

Tartuffe

**By
Moliere**

**Translated
By
Richard Wilbur**

**Production Script
University of Southern Maine
Department of Theatre
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Cary Libkin, Director**

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Cast of Characters

Orgon	Master of the house, provided great service in the last war; married to Elmire; he has fallen under the influence of Tartuffe
Damis	Orgon's son by his first wife; a hothead who would enjoy nothing more than slicing Tartuffe to ribbons
Cleante	Elmire's brother, he's the voice of reason and calm
Valere	Mariane's suitor, the love of her life
Tartuffe	a religious hypocrite and con-man; he weasels his way into the Orgon's household and almost walks away with the house; lusts after Elmire
M. Loyal	a bailiff serves eviction papers to Orgon
Officer	an officer of the court
Laurent	Tartuffe's lackey
Mme. Pernelle	Orgon's mother; totally deluded by Tartuffe
Elmire	Orgon's second wife; Tartuffe lusts after her
Dorine	Mariane's maid, but much more; a saucy commentator of the action
Mariane	hopelessly in love with Valere, and helpless without Dorine; daughter of Orgon
Flipote	silent maid to Mme. Pernelle

ACT I

SCENE ONE

MADAME PERNELLE, FLIPOTE, ELMIRE, MARIANE, DORINE, DAMIS, CLEANTE

MADAME PERNELLE

Come, come, Flipote; it's time I left this place.

ELMIRE

I can't keep up, you walk at such a pace.

MADAME PERNELLE

Don't trouble, child; no need to show me out.
It's not your manners I'm concerned about.

ELMIRE

We merely pay you the respect we owe.
But, Mother, why this hurry? Must you go?

MADAME PERNELLE

I must. This house appalls me. No one in it
Will pay attention for a single minute.
Children, I take my leave much vexed in spirit.
I offer good advice, but you won't hear it.
You all break in and chatter on and on.
It's like a madhouse with the keeper gone.

DORINE

If ...

MADAME PERNELLE

Girl, you talk too much, and I'm afraid
You're far too saucy for a lady's-maid.
You push in everywhere and have your say.

DAMIS

But...

MADAME PERNELLE

You, boy, grow more foolish every day.
To think my grandson should be such a dunce!
I've said a hundred times, if I've said it once,
That if you keep the course on which you've started,
You'll leave your worthy father broken-hearted.

MARIANE

I think . . .

MADAME PERNELLE

And you, his sister, seem so pure,
So shy, so innocent, and so demure.
But you know what they say about still waters.
I pity parents with secretive daughters.

ELMIRE

Now, Mother...

MADAME PERNELLE

And as for you, child, let me add
That your behavior is extremely bad,
And a poor example for these children, too.
Their dear, dead mother did far better than you.
You're much too free with money, and I'm distressed
To see you so elaborately dressed.
When it's one's husband that one aims to please,
One has no need of costly fripperies.

CLEANTE

Oh, Madam, really . . .

MADAME PERNELLE

You are her brother, Sir,
And I respect and love you; yet if I were
My son, this lady's good and pious spouse,
I wouldn't make you welcome in my house.
You're full of worldly counsels which, I fear,
Aren't suitable for decent folk to hear.

DAMIS

Your man Tarruffe is full of holy speeches ...

MADAME PERNELLE

And practices precisely what he preaches.
He's a fine man, and should be listened to.
I will not hear him mocked by fools like you.

DAMIS

Good God! Do you expect me to submit
To the tyranny of that carping hypocrite?
Must we forgo all joys and satisfactions
Because that bigot censures all our actions?

DORINE

To hear him talk -and he talks all the time-
There's nothing one can do that's not a crime.
He rails at everything, your dear Tartuffe.

MADAME PERNELLE

Whatever he reproves deserves reproof.
He's out to save your souls, and all of you
Must love him, as my son would have you do.

DAMIS

Ah no, Grandmother, I could never take
To such a rascal, even for my father's sake.
That's how I feel, and I shall not dissemble.
His every action makes me seethe and tremble
With helpless anger, and I have no doubt
That he and I will shortly have it out.

DORINE

Surely it is a shame and a disgrace
To see this man usurp the master's place-
To see this beggar who, when first he came,
Had not a shoe or shoestring to his name
So far forget himself that he behaves
As if the house were his, and we his slaves.

MADAME PERNELLE

Well, mark my words, your souls would fare far better
If you obeyed his precepts to the letter.

DORINE

You see him as a saint. I'm far less awed;
In fact, I see right through him. He's a fraud.

MADAME PERNELLE

Nonsense!

You all regard him with distaste and fear
Because he tells you what you're loath to hear,
Condemns your sins, points out your moral flaws,
And humbly strives to further Heaven's cause.

DORINE

If sin is all that bothers him, why is it
He's so upset when folk drop in to visit?
Is Heaven so outraged by a social call
That he must prophesy against us all?
I'll tell you what I think: if you ask me,
He's jealous of my mistress' company.

MADAME PERNELLE

Rubbish! (To Elmore) He's not alone, child, in complaining
Of all of your promiscuous entertaining.
Why, the whole neighborhood's upset, I know,
By all these carriages that come and go
With crowds of guests parading in and out
And noisy servants loitering about.
In all of this, I'm sure there's nothing vicious;
But why give people cause to be suspicious?

CLEANTE

They need no cause; they'll talk in any case.
Madam, this world would be a joyless place
If, fearing what malicious tongues might say,
We locked our doors and turned our friends away.
One can't fight slander; it's a losing battle;
Let us instead ignore their tittle-tattle.
Let's strive to live by conscience' clear decrees,
And let the gossips gossip as they please.

DORINE

If there is talk against us, I know the source:
It's Daphne and her little husband, of course.
Those who have greatest cause for guilt and shame
Are quickest to besmirch a neighbor's name.
When there's a chance for libel, they never miss it;
When something can be made to seem illicit
They're off at once to spread the joyous news,
Adding to fact what fantasies they choose.

By talking up their neighbor's indiscretions
They seek to camouflage their own transgressions,
Hoping that others' innocent affairs
Will lend a hue of innocence to theirs,
Or that their own black guilt will come to seem
Part of a general shady color-scheme.

MADAME PERNELLE

All that is quite irrelevant. I doubt
That anyone's more virtuous and devout
Than dear Orante; and I'm informed that she
Condemns your mode of life most vehemently.

DORINE

Oh, yes, she's strict, devout, and has no taint
Of worldliness; in short, she seems a saint.
But it was time which taught her that disguise;
She's thus because she can't be otherwise.
So long as her attractions could enthrall,
She flounced and flirted and enjoyed it all,
But now that they're no longer what they were
She quits a world which fast is quitting her,
And wears a veil of virtue to conceal
Her bankrupt beauty and her lost appeal.

MADAME PERNELLE (*Initially to Elmire*)

That sort of talk is what you like to hear;
Therefore you'd have us all keep still, my dear,
While Madam rattles on the livelong day.
Nevertheless, I mean to have my say.
I tell you that you're blest to have Tartuffe
Dwelling, as my son's guest, beneath this roof;
That Heaven has sent him to forestall its wrath
By leading you, once more, ...
(To Cléante)
I heard that laugh, Sir, and I saw that wink!
Go find your silly friends and laugh some more!
Enough; I'm going; don't show me to the door.
I leave this household much dismayed and vexed;
I cannot say when I shall see you next. (*slapping Flipote*)
Wake up, don't stand there gaping into space!
I'll slap some sense into that stupid face.
Move, move, you slut.

SCENE TWO
CLEANTE, DORINE

CLEANTE

I think I'll stay behind;
I want no further pieces of her mind.
How that old lady...

DORINE

Oh, what wouldn't she say
If she could hear you speak of her that way!
She'd thank you for the lady, but I'm sure
She'd find the old a little premature.

CLEANTE

My, what a scene she made, and what a din!
And how this man Tartuffe has taken her in!

DORINE

Yes, but her son is even worse deceived;
His folly must be seen to be believed.
In the late troubles, he played an able part
And served the government with wise and loyal heart,
But he's quite lost his senses since he fell
Beneath Tartuffe's infatuating spell.
He calls him brother, and loves him as his life,
Preferring him to mother, child, or wife.
In him and him alone will he confide;
He's made him his confessor and his guide;
He pets and pampers him with love more tender
Than any pretty mistress could engender,
Gives him the place of honor when they dine,
Delights to see him gorging like a swine,
Stuffs him with dainties till his guts distend,
And when he belches, cries "God bless you, friend!"
Tartuffe, much pleased to find so easy a victim,
Has in a hundred ways beguiled and tricked him,
Milked him of money, and with his permission
Established here a sort of Inquisition.
Even Laurent, his lackey, dares to give
Us arrogant advice on how to live;
He sermonizes us in thundering tones
And confiscates our ribbons and colognes.
Last week he tore a kerchief into pieces
Because he found it pressed in a Life of Jesus:

He said it was a sin to juxtapose
Unholy vanities and holy prose.

SCENE THREE
ELMIRE, MARIANE, DAMIS, CLEANTE, DORINE

ELMIRE (*To Cléante*)

You did well not to follow; she stood in the door
And said verbatim all she'd said before.
I saw my husband coming. I think I'd best
Go upstairs now and take a little rest.

CLEANTE

I'll wait and greet him here; then I must go.
I've really only time to say hello.

DAMIS

Sound him about my sister's wedding, please.
I think Tartuffe's against it, and that he's
Been urging Father to withdraw his blessing.
As you well know, I'd find that most distressing.
Unless my sister and Valère can marry,
My hopes to wed his sister will miscarry,
And I'm determined . . .

DORINE

He's coming.

SCENE FOUR
ORGON, CLEANTE, DORINE

ORGON

Ah, Brother, good-day.

CLEANTE

Well, welcome back. I'm sorry I can't stay.
How was the country? Blooming, I trust, and green?

ORGON

Excuse me, Brother; just one moment. (*To Dorine*)

Dorine...

To put my mind at rest, I always learn

The household news the moment I return. (*To Dorine*)
Has all been well, these two days I've been gone?
How are the family? What's been going on?

DORINE

Your wife, two days ago, had a bad fever,
And a fierce headache which refused to leave her.

ORGON

Ah. And Tartuffe?

DORINE

Tartuffe? Why, he's round and red,
Busting with health, and excellently fed.

ORGON

Poor fellow!

DORINE

That night, the mistress was unable
To take a single bite at the dinner-table.
Her headache-pains, she said, were simply hellish.

ORGON

Ah. And Tartuffe?

DORINE

He ate his meal with relish,
And zealously devoured in her presence
A leg of mutton and a brace of pheasants.

ORGON

Poor fellow!

DORINE

Well, the pains continued strong,
And so she tossed and tossed the whole night long,
Now icy-cold, now burning like a flame.
We sat beside her bed till morning came.

ORGON

Ah. And Tartuffe?

DORINE

Why, having eaten, he rose
And sought his room, already in a doze,
Got into his warm bed, and snored away
In perfect peace until the break of day.

ORGON

Poor fellow!

DORINE

After much ado, we talked her
Into dispatching someone for the doctor.
He bled her, and the fever quickly fell.

ORGON

Ah. And Tartuffe?

DORINE

He bore it very well.
To keep his cheerfulness at any cost,
And make up for the blood Madame had lost
He drank, at lunch, four beakers full of port.

ORGON

Poor fellow!

DORINE

Both are doing well, in short.
I'll go and tell Madame that you've expressed
Keen sympathy and anxious interest.

SCENE FIVE
ORGON, CLEANTE

CLEANTE

That girl was laughing in your face, and though
I've no wish to offend you, even so
I'm bound to say that she had some excuse.
How can you possibly be such a goose?
Are you so dazed by this man's hocus-pocus
That all the world, save him, is out of focus?
You've given him clothing, shelter, food, and care;
Why must you also . . .

ORGON

Brother, stop right there.
You do not know the man of whom you speak.

CLEANTE

I grant you that. But my judgment's not so weak
That I can't tell, by his effect on others . . .

ORGON

Ah, when you meet him, you two will be like brothers!
There's been no loftier soul since time began.
He is a man who...a man who... an excellent man.
To keep his precepts is to be reborn,
And view this dunghill of a world with scorn.
Yes, thanks to him I'm a changed man indeed.
Under his tutelage my soul's been freed
From earthly loves, and every human tie:
My mother, children, brother, and wife could die,
And I'd not feel a single moment's pain.

CLEANTE

That's a fine sentiment, Brother; most humane.

ORGON

Oh, had you seen Tartuffe as I first knew him,
Your heart, like mine, would have surrendered to him.
He used to come into our church each day
And humbly kneel nearby, and start to pray.
He'd draw the eyes of everybody there
By the deep fervor of his heartfelt prayer;
He'd sigh and weep, and sometimes with a sound
Of rapture he would bend and kiss the ground;
His serving-man, no less devout than he,
Informed me of his master's poverty;
I gave him gifts, but in his humbleness
He'd beg me every time to give him less.
"Oh, that's too much," he'd cry, "too much by twice!
I don't deserve it. The half, Sir, would suffice."
And when I wouldn't take it back, he'd share
Half of it with the poor, right then and there.
At length, Heaven prompted me to take him in
To dwell with us, and free our souls from sin.
He guides our lives, and to protect my honor
Stays by my wife, and keeps an eye upon her;

He tells me whom she sees, and all she does,
And seems more jealous than I ever was!

CLEANTE

Good God, man! Have you lost your common sense-
Or is this all some joke at my expense?
How can you stand there and in all sobriety . . .

ORGON

Brother, your language savors of impiety.
Too much free-thinking's made your faith unsteady,
And as I've warned you many times already,
'Twill get you into trouble before you're through.

CLEANTE

So I've been told before by dupes like you:
Being blind, you'd have all others blind as well;
The clear-eyed man you call an infidel,
And he who sees through humbug and pretense
Is charged, by you, with want of reverence.
Spare me your warnings, Brother; I have no fear
Of speaking out, for you and Heaven to hear,
Against affected zeal and pious knavery.
There's true and false in piety, as in bravery,
And just as those whose courage shines the most
In battle, are the least inclined to boast,
So those whose hearts are truly pure and lowly
Don't make a flashy show of being holy.
There's a vast difference, so it seems to me,
Between true piety and hypocrisy:
Ah, Brother, man's a strangely fashioned creature
Who seldom is content to follow Nature,
But recklessly pursues his inclination
Beyond the narrow bounds of moderation,
And often, by transgressing Reason's laws,
Perverts a lofty aim or noble cause.
A passing observation, but it applies.

ORGON

I see, dear Brother, that you're profoundly wise;
You harbor all the insight of the age.
You are our one clear mind, our only sage ...

CLEANTE

Brother, I don't pretend to be a sage,
Nor have I all the wisdom of the age.
There's just one insight I would dare to claim:
I know that true and false are not the same;
And just as there is nothing I more revere
Than a soul whose faith is steadfast and sincere,
Nothing that I more cherish and admire
Than honest zeal and true religious fire,
So there is nothing that I find more base
Than specious piety's dishonest face-

ORGON

Now then, dear Brother, is your speech concluded?

CLEANTE

Why, yes.

ORGON

Your servant, Sir. *(He turns to go.)*

CLEANTE

No, Brother; wait.

There's one more matter. You agreed of late
That young Valère might have your daughter's hand.

ORGON

I did.

CLEANTE

And set the date, I understand.

ORGON

Quite so.

CLEANTE

You've now postponed it; is that true?

ORGON

No doubt.

CLEANTE

The match no longer pleases you?

ORGON

Who knows?

CLEANTE

D'you mean to go back on your word?

ORGON

I won't say that.

CLEANTE

Has anything occurred;
Which might entitle you to break your pledge?

ORGON

Perhaps.

CLEANTE

Why must you hem, and haw, and hedge?
The boy asked me to sound you in this affair . . .

ORGON

It's been a pleasure.

CLEANTE

But what shall I tell Valère?

ORGON

Whatever you like.

CLEANTE

But what have you decided?
What are your plans?

ORGON

I plan, Sir, to be guided
By Heaven's will.

CLEANTE

Come, Brother, don't talk rot.
You've given Valère your word; will you keep it, or not?

ORGON

Good day.

CLEANTE

This looks like poor Valère's undoing;
I'll go and warn him that there's trouble brewing.

ACT II

SCENE ONE ORGON, MARIANE

ORGON

Mariane.

MARIANE

Yes, Father?

ORGON

A word with you; come here.

MARIANE

What are you looking for?

ORGON

Eavesdroppers, dear.

I'm making sure we shan't be overheard.
Someone in there could catch our every word.
Ah, good, we're safe. Now, Mariane, my child,
You're a sweet girl who's tractable and mild,
Whom I hold dear, and think most highly of.

MARIANE

I'm deeply grateful, Father, for your love.

ORGON

That's well said, Daughter; and you can repay me
If, in all things, you'll cheerfully obey me.

MARIANE

To please you, Sir, is what delights me best.

ORGON

Good, good. Now, what d'you think of Tartuffe, our guest?

MARIANE

I, Sir?

ORGON

Yes. Weigh your answer; think it through.

MARIANE

Oh, dear. I'll say whatever you wish me to.

ORGON

That's wisely said, my Daughter. Say of him, then,
That he's the very worthiest of men,
And that you're fond of him, and would rejoice
In being his wife, if that should be my choice.
Well?

MARIANE

What?

ORGON

What's that?

MARIANE

I...

ORGON

Well?

MARIANE

Forgive me, pray.

ORGON

Did you not hear me?

MARIANE

Of whom, Sir, must I say
That I am fond of him, and would rejoice
In being his wife, if that should be your choice?

ORGON

Why, of Tartuffe.

MARIANE

But, Father, that's false, you know.
Why would you have me say what isn't so?

ORGON

Because I am resolved it shall be true.
That it's my wish should be enough for you.

MARIANE

You can't mean, Father . . .

ORGON

Yes, Tartuffe shall be
Allied by marriage to this family,
And he's to be your husband, is that clear?
It's a father's privilege . . .

SCENE TWO

Dorine, Orgon, Mariane

ORGON (*To Dorine*)

What are you doing in here?
Is curiosity so fierce a passion
With you, that you must eavesdrop in this fashion?

DORINE

There's lately been a rumor going about-
Based on some hunch or chance remark, no doubt-
That you mean Mariane to wed Tartuffe.
I've laughed it off, of course, as just a spoof.

ORGON

You find it so incredible?

DORINE

Yes, I do.
I won't accept that story, even from you.

ORGON

Well, you'll believe it when the thing is done.

DORINE

Yes, yes, of course. Go on and have your fun.

ORGON

I've never been more serious in my life.

DORINE

Ha!

ORGON

Daughter, I mean it; you're to be his wife.

DORINE

No, don't believe your father; it's all a hoax.

ORGON

See here, young woman . . .

DORINE

Come, Sir, no more jokes;

You can't fool us.

ORGON

How dare you talk that way?

DORINE

All right, then: we believe you, sad to say.
But how a man like you, who looks so wise
And wears a moustache of such splendid size,
Can be so foolish as to...

ORGON

Silence, please!

My girl, you take too many liberties.
I'm master here, as you must not forget.

DORINE

Do let's discuss this calmly; don't be upset.
You can't be serious, Sir, about this plan.
What should that bigot want with Mariane?
Praying and fasting ought to keep him busy.
And then, in terms of wealth and rank, what is he?
Why should a man of property like you
Pick out a beggar son-in-law?

ORGON

That will do. Speak of his poverty with reverence.
His is a pure and saintly indigence
Which far transcends all worldly pride and pelf.
He lost his fortune, as he says himself,
Because he cared for Heaven alone, and so
Was careless of his interests here below.
I mean to get him out of his present straits
And help him to recover his estates-
Which, in his part of the world, have no small fame.
Poor though he is, he's a gentleman just the same.

DORINE

Yes, so he tells us; and, Sir, it seems to me
Such pride goes very ill with piety.
. . . But this approach, I see, has drawn a blank;
Let's speak, then, of his person, not his rank.
Doesn't it seem to you a trifle grim
To give a girl like her to a man like him?
When two are so ill-suited, can't you see
What the sad consequence is bound to be?
A young girl's virtue is imperiled, Sir,
When such a marriage is imposed on her;
For if one's bridegroom isn't to one's taste,
It's hardly an inducement to be chaste,
And many a man with horns upon his brow
Has made his wife the thing that she is now.
It's hard to be a faithful wife, in short,
To certain husbands of a certain sort,
A father who gives his daughter to a man she hates
Must answer for her sins at Heaven's gates.
Think, Sir, before you play so risky a role.

ORGON

This servant-girl presumes to save my soul!

DORINE

You would do well to ponder what I've said.

ORGON

Daughter, we'll disregard this dunderhead.
Just trust your father's judgment. Oh, I'm aware
That I once promised you to young Valére;

But now I hear he gambles, which greatly shocks me.
What's more, I've doubts about his orthodoxy.
His visits to church, I note, are very few.

DORINE

Would you have him go at the same hours as you,
And kneel nearby, to be sure of being seen?

ORGON

I can dispense with such remarks, Dorine. (To Mariane)
Tartuffe, however, is sure of Heaven's blessing,
And that's the only treasure worth possessing.

DORINE

And she'll make him a cuckold, just wait and see.

ORGON

What language!

DORINE

Oh, he's a man of destiny;
He's made for horns, and what the stars demand
Your daughter's virtue surely can't withstand.

ORGON

Don't interrupt me further. Why can't you learn
That certain things are none of your concern?

DORINE

It's for your own sake that I interfere

ORGON

Most kind of you. Now, hold your tongue, d'you hear?

DORINE

If I didn't love you ...

ORGON

Spare me your affection.

DORINE

I'll love you, Sir, in spite of your objection.

ORGON

Blast!

DORINE

I can't bear, Sir, for your honor's sake,
To let you make this ludicrous mistake.

ORGON

You mean to go on talking?

DORINE

If I didn't protest
This sinful marriage, my conscience couldn't rest.

ORGON

If you don't hold your tongue, you little shrew ...

DORINE

What, lost your temper? A pious man like you?

ORGON

Yes! Yes! You talk and talk. I'm maddened by it.
Once and for all, I tell you to be quiet.

DORINE

Well, I'll be quiet. But I'll be thinking hard.

ORGON

Think all you like, but you had better guard
That saucy tongue of yours, or I'll...

Now, child

I've weighed this matter fully.

DORINE (*aside*)

It drives me wild
That I can't speak. (*Orgon glances her way*)

ORGON

Tartuffe is no young dandy,
But, still, his person ...

DORINE (*aside*)

Is as sweet as candy.

ORGON

Is such that, even if you shouldn't care
For his other merits ... *(he turns facing Dorine)*

DORINE

They'll make a lovely pair.
If I were she, no man would marry me
Against my inclination and go scot-free.
He'd learn, before the wedding day was over,
How readily a wife can find a lover.

ORGON

It seems you treat my orders as a joke.

DORINE

Why, what's the matter? 'Twas not to you I spoke.

ORGON

What were you doing?

DORINE

Talking to myself, that's all.

ORGON

Ah! *(aside)* One more bit of impudence and gall,
And I shall give her a good slap in the face.
(He puts himself in position to slap her; Dorine, whenever he glances at her, stands immobile and silent)
Daughter, you shall accept, and with good grace,
The husband I've selected . . . Your wedding-day . . .
(To Dorine:)
Why don't you talk to yourself?

DORINE

I've nothing to say.

ORGON

Come, just one word.

DORINE

No thank you, Sir. I pass.

ORGON

Come, speak; I'm waiting.

DORINE

I'd not be such an ass.

ORGON (*Turning to Mariane:*)

In short, dear Daughter, I mean to be obeyed,
And you must bow to the sound choice I've made.

DORINE (*Moving away:*)

I'd not wed such a monster, even in jest.
(*Organ attempts to slap her, but misses.*)

ORGON

Daughter, that maid of yours is a thorough pest;
She makes me sinfully annoyed and nettled.
I can't speak further; my nerves are too unsettled.
She's so upset me by her insolent talk,
I'll calm myself by going for a walk.

SCENE 3

DORINE, MARIANE

DORINE (*Returning:*)

Well, have you lost your tongue, girl? Must I play
Your part, and say the lines you ought to say?
Faced with a fate so hideous and absurd,
Can you not utter one dissenting word?

MARIANE

What good would it do? A father's power is great.

DORINE

Resist him now, or it will be too late.

MARIANE

But...

DORINE

Tell him one cannot love at a father's whim;
That you shall marry for yourself, not him;

That since it's you who are to be the bride,
It's you, not he, who must be satisfied;
And that if his Tartuffe is so sublime,
He's free to marry him at any time.

MARIANE

I've bowed so long to Father's strict control,
I couldn't oppose him now, to save my soul.

DORINE

Come, come, Mariane. Do listen to reason, won't you?
Valere has asked your hand. Do you love him, or don't you?

MARIANE

Oh, how unjust of you! What can you mean
By asking such a question, dear Dorine?
You know the depth of my affection for him;
I've told you a hundred times how I adore him.

DORINE

I don't believe in everything I hear;
Who knows if your professions were sincere?

MARIANE

They were, Dorine, and you do me wrong to doubt it;
Heaven knows that I've been all too frank about it.

DORINE

You love him, then?

MARIANE

Oh, more than I can express.

DORINE

And he, I take it, cares for you no law?

MARIANE

I think so.

DORINE

And you both, with equal fire,
Bum to be married?

MARIANE

That is our one desire.

DORINE

What of Tartuffe then? What of your father's plan?

MARIANE

I'll kill myself, if I'm forced to wed that man.

DORINE

I hadn't thought of that recourse. How splendid!
Just die, and all your troubles will be ended!
A fine solution. Oh, it maddens me
To hear you talk in that self-pitying key.

MARIANE

Dorine, how harsh you are! It's most unfair.
You have no sympathy for my despair.

DORINE

I've none at all for people who talk drivel
And, faced with difficulties, whine and snivel.

MARIANE

No doubt I'm timid, but it would be wrong...

DORINE

True love requires a heart that's firm and strong.

MARIANE

I'm strong in my affection for Valère,
But coping with my father is his affair.

DORINE

But if your father's brain has grown so cracked
Over his dear Tartuffe that he can retract
His blessing, though your wedding-day was named,
It's surely not Valère who's to be blamed.

MARIANE

If I defied my father, as you suggest,
Would it not seem unmaidenly, at best?
Shall I defend my love at the expense
Of brazenness and disobedience?

Shall I parade my heart's desires, and flaunt . . .

DORINE

No, I ask nothing of you. Clearly you want
To be Mrs. Tartuffe, and I feel bound
Not to oppose a wish so very sound.
What right have I to criticize the match?
Indeed, my dear, the man's a brilliant catch.
Mister Tartuffe! Now, there's a man of weight!
Yes, yes, Mister Tartuffe, I'm bound to state,
Is quite a person; that's not to be denied;
'Twill be no little thing to be his bride.
The world already rings with his renown;
He's a great noble-in his native town;
His ears are red, he has a pink complexion,
And all in all, he'll suit you to perfection.

MARIANE

Dear God!

DORINE

Oh, how triumphant you will feel
At having caught a husband so ideal!

MARIANE

Oh, do stop teasing, and use your cleverness
To get me out of this appalling mess.
Advise me, and I'll do whatever you say.

DORINE

Ah no, a dutiful daughter must obey
Her father, even if he weds her to an ape.
You've a bright future; why struggle to escape?
Your husband . . .

MARIANE

Oh, you turn my blood to ice!
Stop torturing me, and give me your advice.

DORINE:

Your servant, Madam.

MARIANE

Dorine, I beg of you . . .

DORINE

No, you deserve it; this marriage must go through.

MARIANE

Dorine!

DORINE

No.

MARIANE

Not Tartuffe! You know I think him . .

DORINE

Tartuffe's your cup of tea, and you shall drink him.

MARIANE

I've always told you everything, and relied . . .

DORINE

No. You deserve to be tartuffified.

MARIANE

Well, since you mock me and refuse to care,
I'll henceforth seek my solace in despair:
Despair shall be my counsellor and friend,
And help me bring my sorrows to an end.

(She starts to leave.)

DORINE

There now, come back; my anger has subsided.
You do deserve some pity, I've decided.

MARIANE

Dorine, if Father makes me undergo
This dreadful martyrdom, I'll die, I know.

DORINE

Don't fret; it won't be difficult to discover
Some plan of action . . . But here's Valère, your lover.

SCENE 4
DORINE, MARIANE, VALERE

VALERE

Madam, I've just received some wondrous news
Regarding which I'd like to hear your views.

MARIANE

What news?

VALERE

You're marrying Tartuffe.

MARIANE

I find

That Father does have such a match in mind.

VALERE

Your father, Madam . . .

MARIANE

. . . has just this minute said

That it's Tartuffe he wishes me to wed.

VALERE

Can he be serious?

MARIANE

Oh, indeed he can;

He's clearly set his heart upon the plan.

VALERE

And what position do you propose to take,
Madam?

MARIANE

Why - I don't know.

VALERE

For heaven's sake-

You don't know?

No. MARIANE

Well, well! VALERE

MARIANE
Advise me, do.

Marry the man. That's my advice to you. VALERE

That's your advice? MARIANE

Yes. VALERE

Truly? MARIANE

Oh, absolutely.
You couldn't choose more wisely, more astutely. VALERE

Thanks for this counsel; I'll follow it, of course. MARIANE

Do, do; I'm sure 'twill cost you no remorse. VALERE

To give it didn't cause your heart to break. MARIANE

I gave it, Madam, only for your sake. VALERE

And it's for your sake that I take it, Sir. MARIANE

Let's see which fool will prove the stubbornner. DORINE

VALERE

So! I am nothing to you, and it was flat
Deception when you . . .

MARIANE

Please, enough of that.
You've told me plainly that I should agree
To wed the man my father's chosen for me,
And since you've deigned to counsel me so wisely,
I promise, Sir, to do as you advise me.

VALERE

Ah, no, 'twas not by me that you were swayed.
No, your decision was already made;
Though now, to save appearances, you protest
That you're betraying me at my behest.

MARIANE

Just as you say.

VALERE

Quite so. And I now see
That you were never truly in love with me.

MARIANE

Alas, you're free to think so if you choose.

VALERE

I choose to think so, and here's a bit of news:
You've spurned my hand, but I know where to turn
For kinder treatment, as you shall quickly learn.

MARIANE

I'm sure you do. Your noble qualities
Inspire affection . . .

VALERE

Forget my qualities, please.
They don't inspire you over much, I find.
But there's another lady I have in mind
Whose sweet and generous nature will not scorn
To compensate me for the loss I've borne.

MARIANE

I'm no great loss, and I'm sure that you'll transfer
Your heart quite painlessly from me to her.

VALERE

I'll do my best to take it in my stride.
The pain I feel at being cast aside
Time and forgetfulness may put an end to.
Or if I can't forget, I shall pretend to.
No self-respecting person is expected
To go on loving once he's been rejected.

MARIANE

Now, that's a fine, high-minded sentiment.

VALERE

One to which any sane man would assent.
Would you prefer it if I pined away
In hopeless passion till my dying day?

MARIANE

Go then: console yourself; don't hesitate.
I wish you to; indeed, I cannot wait.

VALERE

You wish me to?

MARIANE

Yes.

VALERE

That's the final straw.
Madam, farewell. Your wish shall be my law.
(*He starts to leave, and then returns repeatedly:*)

MARIANE

Splendid.

VALERE (*Coming back again:*)

This breach, remember, is of your making;
It's you who've driven me to the step I'm taking.

MARIANE

Of course.

VALERE (*Coming back again:*)
Remember, too, that I am merely
Following your example.

MARIANE
I see that clearly.

VALERE
Enough. I'll go and do your bidding, then.

MARIANE
Good.

VALERE (*Coming back again:*)
You shall never see my face again.

MARIANE
Excellent.

VALERE (*Walking to the door, then turning about*)
Yes?

MARIANE
What?

VALERE
What's that? What did you say?

MARIANE
Nothing. You're dreaming.

VALERE
Ah. Well, I'm on my way.
Farewell, Madame.
(*He moves slowly away.*)

MARIANE
Farewell.

DORINE
If you ask me,
Both of you are as mad as mad can be.
Do stop this nonsense, now, I've only let you
Squabble so long to see where it would get you.

Whoa there, dearest Valère!

(She goes and seizes Valère by the arm; he makes a great show of resistance.)

VALERE

What's this, Dorine?

DORINE

Come here.

VALERE

No, no, my heart's too full of spleen.

Don't hold me back; her wish must be obeyed.

DORINE

Stop!

VALERE

It's too late now; my decision's made.

DORINE

Oh, pooh!

MARIANE *(Aside:)*

He hates the sight of me, that's plain.

I'll go, and so deliver him from pain.

DORINE

(Leaving Valère, running after Mariana)

And now you run away! Come back.

MARIANE

No, no.

Nothing you say will keep me here. Let go!

VALERE *(Aside:)*

She cannot bear my presence, I perceive.

To spare her further torment, I shall leave.

DORINE

(Leaving Mariane, running after Valère:)

Again! You'll not escape, Sir; don't you try it.

Come here, you two. Stop fussing, and be quiet.

(She takes Valère by the band, then Mariane, and draws them together.)

VALERE (*to Dorine:*)

What do you want of me?

MARIANE (*to Dorine:*)

What is the point of this?

DORINE

We're going to have a little armistice.

(*to Valère:*) Now, weren't you silly to get so overheated?

VALERE

Didn't you see how badly I was treated?

DORINE (*To Mariane*)

Aren't you a simpleton, to have lost your head?

MARIANE

Didn't you hear the hateful things he said?

DORINE (*To Valère:*)

You're both great fools. Her sole desire, Valère,

Is to be yours in marriage. To that I'll swear.

(*To Mariane:*)

He loves you only, and he wants no wife

But you, Mariane. On that I'll stake my life.

MARIANE (*To Valère:*)

Then why you advised me so, I cannot see.

VALERE (*to Mariane*)

On such a question, why ask advice of me?

DORINE

Oh, you're impossible. Give me your hands, you two.

(*To Valère:*)

Yours first.

VALERE

(*Giving Dorine his hand:*) But why?

DORINE (*To Mariane*)

And now a hand from you.

MARIANE
(Also giving Dorine her hand:)

What are you doing?

DORINE

There: a perfect fit.
You suit each other better than you'll admit.

(Valère and Mariane hold hands for some time without looking at each other.)

VALERE

(Turning toward Mariana)
Ah, come, don't be so haughty. Give a man
A look of kindness, won't you, Mariane?
(Mariane turns toward Valère and smiles.)

DORINE

I tell you, lovers are completely mad!

VALERE *(To Mariane)*

Now come, confess that you were very bad
To hurt my feelings as you did just now.
I have a just complaint, you must allow.

MARIANE

You must allow that you were most unpleasant...

DORINE

Let's table that discussion for the present;
Your father has a plan which must be stopped.

MARIANE

Advise us, then; what means must we adopt?

DORINE

We'll use all manner of means, and all at once. *(To Mariane)*
Your father's addled; he's acting like a dunce.
Therefore you'd better humor the old fossil.
Pretend to yield to him, be sweet and docile,
And then postpone, as often as necessary,
The day on which you have agreed to marry.
You'll thus gain time, and time will turn the trick.
Sometimes, for instance, you'll be taken sick,
And that will seem good reason for delay;

Or some bad omen will make you change the day-
You'll dream of muddy water, or you'll pass
A dead man's hearse, or break a looking-glass.
If all else fails, no man can marry you
Unless you take his ring and say, "I do."
But now, let's separate. If they should find
Us talking here, our plot might be divined.
(*To Valère:*)
Go to your friends, and tell them what's occurred,
And have them urge her father to keep his word.
Meanwhile, we'll stir her brother into action,
And get Elmire, as well, to join our faction.
Good-bye.

VALERE (*To Mariane*)

Though each of us will do his best,
It's your true heart on which my hopes shall rest.

MARIANE (*To Valère:*)

Regardless of what Father may decide,
None but Valère shall claim me as his bride.

VALERE

Oh, how those words content me! Come what will . .

DORINE

Oh, lovers, lovers! Their tongues are never still.
Be off, now.

VALERE

(*Turning to go, then turning back*) One last word...

DORINE

No time to chat:

You leave by this door; and you leave by that.
(Dorine pushes them, toward opposing doors)

ACT III

SCENE ONE Damis, Dorine

DAMIS

May lightning strike me even as I speak,
May all men call me cowardly and weak.
If any fear or scruple holds me back
From settling things, at once, with that great quack!

DORINE

Now, don't give way to violent emotion.
Your father's merely talked about this notion,
And words and deeds are far from being one.
Much that is talked about is left undone.

DAMIS

No, I must stop that scoundrel's machinations;
I'll go and tell him off; I'm out of patience.

DORINE

Do calm down and be practical. I had rather
My mistress dealt with him - and with your father.
She has some influence with Tartuffe, I've noted.
He hangs upon her words, seems most devoted,
And may, indeed, be smitten by her charm.
Pray Heaven it's true! 'Twould do our cause no harm.
She sent for him just now, to sound him out
On this affair you're so incensed about;
She'll find out where he stands, and tell him, too,
What dreadful strife and trouble will ensue
If he lends countenance to your father's plan.
I couldn't get in to see him, but his man
Says that he's almost finished with his prayers.
Go, now. I'll catch him when he comes downstairs.

DAMIS

I want to hear this conference, and I will.

DORINE

No, they must be alone.

DAMIS

Oh, I'll keep still.

DORINE

Not you. I know your temper. You'd start a brawl,
And shout and stamp your foot and spoil it all.
Go on.

DAMIS

I won't; I have a perfect right . . .

DORINE

Lord, you're a nuisance! He's coming; get out of sight. (*Damis conceals himself.*)

SCENE TWO
Tartuffe, Dorine

TARTUFFE

(*Observing Dorine, and calling to his man offstage:*)

Hang up my hair-shirt, put my scourge in place,
And pray, Laurent, for Heaven's perpetual grace.
I'm going to the prison now, to share
My last few coins with the poor wretches there.

DORINE (*Aside*)

Dear God, what affectation! What a fake!

TARTUFFE

You wished to see me?

DORINE

Yes...

TARTUFFE

(*Taking a handkerchief from his pocket*)

For mercy's sake,

Please take this handkerchief, before you speak.

DORINE

What?

TARTUFFE

Cover that bosom, girl. The flesh is weak,
And unclean thoughts are difficult to control.
Such sights as that can undermine the soul.

DORINE

Your soul, it seems, has very poor defenses,
And flesh makes quite an impact on your senses.
It's strange that you're so easily excited;
My own desires are not so soon ignited,
And if I saw you naked as a beast,
Not all your hide would tempt me in the least.

TARTUFFE

Girl, speak more modestly; unless you do,
I shall be forced to take my leave of you.

DORINE

Oh, no, it's I who must be on my way;
I've just one little message to convey.
Madame is coming down, and begs you, Sir,
To wait and have a word or two with her.

TARTUFFE

Gladly.

DORINE (*Aside*)

That had a softening effect!
I think my guess about him was correct.

TARTUFFE

Will she be long?

DORINE

No: that's her step I hear.
Ah, here she is, and I shall disappear.

SCENE THREE
ELMIRE, TARTUFFE

TARTUFFE

May Heaven, whose infinite goodness we adore,
Preserve your body and soul forevermore,
And bless your days, and answer thus the plea
Of one who is its humblest votary.

ELMIRE

I thank you for that pious wish. But please,
Do take a chair and let's be more at ease.

TARTUFFE

I trust that you are once more well and strong?

ELMIRE

Oh, yes: the fever didn't last for long.

TARTUFFE

My prayers are too unworthy, I am sure,
To have gained from Heaven this most gracious cure;
But lately, Madam, my every supplication
Has had for object your recuperation.

ELMIRE

You shouldn't have troubled so. I don't deserve it.

TARTUFFE

Your health is priceless, Madam, and to preserve it
I'd gladly give my own, in all sincerity.

ELMIRE

Sir, you outdo us all in Christian charity.
You've been most kind. I count myself your debtor.

TARTUFFE

'Twas nothing, Madam. I long to serve you better.

ELMIRE

There's a private matter I'm anxious to discuss.
I'm glad there's no one here to hinder us.

TARTUFFE

I too am glad; it floods my heart with bliss
To find myself alone with you like this.
For just this chance I've prayed with all my power-
But prayed in vain, until this happy hour.

ELMIRE

This won't take long, Sir, and I hope you'll be
Entirely frank and unconstrained with me.

TARTUFFE

Indeed, there's nothing I had rather do
Than bare my inmost heart and soul to you.
First, let me say that what remarks I've made
About the constant visits you are paid
Were prompted not by any mean emotion,
But rather by a pure and deep devotion,
A fervent zeal . . .

ELMIRE

No need for explanation.
Your sole concern, I'm sure, was my salvation.

TARTUFFE

(Taking Elmire's hand and pressing her fingertips)
Quite so; and such great fervor do I feel . . .

ELMIRE

Ooh! Please! You're pinching!

TARTUFFE

'Twas from excess of zeal.
I never meant to cause you pain, I swear.
I'd rather . . .

(He places his hand on Elmire's knee.)

ELMIRE

What can your hand be doing there?

TARTUFFE

Feeling your gown; What soft, fine-woven stuff!

ELMIRE

Please, I'm extremely ticklish. That's enough.

(She draws her chair away; Tartuffe pulls his after her.)

TARTUFFE

My, my, what lovely lace work on your dress!
The workmanship's miraculous, no less.
I've not seen anything to equal it.

ELMIRE

Yes, quite. But let's talk business for a bit.
They say my husband means to break his word
And give his daughter to you, Sir. Had you heard?

TARTUFFE

He did once mention it. But I confess
I dream of quite a different happiness.
It's elsewhere, Madam, that my eyes discern
The promise of that bliss for which I yearn.

ELMIRE

I see: you care for nothing here below.

TARTUFFE

Ah, well - my heart's not made of stone, you know.

ELMIRE

All your desires mount heavenward, I'm sure,
In scorn of all that's earthly and impure.

TARTUFFE

A love of heavenly beauty does not preclude
A proper love for earthly pulchritude;
Our senses are quite rightly captivated
By perfect works our Maker has created.
Some glory clings to all that Heaven has made;
In you, all Heaven's marvels are displayed.
On that fair face, such beauties have been lavished,
The eyes are dazzled and the heart is ravished;
How could I look on you, O flawless creature,

And not adore the Author of all Nature,
Feeling a love both passionate and pure
For you, his triumph of self-portraiture?
It is, I know, presumptuous on my part
To bring you this poor offering of my heart,
And it is not my merit, Heaven knows,
But your compassion on which my hopes repose.
You are my peace, my solace, my salvation;
On you depends my bliss-or desolation;
I bide your judgment and, as you think best,
I shall be either miserable or blest.

ELMIRE

Your declaration is most gallant, Sir,
But don't you think it's out of character?
You'd have done better to restrain your passion
And think before you spoke in such a fashion.
It ill becomes a pious man like you...

TARTUFFE

I may be pious, but I'm human too:
With your celestial charms before his eyes,
A man has not the power to be wise.
I know such words sound strangely, coming from me,
But I'm no angel, nor was meant to be,
And if you blame my passion, you must needs
Reproach as well the charms on which it feeds.
Your loveliness I had no sooner seen
Than you became my soul's unrivalled queen;
If, in compassion for my soul's distress,
You'll stoop to comfort my unworthiness,
I'll raise to you, in thanks for that sweet manna,
An endless hymn, an infinite hosanna.
With me, of course, there need be no anxiety,
No fear of scandal or of notoriety.
These young court gallants, whom all the ladies fancy
Are vain in speech, in action rash and chancy;
When they succeed in love, the world soon knows it;
No favor's granted them but they disclose it
And by the looseness of their tongues profane
The very altar where their hearts have lain.
Men of my sort, however, love discreetly,
And one may trust our reticence completely.
My keen concern for my good name insures

The absolute security of yours;
In short, I offer you, my dear Elmire,
Love without scandal, pleasure without fear.

ELMIRE

I've heard your well-turned speeches to the end,
And what you urge I clearly apprehend.
Aren't you afraid that I may take a notion
To tell my husband of your warm devotion,
And that, supposing he were duly told,
His feelings toward you might grow rather cold?

TARTUFFE

I know, dear lady, that your exceeding charity
Will lead your heart to pardon my temerity;
That you'll excuse my violent affection
As human weakness, human imperfection;
And that - O fairest! --- you will bear in mind
That I'm but flesh and blood, and am not blind.

ELMIRE

Some women might do otherwise, perhaps,
But I shall be discreet about your lapse;
I'll tell my husband nothing of what's occurred
If, in return, you'll give your solemn word
To advocate as forcefully as you can
The marriage of Valère and Mariane,
Renouncing all desire to dispossess
Another of his rightful happiness,
And . . .

SCENE FOUR
ELMIRE, TARTUFFE, DAMIS

DAMIS

(Emerging from the closet where he has been hiding)

No! We'll not hush up this vile affair;
I heard it all inside that closet there,
Where Heaven, in order to confound the pride
Of this great rascal, prompted me to hide.
Ah, now I have my long-awaited chance
To punish his deceit and arrogance,
And give my father clear and shocking proof

Of the black character of his dear Tartuffe.

ELMIRE

Ah no, Damis; I'll be content if he
Will study to deserve my leniency.
I've promised silence - don't make me break my word;
To make a scandal would be too absurd.
Good wives laugh off such trifles, and forget them;
Why should they tell their husbands, and upset them?

DAMIS

You have your reasons for taking such a course,
And I have reasons, too, of equal force.
To spare him now would be insanely wrong.
I've swallowed my just wrath for far too long
And watched this insolent bigot bringing strife
And bitterness into our family life.
Too long he's meddled in my father's affairs,
Thwarting my marriage-hopes, and poor Valère's.
It's high time that my father was undeceived,
And now I've proof that can't be disbelieved -
Proof that was furnished me by Heaven above.
It's too good not to take advantage of.
This is my chance, and I deserve to lose it
If, for one moment, I hesitate to use it.

ELMIRE

Damis...

DAMIS

No, I must do what I think right.
Madam, my heart is bursting with delight,
And, say whatever you will, I'll not consent
To lose the sweet revenge on which I'm bent.
I'll settle matters without more ado;
And here, most opportunely, is my cue.

SCENE FIVE

ORGON, DAMIS, TARTUFFE, ELMIRE

DAMIS

Father, I'm glad you've joined us. Let us advise you
Of some fresh news which doubtless will surprise you.

You've just now been repaid with interest
For all your loving-kindness to our guest.
He's proved his warm and grateful feelings toward you;
It's with a pair of horns he would reward you.
Yes, I surprised him with your wife, and heard
His whole adulterous offer, every word.
She, with her all too gentle disposition,
Would not have told you of his proposition;
But I shall not make terms with brazen lechery,
And feel that not to tell you would be treachery.

ELMIRE

And I hold that one's husband's peace of mind
Should not be spoilt by tattle of this kind.
These are my sentiments, and I wish, Damis,
That you had heeded me and held your peace.

SCENE SIX
ORGON, DAMIS, TARTUFFE

ORGON

Can it be true, this dreadful thing I hear?

TARTUFFE

Yes, Brother, I'm a wicked man, I fear:
A wretched sinner, all depraved and twisted,
The greatest villain that has ever existed.
My life's one heap of crimes, which grows each minute;
There's naught but foulness and corruption in it;
And I perceive that Heaven, outraged by me,
Has chosen this occasion to mortify me.
Charge me with any deed you wish to name;
I'll not defend myself, but take the blame.
Believe what you are told, and drive Tartuffe
Like some base criminal from beneath your roof;
Yes, drive me hence, and with a parting curse:
I shan't protest, for I deserve far worse.

ORGON
(to Damis)

Ah, you deceitful boy, how dare you try
To stain his purity with so foul a lie?

DAMIS

What! Are you taken in by such a bluff?
Did you not hear...?

ORGON

Enough, you rogue, enough!

TARTUFFE

Ah, Brother, let him speak: you're being unjust.
Believe his story; the boy deserves your trust.
Why, after all, should you have faith in me?
How can you know what I might do, or be?
Is it on my good actions that you base
Your favor? Do you trust my pious face?
Ah, no, don't be deceived by hollow shows;
I'm far, alas, from being what men suppose;
Though the world takes me for a man of worth,
I'm truly the most worthless man on earth.

(To Damis:)

Yes, my dear son, speak out now: call me the chief
Of sinners, a wretch, a murderer, a thief;
Load me with all the names men most abhor;
I'll not complain; I've earned them all, and more;
I'll kneel here while you pour them on my head
As a just punishment for the life I've led.

ORGON

This is too much, dear Brother.

(To Damis)

Have you no heart?

DAMIS

Are you so hoodwinked by this rascal's art. . . ?

ORGON

Be still, you monster. *(To Tartuffe:)*

Brother, I pray you, rise.

(to Damis) Villain!

DAMIS

But...

ORGON

Silence!

DAMIS
Can't you realize . . . ?

ORGON
Just one word more, and I'll tear you limb from limb.

TARTUFFE
In God's name, Brother, don't be harsh with him.
I'd rather far be tortured at the stake
Than see him bear one scratch for my poor sake.

ORGON
Ingrate!

TARTUFFE
If I must beg you, on bended knee,
To pardon him...

ORGON
(Failing to his knees, addressing Tartuffe:)
Such goodness cannot be!
(To Damis)
Now, there's true charity!

DAMIS
What, you...?

ORGON
Villain, be still!
I know your motives; I know you wish him ill:
Yes, all of you - wife, children, servants, all --
Conspire against him and desire his fall,
Employing every shameful trick you can
To alienate me from this saintly man.
Ah, but the more you seek to drive him away,
The more I'll do to keep him.
Without delay, I'll spite this household and confound its pride
By giving him my daughter as his bride.

DAMIS
You're going to force her to accept his hand?

ORGON

Yes, and this very night, d'you understand?
I shall defy you all, and make it clear
That I'm the one who gives the orders here.
Come, wretch, kneel down and clasp his blessed feet,
And ask his pardon for your black deceit.

DAMIS

I ask that swindler's pardon? Why, I'd rather . . .

ORGON

So! You insult him, and defy your father!
A stick! A stick! (to *Tartuffe*) No, no- release me, do.
(To *Damis*:)
Out of my house this minute! Be off with you,
And never dare set foot in it again.

DAMIS

Well, I shall go, but . . .

ORGON

Well, go quickly, then.

I disinherit you; an empty purse
Is all you'll get from me - except my curse!

SCENE SEVEN ORGON, TARTUFFE

ORGON

How he blasphemed your good name! What a son!

TARTUFFE

Forgive him, Lord, as I've already done.
You can't know how it hurts when someone tries
To blacken me in my dear Brother's eyes.

ORGON

Ahh!

TARTUFFE

The mere thought of such ingratitude
Plunges my soul into so dark a mood . . .
Such horror grips my heart . . . I gasp for breath,

And cannot speak, and feel myself near death.

ORGON

*(He runs, in tears, to the door through which he
has just driven his son.)*

You blackguard! Why did I spare you? Why did I not
Break you in little pieces on the spot?
Compose yourself, and don't be hurt, dear friend.

TARTUFFE

These scenes, these dreadful quarrels, have got to end.
I've much upset your household, and I perceive
That the best thing will be for me to leave.

ORGON

What are you saying!

TARTUFFE

They're all against me here;
They'd have you think me false and insincere.

ORGON

Ah, what of that? Have I ceased believing in you?

TARTUFFE

Their adverse talk will certainly continue,
And charges which you now repudiate
You may find credible at a later date.

ORGON

No, Brother, never.

TARTUFFE

Brother, a wife can sway
Her husband's mind in many a subtle way.

ORGON

No, no.

TARTUFFE

To leave at once is the solution;
Thus only can I end their persecution.

ORGON

No, no, I'll not allow it; you shall remain.

TARTUFFE

Ah, well; 'twill mean much martyrdom and pain,
But if you wish it ...

ORGON

Ah!

TARTUFFE

Enough; so be it.

But one thing must be settled, as I see it.
For your dear honor, and for our friendship's sake,
There's one precaution I feel bound to take.
I shall avoid your wife, and keep away . . .

ORGON

No, you shall not, whatever they may say.
It pleases me to vex them, and for spite
I'd have them see you with her day and night.
What's more, I'm going to drive them to despair
By making you my only son and heir;
This very day, I'll give to you alone
Clear deed and title to everything I own.
A dear, good friend and son-in-law-to-be
Is more than wife, or child, or kin to me.
Will you accept my offer, dearest son?

TARTUFFE

In all things, let the will of Heaven be done.

ORGON

Poor fellow! Come, we'll go draw up the deed.
Then let them burst with disappointed greed!

ACT IV

SCENE ONE CLEANTE, TARTUFFE

CLEANTE

Yes, all the town's discussing it, and truly,
Their comments do not flatter you unduly.
I'm glad we've met, Sir, and I'll give my view
Of this sad matter in a word or two.
As for who's guilty, that I shan't discuss;
Let's say it was Damis who caused the fuss;
Assuming, then, that you have been ill-used
By young Damis, and groundlessly accused,
Ought not a Christian to forgive, and ought
He not to stifle every vengeful thought?

TARTUFFE

Alas, for my part I should take great joy
In doing so. I've nothing against the boy.
I pardon all, I harbor no resentment;
To serve him would afford me much contentment.
But Heaven's interest will not have it so:
If he comes back, then I shall have to go.
After his conduct - so extreme, so vicious -
Our further intercourse would look suspicious.
God knows what people would think! Why, they'd describe
My goodness to him as a sort of bribe; ...

CLEANTE

Your reasoning is badly warped and stretched,
And these excuses, Sir, are most far-fetched.
Why put yourself in charge of Heaven's cause?
Does Heaven need our help to enforce its laws?
Leave vengeance to the Lord, Sir; while we live,
Our duty's not to punish, but forgive;

TARTUFFE

Again, Sir, let me say that I've forgiven
Damis, and thus obeyed the laws of Heaven;

But I am not commanded by the Bible
To live with one who smears my name with libel.

CLEANTE

Were you commanded, Sir, to indulge the whim
Of poor Orgon, and to encourage him
In suddenly transferring to your name
A large estate to which you have no claim?

TARTUFFE

'Twould never occur to those who know me best
To think I acted from self-interest.
The treasures of this world I quite despise;
Their specious glitter does not charm my eyes;
And if I have resigned myself to taking
The gift which my dear Brother insists on making,
I do so only, as he well understands,
Lest so much wealth fall into wicked hands,
Lest those to whom it might descend in time
Turn it to purposes of sin and crime,
And not, as I shall do, make use of it
For Heaven's glory and mankind's benefit.

CLEANTE

Forget these trumped-up fears. Your argument
Is one the rightful heir might well resent;
It *is* a moral burden to inherit
Such wealth, but give Damis a chance to bear it.
Would it not be the decent thing to beat
A generous and honorable retreat,
Rather than let the son of the house be sent,
For your convenience, into, banishment?
Sir, if you wish to prove the honesty
Of your intentions . . .

TARTUFFE

Sir, it is half-past three.
I've certain pious duties to attend to,
And hope my prompt departure won't offend you. (*exits*)

CLEANTE

Damn.

SCENE TWO
ELMIRE, MARIANE, CLEANTE, DORINE

DORINE

Stay, Sir, and help Mariane, for Heaven's sake!
She's suffering so, I fear her heart will break.
Her father's plan to marry her off tonight
Has put the poor child in a desperate plight.
I hear him coming. Let's stand together, now,
And see if we can't change his mind, somehow,
About this match we all deplore and fear.

SCENE THREE
ORGON, ELMIRE, MARIANE, CLEANTE, DORINE

ORGON

Hah! Glad to find you all assembled here. *(To Mariana)*
This contract, child, contains your happiness,
And what it says I think your heart can guess.

MARIANE

(Falling to her knees)

Sir, by that Heaven which sees me here distressed,
And by whatever else can move your breast,
Do not employ a father's power, I pray you,
To crush my heart and force it to obey you,
Nor by your harsh commands oppress me so
That I'll begrudge the duty which I owe -
And do not so embitter and enslave me
That I shall hate the very life you gave me.
If my sweet hopes must perish, if you refuse
To give me to the one I've dared to choose,
Spare me at least-I beg you, I implore-
The pain of wedding one whom I abhor;
And do not, by a heartless use of force,
Drive me to contemplate some desperate course.

ORGON

Be firm, my soul. No human weakness, now.

MARIANE

I don't resent your love for him. Allow
Your heart free rein, Sir; give him your property,
And if that's not enough, take mine from me;
He's welcome to my money; take it, do,
But don't, I pray, include my person too.
Spare me, I beg you; and let me end the tale
Of my sad days behind a convent veil.

ORGON

A convent! Hah! When crossed in their amours,
All lovesick girls have the same thought as yours.
Get up! The more you loathe the man, and dread him,
The more ennobling it will be to wed him.
Marry Tartuffe, and mortify your flesh!
Enough; don't start that whimpering afresh.

DORINE

But why...?

ORGON

Be still, there. Speak when you're spoken to.
Not one more bit of impudence out of you.

CLEANTE

If I may offer a word of counsel here . . .

ORGON

Brother, in counseling you have no peer;
All your advice is forceful, sound, and clever;
I don't propose to follow it, however.

ELMIRE

I am amazed, and don't know what to say;
Your blindness simply takes my breath away.
You are indeed bewitched, to take no warning
From our account of what occurred this morning.

ORGON

Madam, I know a few plain facts, and one
Is that you're partial to my rascal son;
Hence, when he sought to make Tartuffe the victim
Of a base lie, you dared not contradict him.

Ah, but you underplayed your part, my pet;
You should have looked more angry, more upset.

ELMIRE

When men make overtures, must we reply
With righteous anger and a battle-cry?
Must we turn back their amorous advances
With sharp reproaches and with fiery glances?
Myself, I find such offenses merely amusing,
And make no scenes and fusses in refusing.
I've found that a polite and cool rebuff
Discourages a lover quite enough.

ORGON

I know the facts, and I shall not be shaken.

ELMIRE

I marvel at your power to be mistaken.
Would it, I wonder, carry weight with you
If I could show you that our tale was true?

ORGON

Show me?

ELMIRE

Yes.

ORGON

Rot.

ELMIRE

Come, what if I found away
To make you see the facts as plain as day?

ORGON

Nonsense.

ELMIRE

Do answer me; don't be absurd.
I'm not now asking you to trust our word.
Suppose that from some hiding-place in here
You learned the whole sad truth by eye and ear -
What would you say of your good friend, after that?

ORGON

Why, I'd say . . . nothing, by Jehoshaphat!
It can't be true.

ELMIRE

You've been too long deceived,
And I'm quite tired of being disbelieved.
Come now: let's put my statements to the test,
And you shall see the truth made manifest.

ORGON

I'll take that challenge. Now do your uttermost.
We'll see how you make good your empty boast.

ELMIRE

(To Dorine:)

Send him to me.

DORINE

He's crafty; it may be hard
To catch the cunning scoundrel off his guard.

ELMIRE

No, amorous men are gullible. Their conceit
So blinds them that they're never hard to cheat.
Have him come down. *(To Cleante & Mariana)* Please
leave us, for a bit.

SCENE FOUR
ELMIRE, ORGON

ELMIRE

Pull up this table, and get under it.

ORGON

What?

ELMIRE

It's essential that you be well-hidden.

ORGON

Why there?

ELMIRE

Oh, Heavens! Just do as you are bidden.
I have my plans; we'll soon see how they fare.
Under the table, now; and once you're there,
Take care that you are neither seen nor heard.

ORGON

Well, I'll indulge you, since I gave my word
To see you through this infantile charade.

ELMIRE

Once it is over, you'll be glad we played.
(Orgon is under the table)
I'm going to act quite strangely, now, and you
Must not be shocked at anything I do.
Whatever I may say, you must excuse
As part of that deceit I'm forced to use.
I shall employ sweet speeches in the task
Of making that imposter drop his mask;
I'll give encouragement to his bold desires,
And furnish fuel to his amorous fires.
Since it's for your sake, and for his destruction,
That I shall seem to yield to his seduction,
I'll gladly stop whenever you decide
That all your doubts are fully satisfied.
I'll count on you, as soon as you have seen
What sort of man he is, to intervene,
And not expose me to his odious lust
One moment longer than you feel you must.
Remember: you're to save me from my plight
Whenever . . . He's coming! Hush! Keep out of sight!

SCENE FIVE
TARTUFFE, ELMIRE, ORGON

TARTUFFE

You wish to have a word with me, I'm told.

ELMIRE

Yes. I've a little secret to unfold.
Before I speak, however, it would be wise
To close that door, and look about for spies.

(Tartuffe dismisses his men)

The very last thing that must happen now
Is a repetition of this morning's row.
I've never been so badly caught off guard.
Oh, how I feared for you! You saw how hard
I tried to make that troublesome Damis
Control his dreadful temper, and hold his peace.
In my confusion, I didn't have the sense
Simply to contradict his evidence;
But as it happened, that was for the best,
And all has worked out in our interest.
This storm has only bettered your position;
My husband doesn't have the least suspicion,
And now, in mockery of those who do,
He bids me be continually with you.
And that is why, quite fearless of reproof,
I now can be alone with my Tartuffe,
And why my heart-perhaps too quick to yield -
Feels free to let its passion be revealed.

TARTUFFE

Madam, your words confuse me. Not long ago,
You spoke in quite a different style, you know.

ELMIRE

Ah, Sir, if that refusal made you smart,
It's little that you know of woman's heart,
Or what that heart is trying to convey
When it resists in such a feeble way!
Always, at first, out modesty prevents
The frank avowal of tender sentiments;
However high the passion which inflames us.
Still, to confess its power somehow shames us.
Thus we reluct, at first, yet in a tone
Which tells you that our heart is overthrown,
That what our lips deny, our pulse confesses,
And that, in time, all noes will turn to yesses.
I fear my words are all too frank and free,
And a poor proof of woman's modesty;
But since I'm started, tell me, if you will -
Would I have tried to make Damis be still,
Would I have listened, calm and unoffended,
Until your lengthy offer of love was ended,
And been so very mild in my reaction,

Had your sweet words not given me satisfaction?
And when I tried to force you to undo
The marriage-plans my husband has in view,
What did my urgent pleading signify
If not that I admired you, and that I
Deplored the thought that someone else might own
Part of a heart I wished for mine alone?

TARTUFFE

Madam, no happiness is so complete
As when, from lips we love, come words so sweet;
Their nectar floods my every sense, and drains
In honeyed rivulets through all my veins.
To please you is my joy, my only goal;
Your love is the restorer of my soul;
And yet I must beg leave, now, to confess
Some lingering doubts as to my happiness.
Might this not be a trick? Might not the catch
Be that you wish me to break off the match
With Mariane, and so have feigned to love me?
I shan't quite trust your fond opinion of me
Until the feelings you've expressed so sweetly
Are demonstrated somewhat more concretely,
And you have shown, by certain kind concessions,
That I may put my faith in your professions.

ELMIRE

(She coughs, to warn her husband.)

Why be in such a hurry? Must my heart
Exhaust its bounty at the very start?
To make that sweet admission cost me dear,
But you'll not be content, it would appear,
Unless my store of favors is disbursed
To the last farthing, and at the very first.

TARTUFFE

The less we merit, the less we dare to hope,
And with our doubts, mere words can never cope.
We trust no promised bliss till we receive it;
Not till a joy is ours can we believe it.
I, who so little merit your esteem,
Can't credit this fulfillment of my dream,
And shan't believe it, Madam, until I savor
Some palpable assurance of your favor.

ELMIRE

My, how tyrannical your love can be,
And how it flusters and perplexes me!
How furiously you take one's heart in hand,
And make your every wish a fierce command!
Come, must you hound and harry me to death?
Will you not give me time to catch my breath?
Can it be right to press me with such force,
Give me no quarter, show me no remorse,
And take advantage, by your stern insistence,
Of the fond feelings which weaken my resistance?

TARTUFFE

Well, if you look with favor upon my love,
Why, then, begrudge me some clear proof thereof?

ELMIRE

But how can I consent without offense
To Heaven, toward which you feel such reverence?

TARTUFFE

If Heaven is all that holds you back, don't worry.
I can remove that hindrance in a hurry.
Nothing of that sort need obstruct our path.

ELMIRE

Must one not be afraid of Heaven's wrath?

TARTUFFE

Madam, forget such fears, and be my pupil,
And I shall teach you how to conquer scruple.
Some joys, it's true, are wrong in Heaven's eyes;
Yet Heaven is not averse to compromise;
There is a science, lately formulated,
Whereby one's conscience may be liberated,
And any wrongful act you care to mention
May be redeemed by purity of intention.
I'll teach you, Madam, the secrets of that science;
Meanwhile, just place on me your full reliance.
Assuage my keen desires, and feel no dread:
The sin, if any, shall be on my head.
(Elmire coughs, this time more loudly.)
You've a bad cough.

ELMIRE

Yes, yes. It's bad indeed.

TARTUFFE

(Producing a little paper bag:)

A bit of licorice may be what you need.

ELMIRE

No, I've a stubborn cold, it seems. I'm sure it
Will take much more than licorice to cure it.

TARTUFFE

How aggravating.

ELMIRE

Oh, more than I can say.

TARTUFFE

If you're still troubled, think of things this way:
No one shall know our joys, save us alone,
And there's no evil till the act is known;
It's scandal, Madam, which makes it an offense,
And it's no sin to sin in confidence.

ELMIRE

(Having coughed once more:)

Well, clearly I must do as you require,
And yield to your importunate desire.
It is apparent, now, that nothing less
Will satisfy you, and so I acquiesce.
To go so far is much against my will;
I'm vexed that it should come to this; but still,
Since you are so determined on it, since you
Will not allow mere language to convince you,
And since you ask for concrete evidence, I
See nothing for it, now, but to comply.
If this is sinful, if I'm wrong to do it,
So much the worse for him who drove me to it.
The fault can surely not be charged to me.

TARTUFFE

Madam, the fault is mine, if fault there be,
And . . .

ELMIRE

Open the door a little, and peek out;
I wouldn't want my husband poking about.

TARTUFFE

Why worry about the man? Each day he grows
More gullible; one can lead him by the nose.
To find us here would fill him with delight,
And if he saw the worst, he'd doubt his sight.

ELMIRE

Nevertheless, do step out for a minute
Into the hall, and see that no one's in it.

SCENE SIX
ORGON, ELMIRE

ORGON

(Coming out from under the table)

That man's a perfect monster, I must admit!
I'm simply stunned. I can't get over it.

ELMIRE

What, coming out so soon? How premature!
Get back in hiding, and wait until you're sure.
Stay till the end, and be convinced completely;
We mustn't stop till things are proved concretely.

ORGON

Hell never harbored anything so vicious!

ELMIRE

Tut, don't be hasty. Try to be judicious.
Wait, and be certain that there's no mistake.
No jumping to conclusions, for Heaven's sake!
(She places Orgon behind her, a Tartuffe re-enters.)

SCENE SEVEN
TARTUFFE, ELMIRE, ORGON

TARTUFFE

Madam, all things have worked out to perfection;
I've given the neighboring rooms a full inspection;
No one's about; and now I may at last . . .

ORGON

(revealing himself)

Hold on, my passionate fellow, not so fast!
I should advise a little more restraint.
Well, so you thought you'd fool me, my dear saint!
How soon you wearied of the saintly life -
Wedding my daughter, and coveting my wife!
I've long suspected you, and had a feeling
That soon I'd catch you at your double-dealing.
Just now, you've given me evidence galore;
It's quite enough; I have no wish for more.

ELMIRE

I'm sorry to have treated you so slyly,
But circumstances forced me to be wily.

TARTUFFE

Brother, you can't think . . .

ORGON

No more talk from you;
Just leave this household, without more ado.

TARTUFFE

What I intended . . .

ORGON

That seems fairly clear.
Spare me your falsehoods and get out of here.

TARTUFFE

No, I'm the master, and you're the one to go!
This house belongs to me, I'll have you know,
And I shall show you that you can't hurt me
By this contemptible conspiracy,
That those who cross me know not what they do,

And that I've means to expose and punish you,
Avenge offended Heaven, and make you grieve
That ever you dared order me to leave.

SCENE EIGHT
ELMIRE, ORGON

ELMIRE

What was the point of all that angry chatter?

ORGON

Dear God, I'm worried. This is no laughing matter.

ELMIRE

How so?

ORGON

I fear I understood his drift.
I'm much disturbed about that deed of gift.

ELMIRE

You gave him . . . ?

ORGON

Yes, it's all been drawn and signed.
But one thing more is weighing on my mind.

ELMIRE

What's that?

ORGON

I'll tell you; but first let's see if there's
A certain strong-box in his room upstairs.

ACT V

SCENE ONE ORGON, CLEANTE

CLEANTE

Where are you going so fast?

ORGON

God knows!

CLEANTE

Then wait;

Let's have a conference, and deliberate
On how this situation's to be met.

ORGON

That strong-box has me utterly upset;
This is the worst of many, many shocks.

CLEANTE

Is there some fearful mystery in that box?

ORGON

My poor friend Argas brought that box to me
With his own hands, in utmost secrecy;
'Twas on the very morning of his flight.
It's full of papers which, if they came to light,
Would ruin him - or such is my impression.

CLEANTE

Then why did you let it out of your possession?

ORGON

Those papers vexed my conscience, and it seemed best
To ask the counsel of my pious guest.
The cunning scoundrel got me to agree
To leave the strong-box in his custody,

So that, in case of an investigation,
I could employ a slight equivocation
And swear I didn't have it, and thereby,
At no expense to conscience, tell a lie.

CLEANTE

It looks to me as if you're out on a limb.
Trusting him with that box, and offering him
That deed of gift, were actions of a kind
Which scarcely indicate a prudent mind.
With two such weapons, he has the upper hand,
And since you're vulnerable, as matters stand,
You erred once more in bringing him to bay.
You should have acted in some subtler way.

ORGON

Just think of it: behind that fervent face,
A heart so wicked, and a soul so base!
I took him in, a hungry beggar, and then...
Enough, by God! I'm through with pious men:
Henceforth I'll hate the whole false brotherhood,
And persecute them worse than Satan could.

CLEANTE

Ah, there you go - extravagant as ever!
Why can you not be rational? You never
Manage to take the middle course, it seems,
But jump, instead, between absurd extremes.
You've recognized your recent grave mistake
In falling victim to a pious fake;
Now, to correct that error, must you embrace
An even greater error in its place,
And judge our worthy neighbors as a whole
By what you've learned of one corrupted soul?
Be cautious in bestowing admiration,
And cultivate a sober moderation.
Don't humor fraud, but also don't asperse
True piety; the latter fault is worse,
And it is best to err, if err one must,
As you have done, upon the side of trust.

SCENE TWO
DAMIS, ORGON, CLEANTE

DAMIS

Father, I hear that scoundrel's uttered threats
Against you; that he pridefully forgets ...

ORGON

It's true, my boy. I'm too distressed for tears.

DAMIS

Leave it to me, Sir; let me trim his ears.
Faced with such insolence, we must not waver.
I shall rejoice in doing you the favor
Of cutting short his life, and your distress.

CLEANTE

What a display of young hotheadedness!
Do learn to moderate your fits of rage.
In this just country, this enlightened age,
One does not settle things by violence.

SCENE THREE

MME. PERNELLE, MARIANE, ELMIRE, DORINE, DAMIS, ORGON, CLEANTE

MADAME PERNELLE

I hear strange tales of very strange events.

ORGON

Yes, strange events which these two eyes beheld.
The man's ingratitude is unparalleled.
I save a wretched pauper from starvation,
House him, and treat him like a blood relation,
Shower him every day with my largesse,
Give him my daughter, and all that I possess;
And meanwhile the unconscionable knave
Tries to induce my wife to misbehave;
And not content with such extreme rascality,
Now threatens me with my own liberality,
And aims, by taking base advantage of
The gifts I gave him out of Christian love,
To drive me from my house, a ruined man,
And make me end a pauper, as he began.

DORINE

Poor fellow!

MADAME PERNELLE

No, my son, I'll never bring
Myself to think him guilty of such a thing.

ORGON

How's that?

MADAME PERNELLE

The righteous always were maligned.

ORGON

Speak clearly, Mother. Say what's on your mind.

MADAME PERNELLE

I mean that I can smell a rat, my dear.
You know how everybody hates him here.

ORGON

That has no bearing on the case at all.

MADAME PERNELLE

I told you a hundred times, when you were small,
That virtue in this world is hated ever;
Malicious men may die, but malice never.

ORGON

No doubt that's true, but how does it apply?

MADAME PERNELLE

They've turned you against him by a clever lie.

ORGON

I've told you, I was there and saw it done.

MADAME PERNELLE

Ah, slanderers will stop at nothing, Son.

ORGON

Mother, I'll lose my temper . . . For the last time,
I tell you I was witness to the crime.

MADAME PERNELLE

The tongues of spite are busy night and noon,
And to their venom no man is immune.

ORGON

You're talking nonsense. Can't you realize
I saw it; saw it; saw it with my eyes?
Saw, do you understand me? Must I shout it
Into your ears before you'll cease to doubt it?

MADAME PERNELLE

Appearances can deceive, my son. Dear me,
We cannot always judge by what we see.

ORGON

Drat! Drat!

MADAME PERNELLE

One often interprets things awry;
Good can seem evil to a suspicious eye.

ORGON

Was I to see his pawing at Elmire
As an act of charity?

MADAME PERNELLE

Till his guilt is clear,
A man deserves the benefit of the doubt.
You should have waited, to see how things turned out.

ORGON

Great God in Heaven, what more proof did I need?
Was I to sit there, watching, until he'd . . .
You drive me to the brink of impropriety.

MADAME PERNELLE

No, no, a man of such surpassing piety
Could not do such a thing. You cannot shake me.
I don't believe it, and you shall not make me.

ORGON

You vex me so that, if you weren't my mother,
I'd say to you . . . some dreadful thing or other.

DORINE

It's your turn now, Sir, not to be listened to;
You'd not trust us, and now she won't trust you.

CLEANTE

My friends, we're wasting time which should be spent
In facing up to our predicament.
I fear that scoundrel's threats weren't made in sport.

DAMIS

Do you think he'd have the nerve to go to court?

ELMIRE

I'm sure he won't: they'd find it all too crude
A case of swindling and ingratitude.

CLEANTE

Don't be too sure. He won't be at a loss
To give his claims a high and righteous gloss;
And clever rogues with far less valid cause
Have trapped their victims in a web of laws.
I say again that to antagonize
A man so strongly armed was most unwise.

ORGON

I know it; but the man's appalling cheek
Outrage me so, I couldn't control my pique.

CLEANTE

I wish to Heaven that we could devise
Some truce between you, or some compromise.

ELMIRE

If I had known what cards he held, I'd not
Have roused his anger by my little plot.

ORGON

(To Dorine, as M. Loyal enters)

What is that fellow looking for? Who is he?
Go talk to him - and tell him that I'm busy.

SCENE FOUR

M. LOYAL, MME. PERNELLE, MARIANE, ELMIRE, DORINE, DAMIS, ORGON, CLEANTE

MONSIEUR LOYAL

Good day, dear sister. Kindly let me see
Your master.

DORINE

He's involved with company,
And cannot be disturbed just now, I fear.

MONSIEUR LOYAL

I hate to intrude; but what has brought me here
Will not disturb your master, in any event.
Indeed, my news will make him most content.

DORINE

Your name?

MONSIEUR LOYAL

Just say that I bring greetings from
Mister Tartuffe, on whose behalf I've come.

DORINE

Sir, he's a very gracious man, and bears
A message from Tartuffe, which, he declares,
Will make you most content.

CLEANTE

Upon my word,
I think this man had best be seen, and heard.

ORGON

Perhaps he has some settlement to suggest.
How shall I treat him? What manner would be best?

CLEANTE

Control your anger, and if he should mention
Some fair adjustment, give him your full attention.

MONSIEUR LOYAL

Good health to you, good Sir. May Heaven confound
Your enemies, and may your joys abound.

ORGON
(*Aside to Cleante*)

A gentle salutation: it confirms
My guess that he is here to offer terms.

MONSIEUR LOYAL

I've always held your family most dear;
I served your father, Sir, for many a year.

ORGON

Sir, I must ask your pardon; to my shame,
I cannot now recall your face or name.

MONSIEUR LOYAL

Loyal's my name; I come from Chicopee,
And I'm a bailiff, in all modesty.
For forty years, praise God, it's been my boast
To serve with honor in that vital post,
And I am here, Sir, if you will permit
The liberty, to serve you with this writ . . .

ORGON

To-*what*?

MONSIEUR LOYAL

Now, please, Sir, let us have no friction:
It's nothing but an order of eviction.
You are to move your goods and family out
And make way for new occupants, without
Deferment or delay, and give the keys . . .

ORGON

I? Leave this house?

MONSIEUR LOYAL

Why yes, Sir, if you please.
This house, Sir, from the cellar to the roof,
Belongs now to our good friend Tartuffe,
And he is lord and master of your estate
By virtue of a deed of present date,
Drawn in due form, with clearest legal phrasing . . .

DAMIS

Your insolence is utterly amazing!

MONSIEUR LOYAL

Young man, my business here is not with you,
But with your wise and temperate father, who,
Like every worthy citizen, stands in awe
Of justice, and would never obstruct the law.

ORGON

But...

MONSIEUR LOYAL

Not for a million, Sir, would you rebel
Against authority; I know that 'well.
You'll not make trouble, Sir, or interfere
With the execution of my duties here.

DAMIS

Someone may execute a smart tattoo
On that black jacket of yours, before you're through.

MONSIEUR LOYAL

Sir, bid your son be silent. I'd much regret
Having to mention such a nasty threat
Of violence, in writing my report.

DORINE

(Aside)

This man Loyal's a most disloyal sort!

MONSIEUR LOYAL

I love all men of upright character,
And when I agreed to serve these papers, Sir,
It was your feelings that I had in mind.
I couldn't bear to see the case assigned
To someone else, who might esteem you less
And so subject you to unpleasantness.

ORGON

What's more unpleasant than telling a man to leave
His house and home?

MONSIEUR LOYAL

You'd like a short reprieve?
If you desire it, Sir, I shall not press you,

But wait until tomorrow to dispossess you.
Splendid. I'll come and spend the night here, then,
Most quietly, with half a score of men.
For form's sake, you might bring me, just before
You go to bed, the keys to the front door.
My men, I promise, will be on their best
Behavior, and will not disturb your rest.
But bright and early, Sir, you must be quick
And move out all your furniture, every stick:

ORGON (*Aside*)

I may be all but bankrupt, but I vow
I'd give a hundred bucks, here and now,
Just for the pleasure of landing one good clout
Right on the end of that complacent snout.

CLEANTE

Careful; don't make things worse.

DAMIS

My bootsole itches

To give that beggar a good kick in the breeches.

DORINE

Monsieur Loyal, I'd love to hear the whack
Of a stout stick across your fine broad back.

MONSIEUR LOYAL

Take care: a woman too may go to jail if
She uses threatening language to a bailiff.

CLEANTE

Enough, enough, Sir. This must not go on.
Give me that paper, please, and then begone.

MONSIEUR LOYAL

Well, au revoir. God give you all good cheer!

ORGON

May God confound you, and him who sent you here!

SCENE FIVE
ORGON, CLEANTE, MARIANE, ELMIRE, MME. PERNELLE, DORINE, DAMIS

ORGON

Now, Mother, was I right or not? This writ
Should change your notion of Tartuffe a bit.
Do you perceive his villainy at last?

MADAME PERNELLE

I'm thunderstruck. I'm utterly aghast.

DORINE

Oh, come, be fair. You mustn't take offense
At this new proof of his benevolence.
He's acting out of selfless love, I know.
Material things enslave the soul, and so
He kindly has arranged your liberation
From all that might endanger your salvation.

ORGON

Will you not ever hold your tongue, you dunce?

CLEANTE

Come, you must take some action, and at once.

ELMIRE

Go tell the world of the low trick he's tried.
The deed of gift is surely nullified
By such behavior, and public rage will not
Permit the wretch to carry out his plot.

SCENE SIX
VALERE, ORGON, CLEANTE, MARIANE, ELMIRE, MME. PERNELLE, DORINE, DAMIS

VALERE

Sir, though I hate to bring you more bad news,
Such is the danger that I cannot choose.
A friend who is extremely close to me
And knows my interest in your family
Has, for my sake, presumed to violate
The secrecy that's due to things of state,
And sends me word that you are in a plight
From which your one salvation lies in flight.

That scoundrel who's imposed upon you so
Denounced you to the court an hour ago
And, as supporting evidence, displayed
The strong-box of a certain renegade
Whose secret papers, so he testified,
You had disloyally agreed to hide.
I don't know just what charges may be pressed,
But there's a warrant out for your arrest;
Tartuffe has been instructed, furthermore,
To guide the arresting officer to your door.

CLEANTE

He's clearly done this to facilitate
His seizure of your house and your estate.

VALERE

My carriage is outside, to take you hence;
This money should cover all expense.
Let's lose no time, or you shall be undone;
The sole defense, in this case, is to run.
I shall go with you all the way, and place you
In a safe refuge to which they'll never trace you.

ORGON

Alas, dear boy, I wish that I could show you
My gratitude for everything I owe you.
But now is not the time; I pray the Lord
That I may live to give you your reward.
Farewell, my dears; be careful . . .

CLEANTE:

Brother, hurry.

We shall take care of things; you needn't worry.

SCENE SEVEN

OFFICER, TARTUFFE, VALERE, ORGON, CLEANTE, MARIANE, ELMIRE, MME. PERNELLE,
DORINE, DAMIS

TARTUFFE

Gently, Sir, gently; stay right where you are.
No need for haste; your lodging isn't far.
You're off to prison, by order of the Judge.

ORGON

This is the crowning blow, and since, you sludge;
It means my total ruin and defeat,
Your villainy is now at last complete.

TARTUFFE

You needn't try to provoke me; it's no use.
Those who serve Heaven must expect abuse.

CLEANTE

You are indeed most patient, sweet, and blameless.

DORINE

How he exploits the name of Heaven! It's shameless.

TARTUFFE

Your taunts and mockeries are all for naught;
To do my duty is my only thought.

MARIANE

Your love of duty is most meritorious,
And what you've done is little short of glorious.

TARTUFFE

All deeds are glorious, Madam, which obey
His Honor who sent me here today.

ORGON

I rescued you when you were destitute;
Have you forgotten that, you thankless brute?

TARTUFFE

No, no, I well remember every tort;
But my first duty is to serve the court.
That obligation is so paramount
That other claims, beside it, do not count;
And for it I would sacrifice my wife,
My family, my friend, or my own life.

ELMIRE

Hypocrite!

DORINE

All that we most revere, he uses

To cloak his plots and camouflage his ruses.

CLEANTE

If it is true that you are animated
By pure and loyal zeal, as you have stated,
Why was this zeal not roused until you'd sought
To make Orgon a cuckold, and been caught?
Why weren't you moved to give your evidence
Until your outraged host had driven you hence?
I shan't say that the gift of all his treasure
Ought to have damped your zeal in any measure;
But if he is a traitor, as you declare,
How could you condescend to be his heir?

TARTUFFE

(To the Officer)

Sir, spare me all this clamor; it's growing shrill.
Please carry out your orders, if you will.

OFFICER

Yes, I've delayed too long, Sir. Thank you kindly.
You're just the proper person to remind me.
Come, you are off to join the other boarders
In a dank prison, according to his orders.

TARTUFFE

Who? I, Sir?

OFFICER

Yes.

TARTUFFE

To prison? This can't be true!

OFFICER

I owe an explanation, but not to you. *(to Orgon)*
Sir, all is well; rest easy, and be grateful.
We serve a Leader to whom all sham is hateful,
A Leader who sees into our inmost hearts,
And can't be fooled by any trickster's arts.
His deep soul, though generous and human,
Views all things with discernment and acumen;
His sovereign reason is not lightly swayed,
And all his judgments are discreetly weighed.

Betraying you, the rogue stood self-betrayed.
Our officers soon recognized Tartuffe as one
Notorious by another name, who'd done
So many vicious crimes that one could fill
Ten volumes with them, and be writing still.
But to be brief: the judge was appalled
By this man's treachery toward you, which he called
The last, worst villainy of a vile career,
And bade me follow the impostor here
To see how gross his impudence could be,
And force him to restore your property.
Your private papers, by the Court's command,
I hereby seize and give into your hand.
The Court, both revokes and invalidates
The deed which gave this rascal your estates,
And pardons, furthermore, your grave offense
In harboring an exile's documents.
By these decrees, the Court rewards you for
Your courageous deeds in the late war,
And shows how heartfelt is his satisfaction
In recompensing any worthy action,
How much he prizes merit, and how he makes
More of men's virtues than of their mistakes.

DORINE

Heaven be praised!

MADAME PERNELLE

I breathe again, at last.

ELMIRE

We're safe.

MARIANE

I can't believe the danger's past.

ORGON

Well, traitor, now you see . . .

CLEANTE

Ah, Brother, please,
Let's not descend to such indignities.
Leave the poor wretch to his unhappy fate,
And don't say anything to aggravate

His present woes; but rather hope that he
Will soon embrace an honest piety.

ORGON

Well said: let's go at once and, gladly kneeling,
Express the gratitude which all are feeling.
Then, when that first great duty has been done,
We'll turn with pleasure to a second one,
And give Valère, whose love has proven so true
The wedded happiness which is his due.

The comedy ends with a dance.

[end of script]