

# Tartuffe; Or, The Hypocrite

Molière

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or The Hypocrite

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**\*\*\*START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK TARTUFFE\*\*\***

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## Characters

MADAME PERNELLE, Orgon's mother--(the mother-in-law)

ORGON, Elmire's husband--(the dupe)

ELMIRE, Orgon's wife

DAMIS, Orgon's son, Elmire's stepson--(the hot-headed youth)

MARIANE, Orgon's daughter, Elmire's stepdaughter, and Valere's lover--  
(the ingenue)

CLEANTE, Orgon's brother-in-law--(the raisonneur)

TARTUFFE, the hypocrite

DORINE, Mariane's maid--(the impertinent maid)

M. LOYAL, a bailiff

POLICE OFFICER

FLIPOTE, Madame Pernelle's servant

LAURENT, Tartuffe's servant

*The Scene is at Paris*

## ACT I

### SCENE I

**Madame Pernelle and her servant Flipote, Elmire, Mariane, Dorine, Damis, Cleante**

**Mme. Pernelle.** Let's go, Flipote, let's go. I hate this place.

**Elmire.** I can't keep up, you rush at such a pace.

**Mme. Pernelle.** Peace, my dear, peace; come no farther.

I don't wish to cause you any bother.

**Elmire.** What duty demands, I insist on giving.

But, mother, what has caused your hasty leaving?

**Mme. Pernelle.** I just can't stand the way your household runs . . .

And no one cares what I wish to have done.

Oh, yes, I leave your household quite dissatisfied

For all my wise advice has been defied . . .

And nobody respects me, and everybody shouts,  
And truly this is a home for the king of louts!

**Dorine.** If . . .

**Mme. Pernelle.** You, my dearie, are a bold lassy,  
A little brazen and very sassy,  
You butt into everything to speak your mind.

**Damis.** But . . .

**Mme. Pernelle.** You, grandson, are a fool of the worst kind.  
It is I, your grandmother, that pronounce this edict  
And to my son, your father, I have oft predicted  
That you'll turn out to be a worthless wastrel,  
And give him in life a foretaste of Hell.

**Mariane.** I think . . .

**Mme. Pernelle.** My lord, his sister! You seem so discreet  
And so untainted, so very sweet,  
But the stillest waters are filled with scum,  
And your sly ways earn my revulsion.

**Elmire.** But . . .

**Mme. Pernelle.** Daughter, my views may make you mad,  
But your conduct in all things is all bad.  
In your family's eyes you should be an example-setter;  
In that respect their late mother did far better.  
You are extravagant, and it wounds me, I guess,  
To see you sashay about dressed like a princess.  
A woman who wishes only to please her mate,  
Dear daughter, need not primp and undulate.

**Cleante.** Madam, after all . . .

**Mme. Pernelle.** And her brother, as for you,  
I respect you, love you, and revere you, too,  
But finally, if I were my son, her spouse,  
I would at once beg you to leave this house.  
Without cease you teach your rules and mottos  
Which decent people should never follow.  
I now speak frankly, but it is my part;  
I never spare the words that stir my heart.

**Damis.** Your man Tartuffe is satisfied, no fear . . .

**Mme. Pernelle.** He is a holy man whom all should hear,

And I cannot bear, without great rue,  
To hear him mocked by a fool like you.

**Damis.** What? Am I myself to bear a carping critic,  
A base usurper with a power tyrannic,  
Such that we can do nothing for diversion  
Without hearing about that creep's aversion?

**Dorine.** If we were to hear and obey his whims,  
We couldn't do anything without sins  
For he forbids all, this false Capuchin.

**Mme. Pernelle.** And everything he forbids is well forbidden.  
He strives to guide you on the road to heaven,  
And it's my son's duty to make you love him.

**Damis.** No, grandma, neither dad nor anyone else  
Can oblige me to wish for his good health.  
I'd be false to myself if I didn't say this:  
When I see him around, I begin to get pissed.  
I can smell the outcome, and soon this coot  
And I will find ourselves in a grand dispute.

**Dorine.** It's certainly a clear cause for remark  
When a nobody acts like a patriarch,  
A beggar who was barefoot when he came hence  
And whose whole wardrobe wasn't worth two cents!  
And he's gone so far as to forget his past for  
He opposes everything and plays the master.

**Mme. Pernelle.** Ah! mercy on me! Things would be better,  
If you'd only follow his holy orders.

**Dorine.** He passes for a saint in your fantasy,  
But, I swear, he acts with hypocrisy.

**Mme. Pernelle.** Watch your tongue!

**Dorine.** Not to him nor his man Laurent  
Would I trust my honor without good warrant.

**Mme. Pernelle.** I don't know what his servant's like at heart,  
But for the man himself, I'll guarantee his part.  
You only treat him with hate and aversion  
Because he truly strives for your conversion.  
He hurls his heart up against each sin  
And the glory of God is all he hopes to win.

**Dorine.** Yes. But why, especially during some  
Time past, must he ban all guests from our home?  
Can a courtesy call offend Heaven  
Enough to merit a huge commotion?  
Would you like it explained, just between us? [*Gesturing toward Elmire.*]  
Of Madam there, on my oath, he's jealous!

**Mme. Pernelle.** Be quiet, and think before you speak.  
Others, too, condemn the company you keep.  
All this bustle from the people who arrive,  
The carriages ceaselessly parking at curb-side,  
And the servants in a circle chattering,  
Makes noise that your neighbors find nerve-shattering.  
I'd like to think there's no harm meant,  
But when gossips talk, they're malevolent.

**Cleante.** How can you hope to stop people talking?  
It would truly be most irritating  
If, for the sake of idle, foolish chatter,  
We must renounce the friends that really matter.  
And even if we could resolve to do it,  
How could you hope to keep the whole world quiet?  
No castle wall can defend against lies,  
So let's ignore the fools who criticize,  
And strive to live in innocence and ease,  
Letting gossips gossip as they please.

**Dorine.** Daphne, our neighbor, and her petty spouse--  
Weren't they the ones who slandered this house?  
Those whom the whole world finds ridiculous  
Are always first in line to stick it to us.  
They never fail to sniff out and swiftly share  
The earliest rumor of a love affair,  
Sowing seeds of scandal with eager expedition  
And twisting truth past all recognition.  
In their own colors, they paint all others,  
Brazenly calling all men their brothers;  
In the faint hope of finding some resemblance,  
They try to give a gloss of innocence  
To their schemes or to make others share

The burden of blame that is only theirs.

**Mme. Pernelle.** All this hair-splitting is off the subject.

Orante lives a life that is perfect

With all her thoughts on heaven, and I hear

That she deeply mourns the way you live here.

**Dorine.** The lady herself is quite an example!

You want a chaste life? She's a nice sample.

But old age has stuck her in this zealous mood,

And everyone knows she's a reluctant prude.

'Cause as long as she could snare a man's heart,

She was more than willing to play her part.

But now that her eyes have lost their luster,

She leaves the world that already left her

And uses a pompous veil of phony wisdom

To hide the fact that her looks are gone.

It's the last resort of the aging flirt,

So peeved at having no man at her skirt

That, alone and abandoned to solitude,

Her only recourse is to become a prude.

And these good women censure all with such

Great severity; nor do they pardon much.

They biliously blame immorality

Not from charity, but only from envy

That others are drinking in that pleasure

From which old age now drains their measure.

**Mme. Pernelle** [*to Elmire*]. Such idle tales form a silly song.

In your home, my dear, I've been silenced too long

Because, like a crap-shooter with the die,

Madame won't give up her turn; but now my

Chance has come. I applaud my son's great wisdom

In opening his home to this holy person

Who's been heaven-sent to meet your needs

In turning from evil to God's holy deeds.

For your soul's salvation, please pay attention:

What he reprehends, merits reprehension.

These visits, these balls, these conversations

Are flawless signs of Satanic possession.

In them you never hear the holy Credo--  
Just songs, chatter, gossip, malice, and innuendo.  
Often the neighbors get stabbed to the heart  
By vicious lies from the third or fourth part.  
So good people suffer real anxiety  
From the sad confusion spread at your party.  
A slew of slanders are spread along the way  
And, as a doctor told me the other day,  
This is truly the Tower of Babylon  
Because everyone babbles on and on;  
And, to tell a story that now comes to mind . . .  
Now look at him and how he laughs! [*Indicating Cleante.*] Go find  
Some snickering fools. They are just your kind!  
[*To Elmire.*] Adieu, my daughter. I'll say no more.  
But I don't intend to darken your door  
For a long, long time. You've fallen from grace.  
[*Slapping Flipote.*] Hurry up, there! Don't stand staring into space!  
Lord Almighty! I'll slap your silly face.  
Go on, you slut, go on.

## SCENE II

**Cleante, Dorine**

**Cleante.** I'm not following;  
I'm sure there'd only be more quarrelling.  
How that old harridan . . .

**Dorine.** Oh, how I regret  
That she can't hear you use that epithet.  
She'd tell you at length what she thinks of your wit,  
And that she's not old enough to merit it.

**Cleante.** What a fuss she made about nearly nothing!  
And what a passion for Tartuffe, her darling!

**Dorine.** Oh! Really, she's normal compared to her son,  
And if you could see him, you'd say, "Here's one  
Who's nuts!" During the war, he seemed quite sage,  
And in serving his prince, showed some courage,  
But now he's become an absolute fool



Since he gave himself up to Tartuffe's rule.  
He calls him his brother and the love of his life--  
More dear than mother, daughter, son, or wife.  
He's the sole confidant of all his secrets  
And the sole director of all his projects.  
He caresses him, kisses him, and could not show a mistress  
More love and affection than he gives to this  
Leech. At dinner he gives him the highest place  
And watches with joy as he stuffs his face  
With cakes and tarts and often the best part  
Of a pig, and if he should happen to hiccup or fart,  
Says, "God be with you!" He's mad about him--  
His honey, his hero. He always quotes him  
And admires his deeds. His smallest acts are miracles  
And even his stupidest words are oracles.  
Tartuffe, who uses his dupe to make a buck,  
Knows a hundred wily ways to pluck this duck;  
He rakes off great sums with his biblical bull  
And demands the right to censor us all.  
His foolish footman has such presumption  
That even he dares to give us instruction.  
Madly preaching, he scatters with eyes afire  
Our ribbons, our rouge, and our best attire.  
Last night he ripped up with his own bare hands  
A kerchief left lying in *The Holy Lands*,  
Claiming our crime was truly gigantic  
In mixing what's holy with what's Satanic.

### **SCENE III**

**Elmire, Mariane, Damis, Cleante, Dorine**

**Elmire** [*to Cleante*]. You should be glad you missed the dreadful chore  
Of attending her lecture beside the door--  
Here comes my spouse! Since he doesn't see me,  
I'm going upstairs to rest quietly.

**Cleante.** Then I'll remain with no pleasure on my part  
To tell him hello and then quickly depart.

**Damis.** Ask him about the marriage of Mariane.  
I think Tartuffe will oppose it if he can,  
For he sets up so many prerequisites,  
And you know what an interest I take in it.  
The heat that inflames my sister and Valere  
Has made his sweet sister so very dear  
To me that if . . .

**Dorine.** Shh, he's here.

#### SCENE IV

**Orgon, Cleante, Dorine**

**Orgon.** Hello, brother!

**Cleante.** I'm glad you've returned before my departure.  
The countryside isn't quite blossoming yet.

**Orgon.** Dorine . . . One second brother, please! Just let  
Me set my heart at ease and soothe my fear  
Concerning the things that have happened here. [*To Dorine.*]  
For these past two days, how have things gone on?  
What has happened? And how is everyone?

**Dorine.** The first day your wife had a bad fever  
And a headache that just wouldn't leave her.

**Orgon.** And Tartuffe?

**Dorine.** Tartuffe? He's in splendid shape,  
Fat and flabby, with red lips, and a shining face.

**Orgon.** Poor fellow!

**Dorine.** That night, your wife felt so sick  
And so feverish that she could only pick  
At her dinner and scarcely ate a bite.

**Orgon.** And Tartuffe?

**Dorine.** He alone ate with all his might,  
And devoutly devoured a pair of pheasants  
And a leg of lamb in our lady's presence.

**Orgon.** Poor fellow!

**Dorine.** The whole night passed before she  
Could even close her eyes to fall asleep;

Shivers and chills beset her in bed,  
And right up till dawn we watched her with dread.

**Orgon.** And Tartuffe?

**Dorine.** Drowsy from all that he'd consumed,  
He left the table, went straight to his room,  
And fell quickly into his nice, warm sack  
Where he slept all night flat on his back.

**Orgon.** Poor fellow.

**Dorine.** At last your wife began heeding  
Our good advice that she needed bleeding,  
And she began to recover soon thereafter.

**Orgon.** And Tartuffe?

**Dorine.** He couldn't have been any better.  
To fortify himself against every ill  
And to regain the blood that Madam spilled,  
He drank at brunch four great glasses of wine.

**Orgon.** Poor fellow!

**Dorine.** Both of them are now quite fine;  
I'll now be going up to tell your wife  
Of your deep concern at this threat to her life.

## SCENE V

**Orgon, Cleante**

**Cleante.** She's making fun of you to your face, brother;  
And, though I don't intend to be a bother,  
I must frankly admit that there's some justice  
In what she says. What a crazy caprice  
You have for him! And how could he exert  
Such charm that you'll even let your wife be hurt?  
After taking this pauper into your heart,  
You go so far . . .

**Orgon.** Stop there! Or we must part!  
You don't know the man to whom you refer.

**Cleante.** Okay. Say I don't know him if you prefer,  
But then to know what sort of man he might be . . .

**Orgon.** Brother, you'd be charmed if you could only see  
Him, and your glee would be . . . gargantuan!  
He's a man who . . . who . . . a man . . . well, a man!  
Learn from him a peacefulness most exquisite,  
That lets you drop your woes like . . . dried horseshit!  
Yes, I've been reborn because of his preaching:  
He teaches me that I shouldn't love anything,  
From every earthly passion he has freed my life;  
I'd watch my brother, mother, children, and wife  
Drop dead without caring so much as that! [*He snaps his fingers.*]

**Cleante.** You've sure got humane sentiments down pat!

**Orgon.** Ah! If you'd seen him as I did at first,  
Your eyes would have feasted on him with a spiritual thirst!  
Each day he came to church smiling with sweet peace  
And threw himself down before me on both knees.  
He drew upon himself the eyes of everyone there  
By the holy fervor of his pious prayer.  
He sighed and wept with a most saintly passion  
And humbly kissed the earth in a fetching fashion;  
And when I was going, he rushed out front  
To bless me with water from the holy font.  
His servant (matching his master to a T)  
Then informed me of his identity--  
And his poverty. So I made a donation,  
But then he tried to return a portion.  
"It's too much," he said. "You're too generous;  
I don't merit your pity and kindness."  
And when I refused to take it back, he gave  
It in alms to the poor right there in the nave.  
Then God bade me take him into my home  
And now life is sweet as a honeycomb.  
He governs us all, and to protect my honor  
Bids my wife grant his godly rule upon her.  
He forewarns me of men who might give her the eye,  
And he really seems far more jealous than I!  
Why, you wouldn't believe his fear of Hell!  
He thinks himself damned for the least bagatelle.

Such trifles suffice to scandalize him  
That he even accused himself of sin  
For having slain with a bit too much wrath  
A flea that just happened to cross his path.

**Cleante.** My goodness, brother! I think you're crazy!  
Are you mocking me with sheer lunacy?  
And how can you pretend that this pure rot . . . ?

**Orgon.** Dear brother, your words reek of that free thought  
With which I find you more than a bit impeached,  
And, as ten times or more I have clearly preached,  
You will soon find yourself in a wicked bind.

**Cleante.** Now this is the normal jargon of your kind.  
They want everyone to be as blind as they are.  
To be clear-sighted, is to be in error,  
And one who rejects their vain hypocrisy  
Has no respect for faith or sanctity.  
Go on, all your tart sermons scarcely smart;  
I know what I'm saying, and God sees my heart.  
I'm not a slave to your silly ceremony.  
There is false piety like false bravery;  
Just as one often sees, when honor calls us,  
That the bravest men never make the most fuss,  
So, too, the good Christians, whom one should follow,  
Are not those who find life so hard to swallow.  
What now? Will you not make any distinction  
Between hypocrisy and true devotion?  
Would you wish to use the same commonplace  
To describe both a mere mask and a true face?  
To equate artifice with sincerity  
Is to confound appearance and reality.  
To admire a shadow as much as you do  
Is to prefer counterfeit money to true.  
The majority of men are strangely made!  
And their true natures are rarely displayed.  
For them the bounds of reason are too small;  
In their shabby souls they love to lounge and sprawl.  
And very often they spoil a noble deed

By their urge for excess and reckless speed.  
But all this, brother, is idle chatter.

**Orgon.** Without doubt you are a renowned teacher;  
With all the world's knowledge in your coffer.  
You're the only oracle, the wisest sage,  
The enlightened one, the Cato of our age;  
And next to you, all other men are dumb.

**Cleante.** Brother, I know I'm not the wisest one  
Nor the most learned man in Christendom  
But in moral matters my greatest coup  
Is to differentiate false from true.  
And since I know of no heroes about  
More to be praised than the truly devout  
And nothing at all with greater appeal  
Than the holy fervor of saintly zeal,  
So too nothing could be more odious  
Than the white-washed face of a zeal that's specious,  
Or these frank charlatans, seeking places,  
Whose false and sacrilegious double faces  
Exploit our love of God and make a game  
Of our reverence for Christ's holy name.  
These people who, with a shop-keeper's soul,  
Make cheap trinkets to trade on the Credo,  
And hope to purchase credit and favor  
Bought with sly winks and affected fervor;  
These people, I say, whose uncommon hurry  
On the path to Heaven leads through their treasury,  
Who, writhing and praying, demand a profit each day  
And call for a Retreat while pocketing their pay,  
Who know how to tally their zeal with their vices,--  
Faithless, vindictive, full of artifices--  
To ruin someone they'll conceal their resentment  
With a capacious cloak of Godly contentment.  
They are doubly dangerous in their vicious ire  
Because they destroy us with what we admire,  
And their piety, which gains them an accolade,  
Is a tool to slay us with a sacred blade.

There are many men in this false disguise,  
But those with pure hearts are easy to recognize.  
Our age, my friend, has brought into plain sight  
Many glorious examples of what is right.  
Look at Ariston, or Periandre,  
Oronte, Alcidamus, or Clitandre;  
Their title is one that all agree to.  
They decline any fanfare for their virtue;  
They don't indulge in vain ostentation;  
Their humane faith finds form in moderation;  
They never censure all of our actions,  
For they sense the vain pride in such transactions.  
And, leaving boastful rhetoric to others,  
By their own actions they reprove their brothers.  
The appearance of evil is no concern of theirs;  
They cast the best light on others' affairs.  
They plot no intrigues; seek no one to fleece;  
Their only concern is to live at peace.  
They don't seek to cause any sinner chagrin;  
Their abhorrence is directed only at sin.  
And they don't take the side of God more extremely  
Than God himself--who could act supremely!  
These are my models, and these are their ways;  
Such examples are the ones that most merit praise.  
But your man, in truth, is not made from such steel.  
In good faith, perhaps, you praise his great zeal,  
But I think you're dazed by his meaningless  
Glitter.

**Orgon.** Dear brother-in-law, are you finished?

**Cleante.** Yes.

**Orgon.** Your humble servant. [*He begins to leave.*]

**Cleante.** Pardon me. One word, brother.  
Let's drop this discussion. You know that Valere  
Has your word that he'll be Mariane's spouse.

**Orgon.** Yes.

**Cleante.** And you've announced this fact in your house.

**Orgon.** That is true.

**Cleante.** Then why postpone the event?  
**Orgon.** I don't know.  
**Cleante.** Do you intend to recant?  
**Orgon.** Perhaps.  
**Cleante.** How could you go back on your word?  
**Orgon.** I didn't say I would.  
**Cleante.** I hope no absurd  
Hitch could make you retract your own promise.  
**Orgon.** We'll see.  
**Cleante.** Why do you speak with such finesse?  
Valere sent me to ask you this verbatim.  
**Orgon.** Praise God!  
**Cleante.** But what shall I report to him?  
**Orgon.** What you please.  
**Cleante.** But it is essential  
To know your plans. What are they?  
**Orgon.** To do all  
That God wishes.  
**Cleante.** Stick to the point. I know  
Your promise. Will you keep it? Yes, or no?  
**Orgon.** Farewell.  
**Cleante.** I fear his promise will be withdrawn,  
So I'd better report what's going on.

## ACT II

### SCENE I

**Orgon, Mariane**

**Orgon.** Mariane.

**Mariane.** Yes.

**Orgon.** Come here. We need to speak  
Privately.

**Mariane.** Father, what is it you seek?

**Orgon** [*looking in the closet*]. I'm seeing if anyone can overhear us.



This is a perfect place for such a purpose.

There now, it's okay. Mariane, I find

You endowed with a heart that's sweet and kind

And you have always been most dear to me.

**Mariane.** A father's love brings true felicity.

**Orgon.** Well said, my child! And to earn it fully

You should devote yourself to contenting me.

**Mariane.** That's how my devotion is put to the proof.

**Orgon.** Good. Now what do you think of our guest, Tartuffe?

**Mariane.** Who me?

**Orgon.** You. Think well before you reply.

**Mariane.** Oh my! Tell me what to say . . . and I'll comply.

*[Dorine enters quietly and hides herself behind Orgon without being seen.]*

**Orgon.** That's sensibly spoken. Now tell me, girl,

That his merit shines like a gleaming pearl,

That he warms your heart, and that you would rejoice

To have him be your husband by my choice.

Eh?

*[Mariane recoils in dismay.]*

**Mariane.** Eh?

**Orgon.** What's that?

**Mariane.** Please?

**Orgon.** What?

**Mariane.** Am I in error?

**Orgon.** Why?

**Mariane.** Whom do you wish that I should now swear

Touches my heart--and who would rejoice me

If we joined, by your choice, in matrimony?

**Orgon.** Tartuffe.

**Mariane.** Out of the question, father, I assure

You! Why urge on me such an imposture?

**Orgon.** But, my dear, I wish it to be true,

And it should be enough that I've chosen for you.

**Mariane.** What? Father, would you . . . ?

**Orgon.** Yes, I intend, you see  
To unite in marriage Tartuffe and my family.  
He will be your husband. I do declare it!  
Since you have promised . . .

## SCENE II

**Dorine, Orgon, Mariane**

**Orgon** [*perceiving Dorine*]. What do you stare at?  
You must be eaten up with curiosity  
To eavesdrop on my daughter and me.

**Dorine.** I don't know whether the rumor I hear  
Is sly conjecture or a wicked smear;  
But I've just heard word of this marriage,  
And I trust it is only verbiage.

**Orgon.** Why? Is the idea itself so very absurd?

**Dorine.** I wouldn't believe it, sir, if you gave your word!

**Orgon.** I will make you believe it by-and-by.

**Dorine.** Yes. You're going to tell us a bald-faced lie.

**Orgon.** I am only saying what you will soon see.

**Dorine.** Nonsense!

**Orgon.** What I say, dear girl, will soon be.

**Dorine.** Go on. Don't believe him! It's too bizarre!  
He's joking.

**Orgon.** I say . . .

**Dorine.** No, you've gone too far,  
And no one believes you.

**Orgon.** Damn you, you shrew . . .

**Dorine.** Well, I believe you then; the worse for you.  
What? Monsieur, can you pose as one who's sage,  
Gravely stroking your bearded visage?  
And still be fool enough to wish . . .

**Orgon.** Hear me!  
I have given you too much liberty,

And it no longer gives me any pleasure.

**Dorine.** Monsieur, please. Keep your anger within measure.

Are you mocking us with your silly plot?

Your daughter is no match for a bigot;

He has other schemes to worry about.

And what would you gain if she wed this lout?

With your wealth, what benefit would it bring

To pick a bum . . .

**Orgon.** Ssh! Say he has nothing;

For that reason, you should revere him the more.

He is a holy man and nobly poor.

It raises him up to greater grandeur

That he has renounced all wealth by his pure

Detachment from the merely temporal

And his powerful love for the Eternal.

But my assistance may give him the means

To restore his lands and remove his liens.

He is a man of repute in the land of his birth,

And, even as he is, he's a man of worth.

**Dorine.** Yes, so he tells us, but his vanity

Does not sit so well with true piety.

A man pleased with a simple sanctity

Needn't vaunt his name and his dignity,

And the humility born of devotion

Suffers beneath such blatant ambition.

What good is his pride? . . . But perhaps I digress:

Let's speak of the man--not his nobleness.

Can you bestow, without feeling like a rat,

A girl like this on a man like that?

And shouldn't you think of propriety

And foresee the end with anxiety?

We know that some girls cannot remain chaste

If their husband's tush is not to their taste,

And that the best-laid plans for an honest life

Are somewhat easier for the best-laid wife,

And that many a man with a horned head

Has driven his wife to another man's bed.

It is entirely too much to ask  
That a wife be faithful to a flabby ass.  
And one who gives a girl to a man she hates  
Is guilty before God for all her mistakes.  
Consider the perils you expose yourself to.

**Orgon.** So you think I should learn how to live from you!

**Dorine.** You could do worse than follow my lead.

**Orgon.** Dear daughter, do drop this maid's daffy creed;

I know what's best for you in this affair.

It's true I betrothed you to young Valere,  
But I hear he likes his dicing and drinking  
And even worse is inclined to free-thinking.

I note with regret we don't see him at mass.

**Dorine.** Must he be there the same moment you pass  
Like those who attend only to be seen?

**Orgon.** Your advice isn't wanted. Don't intervene.

Tartuffe is on the path to salvation,  
And that is a treasure past calculation.

This wedding will bring blessings beyond measure,  
And be crowned with great sweetness and pleasure.

Together you will live, thriving on love  
Like new-born babes, or a pair of turtledoves.

You will never be found in angry debate  
For you will find all that you wish in this mate.

**Dorine.** She'll only make him a cuckold, I'm sure.

**Orgon.** What?

**Dorine.** He looks just like a caricature,  
And his fate, monsieur, will make him an ass  
No matter how much virtue your daughter has.

**Orgon.** Don't interrupt me and remember your place  
And quit sticking your nose up in my face!

**Dorine.** I'm only trying, sir, to protect you.

*[Hereafter she always interrupts him at the moment he begins speaking to his daughter.]*

**Orgon.** You're too kind, but do shut up--please do!

**Dorine.** If I didn't like you . . .

**Orgon.** I don't need liking.

**Dorine.** But I will like you, sir, despite your griping.

**Orgon.** Oh?

**Dorine.** Your honor is dear and I'd be provoked  
To find you the butt of some smutty joke.

**Orgon.** Can't you keep quiet?

**Dorine.** In all good conscience,  
It's a shame to foster such an alliance.

**Orgon.** Shut up, you viper, with your brazen traits . . .

**Dorine.** What? You've been reborn, yet you give way to hate?

**Orgon.** Yes, your twaddle has made me quite high-strung,  
And I now insist that you hold your tongue.

**Dorine.** All right. But I'll think in silence nonetheless.

**Orgon.** Think if you wish to, but strive for success  
At shutting your mouth . . . or beware. [*Turning to his daughter*] Let's see,  
I have weighed everything quite maturely.

**Dorine** [*aside*]. I hate this silence. [*She falls quiet every time Orgon turns toward her.*]

**Orgon.** Without being smug, I'll  
Say Tartuffe's face . . .

**Dorine.** Yes, he has a fine muzzle!

**Orgon.** Is so fine that even if you forgot  
His other traits . . .

**Dorine** [*aside*]. And they're a sorry lot!

[*Orgon turns toward Dorine and, with his arms folded, listens while staring in her face.*]

If I were in her place, most assuredly  
No man would wed me with impunity,  
And I'd prove to him right after the wedding  
That a wife's vengeance lies in the bedding!

**Orgon** [*to Dorine*]. So you refuse to obey me, is that true?

**Dorine.** What's your beef, sir? I'm not speaking to you.

**Orgon.** Then what are you doing?

**Dorine.** Soliloquizing.

**Orgon.** Very well. [*aside*] To give her a good chastising,  
I think she needs a taste of the back of my hand.

[*He prepares to slap her, but each time Dorine sees him looking at her, she stands silent and erect.*]

Child, you should approve of all I have planned . . .  
And have faith in the spouse . . . who's my designee.

[*To Dorine.*] Speak to yourself!

**Dorine.** I've nothing to say to me.

**Orgon.** Just one little word.

**Dorine.** I'm not in the mood.

**Orgon.** Because I was ready!

**Dorine.** What ineptitude!

**Orgon.** Now, daughter, let's see some obedience.

Accept my choice with complete deference.

**Dorine** [*running away*]. I'd thumb my nose at such a silly spouse.

[*Orgon tries to slap Dorine and misses.*]

**Orgon.** Daughter, your maid is a pest and would arouse

Vice in a saint--she's an absolute shrew!

I'm so upset that I can't continue.

Her taunts have nearly driven me to swear,

And I need to calm down in the open air.

### SCENE III

**Dorine, Mariane**

**Dorine.** Have you entirely lost your voice and heart?

Why must I continue playing your part?

To think you allow such a mad proposal

Without voicing even a meek refusal!

**Mariane.** How can I resist such a harsh patriarch?

**Dorine.** By any means! Don't be an easy mark!

**Mariane.** But how?

**Dorine.** Tell him you can't love on command,  
That you marry for yourself, not by demand,  
And since you are most concerned in these affairs  
You'll choose for yourself the sire of his heirs,  
And that, if Tartuffe is so charming to him,  
He can wed him himself--if that's his whim.

**Mariane.** A father, I'm sure, has absolute power;  
Before him I can only cringe and cower.

**Dorine.** Use your head. Valere wants to tie the knot.  
Do you really love him, I ask--or not?

**Mariane.** Your injustice to me has a mortal sting!  
Dorine, how can you ask me such a thing?  
Haven't I poured out my whole soul to you,  
And don't you know yet that my love is true?

**Dorine.** How do I know that your heart echoes your voice  
And that this love is truly your own choice?

**Mariane.** Your doubts, Dorine, wrong me greatly;  
My real feelings are shown far too plainly.

**Dorine.** You love him then?

**Mariane.** Yes, with the strongest passion.

**Dorine.** And he seems to love you in the same fashion?

**Mariane.** I think so.

**Dorine.** And both of you burn equally  
For this union in marriage?

**Mariane.** Certainly.

**Dorine.** And about this other man, what's your intention?

**Mariane.** I'd die before I'd submit to coercion.

**Dorine.** Fine! I hadn't thought of that recourse.

Death would give you such a forcible divorce.

What an ingenious remedy! Geez!

I hate to hear such stupid ideas.

**Mariane.** Good Heavens! What a rotten mood you're in!  
You have no pity for my pain, Dorine!

**Dorine.** I have no sympathy for foolishness  
And those who meet a crisis with such weakness.

**Mariane.** But what do you want me to do? I was born frail.

**Dorine.** A woman in love needs a heart of steel.

**Mariane.** But haven't I kept it free for my lover  
Whose task it is to win me from my father?

**Dorine.** What! If your father is a mad fanatic  
Whose love for Tartuffe is completely lunatic  
And who has blocked the match you are now bewailing,  
Is your lover to be damned for failing?

**Mariane.** But am I to display how deeply I'm bitten  
By rejecting Tartuffe like one who's love-smitten?  
Am I, because of Valere's strength and beauty,  
To renounce my modesty and duty?  
And would you have me show my heart to all . . . ?

**Dorine.** No, no, not at all. I'm wrong to forestall  
Your marriage to Tartuffe, and my defiance  
Is apparent in barring that alliance.

What reason have I for my outrageous  
Attempt to stop something so advantageous?  
Tartuffe! Oh! Isn't he something to behold?  
Surely Tartuffe is not made from such a mold,  
If rightly viewed, as to make a person laugh;  
'Twould be an honor to be his better half.  
The whole world already crowns him with glory;--  
Both in physique and character he's laudatory;  
He has red ears and a florid, flushing face  
With him for a mate you'd live in joyful grace.

**Mariane.** Dear God!

**Dorine.** What delight you will feel within  
To know that you're wed to a man like him.

**Mariane.** Oh! Please stop talking, and show me the way  
To avoid this marriage. I will obey,  
You've said enough, and I'm ready to be led.

**Dorine.** No. A good daughter must obey her dad--  
Even if he wishes her to make love  
To an ape. What are you complaining of?  
You will proceed to his little villa  
Where you will get your absolute fill of



Uncles and cousins to be entertained.  
Right away you'll move among the most urbane  
Of hicks. First you will make some overture  
To the wives of the judge and the tax assessor,  
Who will kindly seat you on a folding chair.  
During Carnival, you may hope to have there  
A ball with two bagpipes for an orchestra  
And maybe some puppets and a tame gorilla.  
But if your husband . . .

**Mariane.** Oh! You're killing me.  
Please help me avoid this catastrophe.

**Dorine.** I am your servant.

**Mariane.** Oh! Dorine, mercy . . .

**Dorine.** To punish you, I ought to leave things be.

**Mariane.** My dear girl!

**Dorine.** No.

**Mariane.** If I declared my love . . .

**Dorine.** No. Tartuffe is your man; that's sure enough.

**Mariane.** You know that I've always trusted that you'd  
Help me . . .

**Dorine.** No. I'm sure you will be tartuffed.

**Mariane.** All right! Since my fate no longer moves you,  
Henceforth you may leave me alone and blue;  
From deep sorrow my heart will draw relief,  
And I know an absolute cure for my grief.

*[She starts to leave.]*

**Dorine.** Whoa! I'm not really angry. Come back,--do.  
In spite of everything, I pity you.

**Mariane.** If I'm to be the one you crucify,  
You'll see, Dorine, how quickly I shall die.

**Dorine.** Don't torture yourself. We can easily  
Block them. . . . But look! I think that's Valere I see.

#### SCENE IV

**Valere, Mariane, Dorine**

**Valere.** Gossip is singing a little ditty,  
My dear,--news to me and very pretty.

**Mariane.** What?

**Valere.** That you will marry Tartuffe.

**Mariane.** It's true

That my father has such a plan in view.

**Valere.** Your father . . .

**Mariane.** Has altered his inclination.

Through him, all this has come to my attention.

**Valere.** What? Seriously?

**Mariane.** Yes, seriously.

He wants this wedding--quite decidedly!

**Valere.** And how does your heart respond to this plan,  
Madam?

**Mariane.** I don't know.

**Valere.** Your response is plain.

You don't know?

**Mariane.** No.

**Valere.** No?

**Mariane.** What do you recommend?

**Valere.** I recommend that you accept this husband.

**Mariane.** You recommend that?

**Valere.** Yes.

**Mariane.** Really?

**Valere.** I do.

A wonderful choice, well worth attending to.

**Mariane.** Very well! That's advice, sir, that I accept.

**Valere.** I doubt that taking it causes you regret.

**Mariane.** No more regret than giving it causes you.

**Valere.** I gave it thinking pleasure would ensue.

**Mariane.** And I, I'll take it--simply to please you.

**Dorine** [*moving upstage*]. Let's see what comes of this hullabaloo.

**Valere.** So that's your love for me? And did you lie  
When you . . .

**Mariane.** Please, let's not speak of days gone by.  
You've told me quite plainly that I must embrace  
As my mate the man they've chosen for that place,  
And now I say that I promise to obey  
Since you so kindly advise me that way.

**Valere.** Don't excuse yourself through circumlocution:  
You've already made your own resolution,  
And you've seized upon a frivolous excuse  
To justify this lamentable ruse.

**Mariane.** Quite true and well said.

**Valere.** No doubt, and your soul  
Never lost, for love of me, its self-control.

**Mariane.** Alas! Alas! You may as well think so.

**Valere.** Yes, I may think so, but my broken heart  
Foresees you, too, suffering from Love's dart;  
I know to whom I'll take my heart and hand.

**Mariane.** No doubt, and the love that merit can command . . .

**Valere.** Dear God, let's leave merit to one side.  
I haven't much of it, as you have signified,  
But I know where there's a woman, soft-eyed  
And open-hearted . . . and this double-cross  
May make her more inclined to recompense my loss.

**Mariane.** The loss isn't great; and your fickleness  
Will soon lead you to find a new mistress.

**Valere.** I'll do my best--of that you may be sure!  
When one is forgotten, it's hard to endure,  
And so I, too, must struggle to forget.  
If I can't do it, I'll fake it . . . and yet  
I could never forgive my own servility  
If I kept loving one who abandoned me.

**Mariane.** What a noble, uplifting sentiment!

**Valere.** Quite so. Everyone should give it their assent.  
What? Do you think that I should perpetuate  
The flame of love that I have felt of late,  
And see you pass into another's arms  
Without letting my heart seek other charms?

**Mariane.** No, indeed. It's what I want, and I vow

I wish the thing were to happen right now.

**Valere.** You do?

**Mariane.** Yes.

**Valere.** That's enough insults from you,  
Madam, and now I will bid you adieu.

*[He starts to leave; each time he does so, he quickly comes back.]*

**Mariane.** Very well.

**Valere** *[coming back]*. At least remember that you  
Are the one who forced me down this avenue.

**Mariane.** Yes.

**Valere.** And that I am doing nothing more  
Than following the path you took before.

**Mariane.** So be it.

**Valere** *[leaving]*. Fine. I'm doing what you want.

**Mariane.** Good.

**Valere** *[returning again]*. I'm leaving forever--not some short jaunt.

**Mariane.** The sooner the better.

*[He begins to leave and, when he is near the door, he returns.]*

**Valere.** Eh?

**Mariane.** What?

**Valere.** You called?

**Mariane.** Me? No.

**Valere.** Ah. Well then, I'll soon be abroad.  
Adieu, madam. *[He slowly starts to leave.]*

**Mariane.** Adieu.

**Dorine** *[to Mariane]*. I think, perchance,  
You've lost your mind through extravagance,  
And I've only allowed you to go on  
Like this to see what folly you might spawn.  
Hey! Valere!

*[She grabs him by the arm and he makes a show of resistance.]*

**Valere.** Huh? What do you want, Dorine?

**Dorine.** Come here.

**Valere.** No. I'm too mad. Don't intervene.  
She wishes me to drain this bitter cup.

**Dorine.** Stop.

**Valere.** No, can't you see that my mind's made up?

**Dorine.** Ah!

**Mariane** [*aside*]. My presence pains him, I drive him away.  
I think it would be best if I didn't stay.

**Dorine** [*She leaves Valere and runs after Mariane*]. Now where are you going?

**Mariane.** Let go.

**Dorine.** Then return.

**Mariane.** No, no, Dorine. It's none of your concern.

**Valere** [*aside*]. I see that my presence causes her pain;  
It would be best if I freed her again.

**Dorine** [*She leaves Mariane and runs to Valere*].

Wait! May you both be damned if I want this mess!  
Come here you two and settle this fracas.

[*She pulls them both together.*]

**Valere** [*to Dorine*]. But what's your plan?

**Mariane** [*to Dorine*]. What do you wish to do?

**Dorine.** To patch things up a bit between you two.

[*To Valere*]. Are you out of your mind to fight in this way?

**Valere.** Did you hear her treat me like a popinjay?

**Dorine** [*to Mariane*]. Are you mad to have gotten so enraged?

**Mariane.** Did you see what happened? It can't be assuaged.

**Dorine.** You're both dunces. [*To Valere*] She wants nothing more  
Than to be the one woman you adore.

[*To Mariane*] He loves you alone, and to make you his wife  
Is his only desire--I swear on my life!

**Mariane** [*to Valere*]. How, then, could you give me such bad advice?

**Valere.** And how could you demand it? Was that wise?

**Dorine.** You're both insane. Now give your hands to me.

[*To Valere*] Come on.

**Valere** [*giving his hand to Dorine*]. What for?

**Dorine.** There. [*To Mariane*] Now yours,  
don't you see.

**Mariane** [*giving her hand as well*]. What's the point of all this?

**Dorine.** Lord! Quick!

Come on!

Your love for each other can't be withdrawn.

[*Valere and Mariane hold hands for awhile without looking at each other.*]

**Valere** [*turning toward Mariane*]. Don't react so painfully by the book.

Try giving a fellow a civil look.

[*Mariane turns her gaze on Valere and gives him a shy smile.*]

**Dorine.** All lovers are crazy! It's sad, but true.

**Valere** [*to Mariane*]. Am I not right to complain about you?  
And to tell the truth, weren't you rather unkind  
To delight in trying to unsettle my mind?

**Mariane.** What about you? Aren't you the bigger ingrate . . . ?

**Dorine.** Let's wait until later for this debate  
And try instead to stop this marriage.

**Mariane.** Tell us, then, what we can use for leverage.

**Dorine.** We will wage warfare on every front.  
Your father is bluffing and playing a stunt.

[*To Mariane*] But it might be better for you to seem  
To sweetly consent to his crazy scheme  
So that, whatever the future may bring,  
You can postpone and postpone this wedding.  
By gaining time, we gain our remedy.

Sometimes you will feign a strange malady  
Whose sudden onset will bring some delay;  
Sometimes an ill-omen will cause you dismay:

You saw a corpse and never felt queerer,  
Dreamt of muddy water, or broke a mirror.

The point above all is that no one, I guess,  
Can force you to marry unless you say, "Yes."

But our ship would sail in fairer weather  
If you were never seen talking together.

[*To Valere*] Go, and without delay employ each friend  
To keep him on course toward what we intend.

[*To Mariane*] We are going to seek help from his brother  
And we'll also recruit your step-mother.

Farewell.

**Valere** [*to Mariane*]. Whatever we attempt to do,  
In truth, my greatest hope resides in you.

**Mariane** [*to Valere*]. Although I cannot answer for my father,  
I vow I'll never belong to another.

**Valere.** How happy you have made me! If they ever . . .

**Dorine.** Fie! You young lovers prattle forever!  
Be off, I say.

**Valere** [*going a step and then returning*].  
Finally . . .

**Dorine.** What blather!  
You go off that way, and you go the other.

### ACT III

#### SCENE I

**Damis, Dorine**

**Damis.** May a bolt of lightning now strike me dumb,  
May everybody treat me like a bum  
If either respect or force can hinder me  
From blowing my top at this calamity!

**Dorine.** For heaven's sake, control your displeasure.  
Your father has merely mentioned this measure.  
No one does everything he proposes.

How something opens may not be how it closes.

**Damis.** I need to stop this vulgar coxcomb's plot  
And in two little words tell him what's what.

**Dorine.** Whoa now! Why don't you let your stepmother  
Manage him just as she does your father.

Over Tartuffe she has her own little ways  
Of making him welcome all that she says,  
And perhaps she makes his heart go pitter-patter.

Pray God it's true! That would be a fine matter.

In fact she has summoned him for your sake

In order to learn exactly what's at stake,

To find out his feelings, and to let him know

What really rotten results would flow

From any pretensions he might have to marry.

His valet says he's praying, and I should tarry--

That he'll descend after he meditates.

Be off then, I beg you, and let me wait.

**Damis.** I demand to be here the whole time they meet.

**Dorine.** No. They must be alone.



**Damis.** I won't even speak.

**Dorine.** You're kidding yourself. You're so quick to anger,  
And that would surely put us all in danger.

Go.

**Damis.** No. I'm going to watch--without getting cross.

**Dorine.** How tiresome you are! Here they come. Get lost!

[*Damis hides himself in a closet.*]

## SCENE II

**Tartuffe, Laurent, Dorine**

**Tartuffe** [*observing Dorine*]. Laurent, lock up my hair shirt and my  
scourge,

And pray for freedom from each carnal urge.

If anyone comes calling, say I have gone

To share my alms with the poor souls in prison.

**Dorine** [*aside*]. Such affectation and boastful behavior!

**Tartuffe.** What do you wish?

**Dorine.** To say . . .

**Tartuffe** [*taking a handkerchief from his pocket*]. Wait! By our Savior,  
Please! Before you speak take this handkerchief.

**Dorine.** Why?

**Tartuffe.** Because seeing your bosom causes me grief.

Through one's eyes one's soul may be wounded,

And then sinful thoughts may grow unattended.

**Dorine.** Then you are quite ready for temptation,

And bare skin makes on you a big impression.

I truly don't know why you feel such passion;

I myself think lust is out of fashion,

For I could see you nude from top to toe

Without your pelt setting my cheeks aglow.

**Tartuffe.** Put a little modesty in your discourse

Or I must leave you instantly perforce.

**Dorine.** No, it is I who will leave you here in peace,

And I will just say this before I cease:

Madam is coming down to visit you  
And demands the favor of a rendezvous.

**Tartuffe.** Oh yes! Most willingly!

**Dorine** [*to herself*]. Isn't he sweet!

I'm even surer now that dog's in heat.

**Tartuffe.** Will she soon come?

**Dorine.** I think I can hear her.

Yes, there. Now I will leave you two together.

### SCENE III

**Elmire, Tartuffe**

**Tartuffe.** May Heaven forever in its great bounty  
Grant you good health both in soul and body,  
And bless your days as much as he desires  
Who is the humblest of those your love inspires!

**Elmire.** I'm much obliged for your pious wishes, but please,  
Let us be seated and put ourselves at ease.

**Tartuffe** [*sitting down*]. Have you quite recovered from your illness?

**Elmire** [*sitting as well*]. Yes, my headache quickly lost its sharpness.

**Tartuffe.** My prayers haven't enough value to buy  
Such grace from the Heavenly One on High,  
But most of my recent prayers have in essence  
Been mainly focused on your convalescence.

**Elmire.** Your concern for me is somewhat disquieting.

**Tartuffe.** I dearly cherish your precious well-being,  
And to restore it I would have given my own.

**Elmire.** Such Christian charity is overblown,  
But I am much obliged for all your care.

**Tartuffe.** I try to do as much for you as I dare.

**Elmire.** I wish to speak of some private business  
And am pleased there's no one to overhear us.

**Tartuffe.** I, too, am delighted, and *entre nous*  
It's very sweet being one-on-one with you.

For this also have I begged the Deity,  
But only now has he granted it to me.

**Elmire.** I myself want an encounter between us two  
Where your whole heart is opened through and through.

*[Without exposing himself and in order to better hear the conversation,  
Damis opens the door of the closet in which he is hiding.]*

**Tartuffe.** In exchange for this unique blessing, I  
Desire only to reveal to you my  
Whole soul, and to swear that all my preaching  
About your guests--though perhaps over-reaching--  
Was not caused by any anger or hate  
But rather by a zeal that's passionate  
And pure . . .

**Elmire.** I wholly understand and declare  
My belief that you seek only my welfare.

**Tartuffe** *[pressing the tips of her fingers]*. Yes, madam, it's true; my  
devotion is such . . .

**Elmire.** You're hurting me.

**Tartuffe.** Passion pushes me too much.  
I never wanted to hurt you, I swear,  
And I would rather . . .

*[He puts his hand on her knee.]*

**Elmire.** Why is your hand there?

**Tartuffe.** I'm feeling your dress. Such fine dimitry!

**Elmire.** Oh! Please let me go. You're tickling me.

*[She pushes her chair back, and Tartuffe moves his forward.]*

**Tartuffe** *[putting his hand on her lacy collar]*.  
Dear Lord! But this workmanship is marvelous!  
Lacework nowadays is miraculous.  
I've never seen anything quite so fine.

**Elmire.** That's true. But let's speak of this concern of mine.  
I hear that my husband may be breaking his word  
And giving you his daughter. What have you heard?

**Tartuffe.** In truth, madam, some such words did transpire,  
But that is not the joy to which I aspire,  
And I see elsewhere those splendid attractions  
Which I seek to attain through all of my actions.

**Elmire.** Then all your earthly love has been overthrown?

**Tartuffe.** My breast does not hold a heart made of stone.

**Elmire.** I'm sure that all your thoughts are on salvation,  
And nothing less holds any fascination.

**Tartuffe.** The love that attracts us to what's eternal  
Does not stop our love for the merely temporal.

Our senses can be quite easily charmed  
By the perfect Earthly works that God has formed.

His glory is mirrored in those like you,  
But in you yourself we see its rarest hue.

He has molded your face with such sublime art  
That it surprises the eye and transports the heart,  
And I can't gaze upon you, you perfect creature,  
Without worshipping in you both God and nature,  
And sensing in my soul an ardent love  
For this, the most beautiful portrait by God above.

At first I feared that my secret passion  
Might be a tricky trap laid by Satan,  
And I even resolved to flee from your eyes  
As if you were something to exorcise.

But I finally learned, oh beauty most lovable,  
That my ardor for you could never be culpable,  
That I should even consider it right,  
And so I submit to my heart's delight.

I confess that I'm playing an audacious part

In presenting to you the gift of my heart,  
But I place all my faith in your kindness  
Like a beggar-man hindered by blindness.

In you I seek peace, hope, and happiness;  
On you depends my torment or my bliss.

And through you alone I will finally be  
Happy if you will, or sad if you please.

**Elmire.** That declaration is very urbane,

But in a man of God it's a bit profane.  
You ought to protect your heart a bit better  
And reflect more deeply on such a matter.  
A saint like you whom we all hail . . .

**Tartuffe.** I may be holy, but I'm nonetheless male,  
And when one sees your heavenly charms,  
It's time for reason to throw up its arms.  
I know such words from me may seem strange--though,  
Madam, after all, I am not an angel,  
And if you condemn the confession I'm making,  
Admit nonetheless that your beauty's breath-taking.  
From the first time I set eyes on your supreme  
Splendor, my heart became yours and you my queen.  
The ineffable sweetness of your divine gaze  
Shattered my stout heart and set it ablaze.  
That look conquered all--fasting, prayers, duty--  
And turned my vows into praise of your beauty.  
My eyes and my sighs have often shown my choice  
But to make it still clearer I now add my voice.  
If you should look down with a kindly eye  
Upon the base woes of a slave such as I  
And if your great kindness should happen to lead  
You to stoop down and grant what I need,  
I should always have for you, oh precious one,  
A love that beggars all comparison.  
With me your honor will never be damaged;  
No disgrace can attend an affair I have managed.  
All these gallants at court, for whom wives act absurd,  
Are reckless in their deeds and rash in their words.  
They endlessly brag about every success.  
Each favor they receive, they quickly confess,  
And their wagging tongues, on which you rely,  
Dishonor the shrine before which they lie.  
But men like me burn with a discreet fever,  
And we keep your sweet secrets safe forever.  
The concern we have for our good reputation  
Will also preserve you in your own station;

In us you will find, if you wish it, my dear,  
Love without scandal, pleasure without fear.

**Elmire.** I have heard your words, and your rhetoric  
Leaves your point clear--though you lay it on thick.  
Aren't you afraid that I could be in the mood  
To tell my husband of your solicitude,  
And that a sudden knowledge of that sort  
Might set back your hopes of his lasting support?

**Tartuffe.** I know that you are only too gracious  
And that you will forgive my audacious  
Deeds since they spring from a human failing  
In that passionate love that you are bewailing,  
And that you will reflect when you view things afresh  
That I am not blind, and a man's only flesh.

**Elmire.** Others might take things differently, I suppose,  
But discretion prevails, and I won't expose  
This matter to my spouse. In return, it's true,  
I do want one little favor from you:  
To push forward without any sly snare  
The wedding of Mariane and Valere,  
To renounce on your own the unjust power  
That would enrich you with another's dower,  
And . . .

#### SCENE IV

**Elmire, Damis, Tartuffe**

**Damis** [*coming out of the closet in which he was hiding*].

No, madam, no. All this must be exposed.  
By hiding here I've heard all he proposed,  
And God in His goodness has guided me  
To confound this noisome bastard's treachery,  
To discover a way to take my vengeance  
For his hypocrisy and insolence,  
To wake up my father, and to justly screw  
This scumbag who wants to make love to you.

**Elmire.** No, Damis. It's enough if he has striven

To reform and merit the pardon I've given.  
Don't make me retract what I have avowed.  
I don't choose to discuss scandal out loud:  
A woman laughs at these masculine foibles,  
And never plagues her mate with paltry troubles.  
**Damis.** You have your own reasons for acting so,  
And I have reasons for my *quid-pro-quo*.  
The very thought of sparing him is a joke,  
And the insolent pride of this base bloke  
Has triumphed too often over my just wrath,  
And has sown too much trouble along my path.  
For too long that liar has ruled my old man  
Blocking both my love and that of Mariane.  
His perfidy must be brought to light of day,  
And for that God gives us a ready way.  
For this occasion I thank the good Lord;  
It is far too lucky to be ignored.  
The only way to deserve to lose it  
Is to have it in hand and not to use it.

**Elmire.** But Damis . . .

**Damis.** No, please, my mind is made up.  
It is time to rejoice and fill up the cup,  
And you're trying in vain to obligate me  
To give up the pleasure of my victory.  
I'm going to expose this affair without delay;  
This is just the thing that will make my day.

## SCENE V

**Orgon, Damis, Tartuffe, Elmire**

**Damis.** Father, it may surprise . . . and amuse you greatly . . .  
To hear the news of what's gone on lately.  
You're being well paid for all your caresses  
By your friend's response to those tendernesses.  
His great love for you has shown its hold  
Through his eagerness to make you a cuckold.  
And I heard him here confess to your bride

A love that has made him heart-sick and dove-eyed.  
At all costs she wants to remain discreet  
And preserve his secret--because she's sweet--  
But I cannot bear the man's impudence.  
Besides, my silence would cause you offense.  
**Elmire.** Yes, I would never disturb my husband's rest  
By reporting the words of silly pest.  
My honor does not depend on such a thing  
Since I'm well able to resist flattering.  
You wouldn't have spoken out against my view  
If I had any power over you.

## SCENE VI

**Orgon, Damis, Tartuffe**

**Orgon.** What do I hear? Good God! Is it credible?

**Tartuffe.** Yes, brother, I'm wicked and culpable,  
A sorry sinner, full of iniquity,  
As great a wretch as there ever could be.  
My entire life has been soiled with evil;  
It's nothing but a mass of sinful upheaval.  
And I see that God has, for my punishment,  
Chosen to mortify me with this event.  
Let them connect any crime with my name;  
I waive all defense and take all the blame.  
Believe what they tell you, stoke up your wrath,  
And drive me like a felon from your path.  
The shame that I bear cannot be too great,  
For I know I deserve a much worse fate.

**Orgon** [*to his son*]. Traitor! Do you dare, by your duplicity,  
To taint both his virtue and purity?

**Damis.** What? Can the false meekness of this hypocrite  
Cause you to belie . . .

**Orgon.** Shut up, you misfit.

**Tartuffe.** Oh, let him go on. You are wrong to scold,  
And you'd be wise to believe the story he's told.  
In light of his claims, why should you favor me?



What do you know of my culpability?  
Why put your faith in my exterior?  
Why should you think that I'm superior?  
No, no, appearances are fooling you,  
I am the kind of man you should eschew.  
The whole world thinks that I have earned God's blessing,  
But the plain truth is . . . that I'm worth nothing.

[*Addressing Damis*]

Yes, my dear son, speak. And don't merely chide.  
Accuse me of treason, theft, and homicide.  
Call me every foul name you can recall.  
I deny nothing. I merit it all.  
And I beg on my knees to bear this chagrin  
As the shameful result of my life of sin.

**Orgon** [*To Tartuffe*]. That's too much, brother. [*To his son*] Why can't  
you let go,  
Scoundrel?

**Damis.** What! Have his words seduced you so . . .

**Orgon.** Keep quiet, you bum! [*To Tartuffe*]. Brother, please arise.  
[*To his son*]. Shame!

**Damis.** He can . . .

**Orgon.** Silence!

**Damis.** Damn! Do you surmise . . .

**Orgon.** If you say one word, I will break your arm.

**Tartuffe.** In the name of God, brother, do no harm.

I would rather face a ravaging beast  
Than that your dear son should be harmed in the least.

**Orgon** [*to his son*]. Ingrate!

**Tartuffe.** Leave him in peace. On my two knees  
I beg you to give him your grace . . .

**Orgon** [*throwing himself to his knees and embracing Tartuffe*]. Don't!  
Please!

[*To his son*] Wretch, see his goodness.

**Damis.** Then . . .

**Orgon.** Shhh!

**Damis.**

I . . .

**Orgon.**

Cease, I say.

I'm aware of your motive in this foray:  
You all hate him, and now I see how my wife,  
Children, and maid conspire against his life.  
You impudently try every trick you can  
To alienate me from this holy man,  
But the harder you try to drive him away,  
The harder I'll try to get him to stay.  
And I'll hasten his marriage to Mariane  
To demolish the pride of this whole clan.

**Damis.** So you will force her to marry this fellow?

**Orgon.** Yes, this very night, to see you bellow.

I defy you all, and stand here to say  
I am the master and you must obey.

Come now. Retract your words, oh foul pollution!  
Throw yourself down and demand absolution.

**Damis.** Who, me? Of that villain, by whose pretense . . .

**Orgon.** So you refuse, you scum, and your impertinence  
Persists? [*To Tartuffe*] A stick! A staff! Don't hold me back.  
[*To his son*] Get out of my house and don't even pack,  
And never again let me see your face.

**Damis.** Yes, I will go, but . . .

**Orgon.** Quickly! Leave this place.  
I am cutting you off and what is worse  
I am leaving you with my heart-felt curse.

## SCENE VII

**Orgon, Tartuffe**

**Orgon.** To offend in that way a saintly man!

**Tartuffe.** Heavenly Lord pardon him if you can.  
[*To Orgon.*] If you only knew with what pain  
I see them trying to blacken my name. . . .

**Orgon.** Alas!

**Tartuffe.** The mere thought of this ingratitude

Makes me suffer from a torture so crude . . .  
The horror I feel . . . My soul longs to cry . . .  
I can't even speak, and I'm sure I will die.

**Orgon** [*He runs weeping to the door through which he had chased his son.*]

Villain! How I regret that I held my hand  
And that I did not crush you where you stand.  
[*To Tartuffe.*] Calm yourself, brother and try not to fret.

**Tartuffe.** Let's stop these squabbles that end in regret.  
The great friction I have caused makes me grieve,  
And I believe, brother, that I should leave.

**Orgon.** What? Surely you jest?

**Tartuffe.** They hate me and I see  
That they want you to doubt my integrity.

**Orgon.** Who cares! Do you think I'll listen to them?

**Tartuffe.** No doubt they'll continue their stratagem;  
And the same tales that you reject today  
You may find credible some other day.

**Orgon.** No, brother, never.

**Tartuffe.** Ah, brother, a man's mate  
Can easily make her spouse speculate.

**Orgon.** No, no.

**Tartuffe.** Let me leave here at once and so  
Escape the threat of another low blow.

**Orgon.** No, please remain. I can't live without you.

**Tartuffe.** Well! I suppose I will suffer if I do.  
Still, if you wish . . .

**Orgon.** Oh!

**Tartuffe.** All right! It's a pact.  
But in future I know how I must act.  
Honor is tender, and friendship engages  
Me to prevent gossip--however outrageous.  
I'll avoid your wife and you will not see me . . .

**Orgon.** No, in spite of everyone, you and she  
Must often meet. I love to make a stir,  
So day and night let them see you with her.

No, that's not enough, but this will make them stew:

I don't want to have any heir but you,

And I'm going to legally designate

You as the owner of my whole estate.

A frank and true friend, whom I take as my son,

Is dearer to me than my wife or children.

Will you accept the offer I am making?

**Tartuffe.** May God's will be done in this undertaking!

**Orgon.** Poor man! Let's quickly put it all in writing,

And let their envy choke on its own spiting.

## ACT IV

### SCENE I

**Cleante, Tartuffe**

**Cleante.** Yes, the whole town is talking about it,

And they don't think it does you much credit.

And I've sought you out, sir, just for the sake

Of telling you bluntly what I think's at stake.

I'm not going to dredge up the whole dispute;

The fact is Damis is in disrepute.

Supposing that he did act like a fool

And that you are unfairly being called cruel,

Shouldn't a Christian pardon the offense

And purge his soul of desire for vengeance?

And should you permit him, for this one goof,

To be driven away from his father's roof?

I'll tell you again, and I'll be bold:

You are scandalizing both young and old.

If you take my advice, you will seek a truce

And not be a party to this boy's abuse.

Make an offering to God of your acrimony,

And restore the son to his patrimony.

**Tartuffe.** Alas! As for myself, I seek that solace:

I do not have for him the slightest malice;

I wholly forgive him of any blame,

And long to restore him to his good name.  
But in the service of God I can't permit  
It, for if he remains I shall have to quit  
This house. No prior offense holds a candle  
To his. Our meeting would cause a huge scandal.  
Lord only knows what people would assume!  
They would impute it to cunning, I presume,  
And say that my guilt has made me pretend  
To excuse him of any intent to offend,  
And that I fear him and wish to placate him  
As a crafty move in my plan to checkmate him.

**Cleante.** I think you are making up excuses,  
And your arguments, monsieur, seem like ruses.  
Must you assume the role of the Deity?  
Does He need us to punish the guilty?  
Leave it to Him to take care of vengeance;  
He bids us to forgive every offense  
And not to consider human judgments  
When we follow God's sovereign commandments.  
What? Should the petty fear of what some may say  
Prevent you from doing this good deed today?  
No, let us always follow God's commands,  
And leave all other matters in His hands.

**Tartuffe.** I've told you already that I forgive  
Him, and that, sir, is God's directive.  
But after such scandal and vituperation  
God doesn't demand our cohabitation.

**Cleante.** And does He demand that you lend your hand  
To the pure caprice of the father's command  
And accept the gift of his whole estate,  
Which you cannot justly appropriate?

**Tartuffe.** Those who know me will not believe that I'd  
Do anything selfish or unjustified.  
I hold worldly goods in quite low esteem.  
I can't be dazzled by their phony gleam.  
And if in the end I decide to take  
The gift that the father wishes to make,

It is only, I swear, because I fear  
That it could be left to a false profiteer,  
Or that it could be shared by those who would  
Use it to do evil rather than good,  
And who would not use it, as I'm sure I can,  
For the glory of God and one's fellow man.  
**Cleante.** Oh, sir! Don't put on that scrupulous air  
While your actions injure a rightful heir.  
Don't feel uneasy or risk your good health  
By fretting about the perils of his wealth.  
It is better spent on a young man's whim  
Than that you be accused of defrauding him.  
I only wonder why you aren't ashamed  
By this proposal in which you are named.  
In true religion is there some dictum  
That says it's okay to make an heir your victim?  
And if God has put some obstacle in place  
Against you and Damis sharing the same space,  
Wouldn't you prefer to be more discrete  
And leave this house in a noble retreat  
Than to sit and see the son of the house  
Thrust from his home like a beggarly louse.  
Believe me, it would prove your probity,  
Monsieur, . . .

**Tartuffe.** It is now, Monsieur, half past three:  
Certain religious rites demand my presence,  
And you must excuse me for my absence. [*He leaves.*]

**Cleante.** Ah!

## SCENE II

**Elmire, Mariane, Dorine, Cleante**

**Dorine** [*to Cleante*]. Please, sir, help us help her, for pity's sake.  
Her suffering is such that her heart may break,  
And the pact her father made this evening  
Is the cause of all this awful grieving.  
Here he comes. Let's join forces, I beg you,

And try through skill or cunning to undo  
The vicious scheme that's left us all so troubled.

### Scene III

**Orgon, Elmire, Mariane, Cleante, Dorine**

**Orgon.** Ah! I'm pleased to see you all assembled.

[*To Mariane*] This contract here should make you very gay;  
I'm sure you know what I'm about to say.

**Mariane** [*kneeling*]. In the name of God, who knows how I hurt,  
And of everything which might move your heart,  
Forgo, for now, the rights of paternity  
And release me from my vow of docility.  
Do not reduce me by some brutal rule  
To asking God why you've grown so cruel.  
And this life, alas, that you gave to me--  
Do not make it a life of misery.

If, contrary to all my sweet hopes of  
Joy, you forbid me to wed the man I love,  
Hear me at least--on my knees I implore  
You not to give me to a man I abhor,  
And don't push me past the point of despair  
By using your full force in this affair.

**Orgon** [*to himself, sensing himself weakening*].  
Be firm. This is no time for humanity!

**Mariane.** Your fondness for him doesn't bother me.  
Indulge it, and if it's not enough to consign  
Your whole estate to him--then give him mine!  
I freely consent and will sign on demand,  
But please, please, do not offer him my hand,  
And allow me to live in a convent where I  
May count the sad days till God lets me die.

**Orgon.** Young girls always play such religious pranks  
When their fathers hobble their lusty flanks!  
Get up! The harder you have to work to bear it,  
The greater the virtue and the merit.  
Let this marriage mortify your senses

And quit bothering me with your meek defenses.

**Dorine.** But . . .

**Orgon.** Keep quiet, and stay out of this matter.

I completely forbid you to add to the chatter.

**Cleante.** If you will allow me to offer some advice . . .

**Orgon.** Brother, your advice is worth any price:

It is thoughtful and I truly respect it,

But I hope you don't mind if I reject it.

**Elmire** [*to her husband*]. What can I think about what you're saying

Except that your blindness is quite dismaying!

You must be besotted and led astray

To refuse to believe what has happened today.

**Orgon.** My dear, I only call 'em as I see 'em.

You favor my son, that worthless young bum,

And I think that you are afraid to condemn

His dirty trick on this most saintly of men.

You are, in fact, too calm to be believed;

You ought to have seemed a bit more aggrieved.

**Elmire.** When a love-sick man makes a foolish mistake

Must we take up arms as if honor's at stake?

And should we always respond to small slips

With fire in our eyes and abuse on our lips?

For myself, I laugh at these signs of lust;

It doesn't please me at all to grow nonplussed.

I seek wisdom tempered with charity,

And I'm not one of those prudes whose asperity

Is such that they fight for virtue tooth and nail,

And scratch a man's eyes out for being male.

Heaven preserve me from that kind of virtue!

I am an honest wife, but not a shrew,

And I believe that a calm, icy glance

Is quite enough to rebuff an advance.

**Orgon.** I know what I know and I won't change my mind.

**Elmire.** I'm again amazed that you could be so blind.

But would you keep that incredulity

If I made you see that we have spoken truly?

**Orgon.** See?



**Elmire.** Yes.

**Orgon.** Fantasy!

**Elmire.** But if I found a way  
To make you see it all in light of day?

**Orgon.** Fairy tales!

**Elmire.** What a man! At least reply.  
I don't ask you to believe me, but I  
Do wonder what you will say of your good man  
If I bring you to a place where you can  
Clearly see and hear these things? What then?

**Orgon.** In that case I would say . . . nothing again,  
For it cannot be.

**Elmire.** You've been blind too long,  
And in calling me a liar, you're wrong!  
So for your pleasure, but with modesty,  
I'll make you witness my veracity.

**Orgon.** Good. I take you at your word. Now let's see  
How in the world you will prove this to me.

**Elmire** [*to Dorine*]. Bid him come to me.

**Dorine** [*to Elmire*]. He's a crafty one  
And perhaps he won't easily be undone.

**Elmire** [*to Dorine*]. No, we're easily duped by our affection,  
And vanity aids in our misdirection.

[*Speaking to Cleante and Mariane*]

Send him down here to me. And you can go.

#### SCENE IV

**Elmire, Orgon**

**Elmire.** Bring the table here, and then crouch down low.

**Orgon.** Why?

**Elmire.** Hiding you well is to be desired.

**Orgon.** Why under the table?

**Elmire.** Just do what's required!  
I've made my plans and we'll see how they fare!  
Get under the table, and when you're down there,  
Don't let him see you and try not to grunt.  
**Orgon.** I really think I'm far too tolerant,  
But I'll stay through the end of your stratagem.  
**Elmire.** You won't, I'm sure, have a thing to condemn.

[*To her husband, who is now under the table.*]

Mind you, I'm going to have strange things to say  
And you must not be shocked in any way.  
Whatever I may say, you must allow;  
I only wish to convince you, anyhow.  
I'm going to use sex, since I'm reduced to it,  
To strip off the cloak of this hypocrite;  
I'll stoke up the fires of his insolent heart  
And give a free field to this base upstart.  
For your sake, and to deepen his disrepute,  
I'm going to pretend to welcome his suit.  
I'll quit just as soon as you've heard enough.  
Things needn't go farther than you wish, my love.  
And you must stop them from becoming bizarre  
When you think his mad love has gone too far.  
Spare your wife and don't leave me in his hands  
Longer than reaching your conviction demands.  
This is your concern and you are in command.  
Here he comes. Keep still! Keep down! Understand?

## SCENE V

**Tartuffe, Elmire, Orgon** (*under the table*)

**Tartuffe.** You wish to speak with me in here, I'm told.

**Elmire.** Yes. I now have some secrets to unfold,  
But shut the door before I say a word  
And look around--we mustn't be overheard.

*[Tartuffe closes the door and returns.]*

I don't want another fracas to ensue  
Like the one that overtook us hitherto.  
Never before have I been so dismayed!  
Damis startled me and made me afraid  
For you. You must have seen that I did my best  
To disrupt his plan and soothe his unrest.  
It is true that I was so filled with shame  
That I never thought of denying his claim,  
But by the grace of God, I'm nearly sure  
All is for the best and we're now more secure.  
The prestige of your name has dispelled the storm,  
And my husband will never suspect you of harm.  
Defying those with rumors to foment,  
He wants us together at every moment.  
And that is why without blame I can  
Be alone with you although you're a man,  
And that allows me to open my heart  
Willingly to the sweet thoughts you impart.

**Tartuffe.** I find it odd that you have kind words to say;  
Earlier you treated me in a different way.

**Elmire.** Ah! If you're angry about that rebuff,  
You know nothing about a woman's love!  
And how little you know about our intent  
If you think a weak defense is really meant!  
At such times our modesty must contend  
With the tender feelings that triumph in the end.  
No matter how strongly you make love's claim,  
In embracing it we always feel some shame.  
We resist at first, but in our faces  
It's clear that we'll soon yield to your embraces.  
Our words and our wishes are often opposed:  
A refusal may mean we accept what's proposed.  
No doubt I am making too free a confession  
And I may be committing an indiscretion,  
But since my attempt at silence has gone awry,

Ask yourself why I sought to pacify  
Damis, and what made me listen so long  
And so kindly to your sweet love song?  
Would I have reacted as you saw me do  
If the offer of your heart didn't please me too?  
And what should you be able to conclude  
From my fervent desire to preclude  
The marriage that has been announced just now?  
Isn't it that I'd hate for a wedding vow  
To come between us, and that I care for you  
And want nothing at all to split us in two?

**Tartuffe.** There is no pleasure in Heaven above  
Sweeter than such words from the lips I love;  
Their honeyed sound flows richly through my senses  
With the sweetness of the purest essences.  
The pleasure of pleasing you is my one goal,  
And my heart finds happiness in that role,  
But that heart also takes the slight liberty  
Of daring to doubt this felicity.  
Perhaps these sweet words are a decorous ruse  
Designed to disrupt my hymeneal news;  
And, if I may speak quite freely with you,  
I won't believe that all you say is true  
Until I'm assured that you couldn't lie  
By a few of those favors for which I sigh.  
Such favors would make me your devotee  
And a true believer in your fondness for me.

**Elmire** [*she coughs to warn her husband*].  
Do you demand to push on with such great speed,  
And drain my heart dry by your burning need?  
I risk my life in proclaiming my love,  
And for you even that is not enough!  
Can't you be satisfied with what I say?  
Must you force me into going all the way?

**Tartuffe.** The less one merits, the more one desires.  
Mere words will never quench our raging fires.  
A promised gift is often suspected;

We rarely believe it, until we inspect it.

I, who so little merit your favors,

Doubt the happy outcome of my labors.

And I will not believe a thing, my dear,

Until you ease my pain to prove you're sincere.

**Elmire.** Good God, your love is too oppressive;

It troubles my soul and becomes obsessive!

What a crazy power it has on the heart!

With what fierce passion it tears me apart!

What! Is there no way to stave off your desire?

Won't you give me a moment to respire?

Do you think it is fair to be so firm,

To demand everything and watch me squirm,

To take what you want, pushing and pressing,

And abusing my weakness in acquiescing?

**Tartuffe.** If you look on me with a kindly heart,

Then prove how you feel by playing your part.

**Elmire.** But how can I give you the things you seek

Without offending that God of whom you speak?

**Tartuffe.** If it's only God that opposes my desire,

I'll think up a way to make him conspire,

And that need not restrain your heart, my dear.

**Elmire.** But the decrees of God scare me to tears.

**Tartuffe.** I can dispel your foolish fears, madame,

For I know the art of quashing each qualm.

Though God forbids certain gratifications,

With him one can reach one's accommodations.

It is a science to stretch out the strings

Of conscience in the service of diverse things

And to rectify an evil action

With the purity of our intention.

Regarding these secrets, I shall instruct you;

You need only allow me to conduct you.

Satisfy my desire and have no fear;

I'll assume the sin and leave your soul clear.

*[Elmire coughs more loudly.]*

That's quite a cough, madame.

**Elmire.** Yes, it's a torment.

**Tartuffe** [*offering Elmire a piece of candy*].

Would it help to have a licorice or mint?

**Elmire.** It's an obstinate illness, and I see  
That all the mints in the world won't help me

**Tartuffe.** It's certainly troublesome.

**Elmire.** That's for sure!

**Tartuffe.** Your scruples at least are easy to cure:

You can be sure that I will keep things quiet--

A deed is evil only if men spy it.

The noise of scandal is the source of offense;

There is no sin if one sins in silence.

**Elmire** [*after having coughed and knocked on the table*].

At last I see I'm forced to go astray,

And I must consent to let you have your way,

And that I cannot hope that short of the deed

You will be content and willing to concede.

It is very hard to be forced to do it,

And in spite of myself to stoop down to it;

But since you persist in making me obey,

Since you refuse to believe what I say,

And since you demand more convincing proof,

I'll have to give in and quit acting aloof.

If this action causes anyone grief,

The blame be on him who refused all relief.

The fault most certainly is none of mine.

**Tartuffe.** Yes, madame, I agree and that is fine . . .

**Elmire.** Peek out of the door and see, I beg you,

If my spouse is spying on our rendezvous.

**Tartuffe.** Why do you care what he sees or where he goes?

He's a man who loves to be led by the nose.

Our trysts are something he's proud of achieving,

And he'd watch us go to it without believing.

**Elmire.** No matter. Please, go have a look outside;

I'd hate to think he's found some place to hide.

## SCENE VI

**Orgon, Elmire**

**Orgon** [*coming out from under the table*]. There, I swear, is an abominable man!

I can't get over it. What is his plan?

**Elmire.** How now? Come out so soon? Were you having fun?

Get back down there. We've only just begun.

Wait till the end to be completely sure,

And don't put your faith in mere conjecture.

**Orgon.** No man more evil has been spawned in Hell.

**Elmire.** Dear Lord! Don't believe the lies people tell.

Be wholly convinced before you concede:

Cautious men shun the slips that come with speed.

[*She pushes her husband behind her.*]

## SCENE VII

**Tartuffe, Elmire, Orgon**

**Tartuffe** [*without seeing Orgon*]. All things conspire, madame, for my contentment:

I've closely examined the whole apartment;

No one is around, and my heart's delight. . .

[*Just as Tartuffe comes forward with open arms to embrace Elmire, she steps back and Tartuffe sees Orgon.*]

**Orgon** [*stopping him*]. Hold on! Your desires are too quick to ignite,  
And you mustn't let passion be overdone.

Oh! Man of blessings, you wished to give me one!

How temptation has taken over your life!

You'd marry my daughter, and covet my wife!

I've doubted your word for quite a long while,

And I've always believed you'd change your style;

But this is enough to give me my proof:

I am fed up and want no more, Tartuffe.

**Elmire** [*to Tartuffe*]. It was against my will to act this way,  
But I was forced into the part I play.

**Tartuffe** [*to Orgon*]. What? You think . . .

**Orgon.** Come, please, let's have no to-do.  
Get out of my home without more ado.

**Tartuffe.** My intent . . .

**Orgon.** This is no time for sly repartee;  
You must leave my house immediately.

**Tartuffe.** You must leave, you who speak as the master:  
The house is mine, and you'd better learn fast or  
I shall show you that it's senseless to pick  
A fight with me using this cowardly trick,  
That it will get you nowhere to insult me,  
And that I will punish your falsity,  
Avenge God's wounds, and make you grieve  
For talking here about forcing me to leave.

## SCENE VIII

**Elmire, Orgon**

**Elmire.** What is he saying and what is he after?

**Orgon.** I'm ashamed to say this is no time for laughter.

**Elmire.** Why?

**Orgon.** I see my error by what he said;  
I gave him my lands. What was wrong with my head?

**Elmire.** You gave him . . .

**Orgon.** Yes and they can't be restored,  
But there's something else that troubles me more.

**Elmire.** What is that?

**Orgon.** I'll tell you soon, but first there's  
A certain box I want to find upstairs.

## ACT V

### SCENE I

**Orgon, Cleante**



**Cleante.** Where are you rushing?

**Orgon.** Who knows?

**Cleante.** It might make sense

To begin by having a conference  
About everything that has happened lately.

**Orgon.** That box of papers troubles me greatly;  
More than all the rest, it's cause for distress.

**Cleante.** Why are those papers important to possess?

**Orgon.** My unfortunate friend Argus, when he  
Put them into my hands, swore me to secrecy.

He chose to rely on me as he fled,  
And these papers, according to what he said,  
Are crucial to both his life and his wealth.

**Cleante.** Then why didn't you keep them to yourself?

**Orgon.** It was a matter of conscience, you see,  
So I consulted Tartuffe in secrecy,

And his arguments came to persuade me  
That he should keep the box for security,  
So I could deny having it on hand.

And thus I'd have a subterfuge on demand  
With which my conscience might muddle through  
In swearing to things that I knew weren't true.

**Cleante.** You're in trouble, judging by appearances;  
Both the deed of gift and these confidences

Are, to tell you my thoughts quite honestly,  
Measures that you took very thoughtlessly.  
They might put you in jail with such evidence,

And since that man has it, it makes no sense  
To drive him away through your imprudence;  
You need to regain his full confidence.

**Orgon.** With what a fair appearance and touching zeal  
He hides a wicked soul and a heart of steel!

And I, who received him begging and broke . . .  
That's it, I renounce all such pious folk.

Henceforth, I will hold them as wholly evil  
And do my best to send them to the devil.

**Cleante.** It's just like you to get carried away!  
You can never stick to the middle way.  
To reason rightly is too much bother;  
You always rush from one excess to another.  
You can see your error and now you know  
That by a false zeal you were brought low.  
But to redeem yourself does logic demand  
That you embrace an error that's even more grand?  
And must you confuse the heart of a shill  
With the hearts of all the men of good will?  
Because a rascal had the luck or grace  
To dupe you with his austere and shining face,  
Must you believe everyone acts that way  
And no true church-man can be found today?  
Leave to libertines these foolish deductions.  
Seek true virtue, not a false deconstruction.  
Never rush into hasty admiration,  
And strive instead for moderation.  
If possible, don't admire false pretense,  
But also don't give true zeal cause for offense,  
And if you must fall to one extreme,  
Err in being too free with your esteem.

## **SCENE II**

**Damis, Orgon, Cleante**

**Damis.** Father, is it true that this cad threatens you,  
That he has forgotten the gifts that bound you two,  
And that his shameful pride, maddeningly,  
Has repaid your kindness with tyranny?

**Orgon.** Yes, son; he's brought me to the verge of tears.

**Damis.** Leave him to me. I'll cut off his ears.  
You must not flinch before his insolence  
For I'll soon restore your independence,  
And, to end the matter, I'll slice him like toast.

**Cleante.** That's exactly like a bratty boy's boast.  
Please make your angry words more moderate.

We live during a time and in a state  
Where violent acts are clearly unlawful.

### **SCENE III**

**Madame Pernelle, Mariane, Elmire, Dorine, Damis, Orgon, Cleante**

**Madame Pernelle.** What's happening? The tales I'm told are awful.

**Orgon.** Novel things have been happening to me,

And for all my kindness, this is my fee.

I lift the man out of his misery;

Like a brother, I take him home with me;

Each day I treat him with greater largesse;

I give him my daughter and all I possess;

And at the same time the lying low-life

Looks for the best way to seduce my wife,

And, not fully content with what he's achieved,

He threatens me with the gifts he's received,

And he wishes to use, in ruining me,

Those profits he gained from my foolish bounty

To drive me from the home that I gave to him

And reduce me to the state that he was in.

**Dorine.** Poor man!

**Madame Pernelle.** Son, I don't believe he'd allow

Himself to take part in actions so foul.

**Orgon.** How's that?

**Madame Pernelle.** People always resent holy men.

**Orgon.** Mother, what were you trying to say just then?

**Madame Pernelle.** That in your home one sees the strangest things;

Among them is the hate that envy brings.

**Orgon.** How is it hate when I've told you the truth?

**Madame Pernelle.** I warned you often when you were a youth:

In this world virtue is oppressed forever;

The envious may die, but envy never.

**Orgon.** But what does this have to do with today?

**Madame Pernelle.** People are telling you lies and hearsay.

**Orgon.** I've already said that I myself saw it.

**Madame Pernelle.** The malice of gossips is infinite.

**Orgon.** You'll make me damn myself, Mother. I tell you  
I saw with my eyes just what he would do.

**Madame Pernelle.** Some tongues always have some poison to spit,  
And nothing on earth is safe against it.

**Orgon.** I do not know what these words of yours mean.

I've seen it, I say, seen, with these eyes seen--

Do you know the word, seen? Must I shout it

In your ears a hundred times and still you doubt it?

**Madame Pernelle.** Dear Lord! Appearances may be deceiving:

You shouldn't judge based on what you're perceiving.

**Orgon.** I'll go mad!

**Madame Pernelle.** People are prone to suspicion;

Misjudgment is part of the human condition.

**Orgon.** So I must interpret charitably  
His desire to cuckold me?

**Madame Pernelle.** Don't you see  
That to accuse a man you need just cause,  
And until you're quite sure, you ought to pause.

**Orgon.** To be more certain, what would you advise?  
Should I have waited until before my eyes  
He had . . . You'll make me say something quite lewd.

**Madame Pernelle.** I'm sure that a holy zeal has imbued  
His soul, and I can't begin to believe  
That he would be willing to cheat or deceive.

**Orgon.** Leave me . . . I'm now so angry that if you  
Were not my mother, I'm not sure what I'd do.

**Dorine** [*to Orgon*]. This is fair payment, sir, for what we received.  
You wouldn't believe us; now you're not believed.

**Cleante.** We are wasting time on foolish pleasures  
That would be better spent in active measures.  
We should not ignore this swindler's threats.

**Damis.** What! Does his boldness have no boundaries yet?

**Elmire.** For myself, I don't believe it's possible;  
His ingratitude would be too visible.

**Cleante** [*to Orgon*]. Don't put your faith in that. He will find ways  
To gild with reason all the things he says;  
And with less than this the people in power  
Have forced their foes to cringe and cower.  
I tell you again: well-armed as they are,  
You should never have pushed him quite so far.

**Orgon.** True, but what could I do? Facing that bastard,  
I felt resentment that I never mastered.

**Cleante.** I deeply desire to arrange between you  
Some shadow of peace, however untrue.

**Elmire.** If I had known that he possessed such arms,  
I would never have set off these alarms,  
And my . . .

**Orgon** [*to Dorine, seeing Monsieur Loyal enter*].  
What does this man want? Go and see.

I don't wish to have anyone meet with me!

#### SCENE IV

**Monsieur Loyal, Madame Pernelle, Orgon, Damis, Mariane, Dorine, Elmire, Cleante**

**Monsieur Loyal** [*to Dorine*]. Hello, my dear sister. Could you please see if your master is in?

**Dorine.** He has company,  
And I doubt he'll be able to see you now.

**Monsieur Loyal.** I have not come here to cause a row.  
I don't think that my presence will displease  
Him; I come, in fact, to put him at ease.

**Dorine.** Your name?

**Monsieur Loyal.** Tell him only that I've come here  
For Monsieur Tartuffe, and to give him cheer.

**Dorine** [*to Orgon*]. It's a man who has come quite civilly,  
On behalf of Monsieur Tartuffe, to see,  
He says, to your pleasure.

**Cleante** [*to Orgon*]. You'd best find out  
Who he is and what he has come here about.

**Orgon** [*to Cleante*]. Perhaps he has come here to reconcile us.  
How should I act and what should we discuss?

**Cleante.** Don't let any of your anger appear,  
And if he speaks of a deal, make him be clear.

**Monsieur Loyal** [*to Orgon*]. Greetings, sir. May God destroy all your  
foes

And favor you as much as I propose!

**Orgon** [*aside to Cleante*]. This civil start meets my approbation  
And foreshadows some accommodation.

**Monsieur Loyal.** At one time I was your father's employee,  
And this whole house is very dear to me.

**Orgon.** I ask your pardon, sir, but to my shame  
I'm totally ignorant of your name.

**Monsieur Loyal.** My name is Loyal. I come from Normandy.  
I'm the bailiff here, in spite of envy.

For the last forty years, thanks be to God,  
I've done my duty and retained by job.  
And I've come to you, with your permission,  
To serve this notice of your eviction.

**Orgon.** What! You're here . . .

**Monsieur Loyal.** Let's have no irritation.  
This is nothing more than notification,  
An order to evict both you and yours,  
Put your furniture out and lock the doors,  
Without pardon or delay to fulfill . . .

**Orgon.** Me! Leave this place?

**Monsieur Loyal.** Yes, monsieur, if you will.  
This house now belongs, I have ample proof,  
To your very good friend, Monsieur Tartuffe.  
He is master and lord of all your wealth  
By virtue of a deed he showed me himself.  
It is in due form and cannot be doubted.

**Damis** [*to Monsieur Loyal*]. What impudence! I'm amazed about it.

**Monsieur Loyal** [*to Damis*]. You and I, sir, have no business and you'd  
Best leave things to this man [*pointing to Orgon*], who's civil and shrewd,  
And knows too well the duties of my office  
To wish to oppose himself to justice.

**Orgon.** But . . .

**Monsieur Loyal** [*to Orgon*]. I know that not even a million  
Dollars would make you cause a rebellion,  
And that you will be an honest citizen  
And let me fulfill the orders I'm given.

**Damis.** You may soon feel upon your black soutane,  
Monsieur Bailiff, the heavy weight of this cane.

**Monsieur Loyal** [*to Orgon*]. Command your son to be quiet or depart,  
Monsieur; I would regret to have to report  
All this and make these matters more official.

**Damis** [*aside*]. This Monsieur Loyal seems quite disloyal!

**Monsieur Loyal.** For all worthy men there's a place in my heart,  
And I would not have wished, sir, to take part  
In this, except to lift some of your burden,  
By preventing the chore from falling to one

Who might not share my opinion of you  
And who wouldn't proceed as gently as I do.

**Orgon.** And what could be worse than the evil crime  
Of evicting me?

**Monsieur Loyal.** I'm giving you time,  
And until morning I'll hold in abeyance  
The execution of this conveyance.

I shall only come here with ten of my boys  
To spend the night, without scandal or noise.  
For the sake of form please bring to me, before  
You go up to bed, the keys to your door.  
I'll take care not to disrupt your repose  
And not to do anything you would oppose.

But tomorrow morning you must get set  
To empty the house, down to the last brochette.  
My boys will assist you. Each one's a strong lout  
And will do all he can to help move you out.  
I'm doing my best to use common sense,  
And, since I'm treating you with such indulgence,  
I beg you, sir, to act the same way to me.  
Let no one bar me from doing my duty.

**Orgon** [*aside*]. With a happy heart I would at once pay  
The last hundred francs that are mine today  
For the power and pleasure of hitting his snout  
With one absolutely sensational clout.

**Cleante** [*quietly, to Orgon*].  
Go easy, don't make things worse.

**Damis.** My hand itches  
To get in a fight with these sons of bitches.

**Dorine.** Monsieur Loyal, I think it might become you  
To have your broad back beaten black and blue.

**Monsieur Loyal.** These wicked words deserve condemnation,  
And women, too, may earn incarceration.

**Cleante** [*to Monsieur Loyal*]. Let's end it now; that's enough for today.  
Hand over the paper, and be on your way.

**Monsieur Loyal.** Until later, then. Heaven keep you in joy!

**Orgon.** May it confound you, and your employer!



## SCENE V

**Orgon, Cleante, Mariane, Elmire, Madame Pernelle, Dorine, Damis**

**Orgon.** There! You now see, mother, that I was right,  
And you can judge of the rest by this writ.  
Do you admit at last that he can lie?

**Madame Pernelle.** It's as if a bolt has struck from the sky.

**Dorine** [*to Orgon*]. You're wrong to complain, and wrong to blame him.  
These things show the grand plans of your seraphim.  
His neighborly love finds consummation  
In proving that wealth causes degradation,  
And from pure charity he wants to remove  
Every obstacle between you and God's love.

**Orgon.** Shut up. . . . I'm always saying that to you.

**Cleante** [*to Orgon*]. Let us consider what we ought to do.

**Elmire.** We must expose this man's insolent acts.  
His deeds invalidate all the contracts.  
And his disloyalty will seem too plain  
If he tries to use them for personal gain.

## SCENE VI

**Valere, Orgon, Cleante, Elmire, Mariane, Madame Pernelle, Damis, Dorine**

**Valere.** I'm sorry, sir, that I've come to distress you;  
But certain dangers may soon oppress you.  
A friend, whose love for me is deep and true  
And who knows how much I care about you,  
Has had enough courage to violate  
The secrecy of affairs of state  
And has just now sent me word that you might  
Be well-advised to take sudden flight.  
The villain who has been imposing on you  
Has gone to the Prince to accuse you too,  
And put into his hands, like a blade of hate,

The vital papers of a traitor of State,  
Which he says that you've kept in secrecy  
Despite the duties of aristocracy.  
I don't know the details of the alleged crime,  
But a warrant against you has been signed,  
And he himself is assigned to assist  
Those who will soon come to make the arrest.

**Cleante.** Now his claims are well-armed; and the ingrate  
Seeks to become master of your estate.

**Orgon.** I swear, that man is a vile animal!

**Valere.** The slightest trifling could well be fatal.

My coach is right here to take you away  
With a thousand louis that I've pledged to pay.  
Don't lose any time; the arrow has sped,  
And this is one blow that ought to be fled.

I myself will guide you to a safe place  
And will stay with you to be sure there's no chase.

**Orgon.** I owe you much for your solicitude!

But there isn't time for my gratitude,  
And I pray to God to grant what I need  
So that one day I may repay this good deed.  
Farewell. The rest of you take care . . .

**Cleante.** Go on.  
We'll look after everything when you're gone.

### **Final Scene**

**Police Officer, Tartuffe, Valere, Orgon, Elmire, Mariane, Madame  
Pernelle, Cleante, Damis, Dorine**

**Tartuffe** [*stopping Orgon*]. Slowly, slowly, sir. You needn't run there.  
You won't have to go far to hide in your lair.  
In the Prince's name we will shackle you fast.

**Orgon.** Traitor, you've kept this final shaft for last.  
This is the blow with which you dispatch me,  
And this is what crowns all your perfidy.

**Tartuffe.** Your scorn causes me scant irritation;  
I bear it as a holy obligation.

**Cleante.** This is scant sign of your moderation.

**Damis.** How impudently the wretch mocks veneration!

**Tartuffe.** None of your outbursts mean a thing to me,  
For I think of nothing but doing my duty.

**Mariane.** Your pretense to honor is all a fake,  
And this is just the right job for you to take.

**Tartuffe.** The task can only shower me with grace  
Since our Prince's command has sent me to this place.

**Orgon.** But don't you recall how my charity  
Raised you, you ingrate, from your misery?

**Tartuffe.** Yes, I know that I once received assistance,  
But my duty to the Prince demands this persistence:

'Tis a sacred duty of such fortitude  
That it has suppressed all my gratitude,  
And I would sacrifice to this powerful force  
Friends, wife, parents, and myself, of course.

**Elmire.** The hypocrite!

**Dorine.** How well he can create  
A treacherous cloak from all we venerate!

**Cleante.** But if this zeal which drives you, and with which  
You plume yourself, lifts you to a holy niche,

Why is it that it didn't come to life  
Until after he caught you with his wife,  
And why did you only denounce him today  
After honor made him chase you away?

I don't claim that the gift of all his estates  
Ought to distract you from duty's dictates,  
But if you planned to reveal his treason here,  
Why were you willing to take his wealth back there?

**Tartuffe** [*to the Officer*]. From all this noise, sir, please deliver me,  
And be so kind as to enforce your decree.

**Police Officer.** Yes, I've been rather slow to issue it.  
Your own mouth aptly invites me to do it;  
And so it will be done if you will come  
Straight to the jail that will be your new home.

**Tartuffe.** Who? Me, sir?

**Police Officer.** Yes, you.

**Tartuffe.** But why to prison?

**Police Office.** I need not explain to you my reason.

[*To Orgon.*] Calm yourself, sir, after passions of such heat.

We're ruled by a Prince who's a foe to deceit,  
A Prince whose eyes can read what the soul has writ,

And who can't be fooled by a hypocrite.

Blessed with a fine discernment, his great heart

Always sees the whole picture, not just each part.

Nothing can drive him to exaggeration;

His firm reason clings to moderation.

He confers on men of worth immortal glory;

But that zeal is not blind or peremptory,

And his love for what's true does not turn his eye

From the power of falseness to horrify.

This man here was unable to entrap him;

His defenses are sound when such snares enwrap him.

From the start, he pierced with his perceptive sight

Through the veils that hid this evil from light.

Tartuffe betrayed himself by accusing you,

And, in divine justice, revealed his true

Colors to the Prince as an infamous cad

Whose deeds under another name were so bad

That the record they made was wholly black

And Satan might use them as his almanac.

In short, this king was revolted to see

His ingratitude to you and disloyalty;

To his other crimes, he has joined this one

And has only allowed it so everyone

Could see his audacity's evil ends

And then see him required to make amends.

All your papers, which the wretch has pawed through,

Are here taken away and returned to you.

With his sovereign power he will abrogate

The contract by which you gave away your estate,

And finally he pardons that secret offense

Which you once committed through benevolence.

This is the reward for the courage you showed  
In support of his rights in the late episode,  
And to demonstrate that, when least expected,  
One's past deeds may be recollected,  
That he will never forget a good deed,  
And that good outweighs evil in time of need.

**Dorine.** Heaven be praised!

**Madame Pernelle.** We're no longer distressed.

**Elmire.** What a happy ending!

**Mariane.** Who could have guessed?

**Orgon** [*to Tartuffe, whom the Officer is leading away*].

Good. There you go, traitor . . .

**Cleante.** Ah! Brother, cease,

And don't degenerate to indignities.

Leave to himself this miserable clown,

And don't add to the remorse that weighs him down.

Hope instead that his heart may one day

Make a happy return to the virtuous way,

That he'll reform his life and lament his past,

And cause our great Prince to temper justice at last.

You should throw yourself on your knees in praise

Of the kindness and lenience shown these days.

**Orgon.** Yes, that's well said. Let us kneel down with joy

And praise the kind deeds of his envoy.

Then, having acquitted part of our duty,

Let's turn to address the claims of beauty,

And by a fine wedding crown in Valere

A lover who's both generous and sincere.

**THE END**

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