

# The Mercurian



*A Theatrical Translation Review*  
Volume 8, Number 2 (Fall 2020)

Editor: Adam Versényi  
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*The Mercurian* is named for Mercury who, if he had known it, was/is the patron god of theatrical translators, those intrepid souls possessed of eloquence, feats of skill, messengers not between the gods but between cultures, traders in images, nimble and dexterous linguistic thieves. Like the metal mercury, theatrical translators are capable of absorbing other metals, forming amalgams. As in ancient chemistry, the mercurian is one of the five elementary “principles” of which all material substances are compounded, otherwise known as “spirit.” The theatrical translator is sprightly, lively, potentially volatile, sometimes inconstant, witty, an ideal guide or conductor on the road.

*The Mercurian* publishes translations of plays and performance pieces from any language into English. *The Mercurian* also welcomes theoretical pieces about theatrical translation, rants, manifestos, and position papers pertaining to translation for the theatre, as well as production histories of theatrical translations. Submissions should be sent to: Adam Versényi at [anversen@email.unc.edu](mailto:anversen@email.unc.edu) or by snail mail:

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### Editor's Note

Welcome to the Fall 2020 issue of *The Mercurian*! Amidst the ongoing pandemic, I hope that these three translations from three different time periods and locations will, at least in some small measure, provide a space and place for connection between theatre cultures.

We begin with J. Weintraub's adaptation and translation of Carlo Goldoni's *The Summer Season*. Weintraub has, following Giorgio Strehler's 1954 version, taken Goldoni's 1761 trilogy: *Le Smanie per la Villeggiatura*, *Le Aventure della Villeggiatura*, and *Il Ritorno dalla Villeggiatura*, and combined them into his single play *The Summer Season*. By adapting the setting to late-nineteenth-century Newport, Rhode Island and paring down the length of the trilogy, Weintraub is able to create a more contemporary version of Goldoni's comedy to add to English translations and adaptations of Goldoni's better-known *The Servant of Two Masters*.

*The Summer Season* is followed by Brian Vinero's translation of Molière's 1671 play *Scapin the Scammer*. Vinero, whose translation and adaptation of Euripides' *Iphigenia at Aulis* appeared in *The Mercurian*, Vol. 8, No. 1, has chosen to render Molière's playful three-act farce written in prose into pentameter rhyming verse. Readers can decide for themselves if they agree that this bold move maintains the distance between us and Molière's time and place while simultaneously providing pleasure for both the eye and the ear in performance.

This issue concludes with Sophie Stevens's translation of the contemporary Uruguayan playwright Raquel Diana's play *Her Open Eyes*. Stevens, whose article about translating another Diana play, "Distance and Proximity in Analyzing and Translating *Bailando sola cada noche*," appeared in *The Mercurian*, Vol. 6, No. 2, describes in her introduction her approach to translating this poetic play about the relationship between life and death and, in particular, the resiliency of women as they negotiate loss. In doing so she raises important questions about the nature of rhythm, sound, and repetition in theatrical translation.

Back issues of *The Mercurian* can be found at: <https://the-mercurian.com/>.

As the theatre is nothing without its audience, *The Mercurian* welcomes your comments, questions, complaints, and critiques. Deadline for submissions for consideration for Volume 8, No. 3 Spring 2021 will be March 1, 2021.

—Adam Versényi

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## The Summer Season

Adapted from Carlo Goldoni's *Trilogia della Villeggiatura*

By J. Weintraub

The *Villeggiatura* trilogy was one of the last works Carlo Goldoni wrote for the Venetian stage before he left Italy permanently to become director of the Comédie-Italienne in Paris. These three plays represent an extended critique of the *villeggiatura*, a sort of holiday where wealthy Venetians traveled to their mainland “villas,” ostensibly to supervise the harvest, but primarily to vacation, to display their appreciation for fashion, and occasionally to arrange for the marriage of the eligible women in their families. Joining the nobility in this practice were the affluent bourgeoisie, the target of Goldoni's satire, who added social climbing to the above mix, often to the detriment of their financial health.

The three plays are *Le Smanie per la Villeggiatura* (“The Frenzied Yearnings for . . .”), *Le Avventure della Villeggiatura* (“The Adventures of . . .”), and *Il Ritorno dalla Villeggiatura* (“The Return from . . .”). They were produced sequentially in the late Fall of 1761 at Venice's Teatro San Luca with only moderate success, and then vanished almost entirely from the repertoire for two centuries.

In 1954 Giorgio Strehler was the first to offer the three plays in a single production at Milan's Piccolo Teatro. The major problem with this consolidation, he later observed, was not its legitimacy but the length of the whole, and he accordingly edited the work substantially. But he also wished to preserve Goldoni “absolutely unchanged,” resulting in a performance that surpassed five hours. Yet despite its length, the production was remarkably successful and was instrumental in reintroducing the trilogy into the canon as a culmination of Goldoni's trajectory from the traditions of *commedia dell'arte* to a kind of social realism approaching the masterworks of the late nineteenth century. (In fact, modern commentators can hardly mention the trilogy without a reference to Chekhov.) It is now one of Michael Billington's *The 101 Greatest Plays* (2015).

Strehler eventually took his production abroad for runs at Vienna's Burgtheater (1974) and the Comédie-Française in Paris (1978). An English version, under the title *Country Mania*, and also almost five hours long, was staged by Mike Alfreds at London's National Theatre in 1987, but apparently generated little interest, one reviewer describing the audiences as “woefully thin.”

In 2007 the play was revived by the Piccolo Teatro in a shorter version (but still over three hours long) by Toni Servillo. It ran for about 130 performances throughout Italy and won the 2008 Ubu Prize for the year's Best Production (“A theatrical event of refreshing beauty,” wrote a critic in *La Repubblica*, “which astonishes through its Chekhovian rhythms”). Afterwards, it traveled internationally with subtitled performances in, among other places, Budapest, Madrid, Montreal, and at Lincoln Center in New York. Claudia Ruth Pierpont in her *New Yorker* blog declared the latter to be one of the “Ten Best Cultural Events of 2009.”

There are currently at least two English translations of the complete cycle in print, one by Anthony Oldcorn (1992) and the other by Robert Cornthwaite (1994). Yet, I could discover only a pair of productions at major American theaters since the Strehler revival. *Summer Vacation Madness*, under the direction of Garland Wright at Minneapolis' Guthrie Theater in 1982, preserved much of Goldoni's

original structure by dividing the evening into three separate hour-long acts. And, in 1990, a collaboration between Los Angeles' Mark Taper Forum and the UCLA Department of Theater, also entitled *Summer Vacation Madness*, was again divided into three discrete acts, each under separate direction.

This lack of a greater American stage presence is hardly surprising, since with the exception of *The Servant of Two Masters* (1745), Goldoni's massive *corpus* is largely neglected in the U.S. In the case of the *Villeggiatura* trilogy, the individual plays are probably too limited in scope for separate productions, but they also rely on the others for full development of their characters and actions; the whole is certainly greater than the sum of its parts, and that whole, exemplified by the European revivals, can be lengthy. Another obstacle to Goldoni's transfer, in general, to the English-speaking stage is one identified by David L. Hirst who contends, in a 1993 study of Giorgio Strehler, that Goldoni's work is inevitably compared with the British comedy of manners—à la Sheridan and Goldsmith—and too often found lacking in both wit and language.

Adapting the *Villeggiatura* trilogy to different circumstances would help dispel this last expectation, and certainly Goldoni's most produced play, *The Servant of Two Masters*, has not been immune to such transformations. Richard Bean's triumphant *One Man, Two Guvnors* (2011), which transported the action to Brighton in the early 1960s, is only one of the latest examples. (Goldoni himself was not averse to such dislocations, moving his *Villeggiatura* to the other side of the Italian peninsula—Livorno and Montenero—to avoid criticizing his sensitive Venetian public too explicitly.)

In *The Summer Season*, my own attempt to reduce the trilogy to a single work of manageable length, I also wanted to remove any association with the powdered wigs, buckled shoes, and witty repartee of Restoration and post-Restoration comedy, as well as avoid the temptation of succumbing to a style that could become, as Anthony Oldcorn described it in his own translation of the trilogy, a "fastidious, foppish, cocked-little-finger type of English." To that end, I decided to shift the action and language to Boston and Newport in the early 1870s, a social and historical context certainly more recognizable to American theater-goers than eighteenth-century Italy, but one that might also be more congenial to the Chekhovian shadows lurking in the wings.

Several very specific reasons also motivated my choice of this particular time and place. In the *Le Smanie*, for instance, the rental of horses and carriages is an important comic component of the preparations for the vacation, and although the railroads were rapidly gaining a monopoly for distant travel by the 1870s—Newport was first linked to rail service in 1863—horsepower was still then an option for travel from Boston.

But this was a small matter. Far more important to me were the similarities between Goldoni's *villeggiatura* and the Newport season where elites from all along the East Coast congregated for the summer. Newport had not yet become the "Queen of Resorts" where the ultra-rich of the Gilded Age would build palatial "cottages" and compete in bouts of extravagant exhibitionism, but by the 1870s it had already established itself as a fashionable vacation spot for affluent families to display their wealth and the availability of their unwed daughters; a place for social climbing to be pursued, for fortunes to be won and lost, for romance to be kindled and marriages to be negotiated.

As in Goldoni's Venice, it was also a time when the choices and aspirations of upper-middle-class women were severely limited, when a proper marriage—whether for love, property, or security—was a goal to be vigorously sought. This is the quest that underlies the action of the entire *Villeggiatura* trilogy, summarized near the end when a character tells his sister to accept a proposal or “learn how to be a spinster for life.” It also forms the central conflict for the female protagonist, Giacinta (Jacqueline in *The Summer Season*), who shares the fierce independence of an Isabel Archer (in *The Portrait of a Lady*, 1881) but also—again like Henry James's heroine—makes a crucial decision about marriage that will compel her to choose between integrity and emotional well-being. The values that propel this decision—the honor of one's word, the inviolability of a contract, the reputation of a family—contribute to the moral foundations of Goldoni's work and are values that retained their power as credible and sympathetic motivations into the following century. Afterwards, towards more modern times, such values may have gradually become, like the horse and carriage, outmoded and even a bit quaint.

Yet despite my desire to update the work and reduce its length by half, I still wanted to retain as much of Goldoni's comedy, language, themes, dramatic flow and narrative as possible. With that in mind, I began the task with a strict line-by-line translation of the plays. Then, to initiate my work of extraction, I looked for entire scenes that could be lifted or whose contents could be incorporated elsewhere. One obvious candidate was a sequence famous for its humor—and often excerpted in Italy as an example of Goldoni at his most Molière—but one that introduced a new figure, the miserly Uncle Bernardino, late in the third play and added little to the development of theme or character. Easily excerpted, it was just as easily deleted.

As with Bernardino, I searched for other characters that could be removed without affecting the dynamic of my adaptation's core structure: a *la ronde* of five couples on their journeys, for good or ill, toward marriage. But there were servants who could be furloughed, so occasionally my characters serve themselves or enter scenes without the conventional polite introduction. Concentrating the three plays together allowed as well for the elimination of expository dialogue that linked them or that reinforced themes, attitudes, or relationships previously introduced.

Shifting the work to a new setting also enabled me to eliminate some of the satire that targeted Goldoni's contemporaries but would have less of a bite for other audiences. Yet, surprisingly, there was little that needed to be removed—or added, for that matter—to relocate the play to a new continent a hundred years later. Idiomatic speech required American counterparts and material objects and details needed replacements—a creation from the House of Worth rather than a *mariage* gown, bridge and Old Maid rather than *ombre* and *bazzica*, barrels of pickled buffalo tongue from St. Louis rather than shipments of macaroni from Genoa. Yet the content of the language and the concerns and sentiments of the characters adapted well, with little change, to their new environment.

Two dramatic conventions of Goldoni's time allowed for additional reductions. Throughout the plays, the characters indulge in “asides,” expressing to the audience their inner thoughts, feelings, and opinions about others, most of which reappear in the dialogue or are represented in action. This is a practice that disappeared, to a large extent, in the following century, and it is missing as well from *The*

*Summer Season*. Related to the asides are the long monologues delivered by Giacinta (Jacqueline), sometimes spoken to herself, sometimes to other characters. Appearing in each of the plays, they introduce and reinforce the emotional and moral quandaries of the character as well as the themes expressed throughout the trilogy. Taken together, however, they seem repetitive and often retard the action, and they have been trimmed accordingly.

But with all my revisions and substantial deletions—two informal staged readings at Chicago Dramatists were timed at about two hours each—I strove for the same outcome sought by Giorgio Strehler in his 1954 revival: to present Goldoni's comedy as it is, preserving its style and flavor, but modified for the contemporary stage.

**Carlo Goldoni** (1707-1793) was one of the most prolific and popular dramatists of the eighteenth century, having composed hundreds of dramatic works including comedies, tragedies, histories, libretti, intermezzi, and even cantatas and serenades. He is probably best known for having transformed traditional Italian *commedia dell'arte*—improvised by actors in masks playing stock characters—into a far more realistic comedy, dependent on tightly plotted scripts that both satirized and depicted with compassion a wide range of social classes. He spent the last thirty years of his life in self-exile in Paris where he continued to write, in French, plays and his memoirs.

A member of the Dramatists Guild, **J. Weintraub** has had one-act plays and radio dramas produced throughout the United States and in Australia, New Zealand, India, and Germany. His fiction, poetry, and essays have been published in all sorts of literary places, from *The Massachusetts Review* to *New Criterion*, from *Prairie Schooner* to *Modern Philology*, and his translations from French and Italian have appeared in publications in the USA, the UK, and Australia. In 2018 his annotated translation of Eugène Briffault's *Paris à table: 1846* was published by Oxford University Press. He has a Ph.D. in English Literature from The University of Chicago. More at <https://jweintraub.weebly.com/>



## THE SUMMER SEASON

Adapted from Carlo Goldoni's *Trilogia della Villeggiatura*

by

J. Weintraub

### CHARACTERS

MR. PHILLIPS, a Boston gentleman, retired and wealthy

JACQUELINE, Phillips' daughter, in her early twenties

MR. LEONARD, a man-about-town, and Jacqueline's fiancé, late twenties, early thirties

VICTORIA, Leonard's sister, in her mid-twenties

MR. FULTON, a friend of Phillips and the Leonards' uncle, an elderly gentleman

MR. WILLIAMS, a suitor to Jacqueline, the same age as Jacqueline

SABINA, Phillips' older sister and aunt to Jacqueline, about 65

MR. FERDINAND, a society gossip, freeloader, and Sabina's suitor, in his early fifties (Can double w/ FULTON)

CONSTANCE, a friend of the Phillips, middle-aged

ROSE, Constance's impoverished niece, 18 years old

MR. ANTHONY, Rose's suitor, spectacularly handsome and spectacularly empty, not quite 20

PETER, Leonards' valet, slightly older than Leonard

BRIDGET, Jacqueline's Irish maid, in her late twenties (Can double with Rose or Constance)

CHARLES, a servant in the Leonard household, Peter's age (Can double with Anthony)

A WAITER (Can double with Fulton or Charles or Bridget)

*A note on the characters' names:* All the characters in the original play are identified by first name only, although they are usually addressed with their titles (Signor Leonardo, Signora Costanza, etc.). Along with Anglicizing these names (Filippo to Phillips, Fulgenzio to Fulton, Giacinta to Jacqueline), I have converted the given names of the male characters—excepting the servants—into surnames in order to conform to the usage of the time in which the adaptation occurs. For the same reason, the female characters retain their first names, although on occasion (and in cases where the relationship to a male character is clear), Victoria will become Miss Leonard and Jacqueline Miss Phillips.

## SETTING

The action occurs primarily in the Boston homes and Newport summer “cottages” of the principal characters. The time is the mid-1870s when Newport was becoming established as the preferred summer resort of the elites of New York, Boston, and Philadelphia, where social levels were established, reputations demolished, marriages arranged, and not-so-proper liaisons accomplished. The place had not yet reached the pinnacle of its fame, though, as the “Queen of Resorts,” a locus of extravagance and luxury for the Gilded Age.

(NOTE: The first part of the play takes place in two Boston locations, the Leonard and Phillips households. If the stage is large enough, it can be divided into two parts to take advantage of this duality. The subsequent Newport scenes can occur with centerstage as its focal point, and once the characters return to Boston, the duality of location can reappear, with, perhaps, the exception of the final scene, which takes place in Constance’s parlor, and can be played at centerstage.)

## DECOR

Despite the lavishness of the times, the décor should be minimal, and furnishings limited to tables, chairs, and other accessories required for the action. Dress, however, is important to these characters, and they should be clothed in the fashion of the times.

## ESTIMATED DURATION

100 to 120 minutes, with one intermission.

## ACT I

### Scene I

*A room in the Leonard home in Boston.*

*PETER, surrounded by trunks and boxes, is packing one of them with clothes and linens as LEONARD enters.*

**LEONARD:** Peter, what are you doing here? We’ve got a hundred things to do, and nothing’s getting done.

**PETER:** I would’ve thought packing your trunk was something getting done.

**LEONARD:** My sister’s maids can do that sort of thing. I need you now for something far more important.

**PETER:** Your sister's maids are dealing with your sister. Evening dresses and morning dresses, wraps and gloves, flounces and lace, converting them all into the latest fashion for the Newport season.

**LEONARD:** We're all slaves to fashion when we travel to Newport. (*He looks into one of the boxes.*) There's not enough silverware.

**PETER:** There's plenty of silverware. Two dozen sets, in fact.

**LEONARD:** In Newport a good table attracts guests like flies. Silverware needs to be changed with every course, and there's simply not enough here.

**PETER:** Excuse me if I'm speaking out-of-turn, sir, but we don't always have to keep up with the Vanderbilts. Wealth like that requires a certain noblesse oblige, whereas our limited resources...

**LEONARD:** It's because of our limited resources I have to do even more than is expected of me. So, two more place settings from Garland's, and... (*LEONARD examines another box*) and stop at the wine merchant's for another case of champagne.

**PETER:** Forgive me for opening my mouth again, sir, but you were supposed to settle all of your accounts before you left town.

**LEONARD:** They'll all be paid in full when I return. And pick up some of those nice wax candles. There'll be some long romantic nights.

**PETER:** The Chandler on Commonwealth refuses to extend any more credit.

**LEONARD:** Then go to the one on Newbury.

**PETER:** I'll need some money.

**LEONARD:** Why do you think I'm sending you to Newbury Street? We'll pay them all when I get back. Look, if I run out of anything in Newport, I'll be charged an arm and a leg by the townies. They know how to make a buck during the season, and they're not like our Boston merchants. They'll throw you in jail, before extending you a dime of credit. So, off with you, but before you go, send Charles in.

**PETER:** (*as he exits*) Charles!

(*Exit PETER.*)

**LEONARD:** If only I can get Jacqueline to say yes, then all of this will be resolved.

(*Enter CHARLES.*)

**CHARLES:** You wanted to see me, sir?

**LEONARD:** Charles, inform the Phillips that I've reserved carriages and horses for eight tomorrow morning. And also, see if that Mr. Williams has been hanging around their house. Be discrete.

**CHARLES:** Discretion is my middle name, sir.

*(Exit CHARLES as VICTORIA enters.)*

**VICTORIA:** Brother! Did I hear you say we'll be leaving at eight tomorrow morning?

**LEONARD:** Yes, with the Phillips. I've reserved carriages and horses for eight sharp.

**VICTORIA:** Carriages? Horses?

**LEONARD:** Phillips' idea. He's old-fashioned. He's never liked trains. Besides, he'll need a four-in-hand for the promenade down Bellevue Avenue, and this way we can take our luggage along with us.

**VICTORIA:** How quaint, and thrifty, too. But we can't leave tomorrow morning.

**LEONARD:** Why not?

**VICTORIA:** The tailor hasn't yet finished with my gown. I'm having it crafted exclusively from the latest patterns, direct from the House of Worth itself, in Paris.

**LEONARD:** We cannot possibly delay our departure for a gown. Besides, your closets are full of dresses.

**VICTORIA:** Brother, I've done my very best to refashion my entire wardrobe to the latest style, but I could never hold my head up in society without at least one stunning new gown.

**LEONARD:** We're still leaving tomorrow morning.

**VICTORIA:** Then you'll leave without me.

**LEONARD:** Then we'll leave without you.

**VICTORIA:** You'd leave without me?

**LEONARD:** Look, Victoria, you're still a young girl. You don't have to compete with every wealthy woman of property.

**VICTORIA:** Your beloved Jacqueline Phillips is still a young girl, too, and Jacqueline Phillips always appears in the highest of fashion. A young woman who doesn't keep up is hardly likely to be considered a worthy prospect for marriage, and I'm amazed that you would allow your own sister to be degraded in such a way and condemned to certain spinsterhood! It would be better for me to die of smallpox than to show up at Newport unfashionably dressed!

**LEONARD:** Since it's a matter of life and death, then... I certainly hope your gown is ready before tomorrow morning.

*(Enter CHARLES.)*

**CHARLES:** Sir, I caught Mr. Phillips on his doorstep. He said that eight o'clock would be fine, and also that his daughter was eager to receive you this morning.

**LEONARD:** And Williams?

**CHARLES:** He hasn't been seen there in several days.

**LEONARD:** Good. We'll be leaving that little problem behind tomorrow morning.

**VICTORIA:** And my little problem?

**LEONARD:** We're leaving tomorrow morning whether your problem's been resolved or not. Now, if you'll excuse me I have a few more important things to look after than a trivial piece of fabric.

*(Exit LEONARD. CHARLES is about to follow, when VICTORIA calls him back.)*

**VICTORIA:** Charles! When you were at the Phillips', did you see Miss Jacqueline?

**CHARLES:** I caught a glimpse of her from inside the foyer, trying on a new dress. I think it was worth a lot.

**VICTORIA:** Why do you say that?

**CHARLES:** I overheard the tailor's assistant, and although he was speaking in French, I understood a few words. Like Worth.

**VICTORIA:** La Maison Worth?

**CHARLES:** That's it!

**VICTORIA:** Charles, drop everything and accompany me to the tailor. I must have my new gown at once! We'll yell at him together. We'll threaten him. We'll scare the wits out of him.

**CHARLES:** Perhaps if you just paid him...

**VICTORIA:** He'll be paid when I want to pay him, and that's the last we'll hear about that. Come on!

*(Exit VICTORIA, pulling CHARLES along with her.)*

## **ACT I**

### **Scene II**

*A room in the Phillips' home in Boston.*

*Enter PHILLIPS and WILLIAMS together.*

**PHILLIPS:** It's very kind of you to visit with us, Mr. Williams. To what do we owe this pleasure?

**WILLIAMS:** I understand you'll be leaving for Newport presently, and I stopped by to wish you, if I may be so bold, a very pleasant journey.

**PHILLIPS:** Why thank you. I remember quite fondly the summers we spent together in Maine when we were neighbors. You were just a boy, then, of course...

**WILLIAMS:** My family still has a place near Swampscott... But nobody goes there anymore.

**PHILLIPS:** We all go to Newport these days, and fortunately I can afford to share my enjoyments with others. In short, I like to have people around me, young people in particular, so why don't you join us in our cottage this season? My daughter Jacqueline will be very pleased to have you there, I'm sure. You know Jacqueline, of course?

**WILLIAMS:** Of course. Particularly when we were children. We used to take long walks together on the beach, play cards when it was raining. But I wouldn't dream of inconveniencing you...

**PHILLIPS:** I'm a simple man, sir, so please spare me the fine sentiments. I offer you a soft bed, passable vittles, and a warm hearth at night, and if that's not enough, then...

**WILLIAMS:** Well, I can hardly refuse such a gracious offer.

**PHILLIPS:** Then don't. It's done. You'll come along with us at eight o'clock sharp tomorrow morning. We'll be taking a carriage with Mr. Leonard and his sister.

**WILLIAMS:** The Leonards?

**PHILLIPS:** Yes, they have a cottage next to ours. Is there some sort of problem?

**WILLIAMS:** No, of course not. You'll be taking a carriage to the train station?

**PHILLIPS:** All the way to Newport. There's plenty of room for four. You, me, my daughter, and my sister, Sabina. She's a widow, and she'll serve as chaperone. Not that Jacqueline needs one, of course, but her mother's gone, and you know how people talk. I've also rented a second four-in-hand, and I suppose the Leonards can travel in that with the luggage. So, it's agreed?

**WILLIAMS:** Yes, of course, although I hardly deserve such consideration...

**PHILLIPS:** Enough of that, and if you'll be so kind to inform Mr. Leonard that you'll be accompanying us?

**WILLIAMS:** Could you possibly send a servant in my place? To inform the Leonards, I mean? This is such a surprise and I have so much to take care of myself.

**PHILLIPS:** Of course. You just run along and take care of things.

*(Exit WILLIAMS.)*

**PHILLIPS:** Nice boy.

*(Enter JACQUELINE with her maid, BRIDGET.)*

**JACQUELINE:** Who was that, father?

**PHILLIPS:** That was Williams. Nice boy. A little stiff, perhaps, but a nice boy. You remember his family, don't you?

**JACQUELINE:** Oh, yes. He and I used to play cards together when we summered in Maine. He cheated.

**PHILLIPS:** Of course he did. You were always better than anyone else at cards. He had to cheat to beat you.

**JACQUELINE:** No, he cheated to make sure that I'd win.

**PHILLIPS:** Like I said, a nice boy. Anyway, he'll be staying with us. In fact, I've invited him to come along in our carriage tomorrow. With you, me, and our aunt.

**JACQUELINE:** And Mr. Leonard?

**PHILLIPS:** He and his sister can follow us in the carriage behind.

**JACQUELINE:** Which reminds me—since you insist on saving money by making us travel by horse and carriage, you'll have to give me another twenty dollars for a new overcoat. To protect me from all that dust on the road.

**BRIDGET:** Oh, sir, it's such a beautiful overcoat, and with a fine silk lining, too.

**PHILLIPS:** Silk? What's wrong with linen? Linen was good enough for your mother.

**JACQUELINE:** Father, no one wears the fashions of last year, let alone the last generation.

**PHILLIPS:** Why not? I'm still wearing exactly what I wore twenty years ago.

**JACQUELINE:** Obviously, this conversation has entered the realm of the absurd. May I have my twenty dollars?

**PHILLIPS:** It seems that spending my money is something that never goes out-of-fashion... I'll see if I have twenty dollars in my study. I just hope your husband, should you ever find one, is as generous as your father.

*(Exit PHILLIPS.)*

**JACQUELINE:** If I have one exceptional talent, Bridget, it's to make a man do whatever I want him to do for me.

**BRIDGET:** Especially if he's your father. But what about Mr. Leonard?

**JACQUELINE:** What about Mr. Leonard?

**BRIDGET:** When he finds out you'll be sitting in a carriage next to Mr. Williams, all the way to Newport...

**JACQUELINE:** He'll simply have to swallow it.

**BRIDGET:** It might give him indigestion.

**JACQUELINE:** I've put him through far worse than that.

**BRIDGET:** But if his intentions are honorable, shouldn't you be encouraging him?

**JACQUELINE:** Just the opposite. If he has any intention of becoming my husband, he needs to be trained properly first. He must learn never to be jealous and never to think that he can deprive me of my rightful independence. If he even begins to think that his wish is my command, then I'm his slave forever. Either he loves me or he doesn't, and if he loves me, he'll need to trust me, and if he doesn't love me and trust me, then he should find someone else to pester.

**BRIDGET:** But you do love him just a little bit, don't you?

**JACQUELINE:** More than anyone else I've ever known, although I've never loved anyone else before. In short, I wouldn't have a problem marrying him, but not at the cost of being his prisoner for life.

*(Having heard something from outside, BRIDGET wanders upstage to the window.)*

**BRIDGET:** Speaking of the devil, look who's pacing across your doorstep, back and forth, back and forth. Why doesn't he come inside?

**JACQUELINE:** He might have met Mr. Williams along the way. Well, he had to find out sooner or later.

**BRIDGET:** Oops. He's coming inside now.

**JACQUELINE:** Why don't you leave us alone, Bridget.

**BRIDGET:** Oh, Miss!

**JACQUELINE:** Bridget!

*(BRIDGET exits reluctantly as LEONARD enters.)*

**LEONARD:** *(bowing slightly)* Your humble servant, Miss Phillips. I hope you'll forgive me if I've come at an inopportune moment.

**JACQUELINE:** Oh, please. What a formal entrance!

**LEONARD:** I only came to wish you a very happy and eventful journey to Newport.

**JACQUELINE:** That's odd. I thought you were coming with us.

**LEONARD:** I prefer not to be an inconvenience to others.

**JACQUELINE:** An inconvenience? Why, you're always welcome here, with us.

**LEONARD:** I'm afraid another presence has already taken my place by your side.

**JACQUELINE:** If you're referring to Mr. Williams, sir, that was my father's decision.



**LEONARD:** And his daughter willingly submits to whatever he decides?

**JACQUELINE:** Willingly or unwillingly, that's none of your concern.

**LEONARD:** I think it is. If you valued my friendship at all, you'd find some way to avoid this very public provocation.

**JACQUELINE:** I wasn't aware I was provoking anyone. But just what is it you think I should do?

**LEONARD:** You should at least avoid traveling with him. Or better yet, refuse to go to Newport at all rather than... embarrassing someone you seem to care for.

**JACQUELINE:** Are you mad? What do you think people would say if I spent the summer in Boston? I could never hold my head up in society again... This is so absurd. You're coming with us. (*Grabbing his arm, cajoling him*) Please.

**LEONARD:** No. Not if he's going along. I can't stand the sight of him.

**JACQUELINE:** (*still cajoling*) So you dislike Williams more than you care for me?

**LEONARD:** I dislike Williams because I care for you.

**JACQUELINE:** What do you mean by that? That you're jealous of him?

**LEONARD:** All right. I'm jealous of him.

**JACQUELINE:** (*drops his arm*) So, there we are. Sir, that jealousy you feel toward him happens to be an insult to me, since you couldn't be jealous of him without first thinking me to be as fickle as a weathervane. Whoever trusts and respects someone could never think such a thing, and where there's no trust and respect, there can be no love, and if you do not love me, you have no business even being here. You should know, I care for you very much, but I will not tolerate jealousy or disrespect, and if I said I'm going to Newport tomorrow, I'm going to Newport tomorrow, and I shall go to Newport tomorrow with whomever I please!

(*Exit JACQUELINE.*)

**LEONARD:** You think so? We'll see about that.

(*Blackout.*)

## ACT I

### Scene III

*A room in the Leonard home. Trunks, boxes, a gown hanging on a hook. PETER is packing, and VICTORIA is admiring her gown.*

**PETER:** It's done then?

**VICTORIA:** There it is. A perfect fit, although I doubt I'll ever do business with that tailor again. The impertinence of the man. He demanded payment in full before he'd hand it over. Now all of my money is gone, and how am I ever going to sit down at the bridge table without a stake?

**PETER:** You could give up cards for the season.

**VICTORIA:** Out of the question. But it wouldn't be so awful, would it, to borrow a few dollars from you? To be paid back with interest, of course?

**PETER:** As the manager of your brother's household accounts, I'm sorry to inform you that I can hardly cover our daily expenses, let alone my own salary, which, by the way, I haven't paid to myself for the past six months. I should warn you that unless your brother changes direction soon, he'll be walking off a very steep cliff.

**VICTORIA:** All the more reason for me to go to Newport and find someone now. If I can only become a Mrs. Somebody before my brother walks off that cliff.

*(VICTORIA begins to stuff things into a trunk as LEONARD enters.)*

**VICTORIA:** See how hard we're working on your behalf, brother.

**LEONARD:** No need to rush. You should be pleased to learn that we may not be leaving as early as planned.

**VICTORIA:** You're not still worrying about me, are you? I'm pleased to say that my gown is finished and I'm ready to go.

**LEONARD:** I thought I'd be doing you a favor by delaying our departure, and now we can't possibly leave tomorrow morning. In fact, we may not be leaving for Newport at all.

**VICTORIA:** Are you trying to drive me mad? Because if you are, you're succeeding.

**LEONARD:** Go mad if you like. There's nothing I can do about it now. *(To PETER)* And what are you doing there gawking at us like a statue.

**PETER:** I'm awaiting your orders, sir. I don't know if I should continue doing what I'm doing or undo everything I've done.

**VICTORIA:** Continue doing. Pack!

**LEONARD:** Start undoing. Unpack everything. Now!

*(PETER begins to unpack the trunk.)*

*(VICTORIA grabs her new gown from its hook.)*

**VICTORIA:** What does it matter? If we're not going to Newport, I may as well rip it to shreds!

*(She appears about to tear the gown in half, then thinking better of it, returns it gently to its hook.)*

**LEONARD:** (*indicating the boxes*) And what're all of these?

**PETER:** Champagne, silverware...

**LEONARD:** Take them back. All of them.

**PETER:** Yes, sir. Now you're talking. Get rid of some of this debt!

(*PETER exits, dragging two of the boxes off stage.*)

**VICTORIA:** I'm going to get to the bottom of this. Your foul temper is telling me that you and your precious Jacqueline quarreled.

**LEONARD:** Kindly don't mention that name in this house.

**VICTORIA:** So that's it! We may not be going to Newport because of that vulgar little flirt! While she'll be showing off her new gowns at every cotillion, I...

**LEONARD:** She won't be going either. For one thing, I've cancelled the carriages.

**VICTORIA:** Oh, so now the Phillips will have to send a servant to the stables all by themselves. How will they ever manage!

**LEONARD:** And, I've also asked our uncle to speak with Phillips, to remind him, of his reputation, and if he listens at all, he won't dare allow his daughter to travel to Newport, at least not under the current arrangement. (*He looks at his watch*) In fact he should be speaking with him just about now.

(*Blackout.*)

## ACT I

### Scene IV

*The Phillips' home. PHILLIPS and FULTON.*

**FULTON:** My dear friend, we've known each other for years, and I've often given you proof of my affection.

**PHILLIPS:** I've never had any doubt about that, Fulton. In fact, you would do me great honor by being our guest during our stay this season in Newport.

**FULTON:** Forgive me, but I have business out west in St. Louis. I have warehouses on the Mississippi that need new equipment. The railroads, you know...

**PHILLIPS:** Yes, the railroads. Like everyone else I made a major investment in a warehouse out there myself. Since you're heading into that swamp, I was wondering if you, perhaps, could take a look...

**FULTON:** Yes, of course. I know your property well. How's it doing?

**PHILLIPS:** Last year I received from my investment two cases of beef jerky and a Missouri ham.

**FULTON:** That doesn't sound like much of a return.

**PHILLIPS:** In previous years I also got a barrel of pickled bison tongues. But no more. They were very popular at my lunch table in Newport, too... Still, since you can't join us this year, perhaps next season?

**FULTON:** Newport is not really to my taste. Of course, I don't disapprove of people who wish to go where society goes and enjoy good company. Provided, of course, that the good company doesn't lead the world to talk.

**PHILLIPS:** Why do I suspect that I'm about to receive an unpleasant lecture?

**FULTON:** Quite the contrary. It doesn't have to be unpleasant, because I am here to speak for someone who is on the verge of asking you for your daughter's hand in marriage, but who is reluctant now to press his suit because of another eligible young man who is about to accompany your daughter, side-by-side, on a long trip and spend several weeks together with her, side-by-side, under the same roof of your country home.

**PHILLIPS:** This prospective suitor you're speaking for? It wouldn't be your nephew, by any chance, would it?

**FULTON:** He prefers to remain silent for the moment. But if you cancel your trip to Newport, he might announce himself.

**PHILLIPS:** I'm very fond of my seasons in Newport. Besides, what would people say?

**FULTON:** But you don't have to take your daughter along with you.

**PHILLIPS:** Clearly you've never been either a husband or a father.

**FULTON:** Well, then, if you can't leave her in Boston, you can certainly make sure she doesn't travel in the presence of that young man. Get rid of him.

**PHILLIPS:** How could I do that without being discourteous?

**FULTON:** Do you prefer disgrace and dishonor to discourtesy?

**PHILLIPS:** When you put it that way, I suppose I have no choice.

**FULTON:** Now you're talking responsibly. And now that I've delivered my message, I'll take my leave. I hope I haven't taken too much of a liberty by...

**PHILLIPS:** No, no. Not at all. I'm very grateful to you, and, once again, deeply in your debt.

*(They shake hands, and FULTON exits.)*

*(Enter JACQUELINE.)*

**JACQUELINE:** Is that old fuddy-duddy finally gone?

**PHILLIPS:** Get me a servant. *(Into the wings)* Is anyone here? Why can't I ever find a...

**JACQUELINE:** Father, please. I'll get someone for you. But first just tell me what for?

**PHILLIPS:** All right. If you must know, I need a servant to tell Williams not to waste his time packing, since there's no longer any place for him in our carriage or in our cottage. Don't worry. It will all be handled with the greatest discretion. I'm sure he'll understand.

**JACQUELINE:** Oh? And just what sort of excuse do you expect to give him?

**PHILLIPS:** How should I know? Maybe that I miscounted the number of guests, forgot how many people can fit into a carriage?

**JACQUELINE:** Father, don't you realize how this will make us look. What people will say?

**PHILLIPS:** I only know what people will say if they see you traveling on a long trip side-by-side with an eligible young man and spending several weeks together with him, side-by-side, under the same roof of our country home.

**JACQUELINE:** True, but they'll say even more if you proceed to uninvite him after offering him your hospitality. Not only would such conduct be rude and vulgar, but we would be the topic of conversation over every breakfast table in Boston and Newport. "Have you heard about the Phillips' girl? Well, apparently her father just found out something, because..."

**PHILLIPS:** All right, all right. We won't go to Newport, we'll cancel our trip altogether!

**JACQUELINE:** "Where are the Phillips this year? They haven't come down at all? Wasn't there some sort of scandal? Or perhaps the expense. I've heard his investments are in trouble. He'll be filing for bankruptcy any day now."

**PHILLIPS:** Then what do you propose we do? Let Williams stay in our carriage?

**JACQUELINE:** Since you offered him a place.

**PHILLIPS:** And stay with us in Newport?

**JACQUELINE:** Since you invited him.

**PHILLIPS:** I think I need a bite to eat. I'll see if luncheon is ready.

**JACQUELINE:** Now that everything's been settled, that would seem to be a good idea.

*(Blackout.)*

## ACT I

### Scene V

*The Leonard home. LEONARD and FULTON.*

**LEONARD:** This is very comforting news, uncle. You're sure he'll keep his word?

**FULTON:** I've always been able to count on him. I assure you, Williams will not be traveling with them.

**LEONARD:** In that case, I will be traveling with them.

**FULTON:** You should understand, his daughter had nothing to do with this. Phillips invited Williams simply because he has a good heart and wanted company.

**LEONARD:** I'm glad to hear that, particularly considering what's been going on between Jacqueline and me.

**FULTON:** What exactly has been going on between you?

**LEONARD:** No more than words. I've spoken to her of my love, and I have hopes that she will return that love in kind.

**FULTON:** Her father seems to know nothing about this. He needs to be informed.

**LEONARD:** I'll let him know... one of these days.

**FULTON:** One of these days? I was willing to help you in this matter, nephew, because I believed a friend's reputation was at stake and that your intentions were honorable. You will either declare yourself at once to Phillips or I will recommend that he deal with you in the same manner he is now dealing with Williams.

**LEONARD:** When you put it that way, I suppose I'll be asking for her father's approval, soon.

**FULTON:** Soon?

**LEONARD:** At once!

**FULTON:** Good. Then I'll go back there today and present your proposal. But first a word of advice. There's a dowry worth eighty thousand dollars that could put you back on your feet, as long as you learn how to live wisely, modestly, prudently. Are you listening to me?

**LEONARD:** Yes, of course. I'll put my life firmly back on track, I promise...

**FULTON:** Good. Then I'm off once more to settle your affairs.

*(Exit FULTON.)*

**LEONARD:** ... when we get back from Newport. *(He shouts into the wings)* Hello, Charles.

*(Enter CHARLES.)*

**CHARLES:** Sir?

**LEONARD:** Go at once to the Phillips' home and inform him that I've taken care of all my pressing business concerns and that I'd be honored to accompany him and his daughter on their trip to Newport. Tell him that the carriage and horses are still on order for tomorrow morning. Now hurry.

*(Exit CHARLES.)*

**LEONARD:** *(into the wings)* Peter, are you there in the kitchen?

*(Enter PETER, wiping his hands.)*

**PETER:** Yes, sir.

**LEONARD:** Go directly to the livery stable and make sure the horses and carriages are still on order, since we'll be needing them first thing tomorrow morning.

**PETER:** What? I've just unpacked everything.

**LEONARD:** Then repack everything. And don't forget the extra champagne and silverware.

**PETER:** They're all on their way back to the merchants.

**LEONARD:** Then get them back right away.

**PETER:** Impossible.

**LEONARD:** I'm not asking if it's possible. I'm asking you to do it.

**PETER:** Then you'll have to find somebody else to do it because things have gone well beyond what I can do.

**LEONARD:** Peter, please. Listen, I'll take you into my confidence, not as your employer, but as your friend. Phillips is on the verge of giving me his daughter in marriage, with a dowry of two hundred thousand dollars. Two hundred thousand dollars! Do you know what that could do for us. Do you want him to lose faith in me now, at the last minute? Do you want to see us ruined? Just when we should be making one final grand effort, you tell me it can't be done, it's impossible, it's beyond your powers?

**PETER:** Sir, I appreciate you taking me into your confidence. I'll see if I can do the impossible. Again.

*(Exit PETER. Enter VICTORIA.)*

**VICTORIA:** Now, look here, brother. I've come to inform you that I'm resolved not to stay behind here in Boston when everybody who's anybody's already in Newport. I'm not getting any younger, you know, and...

**LEONARD:** Why are you carrying on like this?

**VICTORIA:** Carrying on? Because it might already be too late to speak with our neighbor, Constance. If she can squander her fortune on her poor niece until she finds her a husband, she can at least put me up for the season, and maybe find a husband for me, too.

**LEONARD:** Why not come along with us?

**VICTORIA:** Us?

**LEONARD:** The Phillips and me. Us. Tomorrow morning.

**VICTORIA:** To Newport?

**LEONARD:** To Newport. I'm having our trunks repacked.

**VICTORIA:** Repacked? Where's my maid? My boxes, my shoes, my coats, my dresses, my Worth!

*(Exit VICTORIA, almost colliding with CHARLES as he enters.)*

**CHARLES:** I'm back.

**LEONARD:** I can see that. What did they say?

**CHARLES:** Both father and daughter send their best regards and were quite pleased to hear that you will again be accompanying them although they hoped you would have the kindness to understand that they would not be able to accommodate you in their carriage since your place had already been taken by Mr. Williams.

**LEONARD:** Mr. Williams?

**CHARLES:** That's what they told me to tell you.

**LEONARD:** That's impossible. You're a thick-headed blockhead and you heard them wrong!

**CHARLES:** I'm not a thick-headed blockhead, and I heard them right, and if I heard them wrong, why was a certain Mr. Williams running up the stairs with bags in both hands when I was leaving?

**LEONARD:** *(to himself)* But my own uncle? Why would he want to deceive me like that? Or maybe Phillips deceived him? Unless Jacqueline, unless it was her... I'm being played like a fool, an idiot, an ASS!

**CHARLES:** Sir?

**LEONARD:** No, you're not the ass. It's me. I'm the ass. Listen, go quickly to my uncle, and tell him I have to see him.

*(Exit CHARLES, colliding with PETER as he enters.)*

**PETER:** You can rest easy, sir. Everything's back on track.



**LEONARD:** Leave me alone.

**PETER:** But I've done the impossible for you again, sir. The impossible!

**LEONARD:** I said leave me alone.

**PETER:** But the horses, the carriages...

**LEONARD:** Cancel them.

**PETER:** But...

**LEONARD:** Didn't I tell you to leave me be!

*(Enter VICTORIA in her new gown.)*

**VICTORIA:** You've never seen me in my new gown. What do you think?

**LEONARD:** Go away.

**VICTORIA:** What the devil's gotten into you? You'd certainly better change your attitude before we leave tomorrow morning.

**LEONARD:** We're not going anywhere tomorrow morning. I'm not going. You're not going. No one's going anywhere.

**VICTORIA:** Have you lost your mind?

*(Enter CHARLES.)*

**CHARLES:** Your uncle's not at home. He's gone over to the Phillips.

**LEONARD:** I want my hat and cane.

*(Exit LEONARD.)*

**VICTORIA:** *(to Peter)* Could you please tell me what's going on?

**PETER:** I don't know anything.

**VICTORIA:** Well I intend to find out. Get me my cloak.

*(Exit PETER.)*

**VICTORIA:** Charles, what do you know about all this?

**CHARLES:** I only know that I'm a thick-headed blockhead...

**VICTORIA:** Oh!

*(Exit VICTORIA, as if in pursuit of PETER.)*

**CHARLES:** ... and that he's the ass.

*(Blackout.)*

## ACT I

### Scene VI

*The Phillips' home. PHILLIPS and FULTON.*

**PHILLIPS:** I must say, I'm very pleased. Your nephew's a proper young man, quite sociable, and, of course, from good stock. A bit of a spender, but he'll settle down in time. In any case, it's now up to Jacqueline. If she's in agreement...

**FULTON:** As I'm sure she will be.

**PHILLIPS:** You're sure? Do you know something I don't know?

**FULTON:** Let's just say the two may be closer than you think and that it's a good thing my nephew is a gentleman. So now you know why it was so important to remove this Mr. Williams completely from the scene. My nephew never would've come around under those circumstances and, frankly, I would've advised him against it.

**PHILLIPS:** Yes, that would've been very awkward... *(leading him toward the wings)* Perhaps you should go now and bring your nephew here so that we can conclude matters.

**FULTON:** Certainly, and if you could talk to your daughter in the meantime...

**PHILLIPS:** Yes, yes, of course, of course, but you should go.

**FULTON:** All right, but I'll be back when...

*(WILLIAMS enters and calls out to PHILLIPS.)*

**WILLIAMS:** Sir! Sir! Since it's getting late, I'd be happy to see to the horses for tomorrow morning.

**PHILLIPS:** No, there's no need. It'll be taken care of.

**FULTON:** Mr. Williams is it?

*(WILLIAMS crosses to FULTON, his arm extended.)*

**WILLIAMS:** Yes, and you're Mr. Fulton, I trust?

**FULTON:** *(shaking his hand)* That is correct. May I be so bold to ask if you'll be vacationing in Newport this season?

**WILLIAMS:** Yes, with Mr. Phillips and his family. I've just dropped my bags off.

**PHILLIPS:** *(to Williams)* Maybe you should see to those horses, after all.

**WILLIAMS:** But you just said...

**PHILLIPS:** No, no. Go now. See that they're well fed for tomorrow. Just go. Go!

**WILLIAMS:** *(bowing to FULTON)* Sir.

*(FULTON returns his bow and WILLIAMS exits.)*

**FULTON:** *(applauding)* Bravo, Phillips, bravo!

**PHILLIPS:** You have to understand, Fulton, when I give my word to someone...

**FULTON:** But of course. You've given your word to me and look how well you've kept it.

**PHILLIPS:** I gave it to him first.

**FULTON:** If you had no intention of taking it back from him, why did you give it to me then?

**PHILLIPS:** Because I had every intention of doing exactly what you told me to do.

**FULTON:** But you didn't.

**PHILLIPS:** Because... because... Well, after all what would people say! Scandal! Bankruptcy! Oh, I don't know... If you'd been here when Jacqueline explained everything to me, you'd have been convinced, too!

**FULTON:** I've heard enough. I regret ever having involved myself in this affair. I will report back to my nephew and wash my hands of the matter forever.

**PHILLIPS:** *(grabbing FULTON by the coat to prevent him from leaving)* No, please. I'll resolve all of this right now. There's still time to get rid of Williams.

**FULTON:** You've just sent him off to feed the horses.

**PHILLIPS:** I got rid of him, didn't I?

**FULTON:** But he'll be back!

**PHILLIPS:** This is becoming more and more confusing.

*(Enter LEONARD.)*

**LEONARD:** How convenient to find both of you here together. Now I can find out which one of you is responsible for making me look like a fool.

*(Enter JACQUELINE.)*

**JACQUELINE:** What's going on here? Some sort of melodrama?

**LEONARD:** Yes. A play being performed by scoundrels who break their word and betray the trust of others.

**JACQUELINE:** Really? Well, then, which one of you is the liar and which one's the traitor?

**FULTON:** Tell her.

**PHILLIPS:** No, you tell her.

**FULTON:** All right, I will. Having been previously assured that your acquaintance, Mr. Williams, was not to be your traveling companion and household guest, my nephew comes here to discover that exactly the opposite is the case.

**JACQUELINE:** And who gave Mr. Leonard the authority to make the rules in someone else's house?

**LEONARD:** The authority of someone deeply in love and who cares...

**JACQUELINE:** I'm not talking to you! Mr. Fulton?

**FULTON:** My nephew would have nothing to say about any of this if he did not honestly intend to ask you to be his wife.

**JACQUELINE:** To ask me to be his wife?

**LEONARD:** Jacqueline, you know perfectly well...

**JACQUELINE:** I'm still not talking to you! Tell me, sir, on what grounds do you base that conclusion?

**FULTON:** On the grounds that in the name of my nephew I have just now made such a proposal to your father.

**JACQUELINE:** Father?

**PHILLIPS:** Well, yes, as far as I'm concerned, everything's fine with me.

**LEONARD:** Now it's my turn to say a few things and...

**JACQUELINE:** No it isn't, and this is what I have to say. My father invited Mr. Williams to come with us on our vacation, and I certainly had every intention of treating him with courtesy and friendship. Now (*to Leonard*), you and I have been friends for a long time, and it seems that friendship has deepened into something far more serious, and now that you have openly declared your love for me and gained my father's consent... I accept your offer to be my husband... But don't expect me to be rude to others in return for your love or allow the first expression of your love for me to be a vile, unjust, and vulgar suspicion. Have faith in me, and from your faith and trust, I'll learn the extent of your love, and return it in kind. My hand is yours for the taking, but if you want my heart, you'll have to earn it.

**PHILLIPS:** *(to Fulton)* What do you think of that?

**FULTON:** I wouldn't marry that woman if her dowry was a million and a half.

**LEONARD:** I don't know what to say other than that I love you and will do everything in my power to win your heart in return.

*(Enter VICTORIA.)*

**VICTORIA:** May I come in?

**JACQUELINE:** Yes, of course.

**VICTORIA:** *(to Leonard)* Is everything all right?

**LEONARD:** Couldn't be better. We leave first thing tomorrow morning.

**VICTORIA:** Leave?

**LEONARD:** For Newport. I'm sorry, Jacqueline, we'll have to hurry home and pack.

**FULTON:** Shouldn't we conclude these matters properly first?

**VICTORIA:** Matters? What matters?

**PHILLIPS:** Yes, of course, the contract.

**VICTORIA:** Contract? What contract?

**PHILLIPS:** The marriage contract.

**VICTORIA:** Marriage? What marriage?

**JACQUELINE:** Dear sister, can't you guess?

**VICTORIA:** Brother, why is she calling me sister?

**LEONARD:** Because she's about to become just that.

**JACQUELINE:** You wish us well, don't you?

**VICTORIA:** Oh, my dear, I'm absolutely thrilled. *(She kisses Jacqueline on both her cheeks, and then turns to her brother, and after kissing him, says to him.)* I can't wait to begin sharing my home with her.

**LEONARD:** Only until we find a husband for you.

*(Enter WILLIAMS.)*

**WILLIAMS:** The horses are being fed and will be ready first thing tomorrow.

*(Everyone turns to WILLIAMS.)*

**WILLIAMS:** Why are you all looking at me like that? Have I said something wrong?

*(Blackout.)*

## ACT I

### Scene VII

*The patio behind Phillips' Newport cottage, overlooking the garden. Enter PETER and BRIDGET. BRIDGET deposits a tray with a coffee pot, cups, and some pastries on the table at stage center. They sit.*

**BRIDGET:** Here's a fresh pot just made, and there's pastry left over from last night. Since they don't know what to do with it, we may as well take care of it ourselves. Most of them are still in bed, anyway.

**PETER:** When, you're up all night, you're usually in bed most of the day. I hope they're enjoying themselves.

**BRIDGET:** I know I am. I just took a long walk in the garden to pick some flowers and admire the sea. What a sweet morning! And now I have the pleasure of entertaining my guest.

*(BRIDGET pours him a cup of coffee.)*

**PETER:** I noticed your neighbors arrived last night.

**BRIDGET:** Madame Constance. Her husband's still in Boston. Merchants like him have to slave away in the city while their wives frolic out here by the sea. She's here with her niece, Rose. Eighteen years old and not a penny to her name. They're stuck with her until they can marry her off. But, fortunately, there's this eager medical student hanging around...

**PETER:** You don't mean Mr. Anthony? But he's such an idiot!

**BRIDGET:** Even more so, now that he's fallen head over heels for Miss Rose. But if you really want a ripe topic, you should take a look at my lady's Aunt Sabina. Sixty-five if she's a day, and she still expects men to fall all over her. And that awful Mr. Ferdinand certainly knows how to pluck her like an old hen.

**PETER:** Sshh. I think that awful Mr. Ferdinand of yours is coming this way.

**BRIDGET:** Then let's go into the garden where we won't be disturbed.

*(They exit upstage into the garden, taking their cups with them, but BRIDGET, turns back to retrieve the tray of pastries as FERDINAND enters.)*

**FERDINAND:** Whoa, there! Stop I say!

**BRIDGET:** Yes, sir?

**FERDINAND:** Is everyone around here asleep?

**BRIDGET:** I'm not, sir.

**FERDINAND:** Well, then, I'd like a cup of coffee, and let's see, what else... Look here... Where are you going? ... Dammit, where are you going!

*(Exit BRIDGET hurriedly upstage as PHILLIPS enters.)*

**PHILLIPS:** My dear friend, there's no need to shout.

**FERDINAND:** But I want a cup of coffee!

**PHILLIPS:** Please, lower your voice. Where are you going?

**FERDINAND:** The cottage next door. I may as well start my visits for the morning with Miss Constance and that pretty little niece of hers. Perhaps I'll find a cup of coffee there. But wait...

*(Noticing the coffeepot on the table, he fills a cup.)*

**PHILLIPS:** I thought you were going next door for your coffee.

**FERDINAND:** But now there's no reason to. I wouldn't want to seem impolite by not accepting your hospitality.

**PHILLIPS:** That's very obliging of you. I think I'll have a cup of it myself.

**FERDINAND:** This seems to be the last of it. *(He returns the cup to the table.)* That hit the spot. Now if you'll excuse me, I must commence my morning visits.

**PHILLIPS:** How about a hand of gin rummy, first? Once everyone's up and around, they'll all break into their little groups, and then not even the dog will pay any attention to me. How about it?

**FERDINAND:** Sorry. Social obligations. Perhaps after lunch.

*(FERDINAND exits.)*

*(PHILLIPS finds a half-eaten piece of pastry left behind on the tray and begins to nibble on it.)*

**PHILLIPS:** I think I'll go into town. Maybe I can find someone at the general store who will stoop to play a game of checkers with me.

*(PHILLIPS exits. Blackout.)*

## ACT I

### Scene VIII

*(A room in the cottage next to the Phillips'. ROSE shows her new hairdo to her aunt, CONSTANCE.)*

**ROSE:** What do you think, Aunt Constance? I spent all morning putting it up just like the fashionable ladies in *La Mode Illustrée*.

**CONSTANCE:** That was time well spent. There will be a very elegant company lunching with us today at Mr. Phillips' and you wouldn't want a hair out of place.

**ROSE:** But where's Mr. Anthony? He was supposed to join us for breakfast?

**CONSTANCE:** He'll be around. Everyone knows he's very much taken with you.

**ROSE:** I think he'd marry me in an instant if he had a practice. How much longer do you think it will be?

**CONSTANCE:** Not much longer. His father got him into Harvard and will push him through as quickly as possible. And with his father's connections, he should have a healthy practice in no time. That's why we need to be patient.

**ROSE:** Oh, to be a patient in his strong hands.

**CONSTANCE:** Rose!

**ROSE:** Someone's knocking.

*(She hurries over to the window upstage.)*

**ROSE:** Oh, it's that old bore, Mr. Ferdinand.

**CONSTANCE:** Careful, Rose. He's got a tongue like barbed wire, and he's not afraid of using it behind your back.

*(FERDINAND enters.)*

**FERDINAND:** My goodness, what visions of loveliness! But I won't have you all to myself much longer. I noticed your doctor's son heading in this direction. I understand he's been shedding a good deal of light on your doorstep, although, God knows, he has precious little of that to spare.

**CONSTANCE:** Mr. Ferdinand, please!

**FERDINAND:** Forgive me. I realize he's very much attached to your niece, but surely even she can see...

**ROSE:** *(At the window)* Here he comes now!

**CONSTANCE:** Mr. Ferdinand, you will go easy on the boy?

**FERDINAND:** I'm surprised at you, Constance. How could you think me capable of...

**ROSE:** Remember, we could say a few things, too, about that old lady of yours.

**CONSTANCE:** Rose!



**FERDINAND:** Now you keep my old lady out of this. She might be getting on in years, but she's still my little treasure.

**ROSE:** We know what kind of treasure you're after.

**CONSTANCE:** Rose!

*(Enter ANTHONY.)*

**ANTHONY:** Hello, everyone. Everyone's having a good day, I hope. A good day? Everyone?

**FERDINAND:** My dear, Mr. Anthony. Yes everyone is having a good day. Everyone. A very, very good day.

**CONSTANCE:** I hope you slept well last night, Mr. Anthony?

**ANTHONY:** Sure did. Why shouldn't I?

**ROSE:** Didn't you find last night's dinner a bit heavy? I'm sure if I'd eaten so much rich food I wouldn't have slept a wink.

**ANTHONY:** My stomach never keeps me awake.

**FERDINAND:** For the sake of argument, since you are practically a doctor, what would you prescribe for someone who has over-indulged and has a touch of indigestion?

**ROSE:** He's not a doctor yet. He doesn't know all that!

**ANTHONY:** But I do! I know all of that stuff!

**FERDINAND:** See, Miss Rose, you do him an injustice by not treating him with the respect he deserves. He knows all of that stuff. So, what stuff would you prescribe?

**ANTHONY:** Two tablespoons of cream of cassia. Cream of tartar. Epsom salts. And castor oil.

**CONSTANCE:** Surely one or the other, not all together.

**ANTHONY:** With a glass of water. And chew dried garlic during the day.

**FERDINAND:** Dried garlic.

**CONSTANCE:** I understand your father was called back to Boston. When do you expect him to return?

**ANTHONY:** When he's done with whatever he's supposed to get done with.

**FERDINAND:** It's remarkable that someone who seems so callow could speak with such eloquence.

**ROSE:** We've already warned you, sir, not to provoke people like that.

**ANTHONY:** Was he provoking me?

**CONSTANCE:** Mr. Anthony, have you had your breakfast yet?

**ANTHONY:** That's what I'm here for.

**ROSE:** *(taking him by the arm)* And we've been waiting for you so we can have it together.

**FERDINAND:** What a lucky man you are, Mr. Anthony, to have such lovely young ladies longing for your presence.

**ANTHONY:** *(to Rose)* Is he provoking me again?

**ROSE:** Aunt Constance, if it's all right with you, we'll have our breakfast in the dayroom.

*(The two exit, quickly.)*

**CONSTANCE:** I think I'd better join them. I'm sure you've already had your breakfast, Mr. Ferdinand?

**FERDINAND:** I haven't even had my morning coffee yet. I accept your offer.

*(FERDINAND offers her his arm, and after she takes it, reluctantly, they exit.)*

*(Blackout.)*

## ACT I

### Scene IX

*The patio behind Phillips' cottage, overlooking the garden. Enter BRIDGET and JACQUELINE.*

**BRIDGET:** I don't understand why you seem so unhappy. You're not enjoying yourself at all!

**JACQUELINE:** Oh, Bridget, all this confusion is driving me crazy!

**BRIDGET:** Confusion? You're not beginning to think twice about marrying Mr. Leonard?

**JACQUELINE:** No, of course not. He's a good man, and I'm sure he loves me very much. I do regret, however, allowing Mr. Williams to stay in our home for the entire season.

**BRIDGET:** He seems nice enough, polite...

**JACQUELINE:** That's right. Nice, polite... That nice, polite, sweet, engaging, endearing, amiable, sparkling, insinuating manner of his is enough to cause any woman to fall so deeply in love, so inextricably in love...

**BRIDGET:** Oh, no! You've told me over and over again that he doesn't mean anything to you, that you couldn't care less...

**JACQUELINE:** And I didn't. Inside I laughed at him whenever he turned that sweet charm of his on me. But living under the same roof, eating at the same table, breakfast, lunch, and dinner... Sometimes he'd brush up against me... I don't know how I'm going to put an end to all this, or even if I want to.

**BRIDGET:** Well, at least you're not married yet.

**JACQUELINE:** But what can I do? Break my word? Tear up a contract signed by my father and announced in both the Boston and Newport papers? And, what would people say if my feelings for Mr. Williams were discovered? That I had arranged a marriage as some sort of cover, a trick to have my true lover by my side all summer? This is a matter of reputation and honor and the consequences of losing both are simply too bitter to contemplate.

**BRIDGET:** Sshh. Here comes your aunt.

**JACQUELINE:** What does it matter. She's already figured it all out, but she's got as much common sense as a three-year-old and she seems to take great pleasure on pouring kerosene on our fire...

*(Enter SABINA.)*

**SABINA:** Niece, have you seen Mr. Ferdinand?

**BRIDGET:** I have. He was here earlier this morning, but he's gone now.

**SABINA:** How rude of him! We were supposed to have breakfast together this morning. *(To Jacqueline)* And you were supposed to join us.

**JACQUELINE:** I'm sorry. I didn't feel quite up to it.

**SABINA:** But you knew I invited Mr. Williams, too! What a nice, polite young man. He ground the coffee all by himself. He's so handy. Just about everything he does, he does perfectly... My dear, you don't look well.

**JACQUELINE:** I have a headache.

**SABINA:** What's wrong with young people nowadays? You always have headaches or the vapors. The vapors! Well, you won't find me moping about all day. I haven't come to Newport to feel sorry for myself or to have headaches. Bridget, I need someone to find Mr. Ferdinand.

**JACQUELINE:** Aunt, please stop this. People are talking. At your age...

**SABINA:** What do you mean ‘at my age’! I admit, I’m not a girl anymore, but I’m still an active woman, free and single, and with, I’m sorry to say, a trifle more spirit than some others I could name.

**JACQUELINE:** So, you’re not ashamed of making a fool of yourself with this Mr. Ferdinand?

**SABINA:** There’s nothing unacceptable or dishonest about a widow of independent means encouraging a man whom she admires and who seems to share her affections! ... What I do consider unacceptable and dishonest is someone encouraging... two of them at the same time!

**JACQUELINE:** Then do what you please. I will no longer concern myself with your affairs, and I would appreciate you doing the same for me.

*(JACQUELINE exits upstage into the garden. BRIDGET follows her.)*

**SABINA:** Why that little hussy. As if I didn’t know her secrets!

*(Enter FERDINAND.)*

**SABINA:** Where have you been. I’ve been looking all over for you.

**FERDINAND:** I stopped at the drugstore in town. My stomach’s been acting up lately.

**SABINA:** Oh you poor little dear. Come over here now. Sit right by me.

*(He takes a chair some distance away.)*

**FERDINAND:** I’ve been chewing dried garlic all morning. (He exhales in her direction.) To settle my stomach.

**SABINA:** My dear boy, you should really watch what you eat. You’re not as young as you once were. (She carries her chair over to him.) Anyway, now that I’ve finally got you alone, there’s something I really must tell you. If I could be assured my affections were reciprocated...

**FERDINAND:** My dear Sabina, you know I care very much for you.

**SABINA:** In short, I have a considerable amount of property, a hundred thousand in both stocks and bonds. and no children from my first marriage... If there were someone... someone who... well, some of it might be his one day. All he need do is declare himself.

**FERDINAND:** If I understand you correctly, then, you’d have no difficulty in loaning a small, insubstantial part of all that to me?

**SABINA:** A loan? That’s what you want from me?

**FERDINAND:** But you just suggested that some of it might be mine some day.

**SABINA:** I meant after I was dead.

**FERDINAND:** Before, after, it all amounts to the same thing.

**SABINA:** A loan! And that’s what you mean when you say you care for me!

**FERDINAND:** It's because I care for you that I'm asking for a loan. A measly ten thousand dollars, all to be invested in a commercial venture that is sure to double in value within the year. It's not my own interests and future I'm concerned about, but ours!

**SABINA:** Ours! (*Taking his hand.*) Then you do care for me, even if it's only a little?

**FERDINAND:** My affection for you is so great I can't even begin to express it. (*Dropping her hand.*) Especially now that someone's coming.

**SABINA:** Who?

**FERDINAND:** Your niece. From the garden.

**SABINA:** I don't want to be seen by her now. Especially while I'm alone with you. We'll discuss this further inside.

(*She grabs his arm and drags him offstage. JACQUELINE enters, followed by WILLIAMS.*)

**WILLIAMS:** Jacqueline! Why are you always running away from me.

**JACQUELINE:** I'm not running away from you. I'm simply going where I please, and that's often in the opposite direction.

**WILLIAMS:** Then will you please stop for just one minute and permit me to say one simple thing to you?

**JACQUELINE:** (*turning toward him, angrily*) It seems to me that you've said whatever you want to say to me with or without my permission.

**WILLIAMS:** Now I've made you angry. I'll keep my mouth shut... if that's what you want.

**JACQUELINE:** If you've got something to say to me, say it!

**WILLIAMS:** Jacqueline, believe me, I would never think of taking advantage of your kindness and your hospitality. But you must have realized by now, that I've fallen deeply in love with you. And you also must know that if such a love on my part could bring you harm or disturb you in any way, I would easily sacrifice my emotions and my future entirely to your interests.

**JACQUELINE:** Someone's coming.

**WILLIAMS:** (*approaching her*) I won't leave until I have your answer.

**JACQUELINE:** (*pushing him away*) Someone's coming!

(*Enter CONSTANCE with ROSE and ANTHONY. WILLIAMS draws apart.*)

**CONSTANCE:** I hope we're not interrupting anything?

**JACQUELINE:** No, of course not. Please make yourselves at home. Sit down... Mr. Williams, why don't you come over here and sit by me?

**WILLIAMS:** That spot's reserved for someone else.

**JACQUELINE:** *(to Williams)* If you persist in making a scene, you'll have that answer I didn't have the heart to give you a moment ago.

**WILLIAMS:** *(sitting next to her)* As you please then.

**JACQUELINE:** Mr. Anthony, it's a pleasure to see you here this morning.

**ANTHONY:** Yes, I'm very well, thank you.

**JACQUELINE:** And your father?

**ANTHONY:** He's very well, too, thank you.

**JACQUELINE:** I hear he's been called away.

**ANTHONY:** Yes, but he's still very well, thank you.

**JACQUELINE:** *(following a short, uncomfortable silence)* How about some bridge before lunch?

**ROSE:** I'd love to.

**JACQUELINE:** And you, Mr. Anthony?

**ANTHONY:** Bridge? Oh, no. But I know how to play Old Maid. I've brought a deck.

**CONSTANCE:** We can make a foursome with Mr. Williams. Mr. Anthony can watch. Maybe he'll learn something.

**ROSE:** There's a carriage coming.

**JACQUELINE:** That should be Mr. Leonard and his sister. Mr. Williams, will you see if it's them?

*(WILLIAMS bows and exits.)*

**CONSTANCE:** Tell me, dear, is it true he's about to propose to Miss Leonard?

**JACQUELINE:** So they say.

**CONSTANCE:** And your own wedding? When will that be?

**JACQUELINE:** I can't say for sure. But I wouldn't be surprised if your lovely niece goes to the altar before me.

**ROSE:** Who would want me?

**ANTHONY:** Who?

*(ANTHONY pinches her; Rose pushes him away.)*

**JACQUELINE:** If my eyes don't deceive me.

**CONSTANCE:** Appearances can be deceptive.

**JACQUELINE:** Mr. Anthony hardly seems capable of deception.

**CONSTANCE:** *(sighing)* So true. There's not much complexity there. But he is the only son of a doctor.

*(SABINA and FERDINAND enter from the garden upstage, as LEONARD and VICTORIA, on WILLIAM's arm, enter stage left.)*

**JACQUELINE:** It looks like we have another foursome. We can still play some bridge before lunch.

**SABINA:** Mr. Ferdinand and I must be partners. I will play with no one else.

**JACQUELINE:** Then you can pair off against Mr. Williams and Miss Leonard. Mr. Leonard and I can then play against Rose and her aunt.

**ANTHONY:** What about me?

**ROSE:** You can sit by me and watch.

**ANTHONY:** *(to Rose)* When are we going to eat?

*(Jacqueline and the others readjust the tables and chairs for their card game. JACQUELINE goes to a side table downstage near the wings for the card decks. She's followed by LEONARD.)*

**LEONARD:** What did you have to say to him?

**JACQUELINE:** I have to report back to you every word I say?... Please, everyone, take your chairs.

**ROSE:** *(To Constance)* Oh, good, they're going to be at our table. Perhaps they'll play out a scene right in front of us.

*(They all take their places and PHILLIPS enters as the cards are being dealt.)*

**PHILLIPS:** Good afternoon, everyone.

*(They all nod their heads and murmur but begin playing without further acknowledgement.)*

**PHILLIPS:** You're all playing cards? Is there no room for me?

**JACQUELINE:** Why don't you play Old Maid with Mr. Anthony here?

**PHILLIPS:** Old Maid?

**JACQUELINE:** That's all he knows how to play.

**ANTHONY:** I brought my own deck, and I should warn you, I'm a gambling man. I'm willing to play for a penny a game.

*(PHILLIPS runs into the wings.)*

**PHILLIPS (O.S.):** I don't care if it's raw or cooked, I want lunch on the table now!

*(PHILLIPS returns.)*

**PHILLIPS:** Ladies and gentlemen, I've been informed luncheon is served. (He offers his arm to Sabina.) Sister?

*(SABINA looks longingly at FERDINAND, who shrugs his shoulders as PHILLIPS takes her by the arm and they exit. ANTHONY grabs Rose.)*

**ANTHONY:** Let's eat.

**ROSE:** Stop it!

*(They exit together.)*

**FERDINAND:** *(offering Constance his arm)* I think my appetite's returning.

**CONSTANCE:** Why am I not surprised?

*(They exit. WILLIAMS and VICTORIA also arise and head for the wings, followed by JACQUELINE and LEONARD.)*

**VICTORIA:** *(to Williams)* I'm still not sure I'll forgive you for not visiting us this morning.

**WILLIAMS:** I told you. I had business to take care of, letters to write.

**VICTORIA:** There's paper and ink in our study, too. You're always welcome to use it, unless you're so much more attached to the Phillips' house and its occupants.

**WILLIAMS:** *(stopping suddenly)* What do you mean by that?

**JACQUELINE:** Is everything all right?

**VICTORIA:** *(peevishly)* Why wouldn't everything be all right?

*(Taken aback, JACQUELINE stops abruptly, along with LEONARD. VICTORIA and WILLIAMS continue to exit.)*

**VICTORIA:** I'm sorry, but you seem to be so moody today.

**WILLIAMS:** I'm afraid that's my nature.

**VICTORIA:** *(clinging to him)* Perhaps if you found someone you could truly love...

**WILLIAMS:** Perhaps I have.

**VICTORIA:** *(suddenly radiant)* Oh? Really?

*(They exit.)*

**JACQUELINE:** I don't think your sister cares very much for me.

**LEONARD:** Don't worry. I think she'll be a married woman far sooner than any of us had anticipated.



**JACQUELINE:** You mean to Mr. Williams?

**LEONARD:** Well, if he doesn't show his hand soon, we won't be seeing much more of him. I can promise you that.

**JACQUELINE:** Is that so?

**LEONARD:** *(stopping)* Yes, that's so.

**JACQUELINE:** I don't want to discuss this now. I don't want a scene.

**LEONARD:** Sometimes, Jacqueline, I think I love you far too much. And that you love me far too little.

**JACQUELINE:** *(stamps her foot)* I told you, I will not have a scene!

*(She turns suddenly and exits. LEONARD follows after her. Blackout.)*

## INTERMISSION

### ACT II

#### Scene I

*The garden behind the Phillips' cottage.*

*Enter BRIDGET and PETER.*

**BRIDGET:** Let's stop here in the garden for a while and take in some fresh air.

**PETER:** But my boss...

**BRIDGET:** They're all in the drawing room with their coffee and before long they'll be going into town for the afternoon promenade. You can afford to talk to me for a few minutes, unless, of course, you don't find my company very appealing.

**PETER:** I find it to be more appealing than you can imagine.

**BRIDGET:** Now isn't that nice!

**PETER:** Is there something going on with your mistress? My boss was sitting next to her and they didn't say a word all through lunch.

**BRIDGET:** And where was Mr. Williams?

**PETER:** Sitting next to Miss Victoria, and he didn't say a word to her either.

**BRIDGET:** It'll all work out, I'm sure. Many a fine match has been made here in Newport in the season... although I've never had much luck... Perhaps because I'm so plain...

**PETER:** I wouldn't say you were plain.

**BRIDGET:** Well, at least I'm not deformed. And I'm still young, and I have some good qualities. I'm thrifty, you know. I've saved close to \$3,000. Some lucky man...

**PETER:** I'd better go before I say a thing or two about that.

**BRIDGET:** Don't go. What do you have to say?

**PETER:** I think... I think...

**BRIDGET:** You think...?

**PETER:** I think I should go now. Can we talk about this later?

**BRIDGET:** When?

**PETER:** Tonight? Here in the garden, when they're all playing cards.

**BRIDGET:** Here in the garden? Tonight? Alone?

**PETER:** I may be a gentleman's valet, but I'm also a gentleman myself. One who has a considerable amount of respect for you.

**BRIDGET:** Until tonight, then. In the garden.

*(They both exit, in opposite directions, looking after each other longingly, as JACQUELINE enters.)*

**JACQUELINE:** Finally, a little peace and quiet. Who could've imagined... No, it can't go on. I've given my word, the contract's been signed, and I'm going through with it!... If they'd just stop looking at me like that! ... Dear God, please help me find the way...

*(Enter WILLIAMS.)*

**WILLIAMS:** Finally, I've caught up with you.

**JACQUELINE:** What do you want from me?

**WILLIAMS:** Just my answer. That's all.

**JACQUELINE:** Your answer? To what?

**WILLIAMS:** To what we were discussing this morning.

**JACQUELINE:** All right then, here's my answer. Simply by listening to you here, I'm failing in the duty I owe to my father and my future husband; and you, by trying to insinuate yourself into my heart are violating the laws of friendship and hospitality. Do you expect me to break my word to my father and my fiancé simply because you've made me... fall in love with you. There, I've said it, and that's the last you'll hear of it from me. Be assured, if you continue to pursue me, I will do everything in my power to see you embarrassed and humiliated. I will meet my obligations just as you fail to meet yours. You should understand by now that my honor is far more important to me than life itself.

*(Enter LEONARD.)*

**LEONARD:** There you are.

**JACQUELINE:** *(to herself)* Oh, for God's sake!

**LEONARD:** And what hidden purpose brings you here to confer alone with Mr. Williams.

**JACQUELINE:** Hidden purpose? ... You should know that my purpose here concerns you far more than it does me, although since I've agreed to become your wife, your interests have become my own. There's been talk in public about an understanding between Mr. Williams and your sister, and since the good name of your... our family hangs in the balance, I sought to reassure myself about his intentions... You'll be pleased to hear that Mr. Williams is a man of honor who would never take advantage of a young woman's weakness, and with all due respect to your sister, and with your consent, he has taken this opportunity, through me... to ask for your sister's hand in marriage.

**LEONARD:** *(to Williams)* Is this true?

**WILLIAMS:** Well... I... I'd certainly consider becoming... your sister's partner in wedlock... if it's not beneath you to give me your consent.

**LEONARD:** You'll have my answer tonight.

**JACQUELINE:** Why not now?

**LEONARD:** I think I should ask my sister first, don't you? ... But in the meantime we're expected to join our friends in their promenade down Bellevue Avenue. Would you be so kind as to take my arm?

**JACQUELINE:** Why this formality? Whose arm should I take but yours?

**LEONARD:** You came out here without me.

**JACQUELINE:** And I'm going back with you.

*(She grabs his arm and practically drags him offstage as he nods formally to WILLIAMS who is left alone on the stage.)*

**WILLIAMS:** My God, what has she done to me!

*(Enter PETER.)*

**PETER:** Sir, would you like to join the others in their promenade, or would you prefer to meet them afterwards in the tearoom at Ocean House?

**WILLIAMS:** I'll meet them afterwards. I prefer to walk into town myself.

**PETER:** As you wish.

*(Enter WAITER from the other side. Time has passed)*

**WAITER:** A table, sir?

**WILLIAMS:** No. I'm waiting for others to join me.

*(The others arrive by pairs and singly, all giving their orders to the WAITER and positioning chairs and tables about the stage as they enter, coupling together as if attracted by magnetic forces.)*

**JACQUELINE:** Coffee. Strong and black.

**LEONARD:** A glass of mineral water, with ice.

**ROSE:** The strawberry sherbet.

**ANTHONY:** A ginger pop.

**VICTORIA:** Tea, with plenty of milk and honey.

**WILLIAMS:** *(glancing at JACQUELINE, crossing over to Victoria.)* Nothing for me.

**CONSTANCE:** A lemon sour.

**PHILLIPS:** A glass of cold selzer, with a twist of lime.

**SABINA:** One of those nice chocolate tarts, with plenty of whipped cream.

**FERDINAND:** Cider. Hard.

**ANTHONY:** *(to Rose, as they are sitting down.)* Oh fudge. I forgot to order one of those fat jelly doughnuts.

**ROSE:** But you just ate.

**ANTHONY:** I usually have my afternoon snack about now.

**SABINA:** *(to Ferdinand)* I seem to always be sitting in a draft.

*(She opens a small umbrella and offers it to FERDINAND.)*

**SABINA:** I'll catch my death of a cold here. Here. You can protect me with this.

**FERDINAND:** I'm supposed to hold up an open umbrella inside a tearoom for half an hour?

**SABINA:** When someone cares for someone, no task is too great.

**FERDINAND:** Lending me a miserable sum of money seems to be too great a task for you.

*(SABINA turns her back to him, sticking the umbrella in his face. Enter PETER, stage left, signaling to LEONARD.)*

**LEONARD:** *(to Jacqueline)* Excuse me, I've asked my man to meet me here.

**VICTORIA:** *(as Leonard crosses in front of her towards Peter)* Brother, you said you had something important to tell me?

**LEONARD:** Later. I'm busy.

**VICTORIA:** *(to Williams)* My brother said he had something very important to tell me. Concerning you, in fact. You couldn't tell me yourself, could you?

**WILLIAMS:** I don't presume to speak for your brother.

**PETER:** *(quietly, to LEONARD)* Sir, the tradesmen here are becoming very unfriendly. They're beginning to threaten. I think...

**LEONARD:** *(handing him a sheet of paper)* Copy out this letter, and be sure to disguise your hand. Seal it in an envelope, address it to me, and bring it to me when we've returned from here. It should give us the time we need.

*(PETER exits and LEONARD returns to his table where he finds a nervous JACQUELINE eyeing VICTORIA and WILLIAMS. The WAITER enters and distributes the orders.)*

**ANTHONY:** I thought I ordered a ginger pop.

**ROSE:** The sherbert's all melted.

**JACQUELINE:** Wait a minute. This is tea.

**LEONARD:** This is tap water.

**CONSTANCE:** Not lemonade. A lemon sour!

**VICTORIA:** Coffee? Did I order black coffee?

**WILLIAMS:** Selzer? And it's flat.

**SABINA:** Where's the whipped cream?

**FERDINAND:** The softest hard cider I've ever tasted.

**PHILLIPS:** Nothing? *(Pointing to Williams)* He's the one who ordered the nothing! Give him the nothing!

*(The WAITER hands PHILLIPS the check.)*

**PHILLIPS:** If I'm paying for everything, at least I should get my lime twist with my nothing!

**ANTHONY:** Waiter, could you bring me one of those fat jelly doughnuts.

*(Blackout.)*

## ACT II

### Scene II

*A drawing room in the Phillips cottage.*

*Enter PHILLIPS, JACQUELINE, and LEONARD, followed by WILLIAMS and VICTORIA.*

**PHILLIPS:** Now that I have you all hear, let me see if I can delay dinner a bit and give us some time for several rounds of bridge.

*(Exit PHILLIPS.)*

**VICTORIA:** Brother, a word with you please.

*(She draws LEONARD aside, while JACQUELINE and WILLIAMS sit down.)*

**VICTORIA:** You had something important to tell me. What is it?

**LEONARD:** Not to beat around the bush... Mr. Williams has asked me for your hand in marriage.

**VICTORIA:** Really?

*(She turns to WILLIAMS, radiant. He responds with a weak smile.)*

**LEONARD:** So now it's all up to you.

**VICTORIA:** If it's all up to me, I couldn't be any happier.

**LEONARD:** Could you join us for a moment, Mr. Williams?

**WILLIAMS:** *(to JACQUELINE, who will show considerable interest in their conversation)* Excuse me.

**LEONARD:** My sister has accepted your proposal with great pleasure.

**WILLIAMS:** Good.

**VICTORIA:** That's all you can say? Good?

**WILLIAMS:** What do you want me to say?

*(Enter PHILLIPS.)*

**PHILLIPS:** Now we'll have some time for bridge.

**LEONARD:** Sir, I have a favor to ask. Will you be so kind to witness a contract of marriage between my sister and Mr. Williams. I'll have the papers drawn up tomorrow morning.

**PHILLIPS:** Congratulations! Jacqueline, did you hear that...

**JACQUELINE:** I heard.

*(Enter PETER, apparently out-of-breath. He hands LEONARD a letter.)*

**PETER:** Sir, an urgent message from Boston.

**LEONARD:** (*Opening the letter*). Oh, my poor uncle!

**PHILLIPS:** What? Fulton?

**LEONARD:** It's from Fulton, but it's about his brother, Bernard. He's dying. Fulton's already on his way back from St. Louis. It's a question of days, and there's the matter of the will in which I have an interest. We have to leave at once.

**VICTORIA:** I'll go with you. Mr. Williams, you'll come with us, too?

**WILLIAMS:** That would seem proper.

**LEONARD:** Peter, see that the overnight bags are packed. You can return tomorrow for the rest and (*sotto voce*) keep the tradesmen at bay for just a little while longer.

**PETER:** Yes, sir.

(*PETER runs into BRIDGET entering as he exits.*)

**BRIDGET:** Peter? Where are you going in such a hurry?

**PETER:** My darling. We have to leave. But I'll be back soon. Alone. Tomorrow night.

**BRIDGET:** You won't forget me?

**PETER:** Tomorrow night.

(*He exits quickly; she follows him slowly offstage.*)

**PHILLIPS:** Write me as soon as you arrive. I believe we'll be following you shortly ourselves.

**LEONARD:** (*taking Jacqueline's hands*) My dearest Jacqueline. Keep me in your heart, and return to Boston soon. Say good-bye to the others for us.

**WILLIAMS:** A moment. Mr. Phillips, I want to thank you with all my heart for your hospitality.

**PHILLIPS:** Think nothing of it.

**WILLIAMS:** And Miss Phillips, forgive me if . . .

**JACQUELINE:** Have a nice trip.

(*VICTORIA takes WILLIAMS' arm. They exit.*)

**PHILLIPS:** What a shame. And now we have all this time before dinner. Would you like to play a few hands of...

**JACQUELINE:** I have a headache.

(*JACQUELINE exits.*)

**PHILLIPS:** *(to the wings)* Hello there! Bring me a deck of cards. I want to play... some solitaire.  
*(Blackout.)*

## ACT II

### Scene III

*A room in Leonard's house in Boston.*

*LEONARD is looking out the window towards the street as CHARLES enters.*

**LEONARD:** Who's that down there at the door?

**CHARLES:** The grocer's son. I told him you weren't home, but he wants to be paid so he keeps coming back. Like the wine merchant and there's a bailiff with a summons...

**LEONARD:** Tell them to leave their bills and summons. I'll send payment for the bills to the stores.

**CHARLES:** Here they are, sir.

*(LEONARD snatches the bills from CHARLES and rips them to shreds.)*

**CHARLES:** Well, that takes care of that. I'll tell them both they'll be paid tomorrow without fail... One more thing, sir. I've been informed that Mr. Phillips and his family have returned to Boston.

**LEONARD:** Is the cellar door locked?

**CHARLES:** The key should be in the door. But the staircase is full of cobwebs. They'll get your suit all dirty.

**LEONARD:** Can't be helped. See if you can get rid of whoever's still outside on the doorstep.

*(Exit LEONARD. CHARLES goes to the window; VICTORIA enters.)*

**VICTORIA:** Was my brother in here?

**CHARLES:** He just left, Through the back door.

**VICTORIA:** The back door? Why would he do such a thing?

**CHARLES:** I guess to avoid the tradesmen at the front door waiting to be paid with money he doesn't have.

**VICTORIA:** Careful! Don't let anyone hear you say things like that! Where has he gone?

**CHARLES:** To the Phillips, I suppose... Excuse me. There seems to be some sort of ruckus out front.

*(CHARLES exits followed shortly after by FULTON entering, his feathers a little ruffled.)*



**VICTORIA:** Good morning, uncle. What a surprise to see you here so early.

**FULTON:** No thanks to those merchants blocking your door. What's that all about?

**VICTORIA:** Something about bills... By the way, I'm sorry you had to cut short your trip to St. Louis, particularly now that your brother's fully recovered.

**FULTON:** I cut short my trip to St. Louis because I've concluded my business there, and what's this about Bernard having fully recovered? The old miser's always been as healthy as a horse as far as I know.

**VICTORIA:** But your letter said...

**FULTON:** What letter? What are you talking about?

**VICTORIA:** The letter you wrote to Newport, informing us that your brother was at death's door.

**FULTON:** And I'm telling you that I could not, would not, did not write such a letter!

**VICTORIA:** Then who did?

**FULTON:** Who else but your brother. I had no idea how far down the primrose path he'd traveled until I saw those merchants trying to break down your door, working men, by the way, who can hardly afford to spend the better part of their days waiting on your doorstep to be paid! Where is he?

**VICTORIA:** Visting with his fiancée, I suppose.

**FULTON:** So the Phillips have returned, too? Perhaps, then I'll pay a visit to my old friend and inform him of the unfortunate financial state his future son-in-law...

**VICTORIA:** Uncle. It would be totally unacceptable to endanger a legitimate contract binding two lovers in a state of holy matrimony!

**FULTON:** I suppose it's more acceptable to spend far more money than you've ever had, refuse to pay your debts, and deceive your family and friends!

*(Exit FULTON.)*

**VICTORIA:** Uncle! Where are you going? What're you going to do?

*(Blackout.)*

## ACT II

### Scene IV

*A sitting room in the Phillips home.*

*Enter JACQUELINE and BRIDGET.*

**BRIDGET:** Please, Miss Jacqueline, you have to start enjoying yourself again. These black moods can have tragic consequences.

**JACQUELINE:** What black moods? I've never felt better in my life, especially now that that man is no longer in my company.

**BRIDGET:** What man could that be?

**JACQUELINE:** Why Mr. Williams, of course. And I have every reason to speak of him with anger and contempt. From his first day under our roof, he set traps for me, laying siege to my heart with his carefully planned encounters, his gracious words, his constant attentions, his seductive looks, his fine considerations.

**BRIDGET:** Well, at least you've gotten him out of your head... And your love for your future husband?

**JACQUELINE:** I've heard that those who marry only for love tire of each other the quickest, and those who marry for... for other reasons learn to love in time... I owe Mr. Leonard both my respect and love, and he'll have the first from me without question and as far as the second is concerned... I'll do what I can.

**BRIDGET:** And if Mr. Williams should suddenly stop by to pay you a visit?

**JACQUELINE:** He will be received at once. After all, he's about to become my sister-in-law's husband and there's an end to it. He's a gentleman and I'm an honorable woman and to think anything else would be false and malicious... Is there someone at the door?

*(BRIDGET goes to the window.)*

**BRIDGET:** It's Mr. Williams. Here to pay his respects, I suppose.

**JACQUELINE:** *(sways for a moment, before regaining her composure)* Mr. Williams, here? So early?

**BRIDGET:** Are you all right?

**JACQUELINE:** Of course. Why do you ask?

**BRIDGET:** You seem so pale all of a sudden...

**JACQUELINE:** You know, I do feel a bit queasy. I don't think those eggs this morning agreed with me. I may have to lie down for a moment. Make my excuses to Mr. Williams for me, will you Bridget? Tell him I'm sorry...

*(Exit JACQUELINE, in a hurry.)*

**BRIDGET:** A woman of flesh and bone, like the rest of us.

*(Enter WILLIAMS.)*

**WILLIAMS:** Where's Miss Phillips? I was told she had returned from Newport.

**BRIDGET:** Excuse me, sir, but what is it you want from her?

**WILLIAMS:** I have to answer to you now? I simply wish to pay my respects. Isn't that sufficient?

**BRIDGET:** Certainly, sir, but I can do that for you if you'd like.

**WILLIAMS:** Am I to understand that I'm not being permitted to see her?

**BRIDGET:** You can understand whatever you like, sir, but I don't know what else to say

**WILLIAMS:** In that case, you can pass this letter on to her and remind her that I'm about to become her brother-in-law.

**BRIDGET:** She doesn't need me to remind her of that, sir.

*(He passes a letter to BRIDGET who hides it away as LEONARD enters.)*

**LEONARD:** *(after glaring for a moment at Williams)* Bridget, where's Jacqueline?

**BRIDGET:** She's with her father.

**WILLIAMS:** Good morning, sir.

**LEONARD:** *(To Williams)* Sir. *(To Bridget)* May I see her?

**BRIDGET:** I'll ask. But first, sir, excuse me, is Peter back yet?

**LEONARD:** No, not yet.

**BRIDGET:** Excuse me, sir, but when will he be back?

**LEONARD:** Are you going to ask her or not?

**BRIDGET:** I'm going. I'm going.

*(Exit BRIDGET.)*

**LEONARD:** *(to Williams)* You're being very considerate paying your respects to my fiancée so early on her first morning home.

**WILLIAMS:** Social duties must be attended to.

**LEONARD:** But you're not quite so attentive to your own fiancée.

**WILLIAMS:** I'm not sure I understand what you mean. Please tell me, where have I been at fault?

**LEONARD:** Let me put it another way. When precisely do you plan to marry my sister?

**WILLIAMS:** When all the proper formalities have been disposed of.

**LEONARD:** All you need do is sign the marriage contract, which is waiting for you in my lawyer's office.

*(LEONARD hands him a business card.)*

**WILLIAMS:** Then I'll attend to it at once.

*(WILLIAMS bows and exits stage left. BRIDGET enters stage right.)*

**BRIDGET:** My mistress thanks you for coming but she begs your indulgence. She's not feeling well. She hopes you'll understand.

**LEONARD:** I understand all too well. Inform her that I will contribute to her well-being by leaving her alone.

**BRIDGET:** Sir, I hope you don't think...

**LEONARD:** Tell her what I just told you to tell her.

**BRIDGET:** Yes, sir.

*(BRIDGET exits. LEONARD turns to leave, when CHARLES enters, interrupting him.)*

**CHARLES:** Sir, I'm glad I caught you here. An urgent letter from Peter, and I should warn you, your uncle's on his way up to see Mr. Phillips.

*(CHARLES offers LEONARD the letter.)*

**LEONARD:** My uncle? He's back from St. Louis?

**CHARLES:** Yes, and he seems angry.

**LEONARD:** Thank you, Charles.

*(CHARLES exits as LEONARD opens and reads the letter. Enter FULTON.)*

**FULTON:** Good morning, nephew. Your sister said I might run into you here.

**LEONARD:** Uncle? This is a surprise. You're back so soon.

**FULTON:** *(motioning to the letter)* Good news, I hope?

*(LEONARD hands the letter over to FULTON.)*

**LEONARD:** What's the use? You're bound to find out soon enough.

**FULTON:** Let's see. What have we here? So, your Newport cottage has been attached along with all the furnishings therein, and your servant is writing from the local jailhouse where he's waiting for someone to bail him out. You must've had quite a fine time in Newport, although they seem to take unpaid debts a bit more seriously there than in Boston. I suppose they're tired of having the summer folk abscond with the rented silver, leaving behind no forwarding address.

**LEONARD:** Where would I go. Besides I could never leave Jacqueline.

**FULTON:** Or her \$80,000 dowry.

**LEONARD:** Uncle, you have to help me!

**FULTON:** How dare you! I've already gone so far as to persuade a good friend to marry his daughter to a common derelict! Now you wish me to compromise myself even further?

**LEONARD:** Uncle, for the love of God! I've nowhere else to turn. I'm staring over the edge of a cliff and pleading with you to lead me away from the brink!

**FULTON:** Oh, so you're at the edge of a cliff. Well, you deserve to jump off of it... But simply because you deserve it, doesn't mean I have the heart to let you go through with it.

**LEONARD:** Uncle, does that mean... are you proposing...?

**FULTON:** Something drastic. But Phillips is still my friend, and I don't think I'll be doing him an injustice if I save his daughter's marriage and your affairs both at the same time. But first we have to arrange a few matters. If you'll follow me to my office...

*(Enter BRIDGET.)*

**BRIDGET:** Sir, my mistress is feeling better now.

**FULTON:** Nephew, are you coming?

**LEONARD:** *(to Fulton)* Jacqueline's feeling better. Shouldn't I explain everything to her first?

**FULTON:** So she can hear all about your little difficulties before we have a chance to resolve them? Are you coming or not?

**LEONARD:** Uncle! I'm coming! I'm coming!

*(Exit FULTON followed by LEONARD.)*

**BRIDGET:** But sir...

*(She follows him toward stage left, as JACQUELINE enters stage right.)*

**JACQUELINE:** He's gone?

**BRIDGET:** I was hoping he could tell me something about Peter. *(Turns around, examining Jacqueline)* But maybe it's for the best. You're still a little pale.

**JACQUELINE:** I'm fine. I just let my emotions get the better of me. But you look a little pale yourself.

**BRIDGET:** Oh, Miss, it's Peter. Mr. Leonard's valet. I love him so, but he's still in Newport looking after Mr. Leonard's affairs, and I don't know when he'll return or if he'll remember what passed between us when he does!

**JACQUELINE:** And what did Mr. Williams want?

**BRIDGET:** He wanted to give me a letter.

**JACQUELINE:** A letter? For whom?

**BRIDGET:** For you. He wanted me to give it to you.

**JACQUELINE:** You weren't indiscrete enough to accept it, of course. Were you?

**BRIDGET:** Oh, of course not.

*(A pause as they stare at each other.)*

**JACQUELINE:** And you refused to take it?

**BRIDGET:** Because he insists on making himself a nuisance, because he won't leave you alone.

**JACQUELINE:** Why you little busybody! You always think you know what's best for me!

**BRIDGET:** Because I do... Unfortunately, sometimes I do just the opposite.

*(She shows her the letter.)*

**JACQUELINE:** Give me that!

*(She grabs the letter and tears it open.)*

**BRIDGET:** What's it say? What's it say?

**JACQUELINE:** "Chère Mademoiselle..." Hmm, French. "You need trouble yourself about me no longer, since I will make every effort to avoid any encounter that might be construed improperly." You see, Mr. Williams is honorable. "But as a matter of honor..." There! "...I feel compelled to inform you that your future husband has entered a state of extreme embarrassment. His Newport property has been attached, and his manservant is now languishing in a Newport jail, with no one to bail him out..."

**BRIDGET:** What's that? It must be Peter! What else does he say?

**JACQUELINE:** Only that if I'm deeply in love with Mr. Leonard, he doesn't expect that his ruin should be an obstacle although he doubts that my father would hold me to an agreement that ties me to a man who is "for all practical purposes a pauper, and that if you should again find yourself unattached, you should know that I have not yet signed any agreements and that I would never be party to such an action unless I knew for certain you would never be mine. Your most loving servant."

**BRIDGET:** What else does he say about Peter?

**JACQUELINE:** Nothing... Bridget, advise me. What should I do?

**BRIDGET:** *(very agitated)* Follow your heart.

*(BRIDGET suddenly turns and begins to exit.)*

**JACQUELINE:** Where are you going?

**BRIDGET:** To get Peter out of jail!

*(Exit BRIDGET.)*

**JACQUELINE:** At least she knows what to do. *(Addressing the letter.)* You're still trying to tempt me, aren't you? *(She crumples the letter in her hand.)* We're all made to suffer and to die, but before that we can at least endure.

*(JACQUELINE exits. The lights dim and brighten again, as if some time has passed. Enter FULTON and LEONARD.)*

**LEONARD:** *(who's been hanging back, looking offstage)* Apparently, Phillips has finished his lunch...

**FULTON:** Why don't you disappear into the library for a moment? Leave everything to me.

*(Exit. LEONARD, and PHILLIPS enters.)*

**PHILLIPS:** Fulton! My old friend!

**FULTON:** Phillips. It's good to see you so well. I hope you found Newport to your liking.

**PHILLIPS:** A wonderful year for oysters!

**FULTON:** That's all well and good. But now there's a matter of extreme importance...

**PHILLIPS:** Not to mention the woodcocks...!

**FULTON:** Good. Phillips...

**PHILLIPS:** ... and the grilled quail on toast!

**FULTON:** You need to listen seriously to me. Right now.

**PHILLIPS:** Of course. Any hour of the day or night.

**FULTON:** In brief, are you making the final preparations for the marriage of your daughter to my nephew?

**PHILLIPS:** Well, just between you and me, there is the matter of the expense of such an affair. Newport is getting more costly every year, and those people expect to be paid in cash.

**FULTON:** And there's the dowry, too. Eighty thousand dollars.

**PHILLIPS:** Frankly, I couldn't lay my hands on eighty thousand cents right now.

**FULTON:** Excellent, because I have a plan that will leave both your honor and pocketbook fully intact. That warehouse you own on the Mississippi...?

**PHILLIPS:** Yes, of course, did you have a chance...?

**FULTON:** I made some inquiries, and I now know for a fact that the manager of your property has been robbing you blind. So, rather than the dowry, why don't you transfer ownership to your daughter. My nephew, her future husband, will then manage the warehouse for you. He views this as a wonderful

opportunity and would surely create an income far greater than the interest on eighty thousand dollars, which will still be yours to spend as you please.

**PHILLIPS:** St. Louis? That's a long way off... But if it will give my daughter and my nephew a chance to make a life for themselves... I must admit I have been a little concerned about his extravagance, but there's not much of a fashionable set out there in the Mississippi swamps... Of course, I'd still want my Missouri ham. They can keep the beef jerky.

**FULTON:** One Missouri ham a year and a barrel of pickled buffalo tongues from the Oklahoma territories.

**PHILLIPS:** Put that in writing and it's a deal! Of course, there's the matter of my daughter...

**FULTON:** You'll have to get her to agree.

**PHILLIPS:** Yes, of course. *(He begins to exit, then pauses.)* Or I could have her sent here, and you could explain everything to her. You do these things so well.

**FULTON:** Tell her. Now.

**PHILLIPS:** Yes, of course...

*(Exit PHILLIPS, and LEONARD enters from the opposite side.)*

**FULTON:** You heard?

**LEONARD:** Everything. Now if only Jacqueline... She may not be so eager to join me once she learns we'll have to sneak away some moonless night under the very noses of our creditors.

**FULTON:** I'll take care of your creditors.

**LEONARD:** Uncle, how can I ever...

**FULTON:** I'll expect you to manage your new properties well enough to pay me back. With interest.

*(Enter PHILLIPS.)*

**PHILLIPS:** Hello, Leonard. What a surprise! *(To Phillips.)* Have you told him?

**LEONARD:** I've agreed to everything.

**FULTON:** And your daughter?

**PHILLIPS:** Apparently, she's gone to pay a visit to her friend Constance.

**LEONARD:** I believe my sister's on her way over there now, too.

**FULTON:** Well, I've done my part. Why don't you join them all there, and settle everything with everybody all at once, like the last scene in a comedy.

*(PHILLIPS throws his arm around LEONARD'S shoulders.)*



**PHILLIPS:** Come along, son-in-law. Let's find out what your new wife thinks about her move to St. Louis.

*(Exeunt. Blackout.)*

## ACT II

### Scene V

*CONSTANCE is arranging chairs in the parlor. ROSE joins her.*

**CONSTANCE:** Hurry up, Rose. You have to help me with all of this. I've already sent out my cards and people will be arriving at any moment. Your uncle left this place in such a mess! Perhaps you can train your husband better.

**ROSE:** I intend to. But so far marriage hasn't been much of a comfort to me. I don't have a ring, I don't have a trousseau, I don't have a wedding, nothing to show for it but a husband.

**CONSTANCE:** Those other things will come in time. But for now, no one needs to know you're married. This isn't the first time his father has threatened to disinherit him, and not until we're sure they've reconciled can we announce your marriage. Just make sure that husband of yours keeps his mouth shut. Where is he, anyway?

**ROSE:** He's changing. Now that summer's almost over, he needs a new wardrobe, so he stole one of his father's ready-mades just before he was chased out of the house. He's trying it on now.

**CONSTANCE:** But he's so much smaller than his father.

**ROSE:** He's not all that small.

*(Enter ANTHONY, in a suit several sizes too large.)*

**ANTHONY:** What do you think?

**ROSE:** It's a little long in the sleeves, but not all that bad.

**CONSTANCE:** It's a disgrace! Take it off, and put on your other suit.

**ANTHONY:** I can't. I gave my other suit to the servant who helped me steal this one.

**ROSE:** *(Embracing him)* Maybe if we had it taken in a little, at the waist?

**ANTHONY:** You could do that for me, couldn't you, auntie?

**CONSTANCE:** No I could not, and don't call me auntie! No one must know that you're married. No one!

**ANTHONY:** Fine, but why don't you want me to call you auntie, auntie?

**CONSTANCE:** Don't call me that!

**ROSE:** You really have to learn to be a bit more circumspect, dear.

**ANTHONY:** What do you mean by that?

**ROSE:** Show some common sense, And study, study hard so that you'll become a great doctor and I can be proud of you. Learn how to use your whole brain, all of it.

**CONSTANCE:** How can he use his whole brain if he doesn't have half of one.

**ANTHONY:** I heard that! I'm a married man now, and I won't let you treat me...

**CONSTANCE:** Sshh! I hear someone at the door. Rose, could you bring in some coffee and cakes from the kitchen. *(To Anthony)* And you get out of my sight. I can't have anyone respectable seeing you like that!

*(Exit ROSE. She'll return a moment later with a tray of coffee and cakes.)*

**ANTHONY:** You just don't want me eating any of your precious coffee and cake.

**CONSTANCE:** I can't take much more of this.

**ANTHONY:** Married to your niece, don't you know. Married to your niece! Auntie!

*(Exit ANTHONY. He takes a piece of cake from the tray ROSE is carrying as she enters.)*

**CONSTANCE:** Rose, I won't be able to have him around me much longer if things go on like this.

**ROSE:** Be patient. He's still just a little boy.

**CONSTANCE:** Go on, make excuses for him.

**ROSE:** I'm supposed to make excuses for him. He's my husband. Besides, you're the one who advised me to marry him.

**CONSTANCE:** Rose, I love you very much, but you don't have a penny to your name, and we can't provide for you forever. If that little boy hadn't fallen into our laps, I fear you would've been left standing alone in the shadows for a very long time.

**ROSE:** Hush!

*(Enter JACQUELINE.)*

**JACQUELINE:** Constance. Rose.

**CONSTANCE:** I can't tell you how sorry I am the house is in such a state. My husband...

**JACQUELINE:** *(taking care to wipe off a chair before sitting)* Please, it's fine... I came over so soon because I was concerned about my Aunt Sabina. You must have seen her before leaving Newport...

**CONSTANCE:** I'm sorry to say the poor dear's beside herself. In fact, she asked me personally to deliver a very private letter to Mr. Ferdinand, so private I'm sure he'll share the contents with everyone.

**JACQUELINE:** I'm often amused by Mr. Ferdinand's antics, but the thought of him exposing my aunt is like a dagger through my heart.

**CONSTANCE:** And how is Mr. Leonard.

**JACQUELINE:** Fine.

**ROSE:** And Mr. Williams. How is he?

**JACQUELINE:** Is it true that Mr. Anthony has returned to Boston with you?

**CONSTANCE:** Yes, he's staying with us for a few days until he gets settled.

**JACQUELINE:** Some very malicious people have been spreading a rumor that he's returned to Boston with you because he's also been married... Of course, I knew it couldn't be true. It would be such a ridiculous match.

**ROSE:** And then there's Mr. Williams engagement to Miss Leonard. When do you think they'll be getting married?

**JACQUELINE:** I don't have the slightest idea.

**ROSE:** Considering how they act around each other, that would also seem to be a ridiculous match, don't you think?

**JACQUELINE:** *(rising)* Excuse me, I really have several more visits to make this afternoon. I see that you're very busy, and I wouldn't want to take any more of your time.

**CONSTANCE:** Please, we just brewed a pot of coffee. I insist that you stay for a cup.

**JACQUELINE:** Well, since you insist.

*(ROSE, after hearing voices, goes to the window.)*

**ROSE:** More visitors. Miss Victoria herself, and Mr. Ferdinand, and, oh yes, Mr. Williams.

*(JACQUELINE stands up suddenly.)*

**ROSE:** Careful. You're spilling coffee all over yourself.

**CONSTANCE:** I'll get some water.

**JACQUELINE:** *(wiping herself)* No, please, it's nothing.

*(Enter WILLIAMS and VICTORIA.)*

**CONSTANCE:** Please come in. I've already made my apologies to Miss Phillips. I simply haven't had enough time to put this house in order. Rose, didn't you say Mr. Ferdinand was here, too?

**VICTORIA:** He was with us a moment ago. Where could he have gotten to?

**CONSTANCE:** I have a very private letter for him. I'm to deliver it personally.

**WILLIAMS:** A very private letter?

**JACQUELINE:** Yes, from my aunt.

**WILLIAMS:** And I suppose he'll want to read the letter and respond to it as soon as possible. That's the proper thing to do, isn't it?

**JACQUELINE:** Assuming the letter deserves a response.

**WILLIAMS:** Assuming the letter was an honest one, written with sincerity and affection. I think such a letter would always deserve a response.

**JACQUELINE:** Not all affection is innocent, and sometimes honesty is another word for self-interest.

**VICTORIA:** It sounds like you two already know what this letter's all about.

**WILLIAMS:** We know the passion that led to it.

**JACQUELINE:** We also know that it's an unworthy passion that should not be encouraged.

**VICTORIA:** In any case, it seems to be a letter worth reading, and here's the man who might read it to us.

*(Enter FERDINAND, his arm linked to ANTHONY's.)*

**FERDINAND:** Look what I found in the kitchen.

**ANTHONY:** Hello everybody.

**CONSTANCE:** *(to Anthony)* Leave here at once.

**FERDINAND:** I heard that. I think he should stay. And you should show him a bit more respect, since, after all, he is a married man.

**CONSTANCE:** No he's not!

**FERDINAND:** He's not? You're not?

**ANTHONY:** *(abashed)* No, I guess I'm not.

**FERDINAND:** Then that's good news, for if he's not, if he's not married to our lovely little Rose here, I might be tempted to ask for her hand myself.

**ANTHONY:** In that case, you'd be a... a cuck—... a cuck—... a coo-koo!

**FERDINAND:** Whatever could you mean by that?

**ANTHONY:** What I mean by that is that our lovely little Rose here is certainly no longer a...

**CONSTANCE:** Mr. Anthony, will you hold your tongue! ... Mr. Ferdinand, I have a letter for you.

**FERDINAND:** *(takes the letter from her)* From my dear little pigeon. I shall read it with the greatest of pleasure.

**VICTORIA:** You should read it to all of us.

**FERDINAND:** Let's see what it says first.

*(Enter PHILLIPS and LEONARD.)*

**PHILLIPS:** Sorry to barge in like this, but it's imperative... Mr. Anthony! Nice suit.

**ANTHONY:** Would you like to play a hand of Old Maid?

**PHILLIPS:** No, but I would like to speak to my daughter. *(To Constance)* Please forgive me for my impatience, but if I could speak with my daughter in private for just a moment.

**CONSTANCE:** Certainly. If you just want to go into the hallway...

**PHILLIPS:** Jacqueline, come! You, too, Leonard. Let's get this settled.

**LEONARD:** Excuse us, please.

*(All three exit.)*

**ANTHONY:** *(to Rose)* I'll see if I can overhear what they're saying from the kitchen.

*(Exit ANTHONY. In the meantime, FERDINAND has crossed over to stage right. He reads his letter as the lights dim on the others.)*

**FERDINAND:** Good lord. What is this? Arabic? I can barely make it out. Let's see. "Cruel heart." I guess that's me. "You're the first man who's ever made me cry for love." Etc., etc. "Tears are welling up in my eyes." It's all smudged here. What, was she writing in a rainstorm? "You must return at once. And if you really love me, you will come, and if you come you will not find me ungrateful." Ah, now we're getting somewhere. "If my love alone is not enough to recompense you, come back to me anyway, and I will pledge you..." The devil take her, I can't make this out! "I will pledge you all your loan." No that can't be it. It's not "all your loan," it's "all that I own." "All that I own!" Good lord. "Your faithful and loving and future wife, Sabina."

*(Light comes up upstage.)*

**VICTORIA:** You're taking a considerable time with that letter, Mr. Ferdinand. Would you like to share any of it with us?

**FERDINAND:** I'm sorry, it would be inappropriate for me to divulge its contents. Suffice to say she signs it "Your faithful and loving and future wife, Sabina."

**CONSTANCE:** Bulls-eye.

**VICTORIA:** And what, then, are you going to do?

**FERDINAND:** I'm going to take the next train to Newport to be with my faithful and loving and future wife, Sabina. My friends, your most humble and eternal servant.

*(Exit FERDINAND.)*

**CONSTANCE:** She must've agreed to sign everything over to him.

**ROSE:** That poor, crazy old lady.

**VICTORIA:** *(to Williams)* Don't you find this all very amusing? Or have you simply fallen asleep?

**WILLIAMS:** I don't find any of this amusing.

*(JACQUELINE and LEONARD enter first, arm-in-arm, followed by PHILLIPS.)*

**VICTORIA:** *(noticing that Williams has arisen)* Well, that seems to have awakened you... So what great news do you have for us, brother?

**LEONARD:** Great news it is, sister. By tomorrow evening Jacqueline and I will be on a train to St. Louis.

**VICTORIA:** St. Louis? I take it you intend to get married first?

**LEONARD:** Absolutely.

**VICTORIA:** And where does that leave us, Mr. Williams?

**WILLIAMS:** *(to Jacqueline)* You're going to St. Louis? Is this true?

**JACQUELINE:** Very true. Thanks to my father and my new uncle. I confess, it's hard to leave the people you love and care for... But, so there will be no misunderstanding, in front of everyone present, I offer you, my husband, my hand, willingly, and ask for yours, willingly and eagerly in return.

**LEONARD:** *(Embraces her, then stands back, holding her by the shoulders)* You're shaking. You're pale as a ghost, as if you're not entirely sure...

**JACQUELINE:** I am sure! No one could ever persuade me to take such a step if I were not certain, No, blame the weakness of a woman who is about to surrender her beloved independence to become your wife, and who is about to tear someone she loves from her heart... a father—and replace him with a husband. Again, here is my hand. I am your wife. I am yours.

**LEONARD:** *(taking her hand)* And I'm yours.

**JACQUELINE:** *(pushing him softly away before he can embrace her again)* Sir, we leave tomorrow. You have affairs to put in order, and I don't lack for things to do.

*(Enter ANTHONY, eating a piece of cake.)*

**ANTHONY:** Weddings! Weddings! More weddings!

**CONSTANCE:** Quiet, you fool!

**ROSE:** Aunt, stop. You're always demeaning him.

**LEONARD:** Weddings, yes. Speaking of weddings, I'm sure, Mr. Williams, you will want to formalize your engagement to my sister before we leave tomorrow?

**VICTORIA:** We were discussing signing the papers tonight.

**JACQUELINE:** Mr. Williams, I expect you'll be true to your word and finish what you've started.

**VICTORIA:** Have you nothing to say, or have you gone back to sleep?

**WILLIAMS:** I'm awake enough to hear what's been said and to know what needs to be done. I'm a man of my word and I mean to stand by it as Miss Phillips has by hers. I've always admired her integrity and because of my respect for her and her advice, I am ready, before everyone here, to give you my hand in marriage.

**VICTORIA:** Because of your respect for her, not because of your love for me?

**JACQUELINE:** She's right. Perhaps you should be a bit more open about your emotions.

**WILLIAMS:** Please don't be concerned about my emotions. Like you, I have them completely under control, and I know what I'm doing. Victoria, I swear that you have found a husband who respects your character and worth, and one who will always be faithful and true to you.

**VICTORIA:** Wonderful. All I've ever wanted, except passion and love.

**LEONARD:** Enough of this. Accept his offer or learn how to be a spinster for life.

**VICTORIA:** You're very humorous, brother, but I am not acting under compulsion, either. *(To Williams)* Here is my hand, and all my heart.

**WILLIAMS:** *(taking her hand)* And I accept.

**VICTORIA:** Only... try to have a little compassion for me.

**WILLIAMS:** I'm the one who will need compassion.

**VICTORIA:** Well, I think we'd better find that lawyer if we want those papers signed. Brother, will you join us.

**LEONARD:** Jacqueline?

**JACQUELINE:** Please, go. Farewell, sister, brother. We leave for St. Louis tomorrow night.

*(Exit LEONARD and VICTORIA, who draws WILLIAMS with her by the arm.)*

**ANTHONY:** Wonderful! Wonderful! Another wedding coming right up.

**PHILLIPS:** You seem to enjoy weddings so much, young man, I wouldn't be surprised if your own wasn't forthcoming before long.

**ANTHONY:** Before long? It's already occurred. I mean it. We've done it! I'm a married man!

*(He grabs Rose and kisses her hard on the lips.)*

**CONSTANCE:** You're a fool. A reckless, mindless idiot!

**ROSE:** Stop insulting him! We weren't going to hide it forever, and now I'm glad it's finally out!

*(She grabs Anthony, kissing him back, just as hard.)*

**CONSTANCE:** Well I'm not! And I can insult anyone I want to insult in my own house. Moreover, I can't stand the sight of either one of you anymore!

*(Exit CONSTANCE.)*

**JACQUELINE:** *(to Rose)* Don't be angry with her. She only wants the best for you. I pray with all my heart that there will be no cause for you to regret a decision made on a warm summer night at a seaside resort.

**PHILLIPS:** Jacqueline, we have a marriage to take care of. And perhaps a small reception tomorrow with a little brunch. We should go.

**JACQUELINE:** *(to Rose again)* Give our regards to your aunt, and tell her we all wish the very best fortune to her niece and her new husband.

*(Exit JACQUELINE and PHILLIPS.)*

**ANTHONY:** That was nice... Now what?

**ROSE:** I don't know.

**ANTHONY:** Would you like to play some Old Maid?

**ROSE:** Why don't I teach you how to play bridge?

**ANTHONY:** All right... Maybe later. But first, I think there's still some cake left in the kitchen.

*(ANTHONY exits, leaving ROSE alone. She shrugs her shoulders and follows him offstage.)*

*(Curtain. End of play.)*



## Scapin the Scammer

By Molière

Adapted into English Verse by Brian Vinero

Many of the plays of Molière were written in rhymed verse, including the two that are often considered his greatest, most-lasting contribution to world theatre: *Le Misanthrope* and *Tartuffe*. When these plays are translated into rhyming couplets when performed in English, particularly in the masterful translations of Richard Wilbur, they take on a style and élan that creates an approximation of the French originals. There have also been many translations of Molière's verse plays that render them into prose. An English speaker making a comparison might imagine *A Midsummer Night's Dream* translated into French prose with everyday dialogue, rather than the poetry and heightened language of Shakespeare. While the plot and characters, and occasionally the wit, still can come through, they can never create the larger-than-life theatricality and classicism of the originals.

This creates a dual issue for the translator when attempting one of Molière's many comedies that were originally written in prose. The writer faces how to bring it to life in English with the sense and style of another place and time and also address the more rapid cadence of the French language, which is instrumental to the pace and nuance of the Molière oeuvre. Both issues are resolved when translating a play into verse as the rhymed couplets not only elevate the language, but also keep the actors moving along to the clip of iambic pentameter.

So, I took my inspiration from Molière's grander plays and have crafted my translation of *Les Fourberies de Scapin* into rhymed verse. The use of iambic pentameter is particularly helpful for the actor playing the title role. It requires him to speak copious amounts of rapid-fire dialogue as the farce intensifies. The consistent beat and rhythm is very helpful to keep the performer on track while playing a very demanding role. The rhyming dialogue also allows for additional humor to be mined from what is already a very funny play. My hope is to create a version of this play that will allow English speaking actors to celebrate Molière's style, wit and incredible contributions to the art of comedy.

**Molière** (1622-1673). The man who would become one of France's most-renowned writers was born **Jean-Baptiste Poquelin** before attaining remarkable success as an actor and playwright under the name Molière. His plays built on the traditions of commedia dell'arte, yet refined the street theatre style to a form elegant enough to enchant French society and royalty. He also maintained commedia dell'arte's broad characterizations and satire yet added depth and social commentary that gave his plays a gravitas that is celebrated worldwide to this day. While his plays were generally uproariously humorous, they also jabbed at the foibles of human nature, particularly hypocrisy. This made him run afoul of certain segments of society. Religious groups especially worked to ban his play *Tartuffe*, which is now widely considered one of the masterpieces of world theatre along with *L'École des Femmes*, *Le Misanthrope*, *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, and many others.

Playwright **Brian Vinero** is an alumnus of the Minnesota Conservatory of Performing Arts, the National Shakespeare Conservatory, the 78<sup>th</sup> Street Theatre Lab, the BMI/Lehman Engel Workshop and a founding member of the New Musical Theatre Exchange. His plays have been produced and/or developed at the Praxis Theatre Ensemble, the 78<sup>th</sup> Street Theatre Lab, the Willoughby Theatre, the West Side Dance Project, the BMI/Lehman Engel Musical Theatre Workshop, and the Midtown International Theatre Festival in New York City, Theatre of Note in Los Angeles, the Jewish Ensemble Theatre in Detroit, and at the Playwrights' Center, the New Musical Theatre Exchange, the Classical Actors Ensemble, Theatre Pro Rata, and the Minnesota Fringe in the Minneapolis/St. Paul area. His translations of the plays of Euripides include *Medea*, *Hecuba*, *Alceste*, and the four-play cycle *Children of Agamemnon* consisting of the plays *Iphigenia at Aulis*, *Electra*, *Orestes*, and *Iphigenia at Tauris*. Other theatrical works include multiple translations of the works of Molière, a modernization of Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*, and musicals adapted from Rostand's *Chantecler* and Booth Tarkington's *The Magnificent Ambersons*. Brian has worked directly with two Newberry Award-winning authors adapting their work to the stage, has been published by the international literary journal *Asymptote*, and has served on the faculties of William Patterson University and Regional Center for the Arts High School. His rhymed verse adaptations of the plays of Euripides, Moliere and Rostand are available for sale on Amazon.com and at the Drama Book Shop in New York City. Member of the Dramatists Guild, BMI, and the Playwrights' Center.

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**Scapin the Scammer**  
**By Molière**  
**Adapted into English Verse by Brian Vinero**

**Cast of Characters:**

**ARGANTE** father to OCTAVE and ZERBINETTE  
**GERONTE** father to LÉANDRE and HYACINTHA  
**OCTAVIO** son to ARGANTE, and lover to HYACINTHA  
**LEANDER** son to GÉRONTE, and lover to ZERBINETTE  
**ZERBINETTA** daughter to ARGANTE, believed to be a gypsy girl  
**HYACINTHA** daughter to GÉRONTE  
**SCAPIN** servant to LÉANDRE  
**SYLVESTER** servant to OCTAVE  
**NERINE** nurse to HYACINTHA  
**CARLOS**  
**TWO PORTERS**

**Setting:** The main room of Argante's home.

**ACT I**  
**SCENE I—OCTAVIO, SYLVESTER**

**OCTAVIO**

Oh what a tragic fate for one who is  
In love. What sadder news could ring in his  
Ears? So Sylvester, you have just now heard  
My father soon returns?

**SYLVESTER**

He does.

**OCTAVIO**

And word

Is he returns this very morning?

**SYLVESTER**

He

Returns this very morning.

**OCTAVIO**

And to see

That I am wed?

**SYLVESTER**

That you are wed.

**OCTAVIO**

And to

The daughter of Signor Geronte?

**SYLVESTER**

It's true.

The daughter of Signor Geronte.

**OCTAVIO**

And she

Arrives from Taranto in hopes to be  
My bride?

**SYLVESTER**

In hopes to be your bride.

**OCTAVIO**

And you

Have heard this through my uncle?

**SYLVESTER**

It was through

Your uncle.

**OCTAVIO**

And he got this information from

My father?

**SYLVESTER**

From your father.

**OCTAVIO**

That had come

Within a letter?

**SYLVESTER**

From a letter.

**OCTAVIO**

And

You say my uncle seeks to understand  
The nature of our recent actions?

**SYLVESTER**

He

Now seems to understand the nature...

**OCTAVIO**

We

Are not an echo of each other! Please  
Say words that are your own instead of these  
Regurgitations!

**SYLVESTER**

What is there to say?

You have retained the facts.

**OCTAVIO**

But you still may

Advise me in my foul predicament.

**SYLVESTER**

I too am petrified by this event  
And seek the solace of a wiser man.

**OCTAVIO**

But I am terrified and need a plan.

**SYLVESTER**

But I do too!

**OCTAVIO**

I know I am undone  
The moment he returns. He'll scream, "My son,  
The time is nigh for you to die!"

**SYLVESTER**

But me

A lowly servant, he will likely see  
Me flogged and battered. But he won't dare kill  
Me. That is punishment he only will  
Reserve for family members. Even so  
It seems I pay for your bad deeds.

**OCTAVIO** (*looks heavenward*)

I know

That you can hear me. Please show me the way  
To my salvation.

**SYLVESTER**

Maybe you should pray  
Before you step in something foul.

**OCTAVIO**

Oh will

You save your sermon for a zealot? Still  
Your tongue and gums, they are so tiresome!

**SYLVESTER**

As tiresome as seeing me become  
The victim of your stupid deeds?

**OCTAVIO**

Oh I

Am lost and cannot find the way. Oh why  
Or where or what am I to do?

(*enter SCAPIN*)

## **SCENE II—OCTAVIO, SCAPIN, SYLVESTER**

**SCAPIN**

Signor Octavio what troubles you?  
What could it be? What foul calamity  
Now holds you in despair?

**OCTAVIO**

Oh glory be,

My dear Scapin! I am beyond all hope,  
Unfortunate and cursed beyond all scope  
Of mortal men!

**SCAPIN**

How can that be?

**OCTAVIO**

Do you

Have knowledge of the hell I now go through?

**SCAPIN**

I don't.

**OCTAVIO**

Then know my father soon will be  
Arriving with Signor Geronte. And he  
Intends to promise me in marriage to  
The daughter of Signor Geronte.

**SCAPIN**

And you

Find this distressing? Why?

**OCTAVIO**

Oh you don't know

So how I envy you. As I am so  
Enveloped by anxiety.

**SCAPIN**

Should you  
Dare tell me then I might know what to do.  
I am possessed of many talents. I  
Take pleasure helping out the young and try  
Relieving all their troubles.

**OCTAVIO**

Oh Scapin!

If you could only come up with a plan

Or plot or scheme to save my hide. I then  
Would be indebted to you, even when  
I die, which I must hope is not today.

**SCAPIN**

Well it seems I seem to always find a way  
To set things right by tearing them apart.  
When schemes are elevated to an art  
Then very little is beyond all reach.  
But wit is something that no one can teach  
Or learn, it only is within you. I  
Could minimize my talents or just try  
False modesty and beg you not to gush  
In fear I might gasp bashfully and and blush.  
But no, I boast. As what have I to lose?  
I know I am a genius and I choose  
To say it without shame or modesty.  
My reputation always seems to be  
A step ahead of me. Yet even so  
It seems these days that people do not know  
Who truly holds the wreath of victory.  
Oh, they may look but still they do not see  
Who truly pulled the lever or the string.  
And that is why I now can barely bring  
Myself to bother with a scheme. As I  
Once found myself in trouble. That is why  
I barely dare to lay a trap or trick.

**OCTAVIO**

What happened, dear Scapin?

**SCAPIN**

The walking stick

Of justice found that it could flog me.

**OCTAVIO**

You

Have tangled with the law?



**SCAPIN**

We battled through

A little lover's quarrel.

**SYLVESTER**

Justice tried

To tangle with you?

**SCAPIN**

And destroyed my pride.

It used me like a sad, stale tart. Then I  
Was left for dead and so I said, "Why try  
If my reward is cheap ingratitude?"  
So I then vowed to never be unglued  
Again by sticking out my neck. Yet still  
I am concerned for you. So if you will  
Please tell me all that plagues you.

**OCTAVIO**

As you know

My father had set out two months ago  
And took Signor Geronte with him. They are  
Both partners in a business interest far  
Away from here.

**SCAPIN**

I know.

**OCTAVIO**

And left behind,

Myself and also...

**SCAPIN**

Must you now remind

Me of my charge Leander? Just as you  
Are trusted in Sylvester's care, I do  
My service to Signor Geronte. Just as  
Sylvester serves your father.

**OCTAVIO**

But he has

Now fallen fast in love. As now his eye  
Has landed on a Gypsy girl.

**SCAPIN**

Please try

And tell me something I don't know.

**OCTAVIO**

As we

Are closest friends he put his trust in me  
And told me all and took me to her. My  
Intrigue was stoked from his description. I  
Expected quite a goddess from the way  
He spoke of her. And yet I have to say  
I found her merely pleasant. Oh he claimed  
How she had no compare to others, shamed  
By all her heightened attributes. Her face  
A masterpiece, her movements full of grace  
And dignity. Her brains, her wit, her flair,  
Her conversation skills beyond compare.  
Her every phrase a miracle and he  
Would parrot them incessantly to me,  
No matter how inane. Then he would grin  
And moan and sigh and say them all again.  
And dare I insufficiently proclaimed  
Her virtues he would say, "Are you ashamed,  
Ignoring such a wonder? Are your eyes  
Too ill-equipped to gaze on such a prize?  
Your heart must not be functioning if you  
Are so insensitive to love so true."

**SCAPIN**

May I imagine that this story has  
A point?

**OCTAVIO**

We were together one day as  
We made our way to see her. She is cared  
For by her guardians. We weren't prepared

To hear loud sobbing as we walked along  
The street. The sobs and wails were very strong  
And coming from a tiny shack. Just then  
A woman rushed to us and said, "Kind men,  
You must observe and pity two who are  
Within! Two women who have traveled far  
To find themselves in misery. If you  
Have any heart at all I know you two  
Will find yourselves so moved by their sad plight!"

**SCAPIN**

Does this sad story have an end in sight?

**OCTAVIO**

Well I was snared by curiosity  
And asked Leander to go in with me.  
We went inside and saw the saddest scene,  
A tragedy so sad and so obscene.  
An ancient woman at death's door between  
The realms of here and heaven. At her feet  
A servant wailed great lamentations, sweet  
Words, salty tears and cries. A girl was there  
As well in tears as well that welled. I dare  
Say it was sad yet such a lovely sight  
That softly touched the heart yet with great might.

**SCAPIN**

Oh, should I cry or maybe snore?

**OCTAVIO**

How one

As sad as this young girl would seem undone  
In her disgraceful state. She only wore  
A ratty petticoat and not much more  
Except a tattered jacket. And her hair  
Just seemed to grow in bunches everywhere  
And barely stayed within her bonnet. Though  
She was so ragged she still had a glow  
And all her many charms were evident.  
She shined like starlight, seeming heaven-sent.

**SCAPIN**

I think I see the light as well.

**OCTAVIO**

Scapin,

If you had only seen her shine. No man  
Could dare deny her attributes and glow.

**SCAPIN**

I do not doubt it, and I somehow know  
Without the gift of meeting her. I see  
She charms beyond all measure.

**OCTAVIO**

And when she

Shed tears they were so lovely on her cheek  
No growling sobs, no bellowing so bleak  
And mournful. I would say she had true grace  
And every perfect tear fell down her face.

**SCAPIN**

Oh how you paint a portrait...

**OCTAVIO**

Anyone

Who saw the scene would weep as well. As none  
Among us could resist the sight of her  
Emoting at her mother's feet with pure  
Devotion from a heart with endless hope  
That beats within a breast as pure as soap  
Connected to great loveliness unbound...

**SCAPIN**

Oh yes, I see. I've really come around  
To understand your clear perspective. So  
Yes, she's special, blah blah blah. And, oh,  
Her loveliest perfection blah blah blah  
Was just the greatest thing you ever saw.

**OCTAVIO**

What gentleman or savage could resist  
Her virtue so alluring?

**SCAPIN**

So you kissed  
Her?

**OCTAVIO**

Well, I...

**SCAPIN**

Nature surely has a way  
Of bringing us together.

**OCTAVIO**

I said, "May  
I soothe your tears with warmest words?" And then  
I spoke so softly to her. That was when  
I took my leave of her and took aside  
Leander. As we both stepped out outside,  
I asked him what he thought of her. And he  
Said that he merely found her pleasant; she  
Was pretty, not remarkable. And I  
Was truly wounded! How could he dare try  
And minimize her wonders? So I held  
My deepest feelings in my heart, compelled  
To hide them from his callousness.

**SYLVESTER**

Oh please!

Just summarize your story! On my knees  
I beg of you, tomorrow will arrive  
Before you reach an intermission! I've  
A summary that should suffice: His heart  
Is then inflamed and so he needs to start  
To visit her obsessively. Each day  
He's there to mop her tears and lives to say,  
"I cannot live without her love." But then  
He is forbidden by her guardian  
To visit her again. Oh how he wailed

And wept and cried beseeching her, yet failed  
To move her from her staunch position. Though  
The girl was penniless she still did show  
The signs of breeding and morality.  
And so her guardian was bound to see  
Her virtues were to only be released  
By marriage vows. Well, that only increased  
His madness and romantic notions! He  
Obsessed and beat his brain incessantly  
Debated, pondered, wrestled with his soul  
Went back and forth, no reason or control  
And then made up his mind while in a daze.  
So he has married her. It's been three days.

**SCAPIN**

I see.

**SYLVESTER**

Compounding things to make them fun,  
His father now returns, his journey done  
A full two months before expected. And  
His uncle will most surely be on hand  
Disclosing he got married, which will be  
A shock to hear and quite a sight to see.  
As he was promised to the daughter of  
Signor Geronte and his clandestine love,  
A second wife who lives in Taranto.

**OCTAVIO**

Whatever can I do? Where can I go?  
My wife is penniless, and so am I.

**SCAPIN**

Well, I will say I barely need to try  
To fix this trifling thing you call a mess.  
What do you fret about? There's no distress!  
Sylvester, you are made of stronger stuff  
Than that. I say you are grown up enough  
To be his father and his mother. You  
Could not give birth to a solution? Do  
You have no wit or creativity?

No notions, plots, solutions? You must be  
As dense as all the rocks within your head.  
Oh, if I did this in my youth instead  
Of now I wouldn't even break a sweat  
And trap those two old fools within a net  
And barely think about it. In my day,  
No taller than a weed I'd get away  
With scrumptiously deceptive larceny.

**SYLVESTER**

I am not you, and I would never be.  
My brain is too inflexible, and I  
Won't trifle with authority.

**OCTAVIO**

I spy

My dearest Hyacintha.

*(HYACINTHA enters)*

**SCENE III—HYACINTHA, OCTAVE, SCAPIN, SILVESTRE**

**HYACINTHA**

Oh my dear!

Can it be true, Octavio? I fear  
That tale Sylvester told my nurse is true.  
Your father has returned and plans for you  
To wed another girl?

**OCTAVIO**

So sad to say,

But it is true my love. I only pray  
This shocking news won't kill me. But I fear  
Upon your lovely face there is a tear.  
You weep, but why? Do you believe that I  
Could ever be unfaithful to you? Try  
To see my boundless love for you.

**HYACINTHA**

I know

You love me, dear Octavio, although  
Can I be sure the love you feel today  
Will last forever?

**OCTAVIO**

But there is no way  
That any man who loved you could move on  
Without you.

**HYACINTHA**

I have heard that men are drawn  
Away more easily than women and  
Their fire burns quite hot but can't withstand  
The blowing winds of time.

**OCTAVIO**

Oh no, my dear!

My lovely Hyacintha, have no fear.  
My heart is true, unlike the average man,  
And only beats for you. Just know I plan  
To be devoted until death.

**HYACINTHA**

I need

To trust that what you say is guaranteed  
And truly trust in you, although I fear  
You are controlled by one who is not here,  
Who holds the strings that pull your purse and heart.  
Your father wants to tear us two apart  
And wed you to another. And I know  
That it would be my death, Octavio.

**OCTAVIO**

My Hyacintha, let no man take me  
From you, no father or another. Be  
Assured I would renounce my homeland and  
My life to stay with you. Please understand  
That though I have not seen the bride they bring  
For me, I find her frightful. Poor sad thing.



I hate to wish her harm, but still I pray  
The sea will swallow her, take her away  
Forever. Stay your tears, my dear. Each one  
Is like a dagger to my heart. Be done  
With all your wails and save me.

**HYACINTHA**

If it will

Delay your death, I'll stop my tears until  
The heavens send an answer.

**OCTAVIO**

You must know

That Heaven hears our hearts.

**HYACINTHA**

Then you will show

Them that your heart is true. For only then  
Will we be blessed.

**OCTAVIO**

And I will prove it when

We are.

**HYACINTHA**

Then I will be content.

**SCAPIN** (*aside*)

I see

That she is easy on the eyes but free  
To use her brain as well. Impressive!

**OCTAVIO**

Here

Is someone who can help us. Have no fear,  
Scapin is on our side!

**SCAPIN**

Yet I have sworn

To never mix with mischief. Yet I'm torn.  
Perhaps if you ask extra nicely?

**OCTAVIO**

Please!

What ever it may take! What niceties  
Entreaties, bargains, what? With all my heart  
I beg of you to help us!

**SCAPIN**

That's a start.

*(to HYACINTHA)*

And what of you? What do you have to say?

**HYACINTHA**

Like him I beg to you. I also pray  
That you will see our plight as yours and do  
Whatever you must do.

**SCAPIN**

I thought it through  
And find I do not know a word called "no."  
So have no fears. Stand back and I will show  
You all my talents.

**OCTAVIO**

Just be sure!

**SCAPIN**

Oh hush!

*(to HYACINTHA)*

Now go relax my dear.

*(HYACINTHA exits)*

#### **SCENE IV—OCTAVE, SCAPIN, SILVESTRE**

Now we must rush  
And see you are prepared to face him. You  
Must stand your ground.

**OCTAVIO**

Yet I will stumble through  
My staunch conviction as my father makes  
Me nervous, and I tremble with great shakes.

**SCAPIN**

Well, find your courage and maturity.  
Or in his eyes you will forever be  
A boy to him who needs to be controlled.  
It is high time you broke free from your mold,  
Completed and mature and hardened. See,  
You have two feet, so stand on them and be  
As bold as you can be.

**OCTAVIO**

Well, I will do  
The best I can.

**SCAPIN**

I say we put you through  
A test. Call it rehearsal. Let us see  
You stand with firm decisiveness and free  
Of fear.

**OCTAVIO** (*strikes a pose*)

Like this?

**SCAPIN**

Well, that's a start.

OCTAVIO (*another pose*)

And now?

**SCAPIN**

Well, that may work. So, let's pretend somehow  
I am your father and I have returned.  
And answer me as if I just now learned  
About your marriage.

(*acts like Argante*)

You abhorrent fool!

You good-for-nothing simple-minded tool!  
You are unworthy of our family name,  
You shiftless spawn that only brings me shame.  
How dare you show your face in front of me  
When you have sneaked about ungratefully  
And wed without my knowledge or consent?  
I simply took a trip. Then off you went  
Forgetting all I sacrificed for you.  
And what is my reward? Returning to  
Your sneering, smug expression! No respect  
For me, so happy knowing you have wrecked  
Your life eternally. Is this your way  
Of thanking me? Is this the way you say,  
“Oh dearest Father, I respect you?” Do  
You have appreciation? Well, you threw  
Out your entire future after I  
Threw out my life for you. Just tell me why  
You hate me in this way. What have I done  
To justify a most-ungrateful son?  
You are so bold and took a marriage vow,  
A vow you know I never would allow;  
A secret marriage that has come to light.  
What do you have to say, you impolite,  
Unfeeling traitor? Answer me! You must  
Of course have reasons for your crimes. I trust  
That you will tell me. Answer me right now!  
I wait to hear your reasons!

*(OCTAVIO is shell-shocked. SCAPIN drops the guise of Argante)*

Is this how  
You plan to handle him?

**OCTAVIO**

I am so scared.  
You sound like him!

**SCAPIN**

You have to be prepared  
To tangle with him, or just play the fool  
And like a simpleton just gaze and drool.

**OCTAVIO**

I will resolve to stand my ground.

**SCAPIN**

You will?

And you are certain?

**SYLVESTER**

First you must be still.

Your father now arrives!

**OCTAVIO**

Oh God, I'm dead!

*(OCTAVIO runs off)*

**SCENE V—SCAPIN, SYLVESTER**

**SCAPIN**

Come back Octavio! Come back instead  
Of running like a weakling! And he's gone.  
Let's wait until his father comes upon  
Us. Here he comes!

**SYLVESTER**

What shall I say?

**SCAPIN**

Let me

Do all the talking. Follow faithfully!

**SCENE VI—ARGANTE, SCAPIN, SYLVESTER**

*(ARGANTE enters at another part of the stage, talking to himself and  
unaware of the servants)*

**ARGANTE**

Who ever heard of such a thing?

**SCAPIN** (*to SYLVESTER*)

He heard,  
And now it seems he only has conferred  
Within himself!

**ARGANTE**

A reckless thing to do!

**SCAPIN** (*to SYLVESTER*)

I say we hear him out!

**ARGANTE**

I ask of you,  
What dare you say about this foolish act,  
This worthless marriage?

**SCAPIN** (*aside*)

Well, in point of fact  
We have a story at the ready.

**ARGANTE**

Dare  
They try deny this insolence?

**SCAPIN** (*aside*)

No, there  
Is no incentive to deny it.

**ARGANTE**

Or  
Might they concoct some sad excuse?

**SCAPIN** (*aside*)

What for?

**ARGANTE**

Or spin a bit of fiction hoping to  
Deceive me?

**SCAPIN** (*aside*)

Oh, would we do that to you?

**ARGANTE**

All that they try will only be in vain!

**SCAPIN** (*aside*)

Oh will it now?

**ARGANTE**

Oh let them dare explain

What cannot be explained.

**SCAPIN** (*aside*)

Oh let us try.

**ARGANTE**

I will not be bamboozled!

**SCAPIN** (*aside*)

Oh, but why

Would we do such a thing?

**ARGANTE**

I'll take my son

And send him far away from everyone.

**SCAPIN** (*aside*)

Oh will you? Well, we'll see.

**ARGANTE**

Sylvester will

Enjoy my wrath as I beat him until

His hide is torn!

**SYLVESTER** (*to SCAPIN*)

Oh, he remembered me.

I am so fortunate.

*(ARGANTE notices SCAPIN and SYLVESTER. He engages Sylvester and speaks through clenched teeth:)*

**ARGANTE**

Who do I see?  
This chaperone of chaperones, the one  
No household would dare do without. My son  
Received the greatest care, I dare to say.

**SCAPIN**

Signor, you have returned, and if I may,  
I'll say I am delighted.

**ARGANTE**

Oh Scapin,  
Good morning to you.

*(back at SYLVESTER)*

You have held each plan  
Of mine in high regard I know, and my  
Dear son has flourished since I said goodbye,  
Obeying every order.

**SCAPIN**

Oh, you seem  
Quite well, Signor.

**ARGANTE** *(to SCAPIN)*

Quite well.

*(to SYLVESTER)*

Now dare I dream  
That you may dare to speak the truth, you knave!

**SCAPIN**

The trip was good?

**ARGANTE**

So good. But I must save  
My words for this foul specimen. If you  
Would kindly leave so I can tear into  
This misery of drudgery.



**SCAPIN**

You'll tear?

**ARGANTE**

I'll tear!

**SCAPIN**

And into what?

**ARGANTE**

No, who!

**SCAPIN**

That's fair.

But who?

**ARGANTE**

Well, him!

**SCAPIN**

Why him?

**ARGANTE**

This shiftless scum!

Do you know what he did?

**SCAPIN**

No, what?

**ARGANTE**

This dumb,

Incompetent... Oh if you only knew  
What he had done and what he did not do!

**SCAPIN**

You mean that little matter?

**ARGANTE**

Little? What

Do you call little? This disaster?

**SCAPIN**

But

I now may see your point.

**ARGANTE**

They dared

To do this most deceitful thing.

**SCAPIN**

Ensnared

Within their web of lies...

**ARGANTE**

They were content

To go ahead and not seek out consent.

**SCAPIN**

Oh yes, I do agree with you but say  
You shouldn't rage and bellow in this way.

**ARGANTE**

Oh so you say? Well, I still say I will  
Go raging, ranting, bellowing until  
I'm good and done. What makes you think that I  
Don't have good reason to be angry?

**SCAPIN**

My

Own first response was anger when I heard  
Myself these stealthy nuptials occurred.  
I was so shocked I tore your son apart  
And scolded in your absence. From the start  
I fired fire full of brimstones at  
Him, said he was a most-ungrateful brat  
And showed such disrespect. I said your feet  
Were both meant to be worshiped with complete  
Devotion, to be kissed! And also he  
Should mind the path your feet have forged and be  
Obedient. I say that even you  
Could not have lectured him or put him through  
The gauntlet any better. But then I

Stepped back and thought a bit and wondered why  
We should be so disgusted; what did he  
Do that was so disgusting?

**ARGANTE**

Can it be  
That you would say that he has done no wrong  
In marrying a stranger?

**SCAPIN**

We are long  
Past intervention. It was destiny.

**ARGANTE**

Oh, what a fine excuse! Oh now I see,  
If anyone should suddenly commit  
A crime, then they must only say, "But it  
Was destiny, not me! So if they kill  
Or cheat or steal, I say that this now will  
Be an excuse, "It was my destiny"

**SCAPIN**

But what I said was not philosophy.  
I meant to say that he was so ensnared  
That he could not escape.

**ARGANTE**

And yet he dared  
To step into a web?

**SCAPIN**

So I surmise  
That you believe that he will be as wise  
As you, although a youth can never know  
The prudence of maturity. Although  
I guess we can pretend experience  
Can come before our years bring out our sense.  
Just see my charge Leander. Even though  
I taught him right from wrong, look at him go  
Destroy his life far worse than your son. I  
Believe that you were young yourself. Don't lie.

I know you were! And in the bloom of youth  
You were a scamp as well. Now tell the truth,  
As I have heard that in your salad days  
You sowed some wild oats in wondrous ways,  
And if a lady dared to come upon  
You, be assured her virtue would be gone.

**ARGANTE**

Oh, there were wild oats, and how I sowed  
But did not make a meal of them and showed  
Restraint!

**SCAPIN**

But how could he resist the call,  
Confronted by a lovely maiden? All  
The attributes within you also are  
Within him, so he swept her oh so far  
Right off her feet as she charmed him as well.  
He goes to see her; how his heart does swell  
As he sighs out with words of passion. She  
Succumbs to all his overtures, and he  
Then makes his move. But what then should occur?  
Her relatives arrive and make a stir,  
Demanding that he marry her by force  
Of sword.

**SYLVESTER (*aside*)**

Oh God, he's good!

**SCAPIN**

And so, of course

I know you would prefer he live not die.  
Well, marriage can be death. But still just try  
To see this was the way.

**ARGANTE**

I was not told

The total situation.

**SCAPIN (*indicates SYLVESTER*)**

Well, behold!

Sylvester can confirm it!

**SYLVESTER** (*panicked*)

Can I?

**ARGANTE**

Was

He forcibly coerced to wed because  
Of threats?

**SYLVESTER** (*deadpan, terrified*)

Oh yes, he was coerced!

**SCAPIN**

Oh my.

Do you believe that I would tell a lie?

**ARGANTE**

Why did he not seek out the law and ask  
Protection from their threats?

**SCAPIN**

No easy task,

And one he would not do.

**ARGANTE**

But why? It would

Have made annulment easier.

**SCAPIN**

But should

He seek annulment?

**ARGANTE**

Yes, of course.

**SCAPIN**

Oh no.

You will not do that.

**ARGANTE**

I won't do that?

**SCAPIN**

Oh

No.

**ARGANTE**

Do I have no rights? A father has  
A right to retribution seeing as  
My son was threatened.

**SCAPIN**

But he never will

Consent to intervention.

**ARGANTE**

Even still?

With help from me he won't?

**SCAPIN**

He won't.

**ARGANTE**

My son?

**SCAPIN**

Your son. Should he admit to everyone  
That he was terrified? And then by force  
Was forced to acquiesce? Oh no, of course  
He can't confess to that. He would feel shame  
And even worse, disgrace his family name.

**ARGANTE**

What care have I? I do not care at all.

**SCAPIN**

You do not care? But if he should stand tall,  
Then he should say he wed of his own will.

**ARGANTE**

And I will say that I will not stand still  
And let him spin a sad romantic tale  
That has less honor than the truth.

**SCAPIN**

You'll fail

To force him.

**ARGANTE**

I will force him.

**SCAPIN**

I don't know.

I'd say you can't.

**ARGANTE**

I say I can! And show

You all that I mean business! I will write  
Another will with pen and ink and spite  
And disinherit him.

**SCAPIN**

Who, you?

**ARGANTE**

Yes, me!

**SCAPIN**

There is no way.

**ARGANTE**

There is a way. You'll see!

**SCAPIN**

I will not see you do it.

**ARGANTE**

But you will.

**SCAPIN**

No.

**ARGANTE**

No?

**SCAPIN**

No, no.

**ARGANTE**

I know you test me! Still  
You say I will not disinherit him  
As if it were a floating, fleeting whim.

**SCAPIN**

I still say no.

**ARGANTE**

Oh is that so? Will you  
Attempt to hinder me?

**SCAPIN**

No, you will do  
It all yourself.

**ARGANTE**

I will?

**SCAPIN**

You will. You see,  
You simply do not have the heart to be  
So cruel.

**ARGANTE**

I say I do.

**SCAPIN**

I say no way.

**ARGANTE**

I say there is a way. I do not jest!



**SCAPIN**

Oh no, you jest.

**ARGANTE**

I don't!

**SCAPIN**

You will be pressed  
By your parental passions and be swayed.

**ARGANTE**

I never will.

**SCAPIN**

You will.

**ARGANTE**

It won't dissuade  
Me. I will disinherit him.

**SCAPIN**

Oh, I  
Would never bet on that.

**ARGANTE**

I don't know why.  
Your money could be doubled...tripled.

**SCAPIN**

Still  
I would bet far more money that you will  
Not do it. As I know you truly are  
A decent, kindly man.

**ARGANTE**

But pushed too far  
I can be nasty as the worst of men.  
And few would call me kindly even when  
My mood is moderate. Enough of you  
And all your blathering. I am now through  
With this annoying conversation.

*(to SYLVESTER)*

Go

And find my worthless son, you worthless low  
Excuse for servitude. I will now seek  
Signor Geronte. I'll bend his ear and speak  
To him of my misfortunes.

**SCAPIN**

Should there be

A way that I can serve you, call on me.

**ARGANTE**

Well, thank you.

*(looks heavenward)*

I must ask. Please tell me why

I have one son and it is him? If I  
Still had my daughter that you took away,  
Then she could be my heir. *(exits)*

## **SCENE VII—SCAPIN, SYLVESTRE**

**SYLVESTER**

Well, I must say

You are a most amazing man. Although  
I think we may succeed. I also know  
That we are being pressed for money from  
Too many people that may soon become  
Insistent.

**SCAPIN**

You can leave it all to me.  
The bait is planted in the trap, but we  
Require just one player for my plan.  
But where could I discover such a man?  
A most convincing liar. Let me see...  
Look over here, Sylvester. Right at me!  
Just tilt your head. No tilt your cap and show

Me your most angry look; that's nice. Now go  
And place your hand upon your hip and bring  
A pretense to your posture like a king.  
Just play it like the saddest tragedy.  
Well, we can work with this. Just follow me,  
And you will find yourself in a disguise!

**SYLVESTER**

I say Scapin this comes as a surprise.  
Although I know that you so rarely fail,  
I only ask I don't wind up in jail!

**SCAPIN**

Our fortunes are entwined like brothers, we  
May find that jail is just a sight to see.  
And it cannot destroy a noble heart.  
Now we have work to do. I say we start!

*(SCAPIN and SYLVESTER make a quick exit)*

**End of Act I**

**ACT II**

**SCENE I—GÉRONTE, ARGANTE**

**GERONTE**

There is no doubt this weather will prevail;  
Our visitors will be here without fail.  
I just spoke to a sailor, and he said  
He saw our ship about to sail and head  
Here from Taranto. So my daughter should  
Arrive here soon. But if she only would  
Arrive here at a far more opportune  
Occasion. Now our plans have all been strewn  
About, and now your son has thrown away  
The plans we made for him as well.

**ARGANTE**

I say

You should not fret about him. Be assured

He will not be a problem. Take my word  
For it as I will go to see him now.

**GERONTE**

My good Signor Argante, how does one plow  
The children that he sows then reaps? I say  
The way to raise a child is to pray!

**ARGANTE**

I say that you are most correct, but why  
Do you say that just now?

**GERONTE**

Well, it is my  
Opinion that when sons are foolish, it  
Is all the father's fault.

**ARGANTE**

It is a bit,  
But why say that to me and say it now?

**GERONTE**

Why did I say what I just said?

**ARGANTE**

Yes.

**GERONTE**

How

To put it best? If you had raised him right  
Like all good fathers do, well then this spite  
He shows to you would not be dared.

**ARGANTE**

How nice.

And I suppose you never need advice  
On how to raise your son?

**GERONTE**

I never do.

And should he dare what your son did to you

I would be devastated.

**ARGANTE**

Can you just

Imagine he dare violate your trust

And do a thing far worse than my son dared?

What might you say?

**GERONTE**

What might I say?

**ARGANTE**

Impaired

To say what you might say?

**GERONTE**

I say that I

Can't say what we are speaking of.

**ARGANTE**

Just try

Imagining Signor Geronte that you

Live in a house of glass. Do you dare to

Throw stones?

**GERONTE**

I cannot understand why we

Now speak of glass and stones?

**ARGANTE**

Then I will be

More clear.

**GERONTE**

Have you heard something of my son?

**ARGANTE**

That might be possible.

**GERONTE**

Well what?

**ARGANTE**

Well, one

Just might believe your serving man Scapin  
Relayed a rumor to me. He began  
To tell the details, but he got so vexed.  
But know what I have learned made me perplexed.  
I say that you should seek him out as I  
Must now see my solicitor and try  
To find a way to find a way to free  
Myself from this disaster. I will see  
You later. *(exits)*

**SCENE II—GERONTE (alone)**

**GERONTE**

What a mystery! What can  
My son have done that is more shameful than  
What his son has? What could be worse? I say  
To wed without consent in such a way  
Is bad, as bad can be.

*(LEANDER enters)*

**SCENE III—GERONTE, LEANDER.**

Well, there you are!

*(LEANDER steps in to embrace his father)*

**LEANDER**

My father, I am pleased to see you!

*(GERONTE steps back, holds him off)*

**GERONTE**

Far

Enough for now! First I will speak to you.

**LEANDER**

But first a fast embrace...

**GERONTE**

When we are through,

Perhaps.

**LEANDER**

But why deprive me of the joy  
Of welcoming you home?

**GERONTE**

Because my boy

There is a matter to be settled.

**LEANDER**

What?

**GERONTE**

Just stand and let me scrutinize you.

**LEANDER**

But

Why?

**GERONTE**

Look me in the eye!

**LEANDER**

I'm looking.

**GERONTE**

Now

You will inform me of your actions, how  
You spent your time when I was absent.

**LEANDER**

Me?

While you were gone?

**GERONTE**

While I was gone.

**LEANDER**

I see.

Well, what did you expect?

**GERONTE**

Expect? I know

What was expected, but you will now show  
Me what you did in actuality.

**LEANDER**

I did not do a thing that you might see  
As disrespectful to your wishes.

**GERONTE**

No?

Just not a thing at all?

**LEANDER**

Yes, that is so.

**GERONTE**

You sound so confident.

**LEANDER**

As I have done  
As you have wished, I cannot think of one  
Infraction on my innocence.

**GERONTE**

Although

Scapin has told me otherwise.

**LEANDER**

Oh no,

Scapin!

**GERONTE**

Oh how his name not brings a red



Infection on your cheeks!

**LEANDER**

What has he said?

And what of me?

**GERONTE**

Enough to know! But I

Will not conduct my business here. So why

Not scuttle off to home? I soon will see

You there. You dared to try deceiving me.

Dishonor and disgrace will see you swept

Right off my will and from my life! (*exits*)

**SCENE IV—LEANDER (alone)**

**LEANDER**

He kept

Assuring that my secret was secure,

So how could he betray me? I am sure

He told my father everything, so I

Must seek revenge upon him! He will die,

And by my hand!

(*OCTAVIO and SCAPIN enter*)

**SCENE V—OCTAVIO, LEANDER, SCAPIN**

**OCTAVIO**

My dear Scapin I say

That I owe everything to you. The way

You intervene is wonderful, you are

A man most heaven-sent I say and far

Beyond all expectations!

**LEANDER**

Oh I see

The scoundrel has arrived!

**SCAPIN**

Well, I should be

Most honored to be at your service as

Your greeting is so kind.

LEANDER (*draws sword*)

Your humor has

Enraged me further. So you soon will learn

A lesson!

**SCAPIN** (*falls to knees*)

Oh, but sir!

**OCTAVIO**

Leander!

**SCAPIN**

Turn

Away Octavio! Don't hold me back!

**SCAPIN**

But sir!

**OCTAVIO**

In heaven's name!

**LEANDER**

I will attack

With all my rancor and my anger!

**OCTAVIO**

Please!

If only for my sake, get hold of these

Most homicidal urges!

**SCAPIN**

I agree!

But tell me what I did?

**LEANDER**

You did to me  
What you have done, you scoundrel!

**OCTAVIO**

Easy now...

**LEANDER**

Oh no, Octavio. Will you allow  
This villain to escape? Let him confess  
His sins to me. I will accept no less.  
Although I know what you have done, did you  
Not know that I am in the know? Now through  
Your chain of tricks they all have led to me,  
And you will now admit it or we see  
Your innards on my sword!

**SCAPIN**

Oh really? You  
Would do that to your sword? Get blood and goo  
All over it?

**LEANDER**

Confess, I say. Confess!

**SCAPIN**

Inform me of my sins, Signor?

**LEANDER**

Just guess!  
Pick one among your many sins. I hear  
Your conscience calling out so loud and clear.

**SCAPIN**

Upon my very life I do not know  
What you refer to.

**LEANDER** (*raises sword*)

Maybe this will show  
Your memory a clue?

**OCTAVIO**

Leander!

**SCAPIN**

I

Now seem to just recall I happened by  
Some wine then drank it with my friends. The wine  
That was a gift to you. I made it mine  
And made it look as if the cask had sprung  
A leak. And that is when I went and flung  
Some water under it so you would think  
The cask had failed. But I just had a drink.

**LEANDER**

So it was you! You stole my Spanish wine  
You scoundrel! Then you watched me go malign  
Another servant, letting me believe  
That it was her. Oh damn, how you deceive.

**SCAPIN**

I truly am so sorry. Oh Signor...

**LEANDER**

I am so glad, but won't forgive you for  
Your current foul transgression.

**SCAPIN**

That was not

What you referred to?

**LEANDER**

No. But you have brought  
Far fouler curses on me, and you will  
Admit them now!

**SCAPIN**

If we may wait until  
I might remember what I did...

**LEANDER** (*moves blade closer*)

I say

That you remember!

**SCAPIN** (*stares at blade*)

That is clear!

**OCTAVIO**

Oh, may

Some cooler heads prevail?

**SCAPIN**

Oh, I confess!

It all is true Signor, I did it! Yes,  
Three weeks ago you sent me out to take  
That Gypsy girl you love a watch. I make  
A full admission; I came home with mud  
Upon my clothes, a face marked up with blood  
And told you how I was attacked and robbed  
By ten barbaric bandits and I sobbed  
How now the watch was lost forever. Though  
That is not how it happened. I am so  
Embarrassed to admit I stole it. I  
Apologize Signor, I told a lie.

**LEANDER**

So it was you who was the thief!

**SCAPIN**

It's true.

I simply thought that while I'm serving you,  
It truly is a help to know the time.

**LEANDER**

How kind of you to tell me of your crime.  
Oh what a faithful loyal servant you  
Now prove to be. But what else did you do?

**SCAPIN**

That wasn't it?

**LEANDER**

That wasn't it, you foul  
And loathsome creature, always on the prowl  
For treasure yet can never seem to find  
The truth.

**SCAPIN**

But I am out of truth!

**LEANDER**

Remind

Me how I am a patient man, as I  
Now feel this blade is getting heavy.

**SCAPIN**

Why

Confess to nothing?

**LEANDER**

Nothing? Is that all?

**OCTAVIO**

Oh stop!

**SCAPIN**

Well, there is something I recall.  
Do you remember back six months ago?  
That ghost that woke you up and made you so  
Disturbed and then he beat you thoroughly?

**LEANDER**

Yes.

**SCAPIN**

I confess Signor that it was me.  
I am so sorry. You were so distraught  
And ran away in terror and then caught  
Your foot and then fell down the cellar door.

**LEANDER**

The ghost was you? You fiend!

**SCAPIN**

I did it for

A harmless prank in hopes that you would be  
Less likely to go out carousing. We  
Spend many night out chasing after you.  
I hoped you then would be less likely to  
Go out at night because of ghosts.

**LEANDER**

You should

Expect we will revisit this. So good  
Of you to let me know. But now I say  
The present matter is more pressing. May  
I kindly now inquire what you said  
About me to my father? Now! Instead  
Of further sad confessions.

**SCAPIN**

Did you say

I spoke some words and to your father?

**LEANDER**

Pray

My patience is not tested further.

**SCAPIN**

But

I have not seen your father yet.

**LEANDER**

You what?

You have not seen him?

**SCAPIN**

Not since he came back.

**LEANDER**

And you are sure?

**SCAPIN**

So sure I'm sure.

**LEANDER**

You lack

In honesty.

**SCAPIN**

Just ask him.

**LEANDER**

But he told

Me you told him himself.

**SCAPIN**

May I be bold

And say he did not speak the truth?

*(enter CARLOS)*

**SCENE VI—LEANDER, OCTAVIO, CARLOS, SCAPIN**

**CARLOS**

Signor,

I bring bad news about your love.

**LEANDER**

Oh for

The love of God, what now?

**CARLOS**

She came to me

And said her tribe would take her and then flee

The city. But you have two hours to

Deliver them their money. If you do

Not send it. They will carry her away

Where you will never see her.

**LEANDER**

Did you say

Two hours?



**CARLOS**

Yes, two hours. (*bows, exits*)

**SCENE VII—LEANDER, OCTAVIO, SCAPIN**

**LEANDER**

Oh my dear

Scapin, I beg! Please help me!

**SCAPIN**

Did I hear

You call me “Dear Scapin?” Necessity  
Has come to call and oh so suddenly  
I am your “Dear Scapin.”

**LEANDER**

Who could have guessed

I suddenly forget what you confessed,  
And also all your crimes I do not know  
Are also all forgiven...

**SCAPIN**

Oh no, no!

I cannot be forgiven. I insist  
You take your sword and stab me. And just twist  
It in my guts. Then I will fall down dead  
And know I have deserved my fate!

**LEANDER**

Instead

Of that, I say that you can rescue me  
By rescuing my love.

**SCAPIN**

That cannot be!

Oh no, you need to kill me.

**LEANDER**

No, I can't

As I adore the wondrous miscreant

I see before me. He must live to turn  
My tragedies to triumphs.

**SCAPIN**

Yet I yearn  
For death, so kill me. Won't you kill me?

**LEANDER**

No!

Release all thoughts of death so you can go  
And do the things you do to save me.

**OCTAVIO**

Please

Scapin, you need to help him!

**SCAPIN**

After these  
Insulting threats, how can I?

**LEANDER**

Oh I plead  
With you, forgive my temper. How I need  
Your mastery of trickery!

**OCTAVIO**

And I  
Am echoing his begging.

**SCAPIN**

Could I try  
Forgiving all his insults? I say no.

**OCTAVIO**

You must forget, forgive it all!

**LEANDER**

Please show  
Consideration for your charge when he  
Is troubled in a great catastrophe.

**SCAPIN**

Just out of nowhere all those threats just flung  
At me. Oh how they hurt and how they stung!

**LEANDER**

And I was in the wrong. Oh now I know!

**SCAPIN**

You called me “villain” “loathsome scoundrel” *(sobs)* Oh!

**LEANDER**

My deepest true apologies!

**SCAPIN**

You said  
You’d stab me with your sword and kill me dead.

**LEANDER**

I beg of you, forgive me! I will kneel  
Upon this dusty floor and then appeal  
To your accommodating nature.

*(kneels on floor, goes into “begging” stance and bellows:)*

Dear

Scapin do not forsake me!

**OCTAVIO**

Do you hear  
That sad, pathetic plea? Can you ignore  
It?

**SCAPIN**

Oh will you just get up off the floor!  
But next time you might think before you make  
A hasty threat!

**LEANDER** *(standing up)*

So you will not forsake  
Me?

**SCAPIN**

Maybe. Maybe not.

**LEANDER**

But now time flies!

**SCAPIN**

Oh hold your horses! So shall I surmise  
You both are needing cash?

**LEANDER**

Five hundred.

**SCAPIN** (*to OCTAVIO*)

You?

**OCTAVIO**

Two hundred.

**SCAPIN**

Well I see I must dig through  
Both of your father's pockets.

(*to OCTAVIO*)

I am set

To snare your father, and I soon will get  
The money you desire with my plan.

(*to LEANDER*)

But as for yours, he's such a stingy man.  
Yet even so, he is so stupid we  
Should find it easy. He is thoroughly  
Distracted by the smallest trick. But do  
Not be offended, as they say that you  
Do not resemble him at all. They say  
In fact that he is not your father.

**LEANDER**

May

I just suggest you quit while you're ahead?

**SCAPIN**

Oh well, who cares about what has been said?

Octavio, I see your father! He

Will soon be here, and so I say that we

Begin by hooking him. You both should leave.

When I'm alone it's easy to deceive.

But send Sylvester here and quickly. He

Must come and play his role convincingly.

*(OCTAVIO and LEANDER exit, ARGANTE enters muttering to himself. SCAPIN says aside:)*

### **SCENE VIII—ARGANTE, SCAPIN**

I see the wheels are spinning in his mind!

**ARGANTE** *(to himself)*

Such foul behavior one could never find!

So inconsiderate! To lose his head

Then rush into a marriage. Youth are led

By hearts, but never by the brain!

**SCAPIN**

Signor,

I am your servant and am waiting for

Your next instruction.

**ARGANTE** *(noticing him)*

Oh, hello Scapin.

**SCAPIN**

You wrestle with your son's behavior?

**ARGANTE**

Can

I not? And oh, it eats away at me.

**SCAPIN**

Signor, how life is challenging. But we  
Must fortify ourselves and be prepared.  
I am reminded how a friend once shared  
The words of a philosopher. He said...

**ARGANTE**

Said what?

**SCAPIN**

He said a father will not dread  
Returning home from any voyage when  
He conjures up calamities. And then  
His nightmares trump reality. Yes, he  
Should fantasize his house was thoroughly  
Destroyed by fire, and his wife has died,  
His son now married to a worthless bride.  
His daughter's virtue in the gutter and  
His fortune squandered. Then he'll understand  
That anything far short of that is good.  
And he shall thank his lucky stars and should  
See how this wise philosophy is sound.  
I know I have, and know that I have found  
Expecting a disaster soothes the soul.  
So I assume my masters have one goal:  
To batter and abuse me, scream and yell  
And take their anger out on me and tell  
Me how my days are numbered as they beat  
Me so severely, kicking with complete  
Abandon, whipping me with so much glee,  
Insulting, scolding, coming after me  
With clubs and knives and threats and blows. But I  
Am so relieved if I am spared and try  
To see the bright side of my fate.

**ARGANTE**

How nice.

And what a lovely thought and sound advice.  
But this confounded marriage is a sin  
Beyond what I can bear, and I am in  
A pickle, as he was betrothed, and I

Must seek solicitor's advice and try  
To undo all the vows he dared to take.

**SCAPIN**

Signor may I suggest you try and make  
Alternative arrangements? As you know,  
A lawsuit is the hardest field to hoe,  
And you may find entanglements.

**ARGANTE**

I hear

You and suspect you are correct, yet fear  
I have no other option.

**SCAPIN**

Oh but I

Might have a new solution! Deep in my  
Sad heart I felt for you, and so my head  
Went spinning all about while filled with dread  
About your sad predicament. I see  
A father suffering so woefully,  
And I am torn to pieces. Seeing you  
The pain is doubled. My regard is true  
And deeply felt.

**ARGANTE**

I do appreciate

Your great devotion.

**SCAPIN**

Then I must relate

To you how I went to the brother of  
The girl he married. He is one to shove  
A sword without a second thought and pick  
A fight for nothing, and is far too quick  
To kill like he is tossing wine into  
His throat. I went to see him to pursue  
Discussion of this marriage, and I said  
That he should see our way. When they were wed,  
The vows were pressured under threat of harm,  
And he should know how easily your arm

Can reach the scales of justice. As you are  
An influential man with friends quite far  
Above and well beyond his. And I warned  
Him how a father's right cannot be scorned.  
I really laid it on, and how he heard  
My arguments and noted every word.  
And so I spoke of money, and he was  
Receptive to the concept. So he does  
Agree to now dissolve this marriage through  
The miracle of cash that comes from you!

**ARGANTE**

What is the price for miracles?

**SCAPIN**

At first

He dared to ask too much.

**ARGANTE**

How much?

**SCAPIN**

The worst

Extravagance and so outrageous!

**ARGANTE**

How

Much?

**SCAPIN**

He just said five hundred might allow  
Him to forget the marriage. But then swore  
Six hundred would for certain.

**ARGANTE**

That much for

The act of just forgetting? Five or six  
Damn hundred? Oh he thinks such clever tricks  
Might fool me, but he really does not know  
Who he is dealing with!



**SCAPIN**

Yes that is so!

And so I simply scoffed at his demand  
Then laughed and tried to make him understand  
That you are not a man so easily  
Manipulated. He will never see  
Exorbitant extortion work on you!  
Well, after some discussion, I got through  
To him, and so he acquiesced. And he  
Said he'll rejoin the army soon and be  
In need of new equipment. So he does  
Have need of ready money, and because  
Of that he will negotiate with you.  
So, first he needs a horse, and that comes to...  
Well...sixty for a decent one.

**ARGANTE**

I see.

Well, sixty does seem reasonable.

**SCAPIN**

He

Will need a harness and two pistols. That  
Will be another twenty.

**ARGANTE** (*figures in head*)

We are at

Um, eighty then...

**SCAPIN**

Exactly.

**ARGANTE**

I believe

This all seems within reason.

**SCAPIN**

He can't leave

Without a steed to serve his servant, so  
He will need thirty for that horse...

**ARGANTE**

Oh no!

Of all the insolent indulgence! I  
Will not provide that!

**SCAPIN**

But Signor!

**ARGANTE**

No! My

Depleted purse will not provide that. He  
Is cheeky to demand it!

**SCAPIN**

Will you see

His servant forced to walk?

**ARGANTE**

I do not care!

So let him walk, or let him run.

**SCAPIN**

You dare

To haggle over pennies? As they will  
Just wind up with solicitors until  
Their pockets burst. I say that you should take  
This reasonable offer.

**ARGANTE**

I will make

Myself dig deep and give it to him.

**SCAPIN**

Though

He also says he needs a pack mule...

**ARGANTE**

No!

To hell with him and his damn mule! I say  
This all is all too much. So I will pay  
Solicitors and let a judge decide.

**SCAPIN**

Signor, I beg of you...

**ARGANTE**

I have my pride.

**SCAPIN**

But only one small mule...

**ARGANTE**

Who cares how small?

Or even just a donkey!

**SCAPIN**

Think of all...

**ARGANTE**

No, let the law decide I say.

**SCAPIN**

Signor!

What ever do you speak of? There is more  
To this than meets the eye! As you must weigh  
The weighted scales of justice, and they say  
Appeals are constantly considered through  
An endless hall of endless courtrooms. You  
Will be humiliated by each writ,  
And like a wild wolf, they tear you bit  
By bit. The clerk and counselors and then  
Attorneys and solicitors and when  
They all have drained you of your blood, here come  
The magistrates and judges! Should a crumb  
Remain of you, it will be torn apart  
As any of these monsters with no heart  
Can easily destroy the saddest case.  
The way these bastards work is a disgrace.  
Just watch a bailiff slip a summons right  
Below your nose. Solicitors just might  
Be bribed by the opposing counsel to  
Desert you when you go to court, or you  
May find he throws your case with arguments

That are ridiculous and then presents  
Your case with random blathering. And they  
May hold you in contempt for nothing, say  
Your documents are suddenly misplaced,  
A court reporter claims he has erased  
All testimony. And if even then  
In spite of everything you find that when  
You slip through all the perils of the court  
And fight through all objections and each tort,  
You find that someone bribed the judge to be  
Against you. It could be an enemy  
Who sent a tart to whisper in his ear.  
Signor, I beg of you and truly fear  
That you won't save yourself from this foul hell.  
Oh what damnation waits for you? I tell  
You that a lawsuit makes me so aghast  
That I would run away from one, and fast!

**ARGANTE**

How much then for the mule?

**SCAPIN**

For all of it:

Two horses and a mule and then a bit  
More for the harness and the pistols and  
A bit he owes at his hotel. A grand  
Sum of two hundred!

**ARGANTE**

Of two hundred?

**SCAPIN**

Yes.

**ARGANTE**

I'll take my chances with the courts!

**SCAPIN**

Assess

The situation...

**ARGANTE**

In the courts!

**SCAPIN**

Signor,

Assess the danger...

**ARGANTE**

In the courts!

**SCAPIN**

But for

A case to go to court, you need to pay  
For writs and summons, resignations. They  
Will charge you for each brief and plead and there  
Are consultations, files everywhere,  
And evidence and documents. Then see  
How any question that you ask will be  
Recorded on a ledger, and they will  
Be happy to then add it to your bill.  
Decrees, and fees and signatures and then  
Each piece of paper will be counted when  
They pile more upon your bill. See how  
They charge for deeds and with other fees and now  
They stick you for a signature and seal,  
And then when you attempt your first appeal,  
You have to pay them all again. Signor,  
Just give the man the money! I implore  
You, do it and be done with it at last!

**ARGANTE**

Two hundred is too much.

**SCAPIN**

But think how fast

This all will all be over! In my head  
Just now I calculated, and instead  
Of paying all the courts far more, well you  
Will save a fortune! What, how much? I do  
Believe two hundred fifty more, much more  
Than just two hundred he is asking for.

And think of all the time and trouble saved,  
And you will save yourself the foul depraved  
Foul odor in the court. If I could free  
Myself from pain of legal counsel, see  
How fast I would pay hundreds more.

**ARGANTE**

But I

Cannot be bothered if the lawyers try  
To make a mockery of me.

**SCAPIN**

And you  
Will do as you see fit. But why go through  
A nasty lawsuit?

**ARGANTE**

I will not allow  
Two hundred to be stolen from me.

**SCAPIN**

Now

Here comes the man we speak of.

*(SYLVESTER enters disguised as a rogue, walks in with anger and fury.)*

## **SCENE IX—ARGANTE, SCAPIN, SYLVESTER**

**SYLVESTER**

Well, Scapin,

Where can I find that oh-so-sorry man,  
The father of Octavio?

**SCAPIN**

But why?

What for, Signor?

**SYLVESTER**

They told me he will try  
To call me to the courts! And he will sue

To see my sister's vows annulled!

**SCAPIN**

Are you

So sure that he intends to? Though I hear  
He won't pay you two hundred, as I fear  
He says that is too much.

**SYLVESTER**

Too much? I'll see

That he is killed and damned eternally!  
Where is he? As I will eviscerate  
Him and without a worry for my fate.  
Yes, they can kill me for it; I don't care!  
He won't escape me; I am everywhere!

*(ARGANTE hides behind SCAPIN)*

**SCAPIN**

Signor, the man you speak of is quite brave.  
He may not be afraid of you.

**SYLVESTER**

The knave

Is not afraid of me? Well, curses on  
Him! And if he were here, I'd set upon  
Him with my sharpened sword and stick it through  
His stupid, beating heart!

*(eyes ARGANTE)*

And who are you?

**SCAPIN** *(holds arms out)*

Oh, he is not the man you seek, Signor!  
No, this is not the one you're searching for!

**SYLVESTER**

But does he dare to call that man his friend?

**SCAPIN**

Oh no Signor, oh no! How you offend  
Him! As he is his greatest enemy!

**SYLVESTER**

You say his greatest enemy?

**SCAPIN**

Yes.

**SYLVESTER**

Be

Assured I am so glad to hear it.

*(to ARGANTE)*

You

Are enemies with one I hate? It's true?  
You hate the foul Argante as I do?

**SCAPIN**

He

Is full of hateful hate. Can you not see  
The way he shakes before you?

*(SYLVESTER grabs ARGANTE'S hand and shakes it violently)*

**SYLVESTER**

Take my hand

My friend, and you will surely understand  
My handshake is my bond, and I now vow  
On all my honor; I swear here and now  
Before the sun sets, I will bring to you  
The bloody body of the bastard who  
They call "Argante." Yes, put your trust in me!

**SCAPIN**

Are violent acts the only remedy?  
You know they are illegal in this land.



**SYLVESTER**

As if I care! You fail to understand  
I have no fear of laws or jails!

**SCAPIN**

But he

Will surely take precautions. There may be  
Some relatives and friends and servants who  
Will come defend his life and challenge you.

**SYLVESTER**

I live for murder and destruction! Death  
Is not my fear; it is a goal. My breath  
Reeks of the stench of blood and guts! Oh where  
Is this foul man I seek? Oh let him dare  
To face me with his relatives and friends,  
And I will send them to untimely ends!  
Let them surround me from all sides and draw  
Their swords and hold them high. I'll yell, "Hurrah!"  
And say, "Pathetic fools you dare engage  
Me? See my sword held high, and feel my rage!"

*(He pulls out his sword and mimes attacking men from all sides.)*

I lunge and parry, strike and block and thrust!  
Again, again, again!

*(sees imaginary enemy)*

Oh, if I must...

*(jumps in for attack again)*

I slaughter you and you and you and you.  
Is that enough? What, no? Then I will chew  
Your guts and spit them out! You like it rough?  
Take that and that and that! Is that enough?  
You rabble, slime and rubbish in a horde!  
Oh look, your blood has stained my polished sword.  
I love to see you die, the lot of you.  
I only have begun, but you are through.

*(Looks directly at SCAPIN and ARGANTE, he is now rabid with madness.)*

Do you stand there awaiting death as well?  
Your comrades all have died, and I can tell  
You wish for death yourself. So do not dare  
To think that you are going anywhere.  
Don't make a move or think of drawing back.  
Just take it like a man as I attack!

*(He lunges at them with gusto. SCAPIN stands firm, as ARGANTE covers.)*

**SCAPIN**

Oh no, Signor! We are not party to  
This thrust and parry carnival!

**SYLVESTER**

Then you  
Have learned don't dare to play a trick on me!

*(SYLVESTER bellows and exits, sword aimed at more invisible challengers.  
SCAPIN examines the room.)*

## **SCENE X—ARGANTE, SCAPIN**

**SCAPIN**

So many dead, a tragic sight to see.  
All over what? Just merely money. Well,  
What's done is done. So I will simply tell  
You: Have a lovely day. *(starts to exit)*

**ARGANTE**

Scapin...I...I...

**SCAPIN** *(turns back)*

Did you say something?

**ARGANTE**

I think we should try  
To give him the two hundred.

**SCAPIN**

For your sake,

I am so glad to hear it.

**ARGANTE**

Let us take

It to him right away. I have it here

In ready cash with me.

**SCAPIN**

Oh, but I fear

That I should take it; you should not, as you  
Should not be seen as someone who would do  
Salacious acts. Besides, if now he sees  
You as you are, then he will know. So please,  
And for your own protection, just stay here.  
And think, if he should see you, then I fear  
That he will only ask for more from you.

**ARGANTE**

You may be right, But still I like to do  
My business by myself. I like to see  
The hand that takes my money.

**SCAPIN** (*feigns hurt*)

Look at me.

Am I not to be trusted?

**ARGANTE**

Oh, of course.

But...

**SCAPIN**

Oh, but what I ask? Do you endorse  
Me as an honest man or as a thief?  
Am I deceitful? Is it your belief  
That I am acting in a way against  
You? Can it be that you became convinced  
My goals are not in line with yours and my  
Own master's? Here it is you seek to try  
Combining your two houses! As I do

Not have your confidence, then I am through  
With all of this, and you can find someone  
That you can trust to see your will is done  
And free you of this foul entanglement!

*(ARGANTE pushes cash at SCAPIN)*

**ARGANTE**

No, here Scapin!

**SCAPIN**

Oh no, do not relent!  
Your money is not safe with me at all.  
No, go just find another you can call  
Your trusted representative.

**ARGANTE** *(shoves it at him)*

Oh, here!

**SCAPIN**

Oh no, I can't! I simply drown in fear  
That as I am unworthy of your trust,  
How can I trust myself? I fear I must  
Be secretly a thief; how can I know  
As I may hide it from myself?

**ARGANTE**

Just go

And take this with you, I demand it! Here!  
Don't dare to make me ask again!

*(SCAPIN takes it)*

I fear

It might be prudent you get a receipt  
To have a guarantee that no deceit  
Will further come from him.

**SCAPIN**

I guarantee

That he won't find a fool when meeting me.

**ARGANTE**

Then I will now return to home and wait.

*(as ARGANTE exits)*

**SCAPIN**

And I will be there very soon!

*(GERONTE begins to enter)*

**SCENE XI—GÉRONTE, SCAPIN**

**SCAPIN *(aside)***

How great

To have one done, and now I need to do  
The other one!

*(notices GERONTE)*

Oh look, and right on cue:  
One bug, and then another in my net!

*(pretends not to notice GERONTE)*

Oh what misfortune! Oh, to be beset  
With sad disaster! Lord above, I pray  
To you for this unhappy father. May  
Signor Geronte please persevere. What can  
We do?

**GERONTE *(aside)***

What does he say? I say the man  
Looks steeped in misery!

**SCAPIN**

Where can he be?  
Can someone go and find this man for me?  
Please find Signor Geronte!

**GERONTE**

Scapin, what is

The matter?

*(SCAPIN rushes about the room as if so distraught he cannot hear him)*

**SCAPIN**

I must tell him now of his  
Impending great disaster when I find  
Him.

**GERONTE**

What disaster?

**SCAPIN** *(still faking)*

I am in a bind,  
As everywhere I look, he is not there.

**GERONTE**

But I am here.

**SCAPIN** *(looks under furniture)*

I seek him everywhere,  
And yet he must be hiding. Where could he  
Now be, I cannot guess.

**GERONTE**

Can you not see  
Or hear, as I am here!

**SCAPIN** *(suddenly "seeing" him)*

Oh, there you are!  
You are impossible to find when far  
Away.

**GERONTE**

But I was standing very near  
To you for half an hour. Now be clear:  
What is this all about?

**SCAPIN** (*hesitating*)  
Signor...

**GERONTE**  
Well, what?

**SCAPIN**  
Your son, Signor...

**GERONTE**  
My son, Signor?

**SCAPIN**  
Is but  
The victim of sad circumstances that  
Are strange indeed.

**GERONTE**  
What are they?

**SCAPIN** (*tearing up*)  
Oh, he sat  
Right here this afternoon just looking sad,  
And he confided earlier you had  
Said something to him and surprisingly  
Associated me with it. And we  
Went walking to the harbor as I tried  
To soothe his shattered soul, and there we spied  
A Turkish ship within the harbor. We  
Were greeted by a sailor, and then he,  
With gentlemanly manners, said we could  
Both come aboard his ship. And there he stood  
Extending out his hand to us. And we  
Both went aboard. And you should know that he  
Was so hospitable, he served fine wine  
And fruit and cake; it all was so divine.

**GERONTE**  
These circumstances are not sad.

**SCAPIN**

But wait

And hear what is to come. As we both ate,  
The ship set sail out to the sea while we  
Were unaware. The sailor then sent me  
Out on a skiff to bring a warning to  
You that five hundred must be paid or you  
Will never see your son again, as they  
Will take him to Algiers!

**GERONTE**

Oh no! No way,

Five hundred?

**SCAPIN**

Yes, five hundred! And they said  
You only have two hours!

**GERONTE**

I am dead

And by his hand, the bastard!

**SCAPIN**

Oh, Signor,

You must respond and quickly. Do it for  
The son you love or he will be enslaved.

**GERONTE**

Why did he step upon the ship?

**SCAPIN**

He craved

Adventure. He had no idea.

**GERONTE**

Run

And tell them now Scapin: Release my son,  
Or I will send the law!



**SCAPIN**

Police, Signor?

Upon the open sea? Unlikely, or  
You seek to tease me?

**GERONTE**

Why did you both go

Aboard?

**SCAPIN**

I simply say we did not know  
What destiny had planned for us.

**GERONTE**

I say,

Scapin, I see a way for you to play  
The faithful servant.

**SCAPIN**

How, Signor?

**GERONTE**

Just go

And tell her to retrieve my son. And show  
Them how you will replace me. You can be  
Collateral and be a guarantee  
Until I find the funds.

**SCAPIN**

Signor, do you

Believe what you are saying? That they do  
Their business in a way that they will take  
A servant as a substitution?

**GERONTE**

Make

Me understand. Why did he want to go  
Within the galley with that scoundrel?

**SCAPIN**

Oh,

How could the lad predict the peril that  
Awaited him within? Signor, we're at  
A standstill and the time is flying. We  
Began with just two hours.

**GERONTE** (*in denial*)

Can it be...

Can it be he said...

**SCAPIN**

...Five hundred...

**GERONTE**

No!

Has he no soul or conscience? Can he show  
No mercy?

**SCAPIN**

Well, he is a sailor...

**GERONTE**

Can

He understand how much this is?

**SCAPIN**

The man

Is well aware how much he asks for.

**GERONTE**

Does

He dream that money grows on trees? Because  
I tell you it does not!

**SCAPIN**

Some people are

Immune to reason.

**GERONTE**

Oh, he stepped too far  
When he stepped on that ship!

**SCAPIN**

Oh, what a waste  
Of words. Forget the ship. We must make haste.  
Each moment that commences separates  
Us farther from your son, and soon the Fates  
Will fling him far forever.

*(calls out, as if to Leander)*

Oh my poor  
Young master, how I weep to know they tore  
You from your father and your home. Just think,  
You're at this very moment on the brink  
Of life so far away and bound in chains.  
But heaven knows I busted all my brains  
In my attempts to rescue you. A shame  
Your father does not love you, but the blame  
Is his and his alone.

**GERONTE**

Just stop, Scapin!  
As I will go and get the money.

**SCAPIN**

Can  
You hurry? As we deal with desperate men,  
And time is fleeting.

**GERONTE**

How much was it then?  
Four hundred, did you say?

**SCAPIN**

Five hundred.

**GERONTE**

Oh!

Five hundred! Why did he decide to go  
Upon the ship?

**SCAPIN**

I know, I know.

**GERONTE**

Could he

Have walked another way?

**SCAPIN**

Well, possibly.

But see Signor, the time...

**GERONTE**

I place a curse

Upon that ship!

**SCAPIN** (*aside*)

I say, what could be worse?

It seems a ship is caught within his throat!

**GERONTE**

See here Scapin, right here within my coat  
I have the gold we need. I just received  
It.

*(pulls a purse from his coat, stares at it longingly)*

Who could know that I could be so grieved  
To see you torn from my my firm grasp?

*(glares at SCAPIN)*

You tell

That sailor he is headed straight to Hell!

**SCAPIN** (*holds out hand*)

I will, Signor.

**GERONTE**

And tell him he is low...

**SCAPIN**

I will.

**GERONTE**

...As low as low can be, and he is so  
Disreputable!

**SCAPIN**

You can bet I will.

**GERONTE**

And he is...

**SCAPIN**

Yes, I will...

**GERONTE**

And I will kill  
Him when I get my hands on him.

**SCAPIN** (*losing patience*)

Oh yes

I will, I will, I will!

**GERONTE**

Do not distress  
Scapin. Now go and quickly get my son.

**SCAPIN**

Signor?

**GERONTE**

Well what Scapin?

**SCAPIN**

It can't be done  
Without the money.

**GERONTE**

What, the money? I  
Just gave it all to you!

**SCAPIN**

Oh, you did try  
But put it back inside your coat.

**GERONTE**

Ah, me!  
My grief has clouded up my mind.

**SCAPIN**

I see.

**GERONTE**

Why did he step upon the ship? Oh why  
You cursed ship and sailor? I will cry  
To Heaven hoping Hell will take you!

*(as GERONTE exits, SCAPIN says aside:)*

**SCAPIN**

He

Has pained to pay five hundred achingly  
And right into my hand. Yet I will play  
My other hand and really make him pay  
For spinning lies about me to his son!

*(OCTAVIO and LEANDER enter)*

## **SCENE XII—OCTAVIO, LEANDER, SCAPIN**

**OCTAVIO**

Hello, Scapin! I pray you say you've won.

**LEANDER**

Please say you have dispatched my misery.

**SCAPIN** *(to OCTAVIO)*

I have two hundred here as you can see.  
I got it from your father.

*(tosses him ARGANTE'S purse)*

**OCTAVIO**

I am so

Relieved!

**SCAPIN** *(to LEANDER)*

But I am sad to say although  
I tried, I failed to help you.

**LEANDER** *(starts to run off)*

I must die!

Without my dearest Zerbinetta I  
Will have no reason to go on!

**SCAPIN**

Oh, stay!

How quickly you accept defeat.

**LEANDER**

What may

Become of me without true love?

**SCAPIN**

Oh please!

*(pulls out GERONTE'S purse)*

As I have captured all necessities  
Right here for you.

**LEANDER**

Oh I am saved!

**SCAPIN** *(pulls purse away)*

But wait!

There is but one condition: You must state

You will allow me my revenge as I  
Deceive your father.

**LEANDER**

As you wish, with my  
Express permission.

**SCAPIN**

So you swear right here?  
In front of witnesses?

**LEANDER**

I do.

**SCAPIN**

Then we're  
In business! Here we go, five hundred!

*(tosses purse to LEANDER)*

**LEANDER**

So

We'll pay the ransom for my love. Let's go!

**End of Act II**

**ACT III**

**SCENE I—ZERBINETTA, HYACINTHA, SCAPIN, SYLVESTER**

**SYLVESTER**

Your lovers have decided that you should  
Both wait together. And we think their good  
Intentions should be honored.

**HYACINTHA**

I must say  
That their intentions just delight me. May  
I now receive this company with great  
Appreciation. Also, may I state  
That friendship shared between our loves should be



Between us two as well? You will not see  
Me give a cause to stop it.

**ZERBINETTA**

And I take  
Your offering, as I will not forsake  
An overture of friendship.

**SYLVESTER**

What if you  
Are offered love?

**ZERBINETTA**

Well, love is something to  
Be more considered as the stakes are high,  
So I am more reluctant.

**SCAPIN**

Yet you try  
To dare reject my master when he'll do  
Things far beyond the bounds of love for you.  
So I should say you have a guarantee,  
And so you should accept him?

**ZERBINETTA**

Yet I see  
Some reasons to be cautious. What he's done  
Is not sufficient to secure me. One  
Who has a happy temperament like me,  
So fond of fun and all frivolity,  
May seem content, and yet it all may hide  
Some true concerns that haunt me deep inside.  
And so he should slow down should he believe  
That buying me is quite sufficient. Leave  
A ransom and find love? I should say no.  
So let him put his purse away and show  
Me how his heart is now held ransom and  
How there are certain rituals he's planned  
To prove he is devoted.

**SCAPIN**

You will see  
That he has planned to take your hand. And he  
Is most sincere and honorable. Or  
I would not be assisting him.

**ZERBINETTA**

No more  
Than your good word is then required. Yet  
I still believe his father now will fret  
About the marriage.

**SCAPIN**

Just leave him to me.

**HYACINTHA** (*to ZERBINETTA*)

Our fates are twisted now, so we should be  
The fastest friends. It seems we both now share  
Some fears, and now it seems we are aware  
We mingle our misfortunes.

**ZERBINETTA**

Even so,  
You are advantaged, as you surely know  
Your parentage, and they are there for you.  
So you can seek consent from them. I do  
Not harbor any hope of that. And I  
Will find his father only asks if my  
Worth can be counted with no dowry.

**HYACINTHA**

True.

And yet consider there is hope, as you  
Need not concern yourself your lover will  
Be tempted by another bride.

**ZERBINETTA**

Yet still  
A lover's changing heart is not the fear  
That we should fear the most. As we can steer  
The heart that we have harnessed. Yet I dread  
The power of a father. As I said,

They only see our value in a purse,  
Not in our souls.

**HYACINTHA**

I know, what could be worse?  
The way to love is quite a rocky road.  
True love should be a sweet romantic ode  
With two combined as perfect as a rhyme.

**SCAPIN**

You could not be more wrong. You'll find with time,  
Familiarity can breed contempt,  
And perfect, peaceful bliss will soon prevent  
Attempts on all romantic acts. We need  
Some ups and downs, or peace will soon impede  
Our inspiration. Then stagnation kills  
Our senses when we want to feel some thrills.

**ZERBINETTA**

But you must tell us now Scapin how you  
Got money out of that old miser through  
Your trickery. I know you know how I  
Will laugh so heartily, and that is my  
Reward for your endeavors.

**SCAPIN**

Oh, just ask  
Sylvester here. He's perfect for the task,  
As I am busy spinning webs to snare  
A nasty bug. Stand back as I prepare  
Another round of sweet revenge.

**SYLVESTER (*distraught*)**

Oh please!  
Why must you leap at dangers such as these?  
They only lead to trouble!

**SCAPIN**

Life is good  
When one is still alive. And so we should  
Take chances seeking danger.

**SYLVESTER**

Oh, could you

Just listen just this once to me and do  
As I advise?

**SCAPIN**

No, I prefer to hear  
Someone who I respect: Myself.

**SYLVESTER**

I fear

For you. Why take the risk?

**SCAPIN**

Why do you care?

You work yourself into a lather.

**SYLVESTER**

Dare

I say I am concerned you will be whipped  
Within an inch of your sad life?

**SCAPIN**

And stripped

Down to the waist and flogged...who cares?  
It is my hide I risk.

**SYLVESTER**

The one who dares

His hide can take responsibility  
For what commences.

**SCAPIN**

You will never see  
Me shirk from any danger. How I hate  
Those with the meekest hearts. See them await  
A danger that may never come and then  
Find that their chance may never come again.

**ZERBINETTA**

Yet we still need you here and still alive.

**SCAPIN**

I understand. But leave me to connive.  
Yes leave me, all of you!

*(as they all exit, SCAPIN says aside:)*

Let no one say

Scapin will ever give himself away.  
And lips that stay so sealed will surely see  
Me have my fun with great impunity.

## **SCENE II—GERONTE, SCAPIN**

**GERONTE**

Hello Scapin. Tell me what you have done.  
Have you arranged a rescue of my son?

**SCAPIN**

Your son is safe, Signor, yet now I fear  
That you are now in danger. Being here  
Is not a good idea. You should be  
In your own house.

**GERONTE**

What, what?

**SCAPIN**

A tragedy!

As you stand here with me, outside they seek  
You out.

**GERONTE**

Who, me?

**SCAPIN**

Yes, you.

**GERONTE**

But who?

**SCAPIN**

I speak

About the brother of the girl that wed  
Octavio. Apparently he said  
That it was you who broke them up, as you  
Intend your daughter for his hand. And through  
Your machinations you have now destroyed  
His sister. Now his friends have been deployed  
With swords held high while crying out your name  
And calling for your blood. Oh what a shame  
That they are so devoted, searching for  
You with a vengeance, hunting by the score,  
Harassing anyone they come upon  
Demanding information, riding on  
Each road and alleyway they block the way  
That leads up to your house. I'm sad to say  
There is nowhere to turn, nowhere to go  
That won't deliver you to them!

**GERONTE**

Oh no!

What can I do, Scapin?

**SCAPIN**

I wish I knew.

Signor, this is unpleasant. How I do  
Now tremble from my toes up to my head!  
Oh wait, I have a thought...

*(SCAPIN goes upstage and pretends to listen)*

**GERONTE**

Well, what?

**SCAPIN** (*dismissive*)

Instead

Of what I thought, I think I need to try  
To think a thought again.

**GERONTE**

Just think of my  
Protection. You must save me!

**SCAPIN**

There is one  
Solution, but I say it can't be done  
Without me risking life and limb.

**GERONTE**

You can!  
Just think how you will prove yourself, Scapin  
As truly being loyal. Don't forsake  
Me!

**SCAPIN**

I will do what I must do and take  
The risk. Oh my devotion has me snared.  
If I should die, they all will know I cared.

**GERONTE**

But I will see you are rewarded! You  
Should be assured that when I am well through  
With this fine coat I wear, it will be yours.

**SCAPIN**

Oh wait, just wait as inspiration pours  
Right out of me and tells me what to do.

*(SCAPIN runs and grabs a giant sack)*

Yes, now I know a way to rescue you!  
Just step into this sack.

*(GERONTE thinks he sees someone)*

**GERONTE**

Wait, who is there?

**SCAPIN**

No one is there, so step in here. Take care  
To be so very still. I'll carry you

Right out of here and past the retinue  
Of angry men and see you safely set  
For home. Be like a bundle; never let  
Them see you move. When you are safe inside,  
We'll barricade the door, and you can hide  
As I send word for help.

**GERONTE** (*getting into sack*)

I say that you

Are most inspired.

**SCAPIN**

Oh, how true, how true!

Now get inside where you are safe.

(*GERONTE gets inside, SCAPIN says aside*)

I say

Revenge is best served hot. Now you will pay!

**GERONTE** (*inside bag*)

Wait, what was that?

**SCAPIN**

I simply said, Signor,

That we will trick your enemies. What's more,  
I hope to see them neutralized. Now get  
Yourself into the very bottom. Let  
Yourself be still as if a stone, and do  
Not make a move or risk they will see through  
Our little ruse, no matter what may come!

**GERONTE** (*pops out of bag*)

I will not move a muscle!

**SCAPIN** (*shoves him back in*)

Oh! The scum

That searches for you now arrives, and he  
Is out for blood!



*During the following, SCAPIN goes back and forth between his own voice and a fake voice.*

*(fake voice)*

Now, who will humor me  
And lead me to Geronte? Oh how I lust  
For blood, and his will do!

*(his own voice, whispering to the sack)*

Signor, please trust  
Me. Oh you must stay still!

*(fake voice)*

Though he may be  
Within the center of the Earth, I'll see  
Him dead!

*(his own voice, whispers to bag)*

Oh please stay safe in there!

*(fake voice)*

Hey, you!  
The man who has a sack!

*(his own voice)*

What may I do  
For you, Signor?

*(fake voice)*

If gold is what you want,  
Then tell me where to find Signor Geronte!

*(his own voice)*

You seek Signor Geronte?

*(fake voice)*

I do!

*(his own voice)*

And why,

May I inquire?

*(fake voice)*

Why?

*(his own voice)*

Yes, why?

*(fake voice)*

Well, I

Intend to beat him with a stick until  
He dies!

*(his own voice)*

Oh no, Signor! You cannot kill  
A Gentleman like him!

*(fake voice)*

Why not? That low

And rotten scoundrel!

*(his own voice)*

No Signor, oh no!

You must not say such things of him. I see  
Such disrespect. Now stop it!

*(fake voice)*

You dare be  
So cheeky with me?

*(his own voice)*

Well, I must insist,  
As you are so revolting and persist  
In slighting him!

*(fake voice)*

Are you a friend of his?  
This man they call Geronte?

*(his own voice)*

Well yes, that is  
Correct.

*(fake voice)*

Well, isn't that so marvelous.  
Give this to him from me!

*(SCAPIN uses his own voice and makes it sound as if he is getting hit as he hits  
GERONTE in the bag with a stick.)*

Can we discuss  
Your method and your message? Please Signor!  
Oh ow! That hurts! Oh how I must implore  
You, have compassion! Have some mercy!

*(fake voice)*

There!  
Now take the message to him with great care.  
Oh wait, there's more!

*(SCAPIN beats GERONTE in the bag a few more times. He uses his own voice:)*

Oh no, oh ow!

*(fake voice)*

Goodbye!

*(his own voice)*

At last he's gone, the vile bastard!

*(GERONTE crawls out of bag in a stupor)*

**GERONTE**

I

Cannot endure another blow...

**SCAPIN**

Signor!

But I was beaten worse, and I am sore  
Across my shoulders—They took every blow!

**GERONTE**

How can it be I felt them all?

**SCAPIN**

How so?

My back is black and blue.

**GERONTE**

And yet I felt

Each blow across my back, and they were dealt  
With vigorous ambition! And I now  
Still feel the sting!

**SCAPIN**

I can imagine how

With each blow unto me as he drew back  
It landed on you hard within the sack.  
You felt it too?

**GERONTE**

If you had stepped away  
A little bit and to the left...

**SCAPIN**

I say!  
Here comes another ruffian! Get in!

*(roughly shoves GERONTE back into sack)*

And this one looks so shifty!

*During the following, SCAPIN goes back and forth between his own voice and a fake voice.*

*(fake voice)*

Such a sin

To run all over town to fester out  
The pitiful Geronte! To run about  
From here to there and everywhere. What for?  
As he is lost, not found!

*(real voice, to GERONTE in sack)*

Stay hidden, or

You may regret it!

*(fake voice)*

Well, hello there. Do  
You know where I may find Geronte? All through  
This city I have searched in vain.

*(real voice)*

Oh no

Signor, I do not know.

*(fake voice)*

Oh, is that so?  
Now you can tell the truth to me as I  
Just have a need to talk to him. Why lie?  
I simply have a stick and have a sword  
That need to meet his body. I am bored  
And want to see if my new sword can cut  
Right into him.

*(real voice, as GERONTE moves in the sack)*

Signor, believe me. What  
I told you was the truth: He is not here!

*(fake voice)*

Did I just see that sack just shake?

*(real voice)*

Oh dear.

You must excuse me now, Signor!

*(fake voice, as GERONTE shakes even more)*

Just now!

I saw the sack just shake again!

*(real voice)*

Oh how

Could that be possible?

*(fake voice)*

Then let me try  
To stick my sword right through!

*(real voice)*

Well tell me why  
That you would think that you could come in here

And stab a sack?

*(fake voice, angry and threatening)*

I say I can.

*(real voice)*

You can. But it is shameful.

Why yes, it does appear

*(fake voice)*

Shameful?

*(real voice)*

Yes!

Revealing it to you would bring me stress,  
And it is so revolting you would die.  
I am protecting you. I do not lie.

*(fake voice)*

I say my sword and I both disagree.  
Whatever you are hiding, I will see.

*(real voice)*

Oh no, you can't!

*(fake voice)*

Oh yes, I will!

*(real voice)*

Signor,

It only is my laundry.

*(fake voice)*

Nothing more  
Than that? Then I shall see!

*(real voice)*

I still say no!

*(fake voice)*

Oh, you say no?

*(real voice)*

I do!

*(fake voice)*

Oh is that so?  
Then you can feel my stick upon your back  
To teach you all the manners that you lack!

*(real voice)*

Oh, go ahead and beat me. I don't care!

*(SCAPIN starts to beat him again with a stick. Switches to fake voice:)*

Oh you will care when I am through! I'll tear  
The skin right off of you!

*(real voice, as if he is being beaten:)*

Oh, ow Signor!  
That hurts, oh how it hurts! Oh please, no more!

*(fake voice, as he continues beating)*

Now I will say goodbye and hope that you  
Have learned a lesson. Have I gotten through  
Your shield of insolence?



*(real voice, stops acting as if being beaten)*

The cursed man  
Is gone at last. I am relieved!

*(GERONTE slowly crawls out of sack even more stupefied)*

**GERONTE**

How can  
I crawl out of the sack when every bone  
I have is broken now?

**SCAPIN**

Oh, let alone  
The fact that I am dying!

**GERONTE**

But again,  
Tell me how I got injured?

**SCAPIN** *(jumps)*

Go back in  
The sack, Signor! As half a dozen men  
Are now approaching!

*(violently shoves GERONTE back into sack)*

**During the following, SCAPIN creates many fake voices.**

*(a voice)*

You must tell me when  
You find him!

*(another voice)*

Seek him out! Search everywhere!

*(another voice)*

And leave no stone unturned. He might be there!

*(another voice)*

Search up and down. Tear through the town,  
Each street and corner, here and there and down  
The streets and up the avenues!

*(another voice)*

This way!

*(another voice)*

Oh no, that way!

*(another voice)*

Go left!

*(another voice)*

Go right!

*(another voice)*

I say

That you are wrong!

*(another voice)*

No, I am right!

*(SCAPIN whispers to GERONTE in his own voice)*

Stay still,

And hide yourself!

*(back to a fake voice)*

Oh look, his servant! Will  
You tell us, you damn rascal. Tell us please  
Where we can find your master? We can squeeze

It out of you if you prefer.

*(real voice)*

Oh no

I cannot do that. Please, please spare me!

*(GERONTE dares to peek out of the sack and sees SCAPIN'S ruse during the following, as Scapin uses another voice:)*

Oh,

Now will you look at that? A touching scene!  
But tell us now, or we will strike between  
Your shoulder blades, and you will feel each blow!

*(real voice)*

Well, I will suffer that and more! Just know  
My loyalty knows of no bounds and I  
Will not betray my master. I will die!

*(another voice)*

Well as you wish. Prepare to die!

*(real voice)*

I will,

And die a loyal servant!

*(another voice)*

We will kill

You here and now!

*(real voice)*

Yet die with honor! I  
Will not betray my master.

*(another voice)*

You will die!!!

*(SCAPIN turns to beat GERONTE again and sees that his ruse is being observed. Geronte lunges out of the bag as SCAPIN runs off.)*

**GERONTE**

Deceitful, lying scum of infamy!  
How dare you do this vile thing to me?

*(ZERBINETTA enters laughing. She is unaware of GERONTE, who is unaware of her)*

**SCENE III—ZERBINETTA GERONTE**

**ZERBINETTA**

Oh my, I really need to catch my breath!

**GERONTE** *(calling after SCAPIN)*

And I will see you punished with your death!

**ZERBINETTA**

Oh what a most amusing story. Who  
Could think a man could be so stupid to  
Be so bamboozled? Oh that sad, old...

**GERONTE** *(notices her)*

I

Believe that you should hold your laughter. Try  
To see that what amuses you could be  
Considered sad by others.

**ZERBINETTA**

Pardon me

Signor, what do you mean?

**GERONTE**

I mean to say

You should not laugh at me.

**ZERBINETTA**

At you?

**GERONTE**

Yes.

**ZERBINETTA**

May

I ask who dares to laugh at you?

**GERONTE**

You do!

You laugh directly in my face.

**ZERBINETTA**

Yet you

Are not involved at all. I simply heard  
A funny story, something so absurd  
That I can only laugh. Though it may be  
Because I am involved, it touches me  
Most deeply. Still, I cannot hope to know  
Another story half as good and so  
Amusing. As you see, a mean old man  
Was just now swindled by a clever plan,  
And it was perpetrated by his son  
To get some money out of him.

**GERONTE** (*suspicious*)

How fun.

You say a son deceived his father to  
Procure some money?

**ZERBINETTA**

Yes! I say, if you

Desire all the details I will share  
Them. Oh, what twists and turns in this affair!  
I cannot keep it to myself or I  
May burst. I love to share in laughter. Why  
Not share this laugh with you?

**GERONTE**

Oh please, please do...

**ZERBINETTA**

Well, I will do so gladly. Telling you  
Is not a risk, as soon the world will know;  
No secret can be truly safe. And so  
It happened just like this: I was among  
A band of Gypsies. As our tribe was flung  
From here to there and there to here we made  
Our way by telling fortunes. When we laid  
Our stakes here in this city, where I met  
A wonderful young man, and once he set  
His eyes upon me that was that, and he  
Pronounced his love. And then so charmingly  
From here to there and there to here he went  
Wherever I might step and was content  
Believing that he merely needed to  
But say one word and then with no ado  
I would just faint away and simply land  
Within his arms and let him take my hand.  
But it is not so simple. First he had  
To bargain with my tribe. And they were glad  
To let him have my hand, but for a fee.  
But how unfortunate for him to be  
A son of one so wealthy, yet he has  
No money of his own. So tragic, as  
His father is a selfish skinflint. He...  
Oh, I forgot his name. What can it be?  
Can you help me remember? Can you name  
A man notorious who has no shame  
In being awful and so miserly?

**GERONTE**

I cannot say...

**ZERBINETTA**

Oh what could his name be?  
It sounds like "Ron" or "Ronte?" That rings a bell.  
"Oronte?" oh no, "Geronte!" That suits him well.  
A perfect name for one who is so mean

And selfish! Now, where was I? Well, between  
His awful father and my tribe, we found  
We were in trouble, as my tribe is bound  
To leave this city any minute. So  
My lover was to lose me. They will go  
And take me with them if he cannot pay.  
And all was lost until he turned today  
To his most-clever servant. Oh Scapin  
Could wrestle money from that nasty man!  
His father did not know what hit him. Oh  
Scapin, he is our hero!

**GERONTE** (*seething*)

Is that so?

(*aside*)

The vile wretch!

(*ZERBINETTA giggles at points during the following:*)

**ZERBINETTA**

But you should hear his plan!

Oh, how he duped the idiotic man!  
I cannot help but laugh so heartily.  
He told the stupid fool convincingly  
That he was in the harbor with his son,  
And there they found a ship, and then someone  
Invited them aboard so graciously  
And gave them wine and cheese, then stealthily  
Set sail and sent the ship to sea. And so  
Scapin told him he was sent back to go  
And get a handsome ransom or he would  
Not see his son again. Oh, this is good!  
The miser, how he struggled, stuck between  
His son and love of money. How obscene  
That he could even struggle with it! Each  
Gold piece held up to him just like a leech.  
Oh how he struggled, and in vain, he tried  
To think of some alternatives. He cried  
That he would send police out on the sea

To walk on water to the ship. And he  
Then asked Scapin to go negotiate  
By trading places with his son. And wait-  
As this gets even better! As you see,  
Geronte had not a single thought to free  
Scapin. You see how foul he is? At last,  
Defeated, he surrendered. He was past  
The point of fighting facts, but then he cried  
Repeatedly, "Why did he go inside  
The ship...why did he go inside? I will  
Go hunting for that sailor and then kill  
Him!" Then with hesitations, moans and cries,  
Gave up his money, cursing to the skies!  
Signor, you are not laughing. Can it be  
You do not find it funny?

**GERONTE**

Well, you see...

I see the young man as a scoundrel who  
Has disrespected his own father to  
Enact a vile scheme! I guarantee  
The father might just take him to his knee  
And far much worse than that for his foul deed.  
As for the girl, I say it's guaranteed  
The little hussy soon will get her due  
For helping to concoct this nasty stew,  
Insulting men of honor and their heirs  
With loathsome tricks and vile dirty snares.  
As for the servant, he will surely see  
How scoundrels are dispatched so thoroughly.  
Oh he is happy, and he had his fun,  
But I will see before the setting sun  
Tomorrow he is hanged!

*(GERONTE exits as ZERBINETTA starts to dash off in a panic.  
SYLVESTER enters, blocking her way.)*



#### SCENE IV—ZERBINETTA, SYLVESTER

**SYLVESTER**

Where are you running off to? Can it be  
That you don't know? The man you spoke to, he  
Is your own lover's father!

**ZERBINETTA**

I began  
Suspecting it. But first, I told the man  
His story without knowing who he was.

**SYLVESTER**

What do you mean, his story?

**ZERBINETTA**

Well, because  
I was so full of laughter, I just had  
To share it with another. I am glad  
He knows, as now the truth is out. Who cares,  
What's done is done. Can all the sad affairs  
Get any worse for wear?

**SYLVESTER**

It must have been  
Compelling to go blab it all. A sin  
Indeed to be so indiscreet about  
One's own affairs.

**ZERBINETTA**

Yet it would all come out  
Eventually.

*(from offstage, we hear ARGANTE)*

#### SCENE V—ARGANTE, ZERBINETTA, SYLVESTER

**ARGANTE** *(yelling)*

You, Sylvester!

**SYLVESTER**

Go

And hide in there. My master beckons.

*(ZERBINETTA exits as ARGANTE enters)*

**SCENE VI—ARGANTE, SYLVESTER**

**ARGANTE**

So!

You all conspired! Did you not go make  
A pact with my son and Scapin to take  
My hard-earned money? And believed that I  
Would be delighted by it? Just stand by  
And let you get away with it?

**SYLVESTER**

I pray

Signor that you don't truly mean to say  
That if Scapin deceived you I would dare  
To be a party to it. Oh, I swear  
I did not know, not know at all.

**ARGANTE**

Oh yes?

Well we shall see, you worthless wretch! Just guess  
What happens if you dare believe that I  
Can be bamboozled. Go ahead and try!

*(GERONTE enters)*

**SCENE VII—GERONTE, ARGANTE, SYLVESTER**

**GERONTE**

Signor Argante, you find me in the throes  
Of deepest trouble.

**ARGANTE**

Oh, and heaven knows

I drown in deepest depths of dark despair.

**GERONTE**

That hooligan Scapin has dared to dare  
To take five hundred from me!

**ARGANTE**

Did he now?

That same Scapin; well let me tell you how  
He took two hundred from me!

**GERONTE**

Oh I see.

He was not satisfied from fleecing me,  
And so he went much further. And...oh no!  
I am ashamed to say it. I will show  
That rascal what is what!

**ARGANTE**

How he will learn

His tricks will quickly turn around and turn  
On him!

**GERONTE**

Oh he can make a mockery  
Of me, but he will be surprised and see  
What consequences are!

**SYLVESTER** (*aside*)

Oh how I pray

That I escape suspicion!

**GERONTE**

Oh I say,

Signor Argante, there is more tragedy  
And more misfortune, more than you now see.  
It seems that sadness rides in tandem. I  
Was oh so thrilled and planned on seeing my  
Dear daughter here today. She is the light  
That guides my life, and I just heard tonight  
That she left Taranto so long ago.

And there is word her ship was wrecked, and so  
It seems that she is lost forever.

**ARGANTE**

You

Had left her back in Taranto? I do  
Not understand. Why wouldn't she be here  
Enjoying life with you?

**GERONTE**

It might appear

To be regretful, but necessity  
Required that she stay there. As you see,  
I had a secret second marriage, and  
I had to keep her there, you understand.  
But who is this I see?

*(NERINE enters)*

**SCENE VIII—ARGANTE, GERONTE, NERINE, SYLVESTER**

Nerine? What are  
You doing here, you worthless nurse?

**NERINE**

So far

We've come, Signor Pandolphe...

**GERONTE**

Don't use that name!

I am Signor Geronte. As when I came  
Here, that name was retired. When I was  
In Taranto, it was of use because  
Of reasons that I will not mention...

**NERINE**

Oh!

What troubles that has caused me! Do you know  
How hard it was to find you?

**GERONTE**

Tell me where

My daughter is. I left her in your care!  
And tell me where he mother is.

**NERINE**

Oh see,

Your daughter is not far from here. But be  
Prepared for me to beg forgiveness. I  
Was forced to let her wed a man. Please try  
To understand we were most destitute.  
And I had lost all hope in my pursuit  
Of you.

**GERONTE**

My daughter married?

**NERINE**

Yes!

**GERONTE**

To whom?

**NERINE**

Signor, the kindest man became her groom.  
A young man named Octavio. And he  
Is sired from the finest family.  
He is the son of one Signor Argante.

**GERONTE**

Dear heavens!

**ARGANTE**

What a twist of fate, Geronte!

**GERONTE**

Well, take us to her quickly!

**NERINE**

She is here

Within this house!

**GERONTE**

How can she be so near?  
Now lead the way and we shall follow you.  
Well, come along Signor Geronte!

*(ARGANTE, GERONTE and NERINE exit as SCAPIN slinks in)*

**SYLVESTER**

I do  
Believe we've had a miracle!

**SCENE IX—SCAPIN, SYLVESTER**

**SCAPIN**

Hello!  
Well, how are things progressing?

**SYLVESTER**

You should know  
Just two small things. Well, first: You must not fret  
About Octavio. He is all set  
For future happiness. And secondly:  
It seems that Hyacintha seems to be  
The daughter of Signor Geronte! By chance,  
It seems that both their fathers' forced romance  
Has come to pass all by itself. And oh!  
Just one more thing: It seems that they are so  
Disgusted with you that they seek to kill  
You with enthusiasm. And it will  
Most likely come upon you from the hand  
Attached to old Geronte. You understand  
That he is quite inspired.

**SCAPIN**

Oh who cares!  
As he is like an angry dog who bares  
His teeth but never bites. Just like the air  
Or clouds, they all blow over.

**SYLVESTER**

Well take care.

The sons may reconcile all their sins  
And hang you out to dry!

**SCAPIN**

And yet who wins  
This game most every time? Just watch as I  
Go soothe and smooth this over...

**SYLVESTER**

You can try,  
But do it later. Here they come!

*(SCAPIN exits. Enter GERONTE, ARGANTE, HYACINTHA,  
ZERBINETTA and NERINE)*

**SCENE X—GERONTE, ARGANTE, HYACINTHA, ZERBINETTE, NERINE,  
SYLVESTER**

**GERONTE**

Come now,  
My daughter; welcome to my home! But how  
I do regret your mother is not here.

**ARGANTE**

And now we see Octavio appear  
And at the perfect time.

*(enter OCTAVIO)*

**SCENE XI—ARGANTE, GERONTE, OCTAVIO, HYACINTHA, ZERBINETTA,  
NERINE, SYLVESTER**

**ARGANTE**

Come here, my son,  
And join me, and rejoice with everyone.  
We celebrate your marriage that was made  
In Heaven.

**OCTAVIO**

Your proposals must be stayed,  
My Father. As I openly refuse,  
As I already wed, or do you choose  
To not accept that fact?

**ARGANTE**

I do. But you  
Are unaware...

**OCTAVIO**

The time to talk is through.

**ARGANTE**

But see, the daughter of Geronte...

**OCTAVIO**

Who cares?

His daughter is quite foolish if she dares  
Compare herself.

**ARGANTE**

But she...

**OCTAVIO**

No Father, I  
Believe that you should hold your breath. Why try  
Convincing one so resolute?

**SYLVESTER**

Sir, please...

**OCTAVIO**

Oh hush, Sylvester! I am sick of these  
Pathetic pleas, and I won't listen!

**ARGANTE**

Son,

Your wife...



**OCTAVIO**

No father, let my life be done  
Should I forsake my sweet Hyacintha.

*(he crosses to HYACINTHA)*

All your commandments are in vain. As the  
Possessor of my heart is here, and she  
Will be my one and only wife.

**ARGANTE**

I see.

Yet she is who I want for you. I say  
You are impossible. Just see the way  
You rant and rave so loud you cannot hear  
The words you wait for!

**HYACINTHA**

Yes, it does appear

Our troubles are now over. I have found  
My father once again.

**GERONTE**

We should be bound

For home so we can rest ourselves and be  
Refreshed while catching up.

**HYACINTHA**

But father, see

This sweet and charming girl. I cannot bear  
To part with her, as she is very fair  
In looks and in her heart. And may I say  
That you are sure to love her too.

**GERONTE**

No way

Would I be welcoming to her, as she  
Both dares to steal my son and throw at me  
The foulest, most revolting insults!

**ZERBINETTA**

Pray

Signor, forgive me for the shameful way  
I spoke of you. Because I did not know  
That it was you, so I could only go  
By all the slander people speak of you.

**GERONTE**

What slander are they speaking?

**HYACINTHA**

Father, do

Believe me when I say that she is pure  
Of heart and virtuous, and I am sure  
The love my brother has for her is true.

**GERONTE**

Well, that is well and good. But can you do  
This: Tell me how you think I might permit  
A guttersnipe to be considered fit  
To wed my son?

*(enter LEANDER)*

**SCENE XII—ARGANTE, GERONTE, LEANDER, OCTAVIO, HYACINTHA,  
ZERBINETTA, SYLVESTER, NERINE**

**LEANDER**

But Father, you can't say  
The one I love is most unworthy. May  
I now inform you how I just found out  
That she is not an orphan? Have no doubt,  
As I was just informed from those I got  
Her from; yes they confirmed that she is not  
A foundling. She was kidnapped by them. She  
Was taken from an honest family  
Right here within this city. And they tore  
Her from the family house when she was four.  
She had a bracelet that they gave me. Here  
It is so we can trace her family.

**ARGANTE**

Dear

God! This bracelet tells me she is my  
Own daughter, lost when she was four. Oh I  
Just know it!

**GERONTE**

She's your daughter?

**ARGANTE**

I am sure!

Look at her features, beautiful and pure.  
Oh it is her, I know it! Oh my dear,  
Dear girl!

**GERONTE**

Just see what wonders may appear!

*(CARLOS enters)*

**SCENE XIII—ARGANTE, GERONTE, LEANDRE, OCTAVIO, HYACINTHA,  
ZERBINETTA, SYLVESTER, NERINE, CARLOS**

**CARLOS**

Oh gentlemen, I fear a tragedy  
Has just commenced within.

**GERONTE**

What could it be?

**CARLOS**

Oh poor Scapin!

**GERONTE**

That bastard? He will die,  
And by my hand!

**CARLOS**

Signor, you need not try.  
As I am sad to say he was outside

And walked along a building when he spied  
A workman's hammer falling down. It hit  
Him on the head and broke his skull and split  
His head apart. And now he slowly dies,  
Yet only called to see you through his cries:  
His final wish.

*(SCAPIN is brought on with his head wrapped in a very melodramatic fashion)*

**SCENE XIV—ARGANTE, GERONTE, LEANDRE, OCTAVIO, HYACINTHA,  
ZERBINETTA, SYLVESTER, NERINE, CARLOS**

**SCAPIN**

Oh my Signors! You see  
My sorry state. Forgive me! I must be  
A sight indeed. Although I soon will die,  
I cannot rest my soul until I try  
To beg forgiveness for the dastardly  
Behavior that I perpetrated. Be  
Forgiving, how I beg you good Signors.  
Oh gentlemen, my sorry heart just pours  
Regret for all my actions.

**ARGANTE**

Let me say,  
You are forgiven. Go in peace.

**SCAPIN**

And may  
I beg of you Signor Geronte to be  
Forgiving though I hurt you thoroughly  
With sticks and sheer deception.

**GERONTE**

Let it go  
As all is now forgiven.

**SCAPIN**

Still, I know  
The wounds I gave you run so deep, each bruise...

**GERONTE**

I said forget it!

**SCAPIN**

...All those blacks and blues  
Upon your aged skin...

**GERONTE**

Oh say no more!  
I say that I forgive you!

**SCAPIN**

How I tore  
The skin right off of you, yet here you are,  
So full of true forgiveness flowing far  
Beyond the scope of any human heart...

**GERONTE**

Don't mention it again, I mean it! Start  
Believing I forgive you, please!

**SCAPIN**

Oh my,  
I must believe it, and I now can die  
In peace.

**GERONTE**

Although...

**SCAPIN**

Oh no!

**GERONTE**

If you should live,  
Then you must know that I will not forgive  
You.

**SCAPIN**

Oh Signor!

**GERONTE**

That is the bargain. You  
Must die.

**SCAPIN** (*bellowing*)

The sharpest pain is running through  
My brain down to my toenails!

**ARGANTE**

Oh, I say  
That we forgive him. Let him pass away  
With no obstructions.

**GERONTE**

Oh I think...I think...

*(ALL bend their ear in to hear his decision)*

He is forgiven.

**ARGANTE**

Let raise a drink  
And dine together, celebrating all  
The happiness we have.

**SCAPIN**

I will sit tall  
Right at the table's head, and I shall be  
The guest of honor, supping happily  
And dine with wine and celebrate you all  
And wait for death to dare to come to call.

**THE END**

**Her Open Eyes**  
**By Raquel Diana**  
**Translated by Sophie Stevens**

“Once I thought I was in love | and I was dying. | Another time I thought I was dying | and I was just in love.” Raquel Diana quoted these words (in the original Spanish) from *Los ojos abiertos de ella* [*Her Open Eyes*] (2000) in our meeting in Montevideo in 2013. Diana’s work often explores the intersections between love and death in creative and unexpected ways, and this is one of the things that I find fascinating about her plays. Diana has an ability to write about people, particularly women, facing huge challenges or decisions. She places them in extremely difficult situations, often where their life is at risk, but she achieves this without ever erasing a sense of their humanity. The themes of love and death connect us as people and they enable us as an audience to recognize aspects of ourselves in the characters on stage. Diana is a brilliant storyteller; she creates dynamic dramatic narratives and some of her plays have involved creating stage versions of the work of other Uruguayan authors. She also portrays characters who share their stories with us and invite us in.

When we had this conversation, I was working on another play by Diana, *Bailando sola cada noche* [*Dancing Alone Every Night*] which I have translated into English, and I have written about the translation process in *The Mercurian*. *Los ojos abiertos de ella* shares key themes with *Bailando sola cada noche*: both plays portray a woman in an in-between space. In the former, the protagonist, Her, is in hospital, balancing between life and death. Through a series of encounters with the male character, Him, she must decide whether to return to her life. In the latter, the protagonist, Joyce, experiences a kind of afterlife as she waits for her corpse to be discovered. Despite the links between the two plays, which made the dramatic space created by Diana seem familiar, translating *Los ojos abiertos de ella* seemed like a daunting prospect (and one that I wasn’t sure I wanted to undertake). This was particularly because the play is set out on the page almost like poetry and I felt that attention to form was essential in creating this world on stage.

But *Los ojos abiertos de ella* was a play that I kept encountering during my ongoing research into Uruguayan theatre. It has been performed throughout Latin America and there are details of some performances at the end of the script. There have been more since, including a production in Spanish by Teatro de la Luna in Washington DC in 2018. In 2016 *Los ojos abiertos de ella* was selected as part of a celebration of the national playwright at the Teatro Solís in Montevideo and performed by the Comedia Nacional. This caught my attention because it was one of two plays by women included in the programme of ten plays by Uruguayan playwrights; the other was *La duda en gira* by Jimena Márquez. This motivated me to return to the play, analyze it in closer detail, and identify the key messages that it communicated to the audience. These messages are about women’s resilience, agency and solidarity. I decided to translate the play because I think it makes an important and relevant contribution to contemporary discussions about women’s experience and struggles for equality. As the protagonist moves between the series of encounters in the play, the shifts in behavior, negotiations, power struggles and decisions that she has to confront provoke her (and us, as the audience) to reflect on how her encounter with death might have an impact upon her life.

A constant awareness of these broader questions that the play asks us to consider underpinned my translation process and I returned to these ideas frequently when making decisions about the

language in English. I hope that, in this way, the play feels contemporary and like it speaks about and into current debates whilst still capturing the sense of the in-between life and death space. One of the ways in which Diana constructs this space is by depicting it as theatrical. The opening lines tell us: “There is a stage. | A woman enters. | The woman walks.” These descriptions emphasize her situation: the woman is part of the world but she is also above it, looking down on it. At other moments in the play, the protagonist finds herself on a very high platform: on one occasion she’s addressing a crowd of women, on another she’s confronted by a trapeze and she has to decide whether she will take the risk to reach out and grab it. She also performs as a diva who sings a version of a song by The Who, whilst the male character shifts between acting as a dance partner, police officer and a variety show host. The idea of a space between life and death as a stage is enticing; it also reminds us that it’s an imagined space, constructed to capture the way in which the protagonist performs her decision-making process.

This brings me back to the poetry of the piece which communicates the otherworldliness of the play. In my translation I paid particular attention to rhythm, sounds, and repetitions across the play and I often prioritized these aspects of the language when making choices about the translation into English. I also hoped that this would enable readers and actors to identify the significance of the poetic, but without it dominating their interpretation or performance. I had opportunities to explore these qualities of the play and to refine my translation at readings with students in seminars and at the Out of the Wings monthly table read. In the table read, I cast multiple actors as a way to try to identify the transitions between the encounters in the play and to experiment with how poetry creates multi-vocality in the piece. The multi-vocal quality was an aspect of the play that we explored in the 2-day rehearsal process with actors as part of the Out of the Wings Festival of play readings. I was inspired to find that the form was not limiting but opened up possibilities for playfulness and to explore the humor of the piece. At the end of the play, there is a sense that the protagonist is back on earth: her eyes become windows, she sees people surrounding her, smiling, and she smiles back. This play is also about smiling; ultimately it tells the story of one woman’s ability to laugh in the face of death.

**Dr. Sophie Stevens** is a Leverhulme Early Career Fellow in the School of Literature, Drama and Creative Writing at the University of East Anglia. Her research project investigates the work of Latin American women dramatists in order to explore links between activism, performance, digital networking and translation. She is a member of the Out of the Wings Theatre Collective and has presented English translations at the Out of the Wings Festival, New Spanish Playwriting Festival (Cervantes Theatre) and CASA Latin American Theatre Festival (Southwark Playhouse). She is the author of *Uruguayan Theatre in Translation: Theory and Practice* which will be published by Legenda in 2021.

**Raquel Diana** is an actor, dramatist, theatre director and philosophy teacher. She was a member of the Teatro Galpón company in Montevideo for twenty years and has also worked with other theatre groups and companies on over sixty productions. She has received more than forty awards and is a six-time winner of Uruguay’s National Prize for Literature. She has also received the Premio Onetti de la Intendencia de Montevideo (Prize awarded by Montevideo’s local government), Premio Florencio de la Crítica Teatral (Theatre Critics’ Award) and twice received the Premio obra de títeres para público adulto (Award for Puppet Theatre for Adults). She has



also been the recipient of competitive grants from La Asociación General de Autores Del Uruguay (AGADU) (Uruguayan Author's Association) and The Ministry of Education and Culture in Uruguay. Her plays have been performed throughout Latin America, Europe and the United States of America and have been translated into English, French, Italian and Portuguese.

**Her Open Eyes**  
**by Raquel Diana**  
**translated by Sophie Stevens**

I dedicate this play to all those people who would not allow me to die

Performed as a rehearsed reading at Omnibus Theatre, London on 1 August 2019 as part of the Out of the Wings Festival. Actors: Jilly Bond (Her) and Richard Glaves (Him). Music by Haylin Cai. Directed by Fran Olivares. The author was present and took part in a post-show dialogue.

**Characters**

**Him**

**Her**

**Her** There is a stage.

A woman enters.

The woman walks.

Beneath her feet is a rope and a cityscape.

If only she could lift her eyes a little, she would see the sea.

But she can't.

She's scared of walking on the rope.

Music plays.

This music stops the woman from falling.

It sounds so distant, it's impossible to tell where it's coming from.

But it holds her there.

At the end of the rope there are people

looking at her

silent people.

They are waiting.

Waiting.

Why?

The woman opens her arms and, extremely moved, says: thank you.

She doesn't know why she's grateful.

She's not an actress.

But she's here

on a stage

with open arms

saying

thank you.

*HIM appears.*

**Him** Aren't you scared of falling? Please, hold my arm.

**Her** Are you talking to me?

**Him** Yes. Aren't you scared?

**Her** No.

**Him** Don't you want to hold my arm?

**Her** Yes, I am scared.

**Him** Why don't you hold my arm?

**Her** I can walk alone.

*Silence.*

*They walk slowly with her holding onto his arm.*

**Him** You can trust me.

**Her** Yes, I know. But you are so... so... so dashing.

**Him** (*laughing*) Please! You don't know what you're talking about.

**Her** It's a bit old-fashioned to say dashing but it seems right for you.

**Him** Probably because it's old-fashioned.

**Her** You're so dashing it makes me nervous. Strange isn't it? With all this going on, me getting nervous because you're so...so...

**Him** Beautiful?

**Her** You're different. What do you do?

**Him** I look after you.

**Her** I don't mean right now. I mean, in life.

**Him** You're also very beautiful. Shall we sit?

*A public bench, like the kind found in a public square. They sit down.*

**Her** It's amazing everything you can see from up here... I used to play in that square when I was little. Nowadays, there aren't many squares with gravel, apart from that one. I'd pick all the little stones out of my knees and just stare at the marks they left, worrying, like it was the worst thing in the world.

I used to love leaning against the statues.

Just a hug and we'd recognize each other instantly... those statues and me...

**Him** You're so beautiful. Your smile is captivating.

**Her** This all seems so serious... Don't look at me like that.

**Him** Doesn't it help?

**Her** What?

**Him** The way I'm looking at you, like I adore you.

**Her** Once upon a time I would have given my life for a man to look at me that way for five minutes.

Now I'm not so sure.

I find it sort of irritating.

*Both of them look ahead.*

*Silence.*

*Then the sound of the sea.*

**Her** In this city we spend our lives forsaking the sea.

And it's always there, every single day.

That's the wall I was resting on just last week.

I went to look.

To look far into the distance.

These days all I can see is a wall.

But I know that just a few streets away the sea and its horizon are there.

It's there, isn't it?

**Him** The sea?

**Her** Yes.

**Him** The sea isn't really over there. But it's lovely that you imagine it could be.

**Her** You're right.

**Him** Dreaming is good for you.

**Her** I'm not crazy.

There's a brown river with pathetic little waves and we call it the sea.

It's always there, close by.

To make us believe we could get away if we wanted to.

Do you see that rock?

My Dad used to take me there to go fishing with tackle made from an old tin.

We never caught anything.

You never see anyone catching anything from the promenade.

There are days when it feels like the whole country is at the river's edge, waiting, with their fishing rods and their dreams.

The passers-by stop to look when someone's line is taught but when they pull it in, nothing, just the weight, dancing around, useless at the end of the line.

Winter and summer come around again.

They say the fish went out to sea.

Things were always easier before.

To imagine it's the sea, you have to fix your eyes on the horizon and look at the water out of the corner of your eye.

It makes it look blue... where is it?

**Him** Don't get anxious.

**Her** It was there! My favourite bit of the promenade.

**Him** You can't see it anymore.

**Her** The sea, the river...

*She cries, he hugs her.*

**Her** Don't touch me! I don't know you... And don't look at me like that!

**Him** Like what?

**Her** Why don't you just leave? I'd like to be alone.

**Him** I have to look after you, take care of you.

**Her** Take care of me? What gives you the right to do that?

I didn't ask you to come here.

I didn't ask you to look after me.

**Him** Darling, darling...

**Her** Don't speak to me like that!

**Him** Fine then.

Shout.

Slap.

My patience is endless.

And there's nothing more magnificent than an angry woman.

Her legs toned by fire, her womb throbbing, powerful, as if she might suddenly give birth to thousands of creatures that will attack her enemy. Her breasts pointed like a bull's horns, her mouth open releasing a howl that's greater than her own body, her eyes wide, burning, blind. I like it. Go on. Go mad.

*She screams.*

*He rushes towards her as if he's about to embrace her.*

*She stops screaming.*

*HIM disappears.*

**Her** Silence.

The silence is a tablecloth the size of the world  
and the woman gathers it up by the corners  
folding it  
until it's nothing more than a handkerchief on her lap.

The woman presses the silence against her chest  
and thinks.

She thinks about her life.

A simple life  
or a complicated one  
or an ordinary one  
any life.

Now she thinks that an ordinary life is still something.

She also thinks about all the times she hated her own life

and now it's there  
in the palm of her hand  
tiny  
precious.

The woman kisses her tiny life in the palm of her hand  
she wraps it up in the handkerchief of silence to keep it safe  
and calm.

*A dance hall.*

*The buzz of voices, laughter.*

**Him** Come on, I've been waiting for you. I'm always waiting for you.

**Her** *(above the noise)* For me?

**Him** I've been waiting for this moment since the beginning of time.

**Her** Don't be stupid. You aren't going to win me over with old romantic lines like that.

**Him** It's the absolute truth.

**Her** Why? Why have you been waiting for me?

**Him** There's no rhyme or reason.

**Her** I want you to explain why.

**Him** There's nothing to explain.

**Her** None of this makes any sense to me.

**Him** But why does it matter?

Explanations offer comfort for a bit.

Then they fade away

disappear

and you have to go out in search of others.

It must be exhausting work.

**Her** So how do you cope?

**Him** I'm here and all I can think about is when you'll kiss me.

**Her** Never.

**Him** You see? Never is a totally ridiculous word. What does never mean?

**Her** That I hate you. That I'm not going to kiss you, even if it's the only thing left for me to do in this life.

**Him** (*he bursts out laughing*) You are wonderful. Shall we dance?

**Her** No. I'm confused. Besides, there's no music. Just the noise of people, people, so many people...

*A delightful music plays.*

**Him** Come on, relax, let yourself go.

Come on.

If you dance in time with everyone else, no-one will see you.

Dance with me.

Please.

*They dance.*

**Her** I've been to thousands of dances  
but I could never hear the music.  
I could see the bodies  
faces  
expressions.  
I moved  
I knew how to keep time  
even in silence.  
Sometimes I'd start to hum softly  
so I didn't feel  
so alone  
amongst all the people twirling around.

**Him** You have an amazing body.

**Her** I used to.

**Him** You still do.

**Her** (*as if she recognizes someone amongst the crowd of people dancing*) Turn this way, please. There, perfect. Will you just dance on the spot. I don't want him to see me like this.

**Him** Like what?

**Her** Old.



**Him** He can't see you. You're with me.

**Her** He's looking this way. Turn some more. Like that... Can you see him? What's he doing?

**Him** You haven't heard from him in fifteen years. Why did he have to come today?

**Her** Twenty. Twenty years.

**Him** Fifteen.

**Her** How would you know?

**Him** Dance with me. He's just a man.

**Her** I could have danced with him for eternity.

**Him** You can only do that with me.

**Her** I can't hear the music with you either.

**Him** But you're hiding from him and you're dancing with me.

**Her** You're jealous! You're so charming... but don't distract me... keep still... He's just the same... (*she hides her body behind HIM*). And my hips and legs are getting bigger and bigger.

**Him** A voluptuous woman.

**Her** A fat woman.

**Him** You've perked up. You're even making jokes. What else?

**Her** A saggy face, dull eyes and flabby skin...

**Him** You're so exciting.

**Her** He looks at me in the same old way, holds me just the same, caresses me just the same after we've made love.

**Him** He's become fat, bald and mean.

**Her** He still loves me. I'm sure of it. He's grown tired of running around in circles and he's come to find me. We're meeting by chance at a dance (*moving forwards to meet her love*).

Hello... What a surprise ... It's the first time I've come here ... No, I don't want to ask you anything ... There's no need ... I don't have anything to say to you either... Right now, I can't think of anything except your hands... I've been waiting for you, that's all... If I close my eyes, you'll put your arms around my waist and carry me away, at last. (*she closes her eyes*)

We're light, beautiful, together, free.

(*HIM takes the place of her imaginary lover, the music can no longer be heard. He kisses her face*)

Why did you take so long?

(*HER hums the tune from the beginning*)

Your chest slopes  
I let myself fall softly  
I trust you  
love  
my love.

**Him** Holding you now, I could crush you like a dry leaf, just by closing my hand.  
But I prefer to kiss you.  
For us to dance together for eternity.

**Her** Thank you (*they kiss*).

**Him** (*pulling himself away and opening his eyes*) No. Not like this. You have to choose me. It's one thing to dream of love and death. But you have to love me, awake or asleep, unconditionally. (*he disappears*)

*The stage is empty.*

**Her** The roar of a crowd.  
The woman is on an extremely high platform.  
As far as the horizon  
women with their hair loose or tied back  
covered by veils, scarves  
shawls or flower garlands.  
What she is about to say will be broadcast live  
to the whole universe  
even to those towns where there is no television  
or radio  
or drinking water  
or food.  
I have come to share with you something that I learnt in a second.  
I don't know if it's wisdom  
but I thought it was worth  
stopping this second right in the middle  
so that there's time to say this:

never  
ever  
close your eyes.  
There's a trap behind everything  
even behind every dream.  
It's not about being alert  
and spoiling the earth with suspicion.  
It's the opposite.  
It's about seeing where others don't see.  
Creating the best world we can imagine  
not with the smoke of our thoughts  
but with the mud beneath our feet.  
Dreaming with our eyes wide open.  
Many women have done it  
since the dawn of time.  
Mad women  
they called them.  
They are the women who smile for no apparent reason  
or get sad  
or suddenly burst into song.  
Just like when we sleep, our soul always keeps one eye on our children,  
we must always see.  
See.  
See.  
Once I thought I was in love  
and I was dying.  
Another time I thought I was dying  
and I was just in love.  
I don't know how things will turn out  
but let them not come to pass in the weakness of sleep

nor in the midst of pleasure  
or because of someone's arrogance  
or their deceitful seduction games.

Here, the woman pauses for the applause of the millions of women listening.

Then she lets the paused second run its course.

She has to choose.

*HIM is sitting behind a desk, acting almost like a police officer.*

**Him** Have you made up your mind?

**Her** Can I have a glass of water?

**Him** Not yet.

**Her** Why not yet? It's such a simple request. I keep seeing a nurse go by. I ask her for water but she walks straight on, she's not listening. Then I realise I'm not speaking. I was just thinking: please, nurse, I want some water to drink.

**Him** And?

**Her** I don't think I have anything to make my mind up about.

**Him** What do you mean? Just a moment ago you thought the exact opposite.

**Her** This is totally crazy. It doesn't make any sense, whichever way you look at it. It's completely crazy to think we could end this madness right here and now and say we've shared something unique, extraordinary, even spiritual. And now, that's it, and we each go our separate ways.

**Him** I'm being very patient. I'm giving you more time than you deserve (*she doesn't answer*). Fine, perhaps it's best if I go. Things always turn out the way they ought to. Good night.

**Her** No. Don't go. Please.

**Him** So?

**Her** I don't want to be alone.

**Him** You have your thoughts, your strange way of talking to yourself, your internal monologues performed on the great stage inside your head.

**Her** Don't mess with my head.

**Him** Why don't you decide, once and for all.

**Her** There are so many things to think about.

**Him** Right now?

**Her** Yes.

**Him** (*in an aggressive manner which intensifies with every question*) You don't have time and you can't possibly remember every single thing.

**Her** Yes, I can.

**Him** Can you? Tell me, what's the best thing you've ever done... (*she is unsure and searches for how to answer but can't ever do it*) And the worst?... When were you bravest?... And when were you a coward?... What about a time when you hurt others, in any way, with a slap, a bullet, gossip, betrayal?... Answer! (*the questioning becomes increasingly hostile*) When were you caring? What was the limit of your kindness? What did you sacrifice?... How often were you selfish? Were you ever generous, really generous?... Answer!

**Her** I can't. You're pressuring me.

**Him** You don't have time! You said that you had to think about all these things. Well, go on, do it.

**Her** I don't understand what's happening.

**Him** Do you think you've achieved things in your life?... Important things?... Do you still have things to do? Or can you say, that's it, you've done enough?... Is there something you should have done?... Should you have been a certain way?... Could you do it?

**Her** (*whimpering*) Please be quiet, my head hurts.

**Him** Think!

**Her** I can't.

**Him** Weigh it all up, assess it, try it, reckon, measure the positives and negatives, calculate, evaluate, decide, judge. Think!

**Her** I can't!

**Him** What was the point of everything? What was all that effort for? Tell me. Tell me!

**Her** I want some water.

**Him** Water! That's all you can think of: water. You make me mad. I don't know why I'm helping you so much. At the end of the day, who cares about your life or your water!

**Her** You do.

**Him** (*annoyed*) Fine, in a way, I do care. That's why I'm asking you to come with me.

**Her** I'm surrounded by hands, eyes, smiles, prayers, throats with lumps in them. I'm sorry. They belong to people who love me. Each one in their own way. They love me.

**Him** That's not what we're talking about. Please focus!

**Her** I don't know what you want from me! I don't know what's happening. And, whatever it is, it's like it isn't happening to me. It's happening on stage and I'm in the audience.

**Him** (*containing his anger*) Think, decide. Make no mistakes. It's quick and easy, like the blink of an eye, the touch of a light breeze (*he disappears*).

*The stage is empty.*

**Her** The nurses' coming and going has stopped.  
A hole has opened in the air  
the woman peers through.  
She sees a ravine  
and gentle green water.  
She gets in  
unties her hair  
breathes calmly  
a little air  
the last little bit  
and she starts to close her eyes.  
Her eyelids fall very slowly  
so slowly that with each millimeter  
she can feel that she is just  
a breath away  
from something very important  
greater than her being.  
She's about to slide into the soft ravine  
to sigh  
to shut her eyes  
when she realizes that she is going to die.

*HIM appears, beaming, clapping.*

*A show in a café concierto or a circus.*

**Him** (*like a host*) Come and see! Come and see, ladies and gentlemen! For one night only, we present, the unique, extraordinary, irreplaceable. I won't go as far as to say the magnificent or wonderful, none of that rubbish, because we all know it's not true. The only thing we can be sure of is that there's none like her. A one off, like every-one.

**Her** (*under a light, she sings and speaks like a diva*)

Welcome.

Welcome to my show.

Everyone has their moment

their moment to be a star.

Today it's mine.

See me.

feel me

touch me

heal me.

Today there are no costumes

Shells

or armour.

It's my time to shine.

See me

feel me

touch me

heal me.

If I have a special light

if something of me might survive

that something is here.

See me

feel me

touch me

heal me.

We all have something to give

we all deserve a place in the show

today it's my turn

tomorrow it's yours.

See me

feel me

touch me

heal me.

**Him** *(like a presenter)* Thank you, darling. Justice prevails: everyone gets their little moment of glory. Sooner or later.

*HIM applauds. She waves and bows.*

**Him** Well done, darling, on with the show. Up next, ladies and gentlemen...

**Her** I don't want to go on.

**Him** You're already here. The audience is waiting.

**Her** What audience?

**Him** You see, you have to go on... *(pointing to the stalls)* for them.

**Her** You've been tricking me from the start.

**Him** The audience doesn't care about that. On with the next act.

**Her** *(she decides to change tack; she acts like a clown)* Sir, sir, can you help me?

**Him** I'm just talking to the audience to introduce the next act...

**Her** Exactly, that's why I want your help.

**Him** Don't interrupt me. Up next...

**Her** That's it, that's what it's about. I need your help with the next act.

**Him** Don't interrupt me. As I was saying, coming up next is unparalleled comedy, humor and wit...

**Her** It isn't going to be possible.

**Him** Why not?

**Her** Because if I'm going to do the act, I need you to play a role.

**Him** Me? I can do anything but act. I've never had to do it or needed to. I don't need to perform anything. I can be anything I want. No. I'd feel stupid.

**Her** Will you do it just this once, please? Come on, be nice, what have you got to lose?

**Him** Fine. What do I have to do?

**Her** You have to play death.

**Him** *(laughing)* Oh right!

**Her** But not just any old death. It has to be my death.

**Him** That's fine. And what's death like?

**Her** I think she's a woman.



**Him** No way. I'm not camping it up for the audience.

**Her** Don't be so judgmental and make an effort. I think death is a very ugly woman. Come on, make an ugly face. (*HIM pulls faces*) Pretty good, something along those lines. She's also spindly, old and stooped over. (*he tries to do it*) Good. Can you stoop over a bit more... Perfect. Now try to speak like you're out of breath, whispering, like it's difficult... (*he tries*) Almost... It has to be a voice that leaves you cold, so that if she whispers in a man's ear, he'll die of a heart attack before he even has time to turn and look her in the face... (*he tries*). Excellent! We can begin. Relax... Death, my dear little death! How are you?

**Him** (*stepping out of his role*) Are you really going to speak to me like that?

**Her** No, no. Just to your character. I think I have the right to speak to my own death however I like. After all, she's my death and no-one else's. (*he tries to object but she stops him*) Don't lose focus or you'll get out of character... Let's go again.

Death, my dear little death! How are you?

**Him** (*acting*) I came for you.

**Her** Me?... You want me to go with you?

**Him** Yes.

**Her** Where to, you horrible old bag?

**Him** Don't insult me.

**Her** Why not, what difference does it make? (*she spits on him*) Piss off.

**Him** (*cleaning the spit away*) This has to stop.

**Her** If only it could.

**Him** (*stops acting, aggressive*) Don't forget who I am.

**Her** (*angry*) And who do you think you are.

*Silence.*

*It's not clear who has won the game.*

**Him** (*to the audience*) Ladies and Gentlemen. The next act has a profoundly dramatic quality. Something amazing: beauty and strength, sorrow and courage, despair and hope... drum roll. I present to you: The Woman.

**Her** The woman

standing on a small platform on the highest post in the circus

thinks

that this isn't the first time she's been here.

The trapeze comes towards her.

She just has to catch it  
and let the momentum take her.  
She knows she doesn't have time to be indecisive.  
She recognizes this feeling.  
She thinks  
of the times she didn't catch it  
that she let it go.  
The person pushing the trapeze is out of sight.  
It just comes and goes.  
Comes and goes.  
This time when it comes  
she's swinging on it, killing herself laughing, her bent legs shaking.  
This time  
she's hanging on with one arm, graceful, wearing a glittering dress like the star of the  
circus.  
I want to get down, I'm tired.  
She can't rest  
there's always a trapeze  
it comes and she has to act.  
Sometimes a man would be on the trapeze when it came  
and she would let it go.  
Once I held on to an outstretched arm and a generous smile and...  
Don't let me fall, darling, my darling (*she cries*)  
On the earth I had my children.  
I forgot all about falling and vertigo  
and my hand never trembled as I cared for them.  
But now my soul trembles because I love them so much...  
Now, they each have to face their own problems with flying and trapezes.  
Where is God so I can beg him not to let them fall!  
The woman stands before herself

lifts her head

dries her tears and prepares to start walking along a rope.

Drum roll.

**Him** There is a stage

A woman enters.

The woman walks.

Beneath her feet is a rope and a cityscape.

If only she could lift her eyes a little, she would see the sea.

But she can't.

She's scared of walking on the rope.

Music plays.

This music stops the woman from falling.

It sounds so distant, it's impossible to tell where it's coming from.

But it holds her there.

**Her** *(she sings the same tune as at the beginning of the play)*

**Him** I could make you forget your song. After all, that's what men do.

**Her** No you couldn't. It's taken me my whole life to compose it. *(her knees buckle slightly as if she had just been about to fall)* I'm not going to go with you.

**Him** You think it's possible to make all the choices, that all it takes is a strong will and a bit of effort.

**Her** And love. *(she is getting weaker)*

**Him** Perhaps that's what hurt you.

**Her** Love?

**Him** Believing that somehow you could solve everything.

**Her** I'm tired. *(she's about to fall, she sings her song very faintly)*

**Him** *(holding her, supporting her)* My darling.

*He gives her a long kiss. Then he lifts his head, looks at her and sings the song whilst she stays very still, as if she had died with her eyes open. Suddenly, she stretches out her arm to draw his head close to hers, she kisses him passionately and then pushes him away.*

**Her** I'm leaving.

**Him** What?

**Her** I'm leaving you. I'm leaving you here.

**Him** You've made your choice.

**Her** I'm not sure who gets to choose here.

**Him** I'll die of sorrow.

**Her** No you won't. You're not going to die.

**Him** Stay with me. *(he holds her)*

**Her** *(she frees herself, she strokes his face)* I'm lucky to have found you now.

**Him** Really? No-one's ever said that to me before.

**Her** Well, I had never met you before... Goodbye. It could have been lovely to be together...  
I'm surrounded by hands, eyes, smiles, prayers, throats with lumps in them. They belong  
to people who love me. Each in their own way. They love me.

**Him** I'll never stop loving you.

**Her** I know.

*He disappears.*

**Her** Nurses coming and going.

The woman has not closed her eyes.

She breathes softly.

She looks.

She looks as if she were tiny

and her head was her house

and her eyes were windows.

The people there are smiling.

A faint smile.

She smiles too.

The stage is so big.

At the end of the rope, there are people

people looking at her

silent people.

They are waiting.

Waiting.

She feels her body is insignificant  
there in such a beautiful theatre.  
Quickly she weaves herself a dress.  
Every thread she needs has been given to her.  
Some are made of love, others from suffering.  
Every fold contains her light and her darkness.  
She is stunning.  
She walks delighted with her dress.  
This courage isn't hers  
it's from the people who've been waiting for her.  
Her life is not insignificant  
it's an ordinary life  
but that really is something.  
She walks confident that she will be the most beautiful woman there.  
She knows that if she looks over her shoulder  
she will find Him there  
always.  
She'll want to kiss him  
sometimes  
or spit at him and push him away.  
It's fine.  
That's the way it has to be.  
The woman opens her arms and, extremely moved, says: thank you.  
She doesn't know why she's grateful.  
She's not an actress.  
But she's here  
on a stage  
with open arms  
saying  
thank you.

## END

This play received the first prize in the Literary Competition run by the Intendencia Municipal de Montevideo (Montevideo's Municipal Government).

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It was first performed in Lima, Peru in 2006, at Celcit in Buenos Aires in 2008 and in Mérida, Mexico in 2009.

[Translator's addition: It was performed by the Comedia Nacional at the Teatro Solís in Montevideo in 2016]