

And I have reasons, too, of equal force.
 To spare him now would be insanelly 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.
 One's honor doesn't require it: to be proficent
 In keeping men at bay is quite sufficient.
 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. *(To Tartuffe.)*

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. *(To Damis.)*

Ingrate!

TARTUFFE.

If I must beg you, on bended knee,

To pardon him...

ORGON. *(Falling 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 goodness! What a son!

TARTUFFE.

Forgive him, Lord, as I've already done.

(To Orgon.)

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.