

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, CLÉANTE, DORINE

ORGON.

Hah! Glad to find you all assembled here.

(To Mariane.)

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. *(Feeling himself touched by her.)*

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. (*To Orgon.*)

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 offers merely amusing,
And make no scenes and fusses in refusing;
My taste is for good-natured rectitude,
And I dislike the savage sort of prude
Who guards her virtue with her teeth and claws,
And tears men's eyes out for the slightest cause:
The Lord preserve me from such honor as that,
Which bites and scratches like an alley-cat!
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 a way
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 and Mariane.*)

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.

(*To her husband, who is now 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 impostor 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 goes to the door, closes it, and returns.*)

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,