can I get out of this with a minimum of fuss...

(*He knocks on door of Alcantor's house. ALCANTOR [BÉJART] opens door and comes out.*)

ALCANTOR. Ah! My son-in-law! Welcome, welcome!

SGANARELLE. Your servant, sir.

ALCANTOR. So, you've come to wrap things up?

SGANARELLE. Excuse me, but you see—

ALCANTOR. I assure you, I'm just as eager to get the knot tied as you are.

SGANARELLE. Actually, I'm here about something...rather different.

ALCANTOR. Oh don't worry about a thing. I've got everything ordered for the big event.

SGANARELLE. That can wait—

ALCANTOR. The musicians, the caterers...and my daughter's getting herself all gussied up just for you!

**SGANARELLE.** That's not why I'm here.

**ALCANTOR.** Now don't worry. You'll be completely satisfied.

**SGANARELLE.** That's not the point.

**ALCANTOR.** So come in, "son-in-law"!

**SGANARELLE.** I have something to tell you.

**ALCANTOR.** Well, don't stand on ceremony; come in, come in.

**SGANARELLE.** No! (*Beat.*) Look, I have to talk with you.

**ALCANTOR.** Something on your mind?

**SGANARELLE.** I'll say.

**ALCANTOR.** Well, what is it?

*(They sit on the bench.)*

**SGANARELLE.** Monsieur Alcantor, I asked for your daughter's hand and you gave your consent. But now I've decided I'm really too old for her.

**ALCANTOR.** Not at all! My daughter loves you just the way you are. You'll be perfectly happy together.

**SGANARELLE.** I've got some really bizarre...disgusting habits. And a rotten temper. She shouldn't have to put up with all that.

**ALCANTOR.** Oh, my daughter is wonderfully adaptable. You'll see. She'll accommodate.

**SGANARELLE.** I've got some health issues that will probably disgust her.

**ALCANTOR.** Impossible. A proper wife is never disgusted.

**SGANARELLE.** Look, I might as well come right out with it: I strongly advise you not to give your consent.

**ALCANTOR.** Are you pulling my leg? I would die before I'd ever break my word.

**SGANARELLE.** Oh for heaven's sake, I release you from your word. And I—

**ALCANTOR.** Never! I promised you to her and you will have her, regardless of all the others who've been clamoring for her hand.

**SGANARELLE.** Damn!

**ALCANTOR.** You are very special to me, you see. Why, even if a prince were to come calling, I'd still give her to you.

**SGANARELLE.** Monsieur Alcantor, I am extremely indebted to you for the high honor you do me. But I'm telling you: I have no intention of getting married.

**ALCANTOR.** You don't?

**SGANARELLE.** I don't.

**ALCANTOR.** And...your reason?

**SGANARELLE.** My reason? Well, I'm just not...disposed to it. In this regard, I imitate my father and all my forefathers, none of whom ever got married.

**ALCANTOR.** Well, look, it's a free country. And I've never been one to force anyone into anything. You're engaged to my daughter. Everything's been arranged, Everything's paid for. But since you want to go back on your word...well, I'll have to look into this...proper procedure and so forth... I'll get right back to you.

*(He exits into his house.)*

**SGANARELLE.** Well, that wasn't so bad. What a reasonable fellow! I thought it would be much harder getting out of it. Whew! When I think! This was a wise move on my part. I would have regretted it all my life if I'd— Ah, here comes his son.

*(ALCIDAS [BRÉCOURT] has come out of the house. The SERVANT follows, carrying two épées beneath a cloak.)*

**ALCIDAS.** *(Very polite:)* Monsieur, your humble servant.

**SGANARELLE.** And I yours, I assure you sir.

**ALCIDAS.** My father informs me that you have just arrived to disengage yourself from your marriage agreement.

**SGANARELLE.** Yes, monsieur, and with great regret, but—

**ALCIDAS.** Oh, monsieur, think nothing of it.

**SGANARELLE.** But I do, monsieur. And I shall do whatever I can to—

**ALCIDAS.** Oh, it's nothing, I assure you. And now sir... *(Taking the two swords from the SERVANT:)* ...be so good as to choose your weapon.

**SGANARELLE.** Choose a weapon?

**ALCIDAS.** If you please.

**SGANARELLE.** What for?

**ALCIDAS.** Monsieur, since you refuse to marry my sister, after having given your promise to do so, I'm sure you will not take amiss the courtesy which I here extend to you.

**SGANARELLE.** What courtesy?

**ALCIDAS.** Oh, some people would make a big fuss and bring legal action against you, but in our family we believe in gentility. So I'm here to inform you—in the most gentlemanly manner possible—that you and I are now going to attempt to kill each other.

**SGANARELLE.** How gentlemanly!

**ALCIDAS.** Come on, then. Choose.

**SGANARELLE.** Your humble servant, sir, but I'm not yours for the killing. I can't believe we're discussing this!

**ALCIDAS.** I'm sorry, but I'm afraid you will have to.

**SGANARELLE.** And I'm sorry, but I'm afraid I must refuse this "courtesy."

**ALCIDAS.** Please, sir, let's not waste time. I've got another such appointment across town.

**SGANARELLE.** I'll have nothing to do with this.

**ALCIDAS.** You refuse to duel?

**SGANARELLE.** Of course I refuse.

**ALCIDAS.** Is that final?

**SGANARELLE.** Final.

**ALCIDAS.** Oh very well. (*He hands swords back to SERVANT.*) At least you must admit you have no cause for complaint. We're doing everything by the book. You have broken your word and I challenged you to a duel. You refuse and I must therefore beat you about the head and shoulders with a large stick.

(*SERVANT hands him a slapstick.*)

I'm sure you will approve of this procedure.

**SGANARELLE.** (*Aside:*) What a very weird person!

**ALCIDAS.** So, monsieur, take your choice. I don't want to have to drag you by the ear.

**SGANARELLE.** Leave me alone!

**ALCIDAS.** Either you accept these consequences, or you marry my sister.

**SGANARELLE.** I have no intention of doing either, thank you very much.

**ALCIDAS.** No intention?

**SGANARELLE.** None whatsoever.

**ALCIDAS.** With your permission, then...

*(He beats SGANARELLE around the stage:)*

I'm so sorry... *(Smack.)* ...to be obliged... *(Whap.)* ...to use you in this manner... *(Pow.)* ...but I am constrained to do so... *(Slam.)* ...until you elect either to fight a duel... *(Pop.)* ...or marry my sister! *(Wallop!)*

*(Suddenly, from upstage center MADELEINE appears in an elaborate aristocratic costume. MOLIÈRE, BRÉCOURT, and GROS-RÉNE cease their lazzi and look at her in amazement.)*

**MADELEINE.**

Hold! And cease this rude, unmannered rout!  
Put down your weapon, sir, and cease to shout.  
It fills me with dismay to see grown men  
Behaving as if they were boys again—

**SGANARELLE / MOLIÈRE.** What the hell is this?

**MADELEINE.**

And scandalizing all who look askance  
At those who would disrupt our peaceful France.  
No more, then, and no need to look so gloomy;  
I can resolve this if you'll listen to me.

*(Pause.)*

**MOLIÈRE.** Do we have a choice?

**MADELEINE.**

I come as a surprise, I know that's true,  
But sometimes there are things one has to do.  
Some things adhere to power and prestige;  
Another way to say: "*noblesse oblige.*"

*(Actors can be seen gathering in the wings to watch.)*

**MOLIÈRE.** *(Aside, to her:)*

How dare you, madame come here in this pose  
And interrupt a play I wrote in prose? ...Damn! Now you've got me  
doing it... This is a farce; language should be terse—

**MADELEINE.**

O sir, I've merely gone from bad to verse.  
Besides, I think that verse is more dramatic  
For characters who are aristocratic.

**MOLIÈRE.** Oh very well, I'll play your silly game...

(As SGANARELLE:)

Who are you, madame? Do you have a name?

**BRÉCOURT.** Will someone tell me what the hell is going on?

**MADELEINE.**

I've come here to retrieve my dearest loss,  
For I am La Comtesse d'Escarbagnas.  
You may pretend, proud sirs, that you don't know me  
But there's a girl here I wish you to show me.  
I have a claim to make; I'll make it when  
I've seen my only daughter: Dorimène.

**SGANARELLE & ALCIDAS.** What?!

**MADELEINE.**

Her father perished in these civil wars  
Which brought uncivil conduct to these shores,  
And I, accused of treason and exiled  
Was forced to give away my only child.

(To ALCIDAS:)

Your father was the man who would re-name her.  
He brought her up, but now I must reclaim her.

**MOLIÈRE.** (*Aside to MADELEINE:*) Will you please tell me what this game is all about? How do we get out of this? (*To audience:*) Your majesty, ladies and gentlemen—

**MADELEINE.** I'll make it plain to you, as clear as water:  
The girl you are engaged to...is my daughter.

(*Pause. MOLIÈRE is beginning to understand.*)

**MOLIÈRE.** What?... Madeleine...are you saying... (*Noticing actors in the wings:*) ...is she telling me...?

**MADELEINE.**

I see I've finally gotten your attention.  
And now, pray tell me, what is your intention?  
You've acted, sir, in haste, caused all this bother—

**MOLIÈRE.** But tell me madame, please; who is the fa-fa-father?

(*ARMANDE, who was seen among the actors in the wings, now exits.*)

**MADELEINE.** That, sir, you will never, ever know.

(*An unhealthy pause. Then ALCANTOR / BÉJART bustles out of the house with DORIMÈNE / ARMANDE.*)

**ALCANTOR.**

I've heard the news which, more than just dramatic,  
 Quite alters things; my girl's aristocratic!  
 Monsieur Sganarelle, if you're still wary  
 There are lots of men who would be thrilled to marry  
 Into the noble house Escarbagnas.  
 So, if you think my girl an albatross  
 I'll happily comply with all your wishes.  
 The sea is full of eligible fishes.

**MADELEINE.**

But I'm not letting this one off the hook.  
 He has engaged to marry, kissed the book,  
 So let things go as planned without a flaw;  
 I cannot wait to be your mother-in-law,  
 And lest you dare refuse this hand he hands you  
 It's Comtesse d'Escarbagnas who commands you.

**ALCANTOR.** And you, my "daughter"...what have you to say?

**DORIMÈNE.**

I'm only waiting for the wedding day.  
 I know the man I want; no hesitation.  
 He matches up to each specification.

**MOLIÈRE.**

"Specification"? My God that sounds p-p-pedantic;  
 I'd pictured something rather more romantic.

**BRÉCOURT.** (*To MOLIÈRE:*) Can we please get back to the script!  
 We'll be out here all night. And I hate improvisation!

**MOLIÈRE.** (*As SGANARELLE:*) All right, all right! I'll marry her!

**BRÉCOURT.** (*As ALCIDAS:*) Ah, Monsieur Sganarelle, I am delighted to see you've come to your senses and everything can be handled with gentility! After all, you are the man I most admire in the world and it would have killed me to kill you. I'll call my father, and... er... Oh! Father! There you are. What a surprise! I'm happy to report this gentleman has behaved most reasonably and gladly accepts my sister's hand.

**ALCANTOR.** Bravo! Here is her hand, son, and the rest of her's attached. Take it.

(SGANARELLE and DORIMÈNE join hands.)

I hereby discharge my duties as a father— God be praised! From now on you're responsible for her!

**MADELEINE.** And don't forget Comtesse d'Escarbagnas.

**MOLIÈRE.** Is that a threat?

**ALCANTOR.** (*Summoning actors onstage:*) Let's dance and sing...and exit to applause!

*(Music.)*

*(They execute a brief dance, all except MOLIÈRE and MADELEINE who remain still, staring at one another. The curtain falls.)*

**MOLIÈRE.** (*To MADELEINE:*) What was the meaning of all that? Have you completely lost your—

**MADELEINE.** You wouldn't listen to me before. Well. I've said all I have to say.

**MOLIÈRE.** What? What?!

*(Curtain lifts; Actors bow; curtain falls.)*

*(To ARMANDE:)* Is she telling the truth?

**ARMANDE.** Please! You're making a fool of yourself.

**MOLIÈRE.** That's what they pay me to do!

*(Curtain lifts; They bow. MOLIÈRE steps forward for a solo bow. Curtain falls.)*

**BÉJART.** That should hold them. Always leave 'em hungry.

*(Actors start to clear stage.)*

**MOLIÈRE.** (*To ARMANDE:*) Look, I've...I'm having second thoughts...

**ARMANDE.** About us?

**MOLIÈRE.** About you. I mean us. Of course, us.

**ARMANDE.** Do I no longer please you?

*(She takes his hand; He melts.)*

**GROS-RENÉ.** Clear stage please! Oh... (*Seeing MOLIÈRE and ARMANDE:*) ...sorry. (*Exit.*)

**ARMANDE.** This is all Madeleine's fault! Barging into the play with all that...nonsense. She's desperately jealous, you know.

**MOLIÈRE.** So that was all just...nonsense?

**ARMANDE.** Who is "La Comtesse d'Escarbagnas," anyway?

**MOLIÈRE.** Oh, it's a play I'm writing. Still just sketching in, really. No one's seen it. Except Madeleine, of course.

**ARMANDE.** Of course! I want to be the one who sees what you're writing. I know what the public wants to see nowadays; she doesn't. She's...she's old.

**MOLIÈRE.** Yes! You are my youth...

*(Offstage: great hubbub, screams of delight, etc. Actors run on-stage.)*

What's going on?

**DE BRIE.** He's here! He's coming backstage!

**MOLIÈRE.** Who?

**ARMANDE.** *(To MOLIÈRE:)* If I no longer please you, of course, well that's a different story...

*(She moves away, over towards LA GRANGE.)*

**MOLIÈRE.** *(Running to her:)* Yes, you please me! You please me far too much! You please me to distraction, When I should be writing—

**BÉJART.** *(Seeing the HERALD offstage:)* Jean-Baptiste!

**MOLIÈRE.** —you please me. When I should be looking after this family—my family, it's only you who pleases me, to my destruction...and my shame. Oh yes, Armande...you please me.

*(The HERALD enters with an enormous gilt staff of office. He raps for attention:)*

**HERALD.** His Majesty King Louis of that name the Fourteenth, Monarch of all French Dominions: of Maine and Anjou, Burgundy and Lorraine, of Normandy and Gascony, the hillsides of Champagne—

*(KING LOUIS XIV enters. This is the very young Louis, just twenty years of age and still under the thumb of his mother and Cardinal Mazarin. But they're not here.)*

**LOUIS.** *(To HERALD:)* Yes, yes, yes, we know all that. You don't do recitations for a company of actors; that's like showing the clergy how to drink. *(To the Company:)* I wish to see the man who calls himself Molière.

**MOLIÈRE.** *(Kneeling:)* Sire.

**LOUIS.** Ah yes. My father knew your father, I believe.

*(MOLIÈRE is speechless.)*

I said my father knew your father, I believe. Get up.

**MOLIÈRE.** *(Rising:)* Yes sire. I believe he—

**LOUIS.** He did our upholstery or something.

**MOLIÈRE.** Yes sire. That is correct.

**LOUIS.** And I understand you were to follow in his footsteps, or his cushions, or whatever.

**MOLIÈRE.** Yes sire.

**LOUIS.** But you chose the stage instead.

**MOLIÈRE.** Yes sire.

**LOUIS.** (*Looking at DE BRIE, DU PARC, and ARMANDE:*) And why don't we see more of these lovely creatures in your plays?

**MOLIÈRE.** Whatever you require...sire. We can p-p-perform any k-k-kind of—

**LOUIS.** You really should see somebody about that stutter. We can't have that.

**MOLIÈRE.** Yes s-s-sire.

**LOUIS.** No, we don't want that. And we don't want any more heavy drama, is that understood?

**MOLIÈRE.** Quite. Understood. Yes.

**LOUIS.** And I've another idea. (*To DE BRIE:*) Do you like to dance?

**DE BRIE.** (*Curtseying:*) Oh yes, sire.

**LOUIS.** Well, come on, come on, give me your little hand.

*(Shyly she proffers her hand.)*

That's better. (*He looks at DU PARC and offers her his other hand. She hesitates.*) What, you don't want to dance with the King?

**DU PARC.** I..I... Your servant, sire. In all things.

**LOUIS.** Really? What an intriguing and inclusive declaration. But "more of that anon" as they say in the dreary old plays. (*To HERALD:*) Sing.

**HERALD.** I beg your pardon?

**LOUIS.** But you're not going to get it. Sing! Anything. "La la la," for example. We can't dance to the sound of people sweating.

**HERALD.** Oh...er...(He attempts a sort of Lully minuet, but is unfortunately tone-deaf) La-la-la-la-la...

**THE COMPANY.** (*Trying to help:*)

La-la-la-la

La-la-la-la...

*(Accompanied by their ragtag singing, LOUIS dances a few pathetic steps with DE BRIE and DU PARC who smile valiantly.)*

**LOUIS.** *(Stops dancing.)* All right now, shut up everybody! Listen, monsieur Molière, I want you to write some plays with songs and dances. Right in the middle of the action. For no reason at all; just, “Ta-da!” and everyone starts to sing and dance. A new form. We’ll call it... “Musical Comedy.” Well?

**MOLIÈRE.** Oh, that would be... wonderful.

**LOUIS.** And I want to dance, too

**MOLIÈRE.** Fine. Splendid.

**LOUIS.** I don’t want to act. And I can’t sing. *(Beat.)* Well, of course I can sing. The King can do anything. But whenever I do sing people get the most extraordinary look on their faces, so I... Do you understand what I’m telling you?

**MOLIÈRE.** Sire?

**LOUIS.** I want you—your company—to be my company. The King’s Company. The first theater of France. Just as soon as mother lets me take over. Or Cardinal Mazarin dies. Well?

**MADELEINE.** *(To MOLIÈRE:)* Say something!

**MOLIÈRE.** I am...sp-speechless.

**LOUIS.** Well, that doesn’t do me any good, does it? If I want “speechless” I’ll hire some dreary mime.

**MOLIÈRE.** Sire, just as the moon reflects the sun  
Shall we, your foils, give light to—

**LOUIS.** That’s better. Yes, that’s more like it. *(To MADELEINE:)* Mademoiselle Béjart, Paris has missed you during your too-long absence, but we are pleased to give you a home at last which you so richly deserve. *(To ARMANDE:)* And this, I hear, Molière, is your lovely bride-to-be in real life as well as on the stage.

**ARMANDE.** *(Deep curtsey:)* Your servant, majesty.

**LOUIS.** No, no; his servant, my subject. We applaud this union, Molière, and we bless it. That’s what we like to see in our artists: family values. High moral standards. You’ve got to set an example. God knows, I’ve no intention of doing so. Go forth and multiply. Propagate the world with little actors to amuse me. You supply the actors; we’ll supply the subject matter. Is that understood?

**MOLIÈRE.** Understood.

**THIS PLAY IS  
NOT OVER!**

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