

She quits a world which fast is quitting her,
 And wears a veil of virtue of conceal
 Her bankrupt beauty and her lost appeal.
 That's what becomes of old coquettes today:
 Distressed when all their lovers fall away,
 They see no recourse but to play the prude,
 And so confer a style on solitude.
 Thereafter, they're severe with everyone,
 Condemning all our actions, pardoning none,
 And claiming to be pure, austere, and zealous
 When, if the truth were known, they're merely jealous,
 And cannot bear to see another know
 The pleasures time has forced them to forgo.
 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 the true path;
 That all he reprehends is reprehensible,
 And that you'd better heed him, and be sensible.
 These visits, balls, and parties in which you revel
 Are nothing but inventions of the Devil.
 One never hears a word that's edifying:
 Nothing but chaff and foolishness and lying,
 As well as vicious gossip in which one's neighbor
 Is cut to bits with epee, foil, and saber.
 People of sense are driven half-insane
 At such affairs, where noise and folly reign
 And reputations perish thick and fast.
 As a wise preacher said on Sunday last,
 Parties are Towers of Babylon, because
 The guests all babble on with never a pause;

And then he told a story which, I think...
 (*To Cleante.*)
 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

CLÉANTE, DORINE

CLÉANTE.

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.

CLÉANTE.

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 his king 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!"
In short, he's mad; he worships him; he dotes;
His deeds he marvels at, his words he quotes,
Thinking each act a miracle, each word
Oracular as those that Moses heard.
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, CLÉANTE, 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.

CLÉANTE.

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, CLÉANTE, DORINE

ORGON.

Ah, Brother, good-day.